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Modern Intellectual History (2023), **20**, 536–558
doi:10.1017/S1479244322000269

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ARTICLE

After the New Left: On Tsumura Takashi's Early Writings and Proto-"Contemporary Thought" in Japan

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(Received 26 June 2021; revised 11 January 2022; accepted 22 May 2022)

This article positions the early career of the Japanese activist and writer Tsumura Takashi as anticipating, from an intellectual and historical-media standpoint, the surge of interest in gendai shisō ("contemporary thought," i.e. French theory) in 1980s Japan. Often understood as the devolution of theory into a mere commercial fad, the gendai shisō boom—in its reliance on a host of writers who worked at a distance from traditional academic publishing networks—promoted an ethos of interdisciplinary and transgressive knowledge production. Tracing Tsumura's interest in structuralism and post-structuralism as an outgrowth of his participation in the student movement, the article provides a prehistory of gendai shisō in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It argues that Tsumura's creative appropriation of structuralism and post-structuralism took place at a crucial juncture when the academic print networks that had legitimated intellectuals in postwar Japan were being hollowed out from within and without.

In the popular 1970 text *The Fashionization of Society* (*Fashon-ka shakai*), the lifestyle producer Hamano Yasuhiro prophesized the emergence of a "fluid self" (*ryūdō jiga*) tasked with endlessly shapeshifting to embody and fulfill new forms of desire and expression in the coming postindustrial society.[1] His writing reflected the influence of youth fashion magazines such as *Heibon Punch* (1964) and *An • an* (1970), which fueled market segmentation and the parallel creation of new consumer subjectivities in Japan—and more generally what Tomiko Yoda calls a media state marked by "fashion as a matrix of lifestyle."[2] This eclipsing of all discourses by the rhetoric of lifestyle went hand in hand with an increasing emphasis on authenticity and self-expression, as exemplified by the iconic "Discover Japan" campaign

[1]Hamano Yasuhiro, *Fashon-ka shakai* (Tokyo, 1970), 22. Hamano was particularly inspired by John Lennon's ability to constantly remake himself and his style. For an account of similar discourses in American advertising at the time that clearly impacted the Japanese context see Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago, 1997).

[2]Tomiko Yoda, "Girlscape: The Marketing of Mediatic Ambience in Japan," in Marc Steinberg and Alexander Zahlten, eds., *Media Theory in Japan* (Durham, NC, 2017), 173–99, at 185. For an overview of the consolidation of mass consumer society through the 1960s and early 1970s see Yoshikuni Igarashi, *Japan, 1972: Visions of Masculinity in an Age of Mass Consumerism* (New York, 2021), 19–49.

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https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244322000269 Published online by Cambridge University Press

launched by Japanese National Railways in 1970. This campaign wedded the promise of personal exploration and development through travel to the modernist dream of returning to a "lost" home—in this case, ever-disappearing rural Japan.[3] A corollary of such an aesthetic of personalized consumption and self-expression was an increasing suspicion of intellectual vanguards and their abstruse language.[4] Critic Nakajima Azusa characterizes the 1970s as marked by a defiant and widespread support for "amateurism" (*amachuarizumu*), paralleling Fredric Jameson's formulation of "aesthetic populism" to describe contemporaneous anti-intellectual attitudes in the US context.[5] In Nakajima's analysis, "classical intellectualism" (*kyōyōshugi*) was superseded by "practical intellectualism" (*jitsuyō-teki kyōyō-shugi*), a supremely utilitarian form of knowledge in which all texts and doctrines had to be judged according to the primacy of one's immediate, everyday experience.[6] Given such transformations in advertising culture and consumer subjectivity through this time period, the question naturally emerged for writers and critics: how could theory be mobilized for social critique in the face of such hyper-individualism without replicating the supposed "elitism" of the traditional intellectual class?

In this article, I propose to examine the early writings of the student activist and writer-turned-*qigong*-teacher Tsumura Takashi (1948–2020) as he grappled with this question. He was a notably early critic of the turn to authenticity in advertising, describing Hamano Yasuhiro as an "information technocrat" (*jōhō tekunokurāto*) serving the state by coopting "antiestablishment" (*hantaisei*) language.[7] Tsumura became a freelance writer after dropping out of Waseda University in 1970, effectively completing a New Left imperative to reject the university for its role in reproducing Japanese capitalism and the country's neo-imperialist ambitions—i.e. "Destroy the University" (*daigaku kaitai*).[8] He was one of many ex-student activists whose subsequent writing careers were formed in direct opposition to what they perceived as the gatekeeping and power relations necessary to sustain classical intellectualism. As such, his writing embodies a moving contradiction: on the one hand, he disdained the traditional elitism of the academy and "classical knowledge" (*koten-teki kyōyō*), and, on the other, he relied on the arcane writings of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and other high French

[3]Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago, 1995), 40–48. "Discover Japan" was organized to encourage tourism after the downturn that followed the 1970 Osaka World Fair.

[4]Such a coinciding of anti-intellectualism with "lifestyle culture" parallels observations made by sociologist Sam Binkley on the emergence of authenticity-based discourses on the US West Coast during the 1970s. These were marked by a rivalry between the elite publishing culture of the East Coast and the "upstart," grassroots West Coast publishers and their embrace of anti-professionalism. Sam Binkley, *Getting Loose: Lifestyle Consumption in the 1970s* (Durham, NC, 2007), 108–15.

[5]Nakajima Azusa, *Besutoserā no kōzō* (Tokyo, 1983), 28. "Aesthetic populism" refers to the explicitly antimodernist tendencies, i.e. the rejection of all intellectual or cultural vanguards, in the cultural logic of postmodernism, as epitomized by the sardonic style of Tom Wolfe. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC, 1991), 2, 61.

[6]Nakajima Azusa, *Besutoserā no kōzō*, 104.

[7]Tsumura Takashi, *Kakumei e no kenri: Gutaisei no hō e* (Tokyo, 1971), 255.

[8]Such a critique was an organic outgrowth of the late New Left's critique of technocracy and technological rationalism—clearly a quality shared with the global '68 movement. See Nagasaki Hiroshi, "On the Japanese '68," in Gavin Walker, ed., *The Red Years: Theory, Politics, and Aesthetics in the Japanese '68* (London and New York, 2020), 12–37, at 33–7.

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theory being imported to Japan at the time to formulate a critique of burgeoning discourses of authenticity and self-expression.[9]

To better assess the significance of Tsumura's experiments in structuralism and post-structuralism in the early 1970s, I will position him as a forerunner to a boom in French theory in Japan in the 1980s. This boom—often dated to the sensational publication in 1983 of Asada Akira's primer on structuralism and post-structuralism, *Structure and Power* (*Kōzō to chikara*), which sold over 150,000 copies—is often seen as heralding the transformation of theory into a journalistically engineered mass fad. Worries over the commodification of philosophy were not new in Japan, appearing in the early postwar period, for example, in critiques of a commercial surge of interest in the works of the philosopher Nishida Kitarō.[10] I will argue, however, that the importation of French theory—or "contemporary thought" (*gendai shisō*), as it was called in Japan at the time—was novel in its heavy reliance on a host of writers who worked at a distance from the traditional academic publishing networks.[11] If this increased interest in contemporary thought in Japan is often theorized according to the utter absorption of academic disciplinary knowledge into the field of popular writing, then Tsumura's early career provides one "prehistory" to such a transformation that deserves further study.

In this article, I will provide an overview of the emergence of the genre of contemporary thought in Japan through the 1970s and 1980s. Then, I will profile the intellectual context within which Tsumura himself was writing, before moving to a close analysis of his writing at the time. Although Tsumura wrote for a variety of more highbrow publications (*sōgō-shi*) such as *Chūō Kōron* (Central Review) through the 1970s, the majority of the texts I reference were originally published in "racketeer magazines" (*sōkaiya zasshi*), zines, film magazines, minor literary reviews, and, later, "mooks" (a portmanteau of magazine and book): in short, a group of publications frequented by dropouts from the New Left, ex-Marxists, the artistic avant-garde, and academics—a sort of fringe discursive space.[12] When viewed in this light, we can examine his dense, jargon-filled style as a strategy for differentiation and a performative critique of the rampant anti-intellectualism of Japanese society in the flush and flattened underground print circuit of the 1970s.[13] As such, I am less interested in assessing whether Tsumura properly

[9]Tsumura Takashi, *Media no seiji* (Tokyo, 1974), 90.

[10]For a discussion of contemporaneous critiques of the postwar Nishida Kitarō publishing craze, and its relation to prewar intellectualism, see Adam Bronson, *One Hundred Million Philosophers: Science of Thought and the Culture of Democracy in Postwar Japan* (Honolulu, 2016), 31–8.

[11]By these networks, I refer primarily to intellectual magazines called *sōgō-shi* that often featured academic writers, most prominently *Sekai* and *Chūō Kōron* in the postwar period. For a helpful overview of the culture and practices of these magazines see Oku Takenori, *Rondan no sengoshi* (Tokyo, 2018).

[12]Racketeer magazines were premised on a rather bizarre alliance between right-wing racketeer or mob groups, who extorted advertising revenue out of large corporations in the form of magazine advertisements (*sanjo kōkoku*), and the ex-New Left editors and writers to whom they delegated responsibility for content. For a useful overview of this publishing culture see Ōsawa Satoshi, "'Ryūdō': shinsayoku-kei sōkaiya zasshi to taikō-teki genron kūkan," in Takeuchi Yō, Satō Takumi, and Inagaki Kyōko, eds., *Nihon no rondan zasshi: Kyōyō media no seisui-shi* (Osaka, 2014), 245–70.

[13]For a snapshot of Tsumura's entire intellectual *oeuvre*—including its relationship with Henri Lefebvre, which I am less concerned with for the purposes of this article—see Kamakura Shōtarō, "Tsumura Takashi ni okeru 'nichijō-sei' hihan no shatei," *Bunka/Hihyō* 2 (2010), 68–94.

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understood or contextualized structuralism or post-structuralism in his writing than in analyzing how these served as conceptual tools for him to further his own project. The critic Suga Hidemi goes so far as to characterize Tsumura's method, which was often forced to rely on inaccurate translations and partial texts as they appeared in the early 1970s, as an elaborate form of bricolage.[14] With such an unsystematic, "undisciplined" method, Tsumura, an activist-turned-writer, critiqued rampant anti-intellectualism and individualism at a crucial juncture when the traditional academic print networks that had legitimated intellectuals in postwar Japan were being hollowed out from within and without.[15]

What was "contemporary thought"?

The term "contemporary thought" (*gendai shisō*) came to take on a specific valence in the 1980s that was roughly equivalent with what François Cusset calls "French theory" in the US. If Cusset sees this genre as emerging at the intersection of university literature departments and the counterculture in the early 1970s, before being more thoroughly institutionalized in the 1980s and spawning neoconservative backlash, it should be stressed that the importation of French high theory to Japan was generally an extra-academic phenomenon that took place in a much more explicitly commercial milieu made up primarily of trade—and later PR—magazines.[16] In this sense, the importation and translation of this theory to Japan would seem to share more with the seminal West German publishing press Merve Verlag, including the latter's increasingly commercial, "mirthful" style after it jettisoned its overt Marxist–collectivist tendencies in 1974.[17] Much like Merve founders Heidi Paris and Peter Gente, editors Nakano Mikitaka and Miura Masashi, who together founded the influential intellectual journal *Gendai Shisō* (Contemporary Thought) in 1973, sought to introduce post-Marxist thought to Japan through the 1970s, in part as a response to what they perceived as the defeatism that accompanied the collapse of the student movement.[18] Unlike Merve, however, such a process of introduction did not, at least initially, focus on French theory. Through the 1970s, the term "contemporary thought" in the Japanese context was much more eclectic, covering a hodgepodge of intellectual

[14]Suga Hidemi, *Kakumei teki na, amarini kakumei teki na: "1968 nen no kakumei" shiron* (Tokyo, 2018), 388.

[15]For an analysis of the impact of the economic high-growth period on the social status of intellectuals and the various print communities and reading groups that supported them see Takeuchi Yō, *Kyōyōshugi no botsuraku* (Tokyo, 2003), 206–46. Takeuchi argues that the corporate turn towards hiring students based on latent ability, correlated with the ranking (*hensachi*) of their universities, rather than with their departmental or disciplinary affiliations, obviated the traditional sociocultural need for holistic "refinement" (*kyōyō*). Such a transformation dovetailed the increased influence of US-style social sciences and the shift from an "oppositional" (*teikō-gata*) understanding of intellectuals to one that cast them as "designers" (*sekkei-gata*).

[16]François Cusset, *French Theory: How Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, and Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States* (Minneapolis, 2008), 70.

[17]Philipp Felsch, *The Summer of Theory: History of a Rebellion, 1960–1990* (Cambridge, 2021), 90–95.

[18]See Sasaki Motohiro, "'*Gendai shisō*': daigakuin-sei no kyōyōshugi zasshi," in Satō Takumi, ed., *Seinen to zasshi no ōgon jidai: Wakamono wa naze sore wo yon'deitanoka* (Tokyo, 2015), 83–110.

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trends from environmentalism to the Frankfurt school. Significantly, Nakano had, in an earlier iteration of the *Gendai Shisō* journal called *Kikan Paideia* (Paideia Quarterly), been an early introducer of structuralism and post-structuralism in Japan, publishing in the early 1970s a translation of Derrida's 1963 "Cogito and the History of Madness" as well as Foucault's response to the article. The use of the term "contemporary thought" itself, however, was geared more towards overcoming the austere category of "postwar thought" (*sengo shisō*), dominated by Marxist and modernist social sciences, than towards promoting French theory. It was only in the 1980s, and particularly following the above-mentioned publication of Asada Akira's *Structure and Power*, that contemporary thought came to encompass structuralism and post-structuralism in a convenient one-size-fits-all package that roughly equates to the English designation of French theory.[19] So-called "intellectual magazines" (*shisō zasshi*) that frequently published features on post-structuralism, such as *Yū* (Play), *Epistēmē* (Episteme), and *GS Tanoshī Chishiki* (GS Fun Knowledge), flourished, and Asada Akira was featured in the popular magazine *Asahi Jānaru* (Asahi Journal) as one of the "Gods of the Young" (*wakamono-tachi no kamigami*)—influential celebrities interviewed between 1984 and 1985 by journalist-later-turned-newscaster Chikushi Tetsuya.

Scholars have assessed the tremendous popularity of contemporary thought from a wide variety of perspectives. Large PR and advertising firms, for instance, churned out "semiotic" theory texts of all kinds, even handing out Jean Baudrillard's books to young copywriters to mine for inspiration in crafting new advertising techniques.[20] Likewise, precocious college graduates became memetic personalities through highly self-reflexive appearances in print, radio, television, and so on, brandishing their discourses of "play," "deconstruction," "flight" (*tōsō*), and "schizo kids."[21] Marilyn Ivy, in turn, emphasizes the consumer craze surrounding such rarefied terms as a corollary of the collapse of the "use value" of knowledge in a heavily mediated, information-saturated, late capitalist society. In her seminal real-time account of the turn to postmodern theory in Japan, she writes on this trend, "It is not so much that the book [*Structure and Power*] is a remarkably easy exposition of poststructuralism, but rather that it is a textual sign, an artifact of magically produced 'difficulty.' If all commodities are fetishes, then *Structure and Power* is a particularly fantastic one, and what it fetishistically replaces is intellectual labor."[22] People bought *Structure and Power*, the story goes, to skim the chart of key ideas at the back of the book—featuring tiny drawings of Klein bottles and rhizomes—not to read the actual text. In short, it was used to learn part of an elaborate, ritualistic code of consumer communication in 1980s Japan. Here, then, was one component of the postmodern world of "differentiation" (*sai-ka*) that is so often portrayed in narratives of the youth consumer culture of the

[19]Significantly, it was Miura Masahi who "discovered" Asada Akira as an undergraduate student in the early 1980s and asked him to serialize what would become the basis for *Structure and Power*.

[20]Kitada Akihiro, *Kōkoku toshi tōkyō: Sono tanjō to shi* (Tokyo, 2011), 72–88.

[21]See Alexander Zahlten, "1980s Nyū Aka: (Non)Media Theory as Romantic Performance," in Steinberg and Zahlten, *Media Theory in Japan*, 200–20.

[22]Marilyn Ivy, "Critical Texts, Mass Artifacts: The Consumption of Knowledge in Postmodern Japan," in Harry Harootunian and Masao Miyoshi, eds., *Postmodernism and Japan* (Durham, NC, 1989), 21–46, at 30–31.

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"New Breed" (*shinjinrui*) at the time, a culture whose participants (supposedly) communicated to each other in dense barrages of musical, literary, and philosophical references, not to mention the name-dropping of brands, as they constantly tested and probed each other's taste.[23]

Granting that all these above perspectives are integral to understanding the contemporary thought boom, I want to emphasize one aspect that I believe has been generally overlooked: the increasing amateurization of intellectual production. The philosopher Nakamasa Masaki defines contemporary thought in part by its tendency to blur popular writing and academic writing (*datsu akademizumu-ka*). In contrast to previous public intellectuals, who relied on specific areas of expertise which they would "quote" or "employ" in popular discourse, "New Academism" (*nyū akademizumu*), as the vanguard of contemporary thought came to be called, featured "intellectuals who from the outset had no specialty in the older sense of the word—or 'philosophers,' 'thinkers,' 'critics,' and 'intellectual performers' with no fixed terrain of specialization."[24] The erosion of academics' disciplinary autonomy by the imperative of mass publishing practices was, of course, nothing new. Beginning with the acceleration of print capitalism inside the 1924 "collected works" (*zenshū*) and 1926–7 "one-yen book" (*enpon*) publishing crazes, and following the expulsion of Marxist intellectuals from university positions in the late 1920s and early 1930s and their subsequent relocation to journalism, so-called "academism" had become an effective commodity that supported a variety of interwar magazines and journals.[25] This trend had only continued after the war with the emergence of the "middlebrow" (*chūkan bunka*) culture of the "weekly magazines" (*shūkanshi*) and "paperback books" (*shinsho*) in the late 1950s, which supplied the burgeoning class of white-collar workers with highly accessible, compressed introductory texts to academic and specialist discourses.[26] What the 1970s and 1980s witnessed, however, was the further de-structuration of academic hierarchy—as evidenced by the fact that Asada Akira had become a spokesman for the New Academism writers holding only an undergraduate degree from Kyoto University (a prestigious institution nonetheless). Such a detachment of knowledge production and dissemination from academic legitimation was even more pronounced in the case of Tsumura and many writers associated with the "baby-boomer" (*dankai*) generation. Upon leaving the academic world, they found support within a burgeoning print universe of racketeer magazines, zines, and mooks—which would form an integral part of the publishing infrastructure for the later emergence of

[23]The "New Breed" generally refers to the demographic born between the late 1950s and 1970. For a discussion of the discourses surrounding this generation see Jordan Sand, "The Ambivalence of the New Breed: Nostalgic Consumerism in 1980s and 1990s Japan," in Sheldon Garon and Patricia L. Maclachlan, eds., *The Ambivalent Consumer: Questioning Consumption in East Asia and the West* (Ithaca, 2006), 85–108. Sand characterizes it as demonstrating a paradoxical relationship between resistance and complacency: "[young] Japanese of the 1980s longed for something outside Japan's managed consumer society, yet they were captive to its fashions." Ibid., 108.

[24]Nakamasa Masaki, *Shūchū nihon no gendai shisō: Postudomodan to wa nan'dattanoka* (Tokyo 2006), 16–17.

[25]For a detailed analysis of the mechanics of the expansion of print capitalism in 1920s Japan and the emergence of a star system for writers and critics see Ōsawa Satoshi, *Hihyō media-ron: Senzenki nihon no rondan to bundan* (Tokyo, 2015).

[26]Katō Hidetoshi, "Chūkan bunka ron," *Chūōkōron* 72/3 (1957), 252–61.

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contemporary thought.[27] As early as 1972, Tsumura described his project as the "deterritorialization" (*datsu-ryōiki*) of academic disciplines and a critique of the exclusionary qualities of classical intellectualism.[28] Such language clearly anticipated the interdisciplinary, transgressive aesthetic of the New Academism writers.

Writing in 1995 and describing the then-recent proliferation of high theory in 1980s Japan that I have profiled above, Marilyn Ivy observed, "In Japan, high theory has a mass audience; if American postmodernists believe that the distinction between mass and high culture has been effaced in the United States, Japan presents an even more complete elision of the difference (and a completely different history of that difference)."[29] Tsumura began his career at an inflection point when the status of the intellectual was being radically transformed in a process that would set the stage for the later contemporary-thought genre. In addition, what we see in Tsumura's early experiments with interpreting and using French theory is indicative of a more general trend in reception: what sold in Japan wasn't so much the translations of the French theorists' texts themselves—as was the case of the above-mentioned publisher Merve in West Germany—but introductions and beginner's guides to these difficult texts, often written by nonspecialists lacking academic accreditation.[30] As such, Japan offers a relatively unexamined and rather extreme case of the commercialization of theory and the amateurization that accompanied such a process, which I trace in the form of an early case study below.[31]

Tsumura Takashi and Zenkyōtō

Reflecting on the late 1960s student movement in 1980, Tsumura Takashi describes a widespread feeling that drove students to rebel and barricade themselves in the universities: "Inside of the university entrance competition [*juken kyōsō*], we became warped, and wretched … and detested our desensitized [*donkan*] selves. We hated how we would be carried [*hakobareru*] close to authority by becoming

[27]Media scholar Ōsawa Satoshi regards this alternative print media milieu as serving as a training ground of sorts for the myriad writers who supported the contemporary thought boom in the 1980s. Azuma Hiroki et al., *Gendai nihon no hihyō: 1975–2001* (Tokyo, 2017), 35–40.

[28]Tsumura, *Media no seiji*, 90.

[29]Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing*, 60.

[30]Sasaki Motohiro, for instance, has shown that it was not the more difficult, "highbrow" publications such as the journal *Gendai shisō*, let alone the texts of the French thinkers themselves, that were most popular with students in the 1980s, but "introduction" manuals meant to break down French theory in more accessible terms. These were often written by ex-members of the New Left, most prominently Kosaka Shūhei and Takeda Seiji Sasaki, "'*Gendai shisō*'," 100. For an account of the reception of these "easy-to-understand" (*wakariyasui*) texts by high-schoolers and university students in the 1980s see Toyama Kōichi, *Kaiseiban zenkyōtō igo* (Tokyo, 2018), 291–5.

[31]It is worth keeping in mind that such a celebration of "amateurism" in itself was by no means a novel phenomenon. The cultural anthropologist Umesao Tadao, in his 1969 best-selling text *Techniques for Intellectual Production* (*Chi-teki seisan no gijutsu*), for example, advocated a "de-individualized" (*botsu-kosei*) method of collecting, storing, and using information that conspicuously resembled the operations of a computer. Such a democratic vision of production promised to free knowledge from the clutches of specialists. I argue, however, that while overlapping in their embrace of amateurism and disdain for academic credentials, the writers of the late New Left were equally suspicious of such a technical–pragmatic understanding of knowledge production given its parallels to the state's managerial techniques. I would like to thank an anonymous reader for directing me towards Umesao Tadao.

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bureaucrats and corporate employees upon graduation."[32] Such a sentiment testifies to the pressures endured by relatively elite students in the intensifying cultural and educational competition wrought by the "high growth period" (*kōdo seichō-ki*) in the 1960s, in which the Japanese economy grew by roughly 10 percent per year and the country emerged as an industrial powerhouse. The younger son of Takano Minoru, the general secretary of the powerful Sōhyō (General Council of Trade Unions of Japan) union in the early 1950s, Tsumura entered the Waseda University Literature Department in 1967—a pivotal year in the formation of the late 1960s New Left with the First Haneda event, an attempt by student protesters to stop then prime minister Satō Eisaku from visiting South Vietnam.[33] Only a year before, protests that foreshadowed later militancy had also arisen at Waseda over tuition increases.

The New Left in Japan had originally emerged through an explosion of student militancy preceding the 1960 renewal of the US–Japan Security Treaty, as symbolized by the anti-Stalinist faction of the Zengakuren (All-Japan Federation of Student Self-Government Associations).[34] After a downturn following the collapse of this movement, a second wave of student militancy arose (what I call the "late New Left") in response to a variety of factors, including the escalating war in Vietnam, and the effects of increased higher-education attendance on the social status and role of the university. Significantly, the percentage of students who pursued education at the university level had ballooned from 15 percent in 1963 to roughly 35 percent in 1970.[35] This increase in university enrollment—itself catalyzed by mass hiring practices—led large corporations to expand their employment strategy of hiring new college recruits (*shinsotsu ikkatsu saiyō*) to beyond just that of the white-collar management sector. This change also meant that many university graduates from less prestigious universities often found themselves upon graduation working the same sales positions as high-school graduates. In other words, attending university ceased to guarantee social ascendancy in Japan—as was well understood by students at the private Nihon University, who leveled critiques at "mass

[32]Tsumura Takashi, "Jibun no jinsei wo kaeru: 80 nendai no kiki to kanōsei ni tsuite," *80 nendai* 1 (1980), 20–29, at 20. Such remarks echo the prevalent attitude of "self-negation" (*jiko-hitei*) at the time—of recognizing one's privileged status as an elite student in a powerful capitalist nation and actively trying to undermine that privilege—though it should be mentioned that Tsumura was generally opposed to this attitude for being a superficial form of moralism that doubled back on the individual subject, thus reinforcing it.

[33]Takano Minoru led the union in the early 1950s and was instrumental in directing it to go beyond merely defending the interests of the working class to involve itself in activism to protect postwar democracy and peace. Watanabe Osamu, "Kōdō seichō to kigyō shakai," in Watanabe Osamu, ed., *Nihon jidai-shi 27: Kōdo seichō to kigyō shakai* (Tokyo, 2004), 7–126, at 21. Tsumura's older brother Takano Hajime is also a well-known television commentator and journalist.

[34]Then prime minister Kishi Nobusuke had negotiated the renewal of a revised treaty to rectify the vastly unequal original security treaty signed along with the 1951 Treaty of San Francisco, which failed to include a firm commitment on the side of the US to defend Japan in the event of a military conflict. Kishi had planned to use the renewal as part of a program to revise the postwar constitution and remilitarize Japan, but significantly miscalculated mass opposition to it; he ended up resigning on 23 June 1960, amid massive protests after the Liberal Democratic Party steamrollered the renewal through the Diet a month before. For a detailed account of the US–Japan Security Treaty and fallout see Nick Kapur, *Japan at the Crossroads: Conflict and Compromise after Anpo* (Cambridge, 2018).

[35]Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present*, 4th edn (Oxford, 2020), 263.

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production" (*masupuro*) education.[36] Meanwhile, those who were able to make it to the upper echelons of the educational system (the most competitive universities) and hence were guaranteed favorable white-collar employment were, conversely, forced to recognize their complicity in maintaining Japanese capitalism (and consumerism), as Tsumura attests to above.[37]

Tsumura would go on to participate in the Waseda University Zenkyōtō ("All-Campus Joint Struggle Committee"). These student organizations, marked by their opposition to Marxist–Leninist groups, and the fact that graduate students and teachers as well as undergraduates could join, emerged in 1968, first at Tokyo University and Nihon University, and then spread throughout the country. Quickly radicalizing from more local protests against unjust management practices and coercive school administrators, they occupied their respective universities and formed communes with the aim of practicing "direct democracy" (*chokusetsu minshushugi*). Tsumura's early writing, mostly in the form of various fliers and posters, reflects larger currents at the time. He simultaneously critiqued the Japanese government and corporations' complicity in the Vietnam War, the "managed society" (*kanri shakai*)—a popular term at the time used to describe the Japanese technocracy—and the Marxist theorists who tried to remain above the fray of the student movement and direct its energies—the "technocrats of revolution," in his words.[38] In a 1979 retrospective article, he describes the Zenkyōtō movement as an awakening of students to the politics of the body and the ability to contest power inside the everyday: Zenkyōtō "was a movement that rejected the everyday … Its motive was the question of just how deeply one could betray the order that one's body belonged to. Put another way, it tried to change the world through changing one's subjectivity."[39] Such an approach could be criticized as politically atomizing, or, to quote the sociologist Oguma Eiji, a moralistic dead end resulting from the "confusion and guilt occasioned by high-speed economic growth."[40] Leaving aside the question of its merits and drawbacks, however, it is essential to recognize that Tsumura claimed this heightened emphasis on subjectivity as the feature that distinguished the late New Left from previous political movements, as it would set the tone for his subsequent engagement with French theory. Tsumura's observations were also in line with larger trends in the global New Left and counterculture, which Theodore Roszak described as defined by a "politics of consciousness."[41]

The Japanese New Left also articulated a critique of the traditional, transcendental role of the integral academic–intellectual as a guardian of the ideals of postwar democracy, as evidenced by the above-mentioned term "Destroy the University." It

[36]Such a phenomenon, of course, was by no means specific to postwar Japan: the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, for instance, termed a similar dynamic in France "diploma inflation," and observed that it was one of the principal drivers of student radicalism in the late 1960s. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London and New York, 2010), 139–40.

[37]See Oguma Eiji, "Japan's 1968: A Collective Reaction to Rapid Economic Growth in an Age of Turmoil", *Asia-Pacific Journal* 13/12 (2015), 1–27.

[38]Tsumura Takashi, *Kakumei e no kenri*, 16. For a discussion of the term kanri shakai and its relation to the intellectual trends of the late 1960s see J. Victor Koschmann, "Intellectuals and Politics" in Andrew Gordon, ed., *Postwar Japan as History* (Berkeley, 1993), 395–423, at 414–17.

[39]Tsumura Takashi, *Ōgi ōkō ron* (Tokyo, 2016), 215.

[40]Oguma, "Japan's 1968," 14.

[41]Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture* (Berkeley, 1995), 51.

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was the poet and critic Yoshimoto Takaaki who emerged as the principal ideologue of the late New Left and voiced their discontent over diploma inflation and the hypocrisy of postwar intellectualism through his influential formulation of *jiritsu* ("autonomy"). Yoshimoto had gained prominence through his association with the radical anti-Stalinist faction of the 1960 security treaty protests—decried by the Japanese Communist Party as Trotskyite adventurists—and particularly his essay "Death of a Fiction" ("Gisei no shūen"), which lambasted various reformist movements and the orthodox Japanese Communist Party in the wake of these protests. For him, the calls for direct action by more radical, "nihilistic" factions of this movement, particularly the ones who had not been absorbed into the various "civilian" (*shiminshugi*) movements, symbolized the victory of the masses over any organized faction or leader.[42] In a 1966 collection entitled *A Base for Independent Thought* (*Jiritsu no shisō-teki kyoten*), Yoshimoto set out his ideal of *jiritsu*, which he described in opposition to the tendency for intellectuality in Japan to be "decided not by immanent struggle, but by external situations."[43] The need to develop an independent language in resistance to the slavish trends of imported thought that had dominated Japanese intellectual history (in Yoshimoto's estimation) shaped his critiques of established academics such as the iconic modernist Maruyama Masao, who sought ideal models of social development in European modernity as well as in the writings of Meiji-era enlightenment thinkers such as Fukuzawa Yukichi. A younger generation of activists converted his critiques of Maruyama into praxis, vandalizing Maruyama's office and famously prompting the scholar to utter, "Even the militarists, even the Nazis didn't commit such violence."[44] Seen from a global perspective, such an antiauthoritarian, anti-intellectual approach echoed the attitudes of texts as diverse as the *Whole Earth Catalog* and *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung*, which playwright Tsuno Kaitarō memorably describes as collectively protesting "the authoritarian rule of book-based knowledge."[45] Significantly, Tsumura himself described Zenkyōtō as manifesting a similar break with what he perceived as the overly textual and dogmatic tradition of Marxism in Japan, and yet it is clear that he remained aware of the danger of the ideal of *jiritsu* tipping into unproductive anti-intellectual territory.[46]

The influence of Yoshimoto's formulation of *jiritsu* on the late New Left became a principal target for Tsumura Takashi in his early career as a writer after he dropped out of Waseda University in 1970. Responding to an influx of small-press zines (*minikomi*) during the early 1970s, he disparaged them as "autonomous media" (*jiritsu media*) that rely on a rugged individualist ideology that conveniently overlooks their dependency on capitalism.[47] He wrote that this ideology "is premised on a

[42]Tanigawa Gan et al., *Minshushugi no shinwa: Anpo tōsō no shisō-teki sōkatsu* (Tokyo, 1960), 63.

[43]Yoshimoto Takaaki, *Jiritsu no shisō-teki kyoten* (Tokyo, 1966), 25.

[44]Quoted in Oguma Eiji, *"Minshu" to "Aikoku": Sengo nihon no nashonarizumu to kōkyōsei* (Tokyo, 2002), 581.

[45]Tsuno Kaitarō, *Dokusho to nihonjin* (Tokyo, 2016), 205.

[46]Tsumura, *Ōgi ōkō ron*, 217.

[47]Tsumura, *Media no seiji*, 249. In this article, Tsumura pokes fun at the responses of a variety of "anti-commercial" zines to interest from the popular magazine *Asahi Jānaru* in a 1971 issue: "If you get covered by *Asahi Jānaru* and you are curious about what got recognized by them, or across to them, then it'd be better to quit making zines [*minikomi*]." Ibid., 250.

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deeply rooted, optimistic delusion [*rakuten-teki gensō*] that believes it is possible to avoid systemization and commercialization by organizing language according to the axis of 'self-expression' [*jiko-hyōshutsu*]—a belief shared by the 'New Left' and a certain group of intellectuals on its periphery [referring primarily to Yoshimoto] in the 1960s."[48] Conceding that Yoshimoto's ideal of *jiritsu* represented an important critique of Stalinism and bureaucratic language on the left, Tsumura argued that the pursuit of *jiritsu* following the collapse of orthodox leftism through the 1950s and 1960s could only lead to a fetishization of self-expression, as if it existed outside capitalism and the nation-state. Tsumura's project, as we shall see below, rested on employing structuralist and post-structuralist theory to disrupt this pervasive worship of the self and self-expression that he saw spreading through the 1970s.[49] In the second half of the article, I will profile how Tsumura formulated a critique of the absorption of the student movement's concerns with subjectivity into advertising using the writings of Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, and Derrida, among other thinkers.

Critique of ethnocentrism and Lévi-Strauss

By the early 1970s, the student movement was splintering into a variety of more regional or identity-based radical movements: "women's liberation" (*ūman ribu*), which critiqued the male chauvinism that had been rampant in the New Left; various environmental groups; and, most relevant to this article, the "anti-discrimination" (*han-sabetsu*) movement. Such a concern for the plight of minority populations in Japan had spread through the New Left in the wake of a critique of ethnocentrism in the student movement by a group of Chinese and Taiwanese Maoist activists in 1970, known as the "*Kaseitō* accusation" (*Kaseitō kokuhatsu*).[50] As a response, various Marxist–Leninist sects, particularly the powerful Middle Core Faction (*chūkaku-ha*), made the liberation of oppressed peoples in Japan—especially Zainichi Koreans, Chinese, Ainu, and Okinawans—a central part of their political program. Renewed emphasis also fell on the "traditional" discrimination of the *burakumin*, an outcaste group with its origins in feudal (Edo period) Japan. Hence the 1970s saw—inside the splintering of the New Left—a turn towards identity-based politics that would inform subsequent debates through the 1980s and 1990s over the practice of "self-censorship" (*jishu-kisei*) surrounding offensive language towards minorities—a trend that conservatives and libertarians would come to call "word hunting" (*kotoba-gari*).[51]

[48]Ibid., 247.

[49]Ibid., 253.

[50]See Suga Hidemi, "1968 and the Postwar Regime of Emperor-System Democracy," in Gavin Walker, ed., *The Red Years: Theory, Politics, and Aesthetics in the Japanese '68* (London and New York, 2020), 98–119, at 114–19. For an overview of the issues of sexism and misogyny in the student movement see Chelsea Szendi Schieder, *Coed Revolution: The Female Student in the Japanese New Left* (Durham, NC, 2021).

[51]The term *kotobagari* became prominent in 1993 following the science fiction writer Yasutaka Tsutsui's declaration that he would cease writing after being criticized for offensively depicting epilepsy in a 1965 story. See William O. Gardner, "Tsutsui Yasutaka and the Multimedia Performance of Authorship," in Christopher Bolton, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr, and Takayuki Tatsumi, eds., *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams* (Minneapolis, 2007), 83–97, at 91–5.

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Joining a movement that would anticipate this turn towards identity politics, Tsumura became deeply involved in protests at the Immigration Bureau in 1969, particularly in opposition to the passage of a bill that would have intensified surveillance of Zainichi Koreans. With his father, Tsumura had visited China several times throughout the 1960s—once during the Cultural Revolution—and become aware of the brutal history of Japanese imperialism on the continent. In formulating an early critique of the instrumentalization of the stigmatized other in the expansion of Japanese capitalism, Tsumura zeroed in on the "outsider" (*ihōjin*) in Japanese history: particularly that of Korean and Chinese laborers in Japan from the Meiji period (1868–1912) onwards. Further developing Marx's notion of the industrial reserve army, Tsumura analyzes the way that this army was always already divided in order to be effectively exploited by capitalists:

> Capital needs a reserve army of labor, but to guarantee the maintenance of the reserve army, a rearguard labor army … is socially requisite. This is the Jewish people, in other words the other for capital; the Jew is the structural secret for the development of global capital within the individual nation state, and, when looked at from this angle, it goes without saying that for us inside Japanese capitalism, the Jew is the *buraku* people, the Okinawans, the Koreans, and the Chinese, including Taiwanese.[52]

This text, included in his first book *Our Inner Discrimination* (*Warera no uchi naru sabetsu*), published in 1970, serves as a prelude to Tsumura's project in the early 1970s of conducting an internal critique of the anarchists and Marxists of interwar Japan, who often fell into jingoistic, ethnocentric frameworks when discussing minorities, particularly the Chinese. To do so, Tsumura researched the legacy of an often overlooked Japanese Marxist economist, Inomata Tsunao, who had recognized the revolutionary agency of the Chinese peasants in the 1920s and resisted the productivist models held by many Marxists in the interwar period (i.e. that the development of China through Japanese imperialism and industry would provide the conditions for revolution there through the expansion of the immanent contradictions of capital).[53] Inomata had, significantly, resisted anchoring his analysis of Japanese expansionism in the 1930s in relation to the emperor—a common point of contention between the two leading Marxist factions in a famous debate over the bourgeois nature of the Meiji Restoration—and instead focused on the fusion of the military and monopoly capital, particularly during the recession of the early 1930s.[54] For Tsumura, Inomata (along with Ozaki Hotsumi) was one of the few

[52]Tsumura Takashi, "'Teidai kaitai' to buraku, okinawa, chōsen no shiten," in Suga Hidemi, ed., *Tsumura Takashi seisen hyōronshū: "1968" nen igo* (Tokyo, 2012), 23–35, at 26–7. In notes to the essay, Tsumura mentions that it was social anthropologist Suzuki Jirō who probably coined the term "rearguard labor army" (*rōdō kōbigun*) in Japanese.

[53]Tsumura Takashi, "Inomata Tsunao = 1937 nen: 'Rinpō shina no zento' o megutte," in Suga, *Tsumura Takashi seisen hyōronshū,* 48–60, at 53. Significantly, Takano Minoru, Tsumura's father, had been deeply influenced by Inomata while studying under him at Waseda University in the interwar period, and so there was a certain intimacy in Tsumura's studying Inomata during the early 1970s.

[54]Ibid., 60. For a discussion of Inomata Tsunao's involvement in the interwar debates over the "feudal" character of Japanese capitalism, as well as his assessments of monopoly capitalism, see Germaine

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Marxists who had proved capable of recognizing the autonomy of the "other," and it was this perspective that helped him resist the ideological conversion of Marxists to nativists (*tenkō*) in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[55] Inomata's vision intersects, rather neatly, with Tsumura's own Maoist vision of the "people" (*jinmin*) emerging as a revolutionary subject, and the Cultural Revolution's "revolution in the superstructure," rather than accepting any dialectical materialist account determined by the development of the productive forces.

Tsumura's investment in documenting the centrality of discrimination and racism throughout Japanese modernity—and continuing into the postwar period—drew him into a public spat with none other than Yoshimoto Takaaki, prophet of *jiritsu*. In the October 1970 issue of his magazine *Shikō* (Trial), Yoshimoto had made a rather reductive claim that Tsumura's study group the Discrimination Research Group (*sabetsu-ken*) was cynically benefiting from the continued existence of discrimination in society rather than effectively combating it. Yoshimoto was particularly upset by an earlier article in which Tsumura had criticized his discriminatory language towards the *burakumin*, claiming in response that Tsumura and his associates were manufacturing taboos just to criticize those who broke them and thus gain publicity (a critique that would become commonplace in the 1990s in the above-mentioned debates over "word hunting").[56] Tsumura, conceding that the critique of discrimination could devolve into moralism, took aim at what he saw as Yoshimoto's "fake radicalism" (*ese-radikarizumu*)—a "relinquishing of the battle with reality" through an implicit valorization of the status quo.[57] He was particularly critical of Yoshimoto's tendency to treat any critique of discriminatory language as mere "moralism" (*rinrishugi*). Such a problem had deeper roots than one thinker, however: through the early 1970s, Tsumura's project would turn towards assessing what he perceived as the general inability of the left, and by extension the New Left, to address the question of how racial heterogeneity and persistent discrimination—whether prewar or postwar—was integrally tied to the ideology of "modern subjective consciousness" (*kindai-teki shutai ishiki*).[58] Tsumura, then, turned to a battle with the cogito itself, and its contemporary manifestations in *jiritsu*, authenticity, and so forth.

In the early 1970s, Tsumura's reading of Claude Lévi-Strauss, particularly his description of the anthropological method as a form of self-dislocation, proved influential in helping him reformulate his conception of discrimination rooted in capitalist development, and instead search for ingrained subjective aspects that contributed to the formation of discrimination. In a 1973 essay, entitled "Thought in

A. Hoston, *Marxism and the Crisis of Development in Prewar Japan* (Princeton, 1987), 190–205. Inomata, as a member of the Rōnō-ha (Labor-Farm Faction), argued that there had been a significant transformation of Japanese capitalism after World War I and the "embourgeoisement" of landlords, and as such rejected the claim—advanced by the Comintern Theses—that Japanese capitalism was still plagued by feudal remnants.

[55]See Max M. Ward, *Thought Crime: Ideology and State Power in Interwar Japan* (Durham, NC, 2019).

[56]See Suga Hidemi, *Yoshimoto takaaki no jidai* (Tokyo, 2008), 339–53, for an overview of their exchanges.

[57]Tsumura Takashi, "'Sabetsu-ken' no tame no bokimei: Awasete yoshimoto takaki ni tō," in Suga, *Tsumura Takashi seisen hyōronshū*, 101–6, at 102.

[58]Ibid., 105.

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an Age of Reproductive Technology," he cites Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology as an important technique for dissolving the coherence of the self:

> Claude Lévi-Strauss often talks about the "maiming of self" [*jiga no kison*] that anthropologists, as lonely wanderers inside exotic cultures—in conditions as estranged as can be imagined—experience. To stand in front of a disappearing culture and experience the breakdown of the cogito—this is the eternal penance of the anthropological method. But, to think this from another perspective, what the anthropologist is doing here is nothing other than a form of play with the duplicated self … He returns to "his" [*ji*] people, to "his" [*ji*] academic world, and quotes a foreign culture. This is the vital aspect of any structural shift in culture.[59]

This passage clearly refers to Lévi-Strauss's depiction of the anthropological method in the final chapter of his 1955 memoir *Triste tropiques*. For example,

> He is what he has chosen to be: an anthropologist; therefore he must accept the mutilated condition which is the price of his vocation. He has chosen and must accept the consequences of his choice: his place lies with "the others", and his role is to understand them. Never can he act in their name, for their very otherness prevents him from thinking or willing in their place: to do so would be tantamount to identifying himself with them.[60]

For Lévi-Strauss, the anthropologist was unable to directly intervene in the cultures that they observed, at the risk of destroying them; rather, they could use the unique experience of cultural relativity, of the dissolving of their own culture and the self embedded inside it, to "disentangle" themselves from the values of their respective societies and "find principles of social life which may be used for [their] society's reform."[61] Tsumura, on the whole, seems less interested in the underlying aspects of Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology, i.e. the discovery of certain mental constraints that structure cultural logics of categorization and relation—or, as Paul Ricoeur put it, "Kantianism without a transcendental subject."[62] Instead, the experience of self-disintegration—in direct contrast to the popularity of Sartre's subjectivism in the Japanese New Left—offered a distinctly non-essentialist notion of the relation between the self and other. For Tsumura, it was the "duplication" or "multiplication" of the self through its dismemberment, and the subsequent ability of one to "quote" this "multiplied" self in one's own society as a form of play—emerging from contact with the other—which could furnish the left with a non-essentialist vision of the structure of discrimination and a way to combat it. Such

[59]Tsumura Takashi, "Fukusei gijutsu jidai no shisō," in Suga, *Tsumura Takashi seisen hyōronshū*, 119–42, at 132–3.

[60]Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes tropiques* (New York, 1972), 384–5.

[61]Ibid., 391. Lévi-Strauss, here, lauds Rousseau's ability to first destroy the supposedly "natural" social order (*Discourse on Inequality*) and then rebuild it (*The Social Contract*).

[62]Quoted in Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, 1980), 182. This was undoubtedly, in part, because Tsumura in the early 1970s was an ardent Maoist and the "people" (*jinmin*) had to serve as the collective subject for his project.

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a perspective allowed him to avoid the fetishization of "otherness" that befell much of the Japanese New Left following the turn to discrimination as a central social issue in the 1970s, particularly evident in the worship of the "Third World" and various indigenous cultures.[63]

Tsumura's interest in this fissuring of subjectivity is evident also in his engagement with Lévi-Strauss's 1962 speech "Jean-Jacques Rosseau, Founder of the Sciences of Man." This text perhaps goes even further than *Tristes tropiques* in analyzing the relationship of self and other in anthropology. Tsumura quotes a central line from the speech—"To obtain acceptance of oneself in others (the goal assigned to human knowledge by the ethnologist), one must first deny the self in oneself"—and voices his fundamental agreement that ethnography is at root a form of "confession" that transcends the narrow boundaries of the Cartesian self, instead aspiring to a form of natural unity and sympathy with the other.[64] "Here," Tsumura writes, "the Cartesian myth that the self and [external] world exist in fundamental accord—'that what is inside of me is expressed through parole'—is already destroyed."[65] Hence his project turned towards combating the very subjective disposition that formed the basis of discrimination—the systematic denial of the other in the self. But how could one go about blocking the exclusionary process of self-identification? To better understand the various strategies Tsumura advocated for challenging the closure of the self, we must turn to the critiques of the structure of language that the young Tsumura inherited from Derrida and Barthes, among others.

Écriture, semiotics, deconstruction: Derrida and Barthes

Central to Tsumura's analysis of the 1970s political situation was the notion of "cultural inflation" (*bunka infurēshon*), which he developed in relation to Walter Benjamin's 1935 "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Production." Adapting Benjamin's influential argument about the decline of aura in an age of constant editing and arranging (essentially collapsing the distance needed to maintain auratic presence), Tsumura described the general turn to semiotics following critiques of modernity on all sides during the 1920s and 1930s—for example, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, general semantics, developments in phenomenology, and, in art, the rise of surrealism and the "Brechtian turn," and so on. In a 1971 essay he wrote, "What connects all of these [movements] is, in all cases, the emergence of language itself as the principal theme. No longer could anyone think a substance on which signs [*kigō*] could rely."[66] Furthering his metaphor, he turned

[63]Here I refer to various attempts to find a "new" revolutionary agent after the supposed incorporation of the Japanese proletariat into capitalism, whether in activist Ōta Ryū's interest in Ainu culture, or the Marxist–Leninist sect Middle Core Faction's embrace of *kessaishugi*—a romantic ideology that stresses a "blood debt" to other Asian countries for the sin of Japanese imperialism. On Ōta's turn to Ainu culture see Till Knaudt, "A Farewell to Class: The Japanese New Left, the Colonial Landscape of Kamagasaki, and the Anti-Japanese Front (1970–75)," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 46/2 (2020), 395–422, at 414–16.

[64]Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Founder of the Sciences of Man," in Timothy O'Hagan, ed., *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 2nd edn (Burlington, 2016), 25–38, at 28.

[65]Tsumura, *Kakumei e no kenri*, 158.

[66]Tsumura Takashi, "1930 nendai: Kyokutō ni okeru teikokushugi," in Suga, *Tsumura Takashi seisen hyōronshū*, 61–86, at 68.

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to the abandoning of the gold standard by advanced capitalist countries throughout the late 1920s and the 1930s, and the rise of a phenomenon called cultural inflation. The collapse of the transcendental signified of gold, and the ability of nations to endlessly print or "reproduce" currency, both eroded the aura of money and produced rampant monetary inflation through World War II. In turn, a new class of ideologues emerged, fabricating various fetishistic centers to respond to the crisis of cultural authority brought about by economic inflation. In the case of Japan, this was the role that the concept of "national polity" (*kokutai*) played, as a form of fascist nominalism, or *kotodama shugi*, premised on a Shinto belief in the magical powers that reside in words themselves.[67] Through the use of such fetishes, authorities arbitrarily grounded the "linguistic systems" of their cultures in the hope of papering over the fundamental crisis of meaning occurring at the time.

Such an analysis in many ways harks back to the pragmatist philosopher Tsurumi Shunsuke's early postwar analysis of the systematic distortion of communication in wartime, and call for the philosopher to serve as "policeman" of semiotic consciousness, interrogating and clarifying the meaning of everyday phrases to prevent them from being manipulated by the authorities.[68] Separating their analyses, however, was Tsurumi's faith in the ability of philosophers to serve as guardians of meaning—a faith that gradually collapsed through the 1950s as Tsurumi and the Science of Thought (*Shisō no kagaku*) intellectual group with which he was associated would increasingly seek to challenge the binary between "intellectual" and "mass" culture. For Tsumura, however, who was writing under the influence of poststructuralist thought, it was less the regulation of signification—a relic of the classical model of the intellectual in the early postwar period—than the potential for blocking or destabilizing such a process that became one of the focal points of his analysis.

The early 1970s represented, for Tsumura, another period of fiscal and cultural inflation—particularly the end of economic high growth following the 1971 Nixon shock (the dual impact of the suspension of dollar–gold convertibility and restoration of diplomatic relations between the US and China) and the 1973 oil shock. In a 1971 essay he argued that the crisis of meaning in the 1970s, revealed by the breakdown of the economic growth machine, was coopted by the Japanese government and corporations in inverse fashion to the interwar period; that is, by flooding the discursive space with leftist language to capture revolutionary energy in purely apolitical, stylistic terms. He writes,

> The essence of today's suppression of journalism, and manipulation of public debate [*genron*], doesn't rely on direct force. Instead, the problem is the overflowing of leftist rhetoric. The public commodification of leftwing writing and the syntactic consolidation of leftwing discourse is proceeding apace. In short, the "revolution in laundry detergent" is, in terms of commodity = language, equivalent to "The Five conditions for soldiers of worldwide revolution." At this point, why would the word "revolution" have to be redacted? All writing is from the beginning struck through by the censor.[69]

[67]Ibid., 71.

[68]Bronson, *One Hundred Million Philosophers*, 66–7.

[69]Tsumura, *Kakumei e no kenri*, 246.

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For Tsumura, cultural inflation—an escalating glut of meaning in language and, thus, society—rather than being funneled into a fetishistic center, as it had been in the interwar period, was actively fostered and made diffuse through the machinations of advertising firms. Combating such a condition led Tsumura to treat culture as a semiotic field. The critic Suga Hidemi, in his analysis of Tsumura's writing in the 1970s, describes his Maoist sympathies as predisposing him to understand the realm of culture—or, in Gramscian terms, the "War of Position"—as a potential source of resistance. Consequently, the left needed to develop a revolutionary style with which to directly engage this realm.[70] It was here that Derrida and Barthes's critiques of linguistic closure would be particularly useful to the young critic.

Tsumura likely first encountered Derrida through the influential art critic Miyakawa Atsushi's analysis of deconstruction, modified through Miyakawa's notion of semiotic appropriation or "quoting."[71] Adopting Derrida's position towards logocentrism, as outlined in the 1967 *On Grammatology*, Tsumura identified the tendency in Western metaphysics to privilege *logos* or voice as pure presence over the semantic instability of *écriture*. It is not my intent, here, to assess the accuracy of his interpretation of Derrida, so much as to pay attention to how Tsumura selectively appropriates his theories to further his own project. In his analysis of Derrida's deconstruction, he describes the role of arch-*écriture* and "trace" in haunting the supposed immediacy of *parole*—and yet he displays unease towards Derrida's reducing of signification to an endless play of difference and deferred meaning:

> Derrida reaches difference instead of existence (remember Ferdinand Saussure's theory of "Meaning as a function of difference!"). But, in the end, he doesn't raise the question whether the meaning of humans being reduced to difference is desirable. He doesn't say like Rosseau, "I have a violent aversion for the estates which dominate others" (from Fourth Letter to Malesherbes). Derrida abandons value.[72]

Tsumura, hence, was less interested in Derrida's critique of metaphysics and the subordination of the written word to *logos*, which he saw as risking the elision of ethics, than in the application of the instability of signification as a strategy of resistance inside the cultural inflation of the 1970s. As a concrete example of such resistance, he describes, in the above-referenced "Thought in an Age of Reproductive Technology," the resistance to the Soviet invasion of Prague in 1968, and the activists who flipped the directions of road signs, or removed them entirely, in a kind of parodic guerilla warfare: "For foreign soldiers unfamiliar with the terrain, Prague became an endless maze. Through this discordance between signifier and signified, a completely different Prague—Prague as a strange, involute labyrinth—was reproduced.[73] Just as Tsumura saw the ethnographer in the "field" as replicating themself

[70]Suga, *Kakumei teki na, amarini kakumei teki na*, 383–91.

[71]Ibid., p. 385. Significantly, Miyakawa was invited by then student Kobayashi Yasuo, a friend of Tsumura's, to give a series of lectures on French thought at Tokyo University in 1971. Miyakawa, as such, proved an important portent of the subsequent 1980s turn to French theory.

[72]Tsumura, *Kakumei e no kenri*, 162.

[73]Tsumura, "Fukusei gijutsu jidai no shisō," 128.

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through the very process of self-disintegration, the entire cultural scape became a potential source for creative appropriation—for disruption of semantic closure. He saw such a process also at work writ large in the interwar situation, in which Great Powers all over the world endlessly quoted and appropriated each other's "styles": Goebbels and the Nazis "quoted" the Soviets' revolutionary energy, FDR and the American New Deal technocrats "quoted" Mussolini's planned economy, and so on. The Zenkyōtō, in Tsumura's estimation, had been the first movement in Japanese history to consciously incorporate such a notion of semiotic appropriation into its logic, and allowed for the city and landscape itself to take on new subversive meanings. He writes,

> The stage of Zenkyōtō's expression was not books, but the city. One had to declare and express as a realistic action. So, instead of being imprisoned inside expression, one sought out expressions that one could entrust one's desire for rebellion [*zōhan*] to in their very alterity and dissimilarity to one's own language system, even if these expressions were only clichés … In other words, the uniqueness of Zenkyōtō was in the renunciation of self being connected to the strong desire for self-expression: at this point of connection there was originality inside the "quotation book" [*inyōshū*] …[74]

As such, Tsumura framed the non-sect student groups of the late 1960s as a deconstruction of identity through semiotic appropriation and quotation of words and concepts, whether Sartre's notion of engagement or Mao's phrase "It is right to rebel." The subject was revealed to be merely an assemblage of styles and quotations—much like the post-structuralists' critique of the modern author and the "hermeneutics" of the subject. There is a parallel here to Hamano Yasuhiro's abovementioned notion of the "fluid self" and its ability to endlessly refashion itself through discourses of fashion, and yet we should remember that the significance of this remaking was for Tsumura an essentially agonistic act of politics. As such, struggle could be seen as a semiotic affair, and one shot through with play and irony—the kind that would later become the symbol of the contemporary thought boom in Japan during the 1980s. Tsumura was by no means, however, naive in his understanding of the power of semiotic analysis to effect social change on its own. Pre-dating critiques of the complicity of contemporary thought with the machinations of the advertising industry, Tsumura wrote the following on the incorporation of Barthes's own semiotic analysis in such seminal texts as *Mythologies* and *The Fashion System* in the early 1970s: "In a situation where we see no revolutionary subject visible to strategically translate Barthes's attempt at a general semiotics into the practice of a mass struggle [*taishū tōsō*], even his work is being deformed and enclosed by the bourgeois."[75] He documented the interests of the advertising agencies in semiotics throughout the 1970s and maintained an

[74]Tsumura, *Ōgi ōkō ron*, 224–5.
[75]Tsumura, *Kakumei e no kenri*, 252.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244322000269 Published online by Cambridge University Press

insistence on the need for collective resistance, which at the time took the form of a search for a Japanese Maoism.[76]

On this note, we come finally to Tsumura's idiosyncratic reading of the iconic folklorist Yanagita Kunio as a potential inspiration for such a Japanese Maoism, which I will argue is central for assessing his engagement with Roland Barthes at the time—in particular his influential notion of the "zero degree" of writing, as well as the "open text." Yanagita, often considered the godfather of Japanese conservatism, is best known for his formulation of the "everyday people" (hereafter *jōmin*), which he developed through detailed ethnographic observation of the countryside in the first decades of the twentieth century. The *jōmin* became, for Yanagita, a repository of a "pure" or unblemished Japanese culture, and one that could serve as a base for the nativist reform of a society, and especially devastated hinterlands, degraded by capitalist modernity. As such, his vision of folklore studies (*minzokugaku*) became a rallying point for intellectuals abandoning their Marxist sympathies in the 1930s—critiques of the bourgeoisie and class warfare could be substituted for the battle for the fate of the *jōmin* and retain a pseudo-populist flair as a result. Significantly, the 1960s saw a resurgence of interest in Yanagita's writings, as writers such as the aforementioned Yoshimoto Takaaki as well as the poet and activist Tanigawa Gan returned to the perennial theme of the rift between intellectuals and the masses following the defeat of the left in the 1960 US–Japan Security Treaty demonstrations.[77] Yoshimoto's formulation of *taishū no genzō* ("the original image of the masses") portrayed the masses as embedded apathetically inside everyday life, and called for intellectuals in turn to incorporate this "image" inside themselves, rather than treat it as a subject to proselytize.[78] Tsumura's understanding of Yanagita would appear to echo Yoshimoto's celebration of the autonomy of the masses. I will argue below, however, that it differs on two important counts. First, Tsumura's invocation of the *jōmin* took place amid his concern for addressing racial heterogeneity and discrimination in 1970s Japan, and so emphasized its fundamental otherness to the activist, and second, Tsumura's attempt to reclaim Yanagita entailed a post-structuralist reading of the writer that attempted to disrupt his status as an icon of modern Japanese literature.

Tsumura's argument involves a detailed analysis of Yanagita's method of ethnography in the countryside as a form of semiotic analysis similar to the one Tsumura was exploring at the time in his study of cities.[79] He writes,

> Marxist thought in Japan was established as one variety of Japanese modernism. It was a half-sibling of "I-novels" and Nishida [Kitarō]'s philosophy. To

[76]In his search for new sources of "revolution" following the collapse of the working movement through the 1960s, Tsumura was not immune to the tendency to essentialize and instrumentalize feminist and minority movements. As Tomiko Yoda has documented, in the late 1970s he rather condescendingly lamented the inability of the New Left to harness women's desire for self-transformation in the late 1960s. Yoda, "Girlscape," 191–2.

[77]See Koschmann, "Intellectuals and Politics," at 409–12, for an overview of the "left-wing nationalism" of Yoshimoto and Tanigawa.

[78]Yoshimoto, *Jiritsu no shisō-teki kyoten*, 106.

[79]For a discussion of Tsumura's interest in the medial dimensions of cities see Miryam Sas, "The Culture Industries and Media Theory in Japan" in Steinberg and Zahlten, *Media Theory in Japan*, 151–72.

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> fill the massive gaps [left by these disciplines], a school was founded on the excessive self-consciousness of the Japanese people's uniqueness—folklore studies [*minzokugaku*], with its roots in the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. Yanagita Kunio hated the violent [*sobō*] modern disciplines. Even more than Roland Barthes pursuing the zero degree of *écriture*, he aggressively rejected all descriptive materials [*kijutsu shiryō*] … This school, which continually refused systemization, was a semiotics of the everyday—a discipline of structural–semantic reduction.[80]

Here, Tsumura references Barthes's 1953 book, and particularly his description of a writing stripped of all bourgeois stylistic concerns: "a colourless writing, free from all bondage to a pre-ordained state of language."[81] Such writing, as Barthes notes, would be similar to a journalistic tone—"almost an ideal absence of style."[82] What I emphasize in analyzing Tsumura's employment of Barthes is that Tsumura creatively inflects the "zero degree" (*reido*) and links it to the notion of the *jōmin* of Yanagita's project: "The Yanagita school's 'zero degree' is the need to serve—not to enlighten or manipulate—the *jōmin*."[83] Inside this claim is the implicit understanding that the *jōmin* is, as a collective to be served, a symbol of heterogeneity—an outside to one's own subjectivity. Here Tsumura's interpretation flies in the face of the common understanding of the *jōmin*, often considered a kind of idealized representation of Japanese collectivity that exists outside history, and one as such abstracted from the crisis of uneven development and class conflict. Historian Harry Harootunian, on this note, argues that Yanagita was able, in the process of joining this collectivity, to "erase the difference between himself and those whom he studied"—a stylistic move that would seem rather antagonistic to Tsumura's above-mentioned experiments in disruption and anti-identification.[84] Tsumura, however, positions the *jōmin*, in the parlance of Lévi-Strauss, as—far from an ideal of ethnic homogeneity—an "actual presence" or "other" (*tasha*).[85] Saving Yanagita's project from devolving into nativism, and hence eroding heterogeneity, thus became the central task of Tsumura's vision of Maoism. He writes, rather bombastically,

> We who desire to do battle with pervasive customs, to know the conditions for the self and its destruction, to reveal the "history" of the arch-*écriture* carved in the everyday [*ke*] life of the people, have rediscovered the Yanagita school [*Yanagita-gaku*] as a weapon. As such, the "critique of Japanese folklore studies" appears to us as our task. If the modern quality of Marxist thought in Japan was a necessary condition for the emergence of Japanese folklore studies, for us today, the complete destruction of modern Marxism must be synonymous with the overcoming of Japanese folklore studies.[86]

[80]Tsumura, *Kakumei e no kenri*, 88.
[81]Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero* (New York, 1970), 76.
[82]Ibid., 77.
[83]Tsumura, *Kakumei e no* kenri, 90.
[84]Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, 2000), 185.
[85]Tsumura, *Kakumei e no* kenri, 94.
[86]Ibid., 90.

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Overcoming folklore studies, in this sense, meant to read Yanagita's texts against his own nativist tendencies, and here was where Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author" and the notion of the open text comes to the forefront.

In developing his argument, Tsumura brings the reader's attention to the question of Yanagita's method in relation to the "field": "As *écriture*, his writings are never completed. As completed texts, they appear to the reader as merely romantic, dilettantish observations … The real site of his struggle is the field."[87] For Tsumura, Yanagita, as a perennial outsider—a representative of the Japanese agricultural bureaucracy—in his fieldwork, was never able to identify with the various "hometowns" (*furusato*) he visited, unlike so many romantic poets and philosophers who sought refuge (i.e. identification) in the rustic. In the same way, the reader does not encounter a closed, modern authorial presence in the figure of Yanagita; rather, they find the archetype of a "text that refuses closure," or, a scattered listing of anecdotes, lists, reports, and so on that resists the coherence of modern narrative.[88] Such a reading clearly echoes Barthes's own critique of author worship in modernity: "The *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it as if it were always in the end … the voice of a single person, the *author* confiding in us."[89] Tsumura sees in Yanagita's project of scattered reportage from the "field" a potential model of semiotic resistance in 1970s Japan premised on blocking the process of self-identification, but one which must be rescued from itself (i.e. from devolving into nativism) through the ingenuity of the reader in the present day.

Fostering criticality—down to an awareness of the imbrication of the nation-state in one's everyday language—proved to be the principle organizing force of Tsumura's project throughout the 1970s. Here, the writing of the structuralists and post-structuralists helped him to theorize the disruption of a veritable matryoshka doll set of closure-producing ideologies—from that of the individual modern subject all the way to the national subjectivity grounded in the production of the artificial "standardized Japanese" (*hyōjungo*) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In a text from the early 1970s, we are reminded of the synonymity of the open text with resistance for Tsumura: "All the descriptive Japanese words used from here on are bracketed (*kakko ga tsuiteiru*). I just don't write them [the brackets] due to page limitations … It is the reader's (including me, who has finished writing this) job to remove these brackets."[90] Arguably, his fervent belief in the agency of the reader over that of the writer, on display here, reflected his early affiliation with the (ideally) nonhierarchical *zenkyōtō* movement. In this way, post-structuralism's critique of the author served to assist Tsumura in developing his own conception of the theoretical and practical innovations of the late New Left in Japan. More broadly speaking, Tsumura's engagement with post-structuralist theories of semiotics should also be understood in relation to the collapse of the classical Marxist and modernist traditions—and the very academic publishing structure—that had supported intellectuality in Japan. Faced with the need to

[87]Ibid., 94.
[88]Ibid., 112.
[89]Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (London, 1977), 143, original emphasis.
[90]Tsumura, *Kakumei e no kenri*, 13.

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develop strategies to differentiate himself in a radically compressed discursive field, Tsumura strategically introduced and incorporated—with little regard to academic fidelity—the various thinkers that would later be grouped together under the umbrella of contemporary thought. As status symbols, his use of post-structuralist writers created perhaps a similar dynamic to the "magically produced 'difficulty'" that Marilyn Ivy saw at work in the 1980s (see above), though long before there was the necessary commercial publishing infrastructure in place to fully capitalize on such a strategy.

Conclusion

Tsumura's commitment to reconciling semiotics and Maoism with life under capitalism waned in the 1980s as the critic became more committed to another practice he had become interested in while visiting China with his father in the 1960s: qigong. Reading his influential contributions to the subcultural mook series *Bessatsu Takarajima*, one is struck by the transformation of his interests, which, although latent in the early 1970s, become predominant from the late 1970s onwards. The locus of the battle with disciplinary society, which Tsumura had primarily explored through concepts of semantic instability and mass uprising, moves to the body itself, and the "armor" (*yoroi*) imposed upon it through socialization. "Removing" this armor became an emphasis in Tsumura's writing in the early 1980s, and this theme merged with increasingly spiritualist overtones under the influence of the American New Age writer Marilyn Ferguson, whose *The Aquarian Conspiracy* was translated into Japanese in 1981 and greatly influenced Tsumura—he eventually reached deep ecology by the 1990s.[91]

In fact, many Japanese readers will most likely remember Tsumura as an innovative writer of DIY cookbooks and exercise manuals rather than for his brief dive into the heady world of post-structuralism, which leads us to the question of how we might evaluate his generally forgotten fusion of high theory and popular writing in the early 1970s—and its relation to contemporary thought in the 1980s. Rather than trace lines of direct intellectual influence as if Tsumura's texts were published in a more formal and legible academic highbrow circuit, I propose that we understand Tsumura's position as simultaneously foreshadowing and paving the way for this later genre, and an increasingly extra-academic intellectual publishing sphere. His writing synthesized the need to mobilize theory, rooted in a form of bricolage, to form new holistic visions of critique and praxis, and the need to democratize theory, freeing it from its predominately specialist origins in the academy. Such a rejection of specialization was rooted in a specific historical and political juncture in Japan defined by the New Left's critique of the academy, and an attendant antielitist ethos that has gone on to have a rather strange afterlife. Recent research by sociologists Kurahashi Kōhei and Itō Masaaki traces how rightwing ideologues—particularly historical revisionists in the turbulent 1990s

[91]For an account of Tsumura's embrace of New Age culture, see Suga Hidemi, *Hangenpatsu no shisōshi: Reisen kara fukushima e* (Tokyo, 2012), 131–8; and Maekawa Michiko, "'Nyū eiji' ruiji undō no shutsugen o meggute: 1960–1970 nendai seinen no igi mōshidate undō to no kannren de," *Shūkyō to shakai* 6/4 (1998), 79–105.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244322000269 Published online by Cambridge University Press

who deny the reality of World War II atrocities committed by Japan—mobilized support for their positions by appealing to the increasingly stale binary of upstart "amateurs" and elite "specialists," effectively challenging the dominant historical consensus held in the academy, and attempting to overturn it through developing an alternative print media (and later Internet) ecosystem.[92] Kurahashi focuses on the revisionists' sophisticated media strategies and ability to channel resentment at convenient targets—the "left-wing" (*sayoku*) newspaper *Asahi Shimbun*, "masochistic" (*jigyaku-teki*) history textbooks, or the bureaucracy—while Itō meticulously reconstructs a genealogy of antiauthoritarian logic in right-wing subcultures with distant intellectual origins in the rugged individualism of none other than Yoshimoto Takaaki, hence linking such reaction to an ethos of transgression present in late 1960s politics and counterculture.[93]

Tsumura Takashi's early foray into structuralism and post-structuralism, however, continues to provide a vision of an alternative to such intellectual regression. It hints at the thoroughly contemporary need for a careful balancing act between utilizing theory to critically grasp the cultural and political situation at any given moment, and the paradoxical requirement to ground this use of theory outside the academy or other spaces of traditional intellectual legitimation, at the constant risk of the backlash of "aesthetic populism." The question remains the same as when Tsumura began to frame his critiques in the early 1970s: how can one disrupt reductive, reactionary tendencies towards the celebration of the simple and immediate without relying on appeals to one's own intellectual training and pedigree? Even if the actual content of his writing has aged with the exhaustion of semiotic models, Tsumura remains an important figure to consider for those writing in a present without transcendence.

Acknowledgements. I would like to thank *Modern Intellectual History* editor Tracie M. Matysik and the three anonymous reviewers for their generous suggestions and support while rewriting this article. It is much stronger as a result. I also benefited from the careful edits and feedback of Tomiko Yoda, Alexander Zahlten, Patrick Chimenti, James Dorsey, and Joshua Linkous.

[92]See Kurahashi Kōhei, *Rekishishugi to sabukaruchā: 90-nendai hoshu gensetsu no media bunka* (Tokyo, 2018); Itō Masaaki, *Netto uha no rekishi shakaigaku: Andāguraundo heisei-shi 1990–2000-nendai* (Tokyo, 2019). Significantly, several of the leaders of the ultranationalist group Nihon Kaigi, particularly secretary general Kabashima Yūzō, have roots in a right-wing, "anti-systemic," late 1960s student movement at Nagasaki University, with close ties to the new religion Seichō no Ie. These students sought to repudiate what they saw as the complacency and subordination of the right in the postwar to the corrupt politics of the ruling LDP party. Yasuda Kōichi, *"Uyoku" no sengoshi* (Tokyo, 2018), 157–200.

[93]For a discussion of the inverted relationship between anti-technocratic, civilian movements in the 1960s and 1990s neoliberal populism in Japan see Noguchi Masahiro, *Sontaku to kanryō no seiji* (Tokyo, 2018), 167–92.

Cite this article: Woolsey J (2023). After the New Left: On Tsumura Takashi's Early Writings and Proto-"Contemporary Thought" in Japan. *Modern Intellectual History* **20**, 536–558. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244322000269

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