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## *Reviews of Books*

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H. Douglas Brown, *Strategies for Success: A Practical Guide to Learning English*. N.Y.: Pearson Education, 2002. 73pp. ISBN 0-13-041392-5. US\$12.25 (pbk).

Introducing communicative language learning approaches to Japanese university students can be quite challenging. After years of receptive learning, focusing on grammar-translation and test taking, students often have hard time understanding the practice of “active participation” in language learning activities. The concept of “autonomous learning” is almost non-existent, and university seminar classes often end up assuming the task of fostering this concept. With this situation in mind, *Strategies for Success: A Practical Guide to Learning English* by H. Douglas Brown is a useful resource book for seminar discussions and activities for beginning-level Japanese university students.

This book is designed as a textbook for more advanced learners (e.g. Intermediate level in an ESL environment) as its intended audience. It utilizes “strategy-based instruction” and stresses the importance of students’ knowledge about themselves as English language learners. The 12 chapters cover students’ learning styles, answering such questions as “What kind of learner are you?” and “What’s your language-learning IQ?”, and addressing such topics such as motivation, the influence of L1, test-taking strategies, anxiety, individual and group strategies, and left and right brain functions.

Each chapter provides some reading passages about the chapter content (approximately “30 minutes of reading” according to the author), followed by self-check questions, individual/pair/group activities, and journal writing exercises. The book, incorporates activities and exercises using the four skills (vocabulary and reading, listening and speaking, and journal writing) as rightfully claimed by the author.

I have used some of the chapter contents as supplementary materials for my first-year seminar class, which covered “study skills” as part of the curriculum content. Because the reading passages, contents, and activities in this textbook were slightly above the level of first-year students, I simplified the chapter contents and incorporated them into “study skill” handouts. I did not use journal writing assignments because we had the required first-year seminar report assignment, but journal writing could easily be incorporated in class activities or homework if there is a need for more writing assignments. Furthermore, suggested discussion questions provide specific guidelines to conduct pair and group work.

Among all the activities and explanation provided in this book, I found self-checking questions particularly interesting and helpful. The questionnaires include a scoring system, and they allow the students to self-score and self-analyze themselves as learners. For example, in Chapter 2 (*Discovering your learning styles*), the questionnaire lists some questions asking if a student is “fast or slow” in doing some tasks. As the students complete the questionnaire, they can score the questionnaire themselves. The textbook, then, explains two possible types of learners, *a reflective learner and an impulsive learner*. It also discusses advantages and disadvantages of each learning style. Using some of these self-checking questions in seminar discussions can encourage students to consider and identify their own learning styles in a more tangible way.

Of course, whether some particular contents are suitable or not is another issue: not all chapter contents are appropriate or necessary. For example, I did not find Chapter 3 (*Left brain and right brain*) particularly important for my seminar students. This concept, however interesting it may be to some people, is rather abstract in terms of application in language teaching and learning. Furthermore, some of the terminologies as well as the validity of scoring could be problematic both theoretically and pedagogically (e.g. *reflecting learner/impulsive learner, left brain and right brain, language-learning IQ*). I thus suggest that seminar teachers selectively use this book as a reference material because it could add a wider variety of topics and activities to the seminar content.

I do not claim that knowing about one's learning styles is the most important thing in communicative language instruction, yet it certainly is useful to bring to the students' attention some of the concepts suggested by this book. In our attempt to raise our students' awareness toward more independent learning, this type of systematic approach can give seminar teachers an option of guiding students to seriously consider their own language learning styles by using specific contents, vocabulary, and guidelines.

This book works well as the "textbook" for more advanced-level learners as originally intended by the author. For our beginning-level seminar students, it is not "the best required textbook" due to its advanced content and language. However, because not many ESL study skills textbooks are written in English for academic purposes, this book certainly serves as an "excellent reference material" for teachers in designing some initial lessons for seminar students. This is particularly true if the instructors are expected to foster the students' independent learning as we are in our first-year seminars. To quote Brown, "...the most successful learners of languages are those who understand their own abilities and capacities well and who autonomously engage in systematic efforts within and beyond the classroom to reach self-determined goals of acquisition". Incorporation of these contents and practices into our seminar classes will hopefully help our student to become more successful and independent language learners.

Yuri Kusuyama

David Crystal, *Words, Words, Words*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. 216pp. ISBN 0-19-861444-6. US\$ 25.00 (hdb).

*Words, Words, Words* is one of more than 100 books written by David Crystal, Professor of Linguistics at the University of Wales and one of the foremost writers and lecturers on the English language. This publication is neither a scientific monograph nor a textbook. It is a book about lexicology written for the general public rather than for linguists.

The author introduces his writing as one of his own linguistic stories. Drawing on his lifetime's experience as a researcher, writer, lecturer, and reader, Crystal shares his personal passion for and interest in English words with any curious reader. In the Preface of the book he states:

People love to share their interests with each other, and I am no exception. I read as many books as I can on the language, and write them as often as I can.

...*Words, Words, Words* is part of my story, a cross-section of my lexical autobiography.

And this is exactly what the book is – one of many stories of what is "out there" in the world of English words. This story may be interesting as a first reading about the world of lexicology, but it might not be equally informative for a linguist or a student of linguistics, or someone who is already familiar with

the most interesting parts of the “story” after having read *Language Play* (1998) or *Words on Words* (2000), co-authored with Hilary Crystal, for example. The writer, however, admits that *Words, Words, Words* is just the first introduction to the world of words, and expects his readers to look for more detailed sources for all the quotations and for more information on the topics after they read the book. Thus, it may be viewed as a selection of popular lecture notes on lexicology with some interesting examples and illustrations. Nevertheless, most of the public may find it an entertaining introduction to the word science. They may learn some of the basic linguistic terms and may get interested enough to explore the field further. Michael Quinion, a *World Wide Words* reviewer of the book, wittily describes it as “Lexicology for Dummies” – “an authoritative yet painless introduction to the field”.

In the first five parts of the book the author gives the readers brief information about the universe, origins, diversity, evolution, and enjoyment of words. Moreover, he invites the readers to become involved with the study and creation of words. He sets questions, and offers answers, or just leaves the readers puzzled enough to explore the topic later in some other sources. He mainly arouses curiosity to what is “out there” in the life of words. In the sixth part, he gives recommendations on how to continue the exploration of the world of words.

The first part, *the universe of words*, attracts the readers’ attention to the role and power of words in people’s life and introduces *lexicology* as the study of words. The author then debates the number of English words, reports on the ways children and adults learn vocabulary, explores how the dictionaries are compiled, and how the word definitions are created.

The second part, *the origins of words*, traces the history of some English words, introduces several theories of the language origins, examines the sources of words in English, reviews some strategies of “word-building”, and considers the use of proper names as “origins of English words”.

The third part, *the diversity of words*, examines the nature and the causes for national and international variations in the words’ spelling, pronunciation, and grammatical forms. Some of the questions the author raises in this part are challenging enough for any professional linguist. Most of the answers, however, are adapted for the general public. For example, the writer’s explanation of the difference in meaning between the verb forms (*learned* and *learnt*, *burned* and *burnt*) used in American and British English does not seem to be very accurate. The author then touches on the wide range of regional dialects in the UK and around the world. However, he does not make distinctions between the national variants and the regional dialects of English, treating British and American English as regional dialects. He argues then that English is becoming a global language, and discusses the advantages and disadvantages of its rise to that status. The author also briefly describes the nature and functions of professional jargon, slang, and “evasive” language.

The fourth part, *the evolution of words*, invites the readers to the field of etymology and shows how individual words are created, how they evolve in form and meaning, how they become archaic, obsolete, and how they die. In this part the author introduces the terms *semantic change* (as the change in meaning) and *etymology* (the study of the history of words). He argues that there are no true synonyms, that every word has its unique history, and as a result “no two words have identical meanings and ranges of usage”. The writer also shares his thoughts about the future of words, and disagrees with the idea that the English language is deteriorating with the advance of new text messaging technologies – such as the mobile phone, for example. He claims that changes can neither improve nor deteriorate languages. They are just a part of a natural process.

The fifth part, *the enjoyment of words*, explores the words and wordplay as the source on delight and entertainment. The author agrees that there could be meanings deep within the sounds of words and offers a list of characteristics that are common for the words perceived as beautiful. He also introduces a new linguistic field called *phonaesthetics* as the study of the aesthetic properties of a language’s sounds. The writer then explores the nature and the work of pun as the source of humor and pain. He further guides the

readers through the world of wordplay: scrabbles, crosswords, and *lipograms* – texts constructed without using a particular letter; and concludes the part with the observations about the use of words in literary prose texts and poetry. He argues that literature can “revitalize” any word of the language and refresh its use.

The final part, *becoming a word detective*, includes a number of books, dictionaries, journals, professional societies, courses and websites that can assist in further studies of the universe of words. The author also gives some guidelines on how to find out the history of a word and the meaning of a name, how to be involved with dictionaries and how to estimate the size of your vocabulary, how to keep a record of your child’s words and how to find out more about words.

David Crystal concludes his book saying: “The story of words cannot be told in one book. But even a small word-book, like this one, can help make words come alive”. And we can admit that it can introduce the readers to the evolving universe of English words. It can surprise them with some mysteries and curiosities from the life of words, especially if it’s the first book they read on the subject.

Tetyana Sayenko

Ann McCulloch, *Dance of the Nomad: A Study of the Selected Notebooks of A.D. Hope*. Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005. 366pp. ISBN 1-74076-168-5. A\$ 45.00 (pbk).

Despite or because of its rarity, the Great Australian Writer is a seriously endangered species with few fighting for its preservation. Since ‘Discourse’ replaced ‘Form’ as the central locus of critical attention, any kind of writing is accepted by some as possessing as much inherent value as Henry Handel Richardson, Patrick White, or A. D. Hope. This view is not entirely without merit—over the centuries perhaps too much has been made of that amorphous noun, greatness—but it is a pity that the baby has been thrown out with the bathwater. There are now several generations of students coming out with degrees in literature who have never read a White novel, nor a poem by A.D. Hope.

Other factors have played their part in ensuring that those who have been described as great are kept out of the classroom. The inclusion in curricula of fresh and worthy material—such as new literatures in English, gender studies, or biography—leaves less time for canonic fare. Furthermore, teachers simply don’t like teaching anything difficult (except veins of convoluted, overwrought postmodern theory), sometimes arguing that there is no such thing as a great writer anyway. I have been present at more than one chardonnay-laced, text-selecting staff meeting when Richardson is dismissed as too long; White too difficult; Judith Wright too Australian; and A. D. Hope not Australian enough.

What a relief, then, in the publication of *Dance of the Nomad*, to see some attention given to an increasingly undervalued Australian poet. Ann McCulloch’s compilation of extracts from A.D. Hope’s varied and voluminous notebooks, until now held for preservation at the Australian National Library, can now be accessed by more than a lucky few. The collection held at the ANL is huge, so it was a difficult task to select and organize a single book from a seemingly chaotic collection of notes, unpublished verse, verse in progress, trivia, meandering thought and sharp criticism.

It was the enigmatic American physicist, Richard Feynmann, who quipped “What I cannot create, I do not understand.” As McCulloch selects from the quantity of material at hand, what she is intent in trying to do is to re-create the subject both for herself—she is one of the few critics in Australia to have been very close to the man himself—and for her readers. With someone as enigmatic and as essentially private as Hope, moving towards an understanding of him as a man and as a poet is going to be the closest we can

get to a definitive description. The enigmatic challenge Hope represents is one of the catalysts which led to the publication of the book. McCulloch admits this freely in an Australian Broadcast Corporation radio interview on eve of the publication of the book. If there were a title for the most influential Hope scholar of the past 30 years, it would go to McCulloch, having spent uncountable hours with him socially, having written widely on him, and having produced a six episode documentary about his life and work. Yet in the ABC radio interview she admits to having avoided the notebooks for a number of years:

There were other things I needed to understand first. I wanted to understand the man. I was seeing him on a weekly basis for a number of years, and I wanted to read the poems and I wanted to understand other kinds of questions.... I knew it was going to be a matter of spending many, many months sitting in the reading room of the national library. But when I did get around to them, I was overwhelmed with how much a person can know and how little I knew.

Other worthwhile ideas come out of the radio interview. McCulloch is convinced that Hope kept the notebooks for posterity. They are not personal journals or diaries. The first thing that the reader recognizes is that they are tonally more professional than personal—in a way just like his poetry! He omitted, for example, personal references to his family, only including something if it served his intellectual ends. The notebooks are, insists the editor, “constructed along philosophic lines” and if they are usually about his poetry or something that could lead to a poem—which is usually the case—this is not to imply they are egocentric waffling. Hope never actually believed his poetry sprang from the excess of emotion within him: instead it is a means through which something external can be discovered and expressed through him:

... the journal would be the self-confessional and he was never interested in that, just in the way he was never interested in doing any autobiographical work. One of the most important things about Alec, of course, is that he doesn't believe his poetry is about himself. He talks about entering as an actor into an idea and testing and idea and that is what he is primarily about in the creating of his art. So his notebooks... one of the reasons why he wrote them... is that he wanted to remember things.

On its own, reading about things he wanted to remember makes this book an unusual adventure, especially for those of us brought up on Hope's kind of poetry which deliberately reveals very little of Hope the man. Hope's enthusiasm for his subject matter in the notebooks, and McCulloch's engagement with it, imbues this work with an infectious energy which makes it hard to put down. In making her selection she clearly revels in the variety, sensuality, arrogance, and grandeur of A. D. Hope's patterns of thought which are usually irrepressible, always varied, often self-contradictory, yet always entertaining. She presents Hope the thinker, metaphoric warts and all.

A note from 1982 opens the collection: an extract which gives authority to the title of McCulloch's book and gives the reader a foretaste of the conversational yet evaluative quality to the tone of voice which pervades most of the volume. Hope is first seen pondering Yeats' “The Most Astonishing Thing” where the persona laments that “Seventy years have I lived/Seventy years man and boy./And never have I danced for joy.”

But I have! All my 75 years I recall breaking into an involuntary, solitary dance—although it happens only at long intervals. Only a few days ago I surprised myself at it....

In my experience, the phrase “dance for joy” is not exact. The dance and the joy are one thing—which is why I call it involuntary. They are outer and inner manifestations of the one state of being.

This kind of energetic musing, which attempts to define or to redefine, declassify or reclassify,

is characteristic of the notebooks as a whole. McCulloch prepares the reader for what is to come by poetically introducing the notebooks as the “most intricate of dances...” which collectively explore “the lands of mind, space, desire and the unknown.” And if that is too abstract she summarizes more prosaically that the content will “provide an intellectual background to his writing as a poet, playwright and critic” as well as showing his fascination for his work, and the work of other poets, “philosophers and thinkers as part of general human activity....” And while the notebooks might color our view of Hope’s world and his place in it, and clarify what is important to him about poetics per se, they do not provide a means through which his art can be interpreted.

*Dance of the Nomad* includes a worthwhile introduction by the editor (preface, overview and the first chapter) in which she works at the “mapping of Hope’s territory” that takes its shape from the rhizomic model proffered by Deleuze and Guattari. In this model there is no “familiar model of knowledge” with its defined structure of root and trunk and spreading branches. Instead there is a decentralized root system of rhizomes with no “central node to which all connections refer, no fixed organizational structure, no hierarchical orderings.” This is not to imply that there is little more than chaos in the selection of material. McCulloch wisely orders material through what she calls “12 points of entry” which appear as chapters, and through which Hope’s multifarious, arborescent mind can be explored. Included are the expected (“Negative Capability”, “Source of His Poetry”, “A Sense of Detachment”, and “What is Art?”) and the unexpected (“The Dream-Team”, “Wine, Women and Insectual Song”, and “Cosmonology”).

Central to every chapter, however, is the view of a man who struggles with his art and who spends a lifetime trying to define what poetry is and what poetry is about. The privilege the reader has as a witness to this makes this book worth reading. Although he never comes up with a definitive description of what good poetry is, he is sure about that which it is not. He was certainly not a slave to critical fashion. He lived in the midst of the New Critics yet rejects their most common assumption that close and closer examination of the text and the text alone will provide an ultimate view of its poetic worth. As an example he shows F. R. Leavis using this method and concluding through it the odd notion that Marvell is a better poet than Milton. Hope argues that “the looser and more open texture of long narrative or reflective poems demands a different sort of scrutiny than that which we subject a short dense lyric.” The closer you look the less able you are to discern the qualities inherent in individual life of a poem:

The New Critics go on to worst excesses. They fragment and apply microscopic tests under which many good poems are bound to break down and in time the canon of acceptable poems becomes absurdly narrow.... Use a microscope or even put your eye close against the painting and you will not see the painting at all. You will see only a meaningless surface of patches and blobs.

As he eschewed the major critical trend of his generation, he also shuns other literary movements and fashions which provided the foci for many an English lecture in the 70s and early 80s. He is, for instance, highly suspicious of Freud and Freudian criticism because, once again, it limits the possibilities for interpretation and imprisons the reader in a narrow view of creativity. Freud’s “mumbo-jumbo” is based on the fact that it sees a “work of art as no more than the underlying symbols to which” it is reduced. I recall with amusement many an undergraduate class in the 70s where certain literature professors saw it as their role to point out every Freudian symbol that littered the text from one end to the other. Hope reminds us that there is a great difference between a work of art and a mental disease.

He is also highly suspicious of poetry which cannot stand outside of the poet’s own feelings or personal involvement. McCulloch reminds us in the ABC interview that Hope believed the absence of detachment perforce limits the universal relevance of any poem, that to “write a poem about your experience directly would not be great poetry.” Hope is terrified of poets who lavish attention on their own



feelings, emotions, and experiences—in other words those who put themselves in the heart of the subject matter. He posits that in Dante's *Vita Nuova* the reader “is made too aware of his exploiting his bonanza of love and grief... his seeking out audiences of sympathetic ladies to recite his sorrows to and share his tears with. A desperate lover with one eye on the publicity value of his despair is not a convincing object.” From this it is easy to see why he is uncomfortable with modernists like Plath, Rich or Auden, yet comfortable with the detached Yeats who, when he uses “I” in the text never means I. He lambastes critics like John Middleton Murry who look for the individual in the poem. This critic argued in his book on the subject, that Keats only makes sense to him in so far as the poetry reveals aspects of the author's personality. Here Hope plays with Nietzsche's observation that poets are immoral since they “live by exploiting their emotions”:

It could have been merely a crack at the Romantic theory that poetry was the overflow of powerful feelings, the feelings of the poet himself. It could have gone deeper, a conviction that to exploit one's private feelings for gain or for the admiration of others was something to be ashamed of, a sort of prostitution. Nietzsche was not much of a poet. True poets know that they take their material where they find it. The source is irrelevant. But of course the basic mistake is to overlook the fact that whether the emotion in the poem is a personal one or not, the emotion of the poem, the emotion created by the poem is another matter entirely: it is not in any sense ‘self-expression’.

For Hope a good poem can't be something that simply comes from the inside out, a way of purging your self. It has to have a lot to do with something out there, something external, something as mysterious as Andromeda or the wolf calmed by the tango. Poetry provides the opportunity to penetrate the impenetrable, to rediscover a kind of truth through not just writing about an object or a situation but through writing about it in a particular way, of realizing the power of balance and form. For Hope, a poem—the art—must have its genesis outside the limitations of the personal.

One day Hope was leafing through his papers to find a decade-old note he had written about two types of artist:

- a. Those who centre the feelings in themselves: the blue of the hills, the music makes me feel sad, etc.
- b. Those who project themselves and their feelings into the objects that arouse them: the melancholy landscape of the hills, the sadness inherent in this music, etc.

What I had overlooked at the time—I think ten or more years ago—was that there is a third type of person who neither attributes his feeling to objects nor endows object with the power of arousing the feelings in himself. This is the man who is inhabited by unattached feelings roving about in search of objects and subjects to justify and complete them. Some of these we call poets.

*Dance of the Nomad* has certain failings. It is unnecessarily large and heavy making comfortable reading difficult, and it has far too much white space. It has not been proofread well—though books coming from struggling presses simply do not have the resources for such. In a book with a myriad references to different people, ideas and turns of events it is unfortunate that there is no index. Yet these are minor issues which are not going to deter the reader from relishing it. It is an essential book for anyone interested in Hope's poetry, or 20<sup>th</sup> century Australian literature, or for someone who wants a unique view of a productive, demanding poet in the very act of thinking. It will appeal to anyone interested in debates about what makes a poem a poem, or how a poem differs from conversation or prose. Is there such a thing as a good poem or a bad poem? What is worthy of a poet's attention? In these days of postmodern

(and now post-postmodern) thought such questions take on a new kind of relevance. Has the notion of greatness survived the death of the author? The onslaught of reams of immediately accessible material? The suspicion of authority? Is Hope's third type alive and well?

George Watt

Boye Lafayette de Mente, *Japan Unmasked: The Character and the Culture of the Japanese*. Singapore: Tuttle Publishing, 2005. 214pp. ISBN 0-8048-3729-5. US\$ 14.95 (pbk).

In the old days of ethnology, one began at the beginning. That is, one consulted the available written records of this or that culture one otherwise knew nothing about, and began to draw far-reaching conclusions that fit the social, culture, and political developments of the day. So J.G. Frazer, whose *Golden Bough* began as a study of the temple rites of Diana of Aricia, but was also influenced by E.B. Taylor's *Primitive Culture*, exemplified Vaihinger's thesis on ideational development, contributed to the late-century British reaction to the literature of social problems, and self-consciously drew its title from a well-known painting by Turner. Planted in Cambridge soil for fifty-some years, Frazer was in many senses a poster child for the academic recluse. He did conduct fieldwork (as is often forgotten), but outside of Italy, the data was characteristically gathered at second hand, the fruit of questionnaires given to and returned by itinerants.

With Malinowsky and Margaret Mead, ethnology severed its umbilical cord to classics and transformed itself into ethnography. The Grand Tour of the 18th century was revived as the field study, now undertaken to non-European locations with self-evaluative reports by the natives themselves. In winning a sense of what the locals "are really like," the documentary interview was received as a methodological advance. Despite the demurrals of Levi-Strauss and others regarding the frequent, often intentional, misrepresentations of native informants and tribal rites staged for outsiders, the ideal of ethnographic immediacy has retained an enduring appeal. Beyond their voyeuristic potential, the various contemporary projects dedicated to letting various groups considered poor, marginalized, or sub-alterned speak for themselves are both conspicuous and occasionally moving. What does the welfare mother, the Libyan, the *mestiza*, the transgendered person, have to tell us today?

In *Japan Unmasked: The Character and Culture of the Japanese*, Boye Lafayette de Mente has attempted to fuse old and new: the disciplinary rubric and the onsite inventory. In this case, however, "disciplinary" is to be read as the plastic genre of cultural commentary that amateur sinologists will likely find a pleasant if not too strenuous read. The book loosely tracks a number of themes familiar to all readers in Japan studies: the dynamics of group harmony, Japanese borrowings from the west, the ritualistic regularity of daily life, bushido-like regimen of business, cult of cute, and the enthusiastic consumption of western fashion. Sourcing by name and work is occasionally in evidence, though Lafayette de Mente for the most part prefers the convention of loose referencing: "a noted Japanese" is said to claim such-and-so, as do "sociologists and others," "the first Westerners to reside in Japan," and so on.

Those looking to engage in scholarly heavy lifting are likely to be disappointed here and in other features of the work. *Japan Unmasked* ends nakedly on page 214, without index or bibliography. Footnotes are kept to an absolute minimum. Thirty-eight chapters, each with a mini-abstract and many with sub-headings, anticipate the distracted or desultory reader. Pronunciation aids for all Japanese phonemes ("i": "[ee]"), assume an unschooled one. Monitory injunctions to right Japan's occasionally listing ship, thereby aligning it with "global standards," strike the left-footed pose of the my-advice-to-you



pundit. If only the problems, much less the solutions, were this easy. “Unmasking” Japan, as the author proposes to do for us, would itself be an achievement, though more critical readers would be justified in asking whether the attempt to do so is necessary or advisable in the first place. Why not simply leave the facades where they are?

For Lafayette de Mente’s commercial readership, however, the propriety of unmasking is unlikely to be an issue. The rhetoric of the *Real Deal* is in perpetual demand, and may well have directed many of these demanders to other titles in his oeuvre, among them *Asian Face Reading* and *Women of the Orient: Intimate Profiles of the World’s Most Feminine Women*. This is the genre of “woodworking in twenty easy steps” applied to the loose canon, if not cannon, of human psychology. It is the talk of the cigar bar by those who have begun to tire of a steady diet of FOX news and the culture columns of the *Wall Street Journal*.

But there is something else to *Unmasking Japan*. Lacking intellectual presumption, the book also lacks academic pretense. The candor in the title to chapter 10, “How the Inept and Mediocre Rise to the Top in Japan,” would never occur in a properly vetted academic study by Robert Bellah, Ishida Takeshi, or Sheldon Garon. Yet it speaks truth to others who, like Lafayette de Mente, have experienced Japan at first hand. The protruding nail gets hammered down. The uniquely Japanese corollary to this is that the nail driven home eventually pops back up in response to the stiffness of the board. Skeptics might unite with popular opinion in concluding that a further dampening of public initiative is in order. Those who succeed here, many would say, certainly do not exceed. After a while, they no longer wish to.

Other chapters invite a similar reading. “How the ‘Black Mark’ System Rules Japan” identifies the way in which social cohesion is generated through the habit of ranking people by demerits. Individuals advance in society and in the workplace, in other words, not so much by moving ahead as by not falling behind. Because thinking outside the box increases the risk of failure, conformity is emphasized. Conformity, in turn, assumes something to conform to, which in the absence of abstract principles of correct behavior confirms the importance of senior leadership cadres.

There is admittedly nothing especially groundbreaking in these observations. But they encourage a conceptual networking more difficult to locate in works that tap deeper wells. A demerit social economy, for example, also helps explain Japan’s irregular and in many respects dysfunctional education system. The author comments on this in two brief chapters, the first discussing the effects of *ijime*, or schoolyard bullying, and the second detailing the militaristic function of Japanese public education from the Meiji Restoration. The bullying problem (Lafayette de Mente provides an undocumented figure of 150,000 cases reported to the Ministry of Education in 1985) is set down to a number of contextual and historical forces of which two command particular attention: the dramatic increase in the number of students from expatriate Japanese families newly returned home in the 1970’s and 1980’s, and what Lafayette de Mente calls “the degeneration of the social environment.” Families in which the father is largely absent because wedded to his company and in which the mother drives the children to draconian preparation for cycles of competitive examinations easily breed a sense of inferiority or rejection in all but the hardiest offspring. Attempting to right the psychological imbalance, in turn, requires outsiders to absorb blame and frustration. The best outsider, moreover, will not be an outsider at all but a *de facto* insider who, by virtue of some distinguishing experience or role, can justify self-negation as destiny.

The risk-aversion built into group conformity influences Japanese education policy on a curricular level, as well. Where learning becomes the worship of tradition, and where tradition is not the mastery of doctrine but an internalization of convention, education favors the formalistic. The point is to imitate, not to best or to alter. Memorization and other forms of self-effacement (including plagiarism) signal an acquiescence to group wisdom. One shows up, goes to cram school, takes the required exams in the required order according to the required method. Although knowledge acquisition in one or more fields

would be an anticipated by-product of this “hidden curriculum,” it cannot be, and is not, the principle aim of publicly funded schooling.

As those familiar with Japanese universities will know, the de-emphasis on knowledge creation is equally true of post-secondary education. At the university level, however, social training loses much of its momentum. The result is an institutional void partially refilled by the existence of clubs, part-time jobs, and study abroad agreements. With the exception of pedigreed programs in technical and professional fields, the tools a university graduate will need in his or her career will not be relayed by university coursework but through extended and highly differentiated corporate training clinics. In this sense, Japanese higher education has been outsourced from the beginning, its institutional viability resting as much upon its job-creating potential as upon any measurable contribution to human capital. As with *juku* masters and supermarket parking lieutenants, university faculty contribute to what understandably strikes the outsider as the puppet theater of deferential consumerism.

Near the end of Lafayette de Mente’s book, wedged between a discussion of *Nihonteki*, or the aesthetic properties of “Japanness”, and the vestiges of Samurai perfectionism in Japanese business practices, is a discussion of the *mizu shobai* or so-called “water trade.” Usually taken to originate in the earlier practice of dual-sex public bathing, the water trade has become the commonly adopted euphemism for the gentlemen’s club, itself a euphemism (if not exclusively so) for sex-for-hire. One thinks also of the uniquely Japanese designation of red-light districts as “soaplands,” perhaps in reference to the color and texture of liquid soap, perhaps as a rhetorical cleansing of what in other cultures and other languages is readily denominated as “dirty.”

Whichever explanation one prefers, Lafayette de Mente connects this soapland community to the drinking culture that has long flourished where companionship is commodified. There are further watery reflections to be emphasized. Beyond the obvious link to the popular onsen, Japan owes both its territorial inwardness and its fascination with all things foreign in some measure to its water barrier. The rising sun surfaces over the Pacific Ocean, where 2,500 nautical miles separate Honshu from California. Wartime propaganda films depicting the *hinomaru* fluttering in watery outline offer an eerie invitation to the living museum of Japanese military engagement in the Pacific. The flag marks the sarcophagus under the sea, just as the Stars and Stripes more ceremoniously adorn the catafalque at state funerals in US.

Perhaps most strikingly, however, every April and May in the rice- growing regions across the island, landscape is transformed into a patchwork of rectangular mirrors. In muted sunlight at new planting, the flooded fields mirror everything that surrounds, just as the mirror suspended from the center of a Shinto shrine returns the image of the votary beholding it. In a metaphysical spin Bishop Berkeley would have been unlikely to sanction, the message seems to be: “I am nothing but what is perceived, and therefore, essentially, I am you.”

Boye Lafayette de Mente does not go this far in his analysis. Indeed, his intended reader would likely doze at the attempt. But the burnished mirror is another, perhaps subtler image for the Japanese mask. For if the mirror is the mask, then an unmasking will neither reveal truth behind illusion nor the real self beyond the public persona. Rather, as with the schoolgirl on the subway with her make-up kit, it will reveal nothing more or less than the face of the observer. I was I, in the words of Housman; my things were wet.

Where does this leave us? Perhaps with Wallace Stevens’s wintry listener, who “nothing himself, beholds/ Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.” Could this be the “secret” to Japan?

J. E. Elliott

Jack Goldsmith and Tim Wu (Eds.), *Who Controls the Internet? Illusions of a Borderless World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 240pp. ISBN-13:978-0-19-515266-1. ISBN-10: 0-19-515266-2. US\$28.00 (hbk)

*Who Controls the Internet?* provides a comprehensive and much needed history of the phenomenon that is the Internet. The book is chiefly concerned with unsettling the myth that the Internet, as “the essential catalyst of contemporary globalization,” has undermined the role of “territorial government” and the territorial nation-state’s role as “the central institution for governing human affairs”. With the passing of the COPE (The Communications Opportunity, Promotion and Enhancement) Act, a major piece of telecommunications reform legislation in the United States House of Congress (the country that is still regarded as owning the Internet) only last month, the impetus on individuals to understand how the Internet is managed and controlled is stronger than ever. While this bill will protect the rights of communities to establish their own broadband Internet services, it will jeopardize what is popularly referred to as net neutrality. Until now users have been able to access whatever web content or services they choose, without any interference from Internet service providers. Consumer groups claim that this Act makes users vulnerable from service providers who may wish to set up a tiered Internet service where internet-speed and site availability may come to depend on customer contributions.

*Who Controls the Internet?* gives many examples of how Internet corporations have had to curb their initial hopes that the Internet would become a vast superhighway of information exchange and commerce free from government censorship and legislation and capable of being managed by the consumer alone. In citing the case of *Knobel vs. Yahoo*, Goldsmith and Wu demonstrate how such aspirations were naïve. In this case the ruling of a French judge prevailed, and websites in America were made to adhere to French law that outlaws the trafficking of Nazi memorabilia in France. However, the authors demonstrate clearly that it is not only government legislation and legal differences that are transforming cyberspace into an environment that must be willing to imitate rather than transcend notions of national and regional jurisdiction. Early Internet entrepreneurs such as Cyril Houri were quick to realize that “people would pay for software that took the boundaries of real space and re-created them on the Internet”. Whereas Houri’s company Infosplit provides consumers with a service that sources information from servers in their region, to suggest that such services only exist due to consumer demand is to gloss over a fundamental element of Internet communications. Goldsmith and Wu quite rightly draw our attention to the fact that the “efficacy of Internet communications depends on the real-space location of both data and the underlying Internet hardware through which the data travel [...]. Neither the data nor the hardware is distributed equally around the globe. This real-space fact about the Internet means that where you are in the world determines the content and quality of your Internet experience”. It would appear that the COPE Act is seeking to make the most of this fact.

Chapter six examines the role of the Chinese government in “changing the Internet’s identity”. By July 2005 China was second only to the United States in number of Internet users. The authors are quite barefaced in arguing that “Chinese nationalism”, contrary to the early ambitions of the founders of the Internet such as Jon Postel and Vint Cerf, is promoting sites with “virulent anti-American or anti-Japanese sentiment” in order “to direct anger away from the Communist government”. They go into quite some detail in explaining how using the Internet is quite a different experience in China than it is in Europe or America. In Shanghai, customers are required to register with their national ID card before logging on and in “[r]egulated cafes” there are cameras pointed at computer screens, and, occasionally, there are “roving police officers” monitoring the surfing. Words such as “Taiwan Independence” and “oral sex” are also censored, or blocked, and the blocking “takes on the appearance of technical error”. However, the most interesting aspect of their report on Internet use in China is that because China is investing so

much money and human resources in Internet service and censorship simultaneously, it is beginning to influence how the rest of the world uses the Internet. In 2004 China put forward its own version of a wireless technology, or Wi-Fi, standard that would force every user of a “wireless network to register with a centralized authentication point”. In refusing to give foreign companies access to its “encryption standard,” it wished to promote local business, and this was regarded as a “ludicrous trade barrier” by the U.S. National Association of Manufacturers. If French law can serve to shut down sites in the U.S. then it is only a matter of time before what are regarded as draconian Chinese Internet policies will begin to affect global Internet use. Indeed, it might be argued that such monitoring of the Internet has been practiced by the U.S. for years as part of its policy of homeland security following 9/11, and that China is only engaging in a less underhand version. Goldsmith’s and Wu’s account of the Internet and China is persuasive and the overriding tone in this chapter spills over into the rest of the book to leave the reader with the impression that regional governments have for some time now been using the Internet not solely as a tool to compete for the advancement of freedom of information but instead as an aid in advancing a more invasive and constrictive form of surveillance.

*Who Controls the Internet?* is a timely and well-researched study of the origins of our most influential and most recent communication phenomenon.

Michael O’Sullivan

MICHAEL VESETH, *Globaloney: Unraveling the Myths of Globalization*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005. 261pp. ISBN 0-7425-3658-0. US\$24.95 (hdb).

STEPHEN D. LEVITT, & STEPHEN J. DUBNER, *Freakonomics : A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*. New York, NY: William Morrow, 2005. 242pp. ISBN 0-06-073132-X. US\$ 27.95 (hdb).

Judging a book by its cover presumably includes its title. To judge the two books reviewed here on these grounds would be misleading no matter how un-seriously one takes them. Their titles are eye-catching, and suggest an apostatic analysis of the phenomena dealt with by the fields whose titles they pervert. The dust cover of *Freakonomics* shows an apple with a slice taken out to reveal an orange within. Yet the book does not reveal that the dismal science, or his practice of it, has a particularly freakish side at all. *Globaloney* might be thought to be a critique of the concept or the phenomenon of globalization, but it is neither. Both books are, rather, serious attempts to see the phenomena they address from another side.

Freakonomics hardly lives up to its sub-title either. It doesn’t cover *everything*, though perhaps the suggestion is that all matters treated by economists may yet reveal a hidden side. If that is the implicit argument, it is not well supported. The phenomena investigated by the author hardly rate as freakish. In its treatment of the hidden side of a number of topics (some that would, and others that may not interest economists), it reveals that more issues can be seen to be the cause or effect of economic considerations, than might be normally assumed. To borrow from Freud, it might more appropriately be called *The Economics of Everyday Life*, as it attempts to reveal the hidden hand that pushes ordinary people to cheat, steal, lie, or otherwise gain an economic advantage. The book is thoroughly post-modern and quite emblematic of a discipline that, in common with the social sciences generally, has eschewed grand theory in favor of the kind of narrow topics found here.

The “fundamental ideas” on which the book is based are that: incentives are the cornerstone of

modern life; conventional wisdom is often wrong; dramatic effects often have distant, even subtle causes; experts use their informational advantage to serve their own agenda; and knowing what and how to measure makes a complicated world less so. It also amplifies well Joseph Stiglitz's claim regarding the informational asymmetries of the marketplace, for which he shared the Nobel prize in economics.

Amongst the many issues Levitt (the principal author) covers are; the drop in violent-crime rates in the USA, cheating by teachers in US high school competency tests and by rikishi in sumo, thought-to-be-advantageous parenting, the danger of guns vs. swimming pools, the economics of drug dealing, and why the Ku Klux Klan are like real estate salespersons. Many of his conclusions are surprising and even counter-intuitive (for example the statistics show that swimming pools kill more children than guns, though the latter would be thought by many to be much more dangerous). Some challenge orthodox, politically inspired and/or conventional wisdom. For example, he attributes the drop in violent-crime rates, which defied all predictions, to the famous Roe vs. Wade decision of the US Supreme court legalizing abortion. Levitt believes that the decrease in the birth rate of children who would be unwanted, unloved and uncared-for explains the dramatic decrease in crime rates that law enforcement agencies and politicians believed were attributable to tougher court procedures and policing. He thinks that the increased expenditure on law enforcement had no consequential benefits.

In the chapter, *What do schoolteachers and sumo wrestlers have in common?* he shows that an analysis of sumo matches on the last of the fifteen-day tournaments, in matches where a rikishi must accumulate a majority of wins or face demotion (with its deleterious economic consequences), the chance of a victory for the wrestler facing demotion is greatly increased if the opponent has already achieved the necessary 8 or more victories. Levitt supports the claim with simple statistics; winners of the bouts in question perform well above the level that form and ranking would otherwise predict. The claim is not really contested and until only recently, cheating in Sumo was in fact fairly commonly acknowledged. The motive being economic, deals were made between "stables", so that none lost in the long run. Teachers cheat by helping students with answers to items in basic skills tests, from which conclusions as to the competency of the teacher and the school system are drawn. In the state of California a bonus of \$25,000 might be paid to teachers whose classes score high on these tests. By looking at patterns of answers it can be seen that a student's performance on a given section of a test allows a fairly reliable prediction to be made about that student's performance overall. When a mediocre student scoring low on the earlier parts of a test (which contain easier items) suddenly has a run of correct answers later in the test and the same pattern appears in others students' answers, one conclusion only can be drawn. Teachers have been caught writing answers on the board, though Levitt suspects that most cheating is done by teachers' altering answer sheets subsequent to the test.

Perhaps the best section of the book is the analysis of the effect of promoting free choice of schools. As part of desegregation initiatives, the Chicago school board allowed parents to freely choose the school to which their children went. It was assumed that students going to better schools would do better academically. Drawing on a massive data set based on the US Dept. of Education's Early Childhood Longitudinal Study and using regression analysis (a statistical technique lucidly explained here) Levitt shows that by controlling for a limited number of variables "...the gap between black and white children is virtually eliminated at the time children enter school". Parental circumstances are much more important.

Levitt questions some cherished assumptions in the chapter *What makes a perfect parent?* His answers will give little joy to those who advocate playing Mozart to the unborn, bed-time reading or mothers staying at home to raise children. Much more important it seems is birth order and the age of the mother at the time of first giving birth. He acknowledges, none-the-less, that the issue of parenting is

enormously complex. Perhaps the best conclusion to be drawn from this chapter is that parental behavior contributes less than its advocates like to claim. Genetics probably better determine whether Benjamin (the most common high-end boy's name) becomes a Wolfgang.

A topic treated tongue-in-cheek perhaps is that of the economic advantage conferred on a person as result of their given name. The question 'What's in a name?' can possibly be answered: 'A significant economic advantage'. Levitt has examined the birth records of millions of children born over a period in California and related them to class and ethnicity, which he presumes affects their life chances. The name that appears first on a person's CV may well influence their chance of employment. Jason might get the job, but DeShawn won't even get an interview.

The term *globaloney* is traced to its use by Clare Luce Booth in her maiden speech to the Congress of the USA in 1943 during which she questioned some claims about the changing face of world affairs in the days of international air travel. Michael Veseth perhaps realized that any book written now with the term globalization in its title might be remaindered from its day of release. In this book he questions many of the claims made about globalization, both by those who see it everywhere and welcome it, and those who acknowledge, but oppose it. Veseth, like Levitt, a well-known and well-published scholar in his field, begins by separating globalization as rhetoric from facts about the way in which business, politics and communications take on more global aspects. He claims, surprisingly perhaps, that there is probably as much evidence for globalization in the 1930s as there is today. The difference seems to be in the rhetoric surrounding it. He identifies much of the rhetoric with motives of spreading fear, hatred and loathing, identifying Jean-Marie le Pen, Ross Perot and Jose Bove as perpetrators with this agenda. Anti-globalizers, in particular William Greider (of *Rolling Stone* magazine), but including those who manned the barricades in Seattle, use the rhetoric as an attack on capitalism. Veseth wishes to claim that the users of globalist rhetoric are basing their arguments on exaggeration and exceptional cases rather examining the real state of things. He attributes this sleight of hand in the rhetoric as having its origins in the writings of Adam Smith.

One of Smith's means of convincing his reader of the benefits of the division of labor is to tell the story of the pin factory where ten men, each with a specialty in the process, can make up to 48,000 pins a day whereas a single person without the machinery might not make more than one a day. Veseth notes that this is just a personal anecdote and is no proof of the benefits of the division of labor, yet Smith bases his whole argument on it, extending it to all cases of industry. The rhetorical technique comprises principle, example, assertion, and logical conclusion. Smith identified this device with what he calls the Newtonian system, the asserting of a principle and using it to connect a chain of observations. It creates a powerful image, which then governs our perception of similar cases.

Thus we see McDonalds everywhere because we are prepared to see it everywhere. This is really an example of the theory-laden basis of perception. We see something because we expect to or are primed to find it. This phenomenon is evident for example, when you buy a car and suddenly recognize so many other people are driving the same model. When we see McDonalds in a small French town it confirms our awareness of the global predominance of the chain. In a chapter, *McWorld*, Veseth points out that Italian restaurants are just as ubiquitous, and that arguments, such as the claim that McDonalds has more customers daily than some countries have citizens, are meaningless or globaloney.

Many other examples are given of the hype and baloney of globalization. Apparently the T-shirt is often used as an example of globalization's exploitation of third world countries. The claim is that it begins



and ends in exploitation of people in developing countries. Veseth cites a study he did of the used clothing trade and notes that most of the profit ends up in developing countries (used clothing is usually gifted by the first wearer, but when it goes abroad, it regains value in the course of several transactions and ends up still more affordable than inefficiently produced local clothing). This is globalization at a grassroots level, where it is “shaped to suit” people’s “lives and needs”. That it is exploitative, is globaloney. McWorld is explored further. Against the claim of those who argue that globalization is producing a McWine, Veseth points out that global standards have in fact increased the awareness of terroir in wine production and the result is that the quality, variety and affordability of wine is increasing.

There are other interesting counter-examples to received ideas, and an interesting chapter on French resistance to globalization (which he sees as based on a nostalgia for their imperial era in which French culture and its products saturated their globe-wide colonies). By comparison with *Freakonomics*, this is a more substantial book with much greater reference to the literature (more than 100 bibliographic citations) and with serious attention given to counter-arguments.

Both books are interesting, easy to read, and challenge readers to examine their own views vis-à-vis the topics covered. Each makes interesting observations on the phenomenology of perception that challenge received views. *Globaloney* is a more serious and balanced monograph, whereas *Freakonomics* reads more like a series of popular magazine articles, not surprisingly since some of the material originally appeared in the New York Times Magazine (the base of the second author, whose role in the book seems more to be that of amenuensis).

Michael Herriman

Colleen Lye, *America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893-1945*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005. 342pp. ISBN 0-691-114419-0. US\$22.95 (pbk)

“If that double-bolted land, Japan, is ever to become hospitable, it is the whale-ship alone to whom the credit will be due, for she is already on the threshold”, Herman Melville's Ishmael argues in a disquisition on the peaceful global influence of whaling in *Moby Dick*. The young Melville cut short his journey across the Pacific when he abandoned ship in the Marquesas, but he remained fascinated by Japan, the impenetrable country close enough to suggest a further American frontier. Melville traveled to Japan only in fiction, setting the *Pequod* on a direct route to the whaling grounds off its coast. As Christopher Benfey argues, Melville “thought that the two nations that faced each other across the Pacific were somehow meant for each other’s embrace.” Melville recognized that the Asian Pacific contributed to the emerging concept of a United States in the nineteenth century. Benfey recognizes the intimacy of this imagined relationship.

In her new book, *America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893-1945*, Colleen Lye pursues the cross-Pacific embrace into the twentieth century to explore what she calls the “intimacy of the Asiatic racial form and the contradictions of US globalism”. She connects American stereotypes of Asians as the “model minority” to earlier fears of the “yellow peril” threatening the U.S. She bases her argument on the assumption that the assimilation of Asians and Asia into the American economy offered a remedy to the closing of the frontier at the end of the nineteenth century. More fundamentally, Lye assumes that literary study enriches historical understanding and that literature can affect politics. Lye

shares this conviction with other recent writers on Asia, America, and Asian American literature, including Malini Johar Schueller who looks for “US Orientalism” in nineteenth-century fiction, Susan Koshy in her influential study of miscegenation, and Bruce Harvey in his earlier analysis of American geography textbooks and images of Polynesia. In a critical study also published in 2005, John R. Eperjisi covers many of the same texts and some of the same theoretical ground as Lye. Focusing on “visions of Asia and the Pacific in American Culture,” Eperjisi argues that U.S. imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth century advances through reimagined spaces. This recognition leads him to an overtly utopian conclusion (much like that of Hardt and Negri in their massive volume *Empire*, one of the sources for Eperjisi’s understanding of space, place, and culture): if politicians can shape spaces to fit their political agendas, then perhaps literature and literary scholars can use the same power of imagination to create alternatives. More explicitly and in some ways more compellingly than Lye, Eperjisi offers his critical writing “as a necessary step toward the imagining of other futures”. Lye’s analysis is more targeted, however, and somewhat less grandiose, although equally dependent upon geographical concepts.

Lye primarily wants to show how “shifts in naturalism’s representations of Asiatic figures” systematically undermined the “critical potential for revealing injustices wrought by globalization in the American context”. She begins with writers such as Jack London and Frank Norris who describe the experiences of the socially marginal in the early twentieth century. According to Lye, the preoccupation with types rather than individuals leads these writers to a racialization of characters. This racialization indicates naturalism’s basic failure to embrace an international America and consequent inability to effectively critique capitalism. Lye draws additional evidence from the historical coincidence of the U.S. labor movement. The movement for recognition of workers’ rights was likely predicated on the strong Asian exclusion movement, she points out. Rather than denying work to Asian immigrants, the U.S. government denied citizenship and thereby guaranteed disempowerment within the labor force. Defining *who* is American by asserting *who is not* proved a powerful unifying force for the white working class and created a means by which to legitimate workers’ rights. In Lye’s reading, the writing of London and Norris suffers from the same racialization. The Asiatic form stands in for the negative consequences of global expansion.

Throughout her analysis, Lye uncovers parallel representations in literature, historical texts, and political rhetoric. John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath* (1939) serves as the paradigmatic and culminating example in this book. Lye points to the fact that when President Roosevelt discussed federal housing projects in one of his famous Fireside Chats, he talked about helping the Joads, Steinbeck’s fictional family. Through fiction, Lye concludes, Steinbeck had “definitively established the reality of the migrant worker’s suffering”. This reality depended in part upon representing the migrant workers as Americans, specifically white Americans. She finds further evidence of this in empirical writing about migratory labor in the 1930s. Like Steinbeck, social scientist Paul Taylor invokes the suffering white American body to legitimate worker demands. In fact, as Lye points out, “Americanness required active assertion and reassertion”. Steinbeck’s writing forms the crux of Lye’s argument for seeing continuity between the two seemingly disparate stereotypes of Asians in America. Whether “yellow peril” or “model minority,” the Asiatic form consistently marks the limit of social solidarity.

Lye deliberately avoids what she considers the limiting essentialism of identity politics and multiculturalism by using the term “form” to talk about race. She links her argument more closely to Susan Koshy’s *Sexual Naturalization: Asian Americans and Miscegenation*. Where Koshy argues for attention to “sexual capital” and women’s increasing sexual autonomy, Lye confines her interest in intimacy to the relationship between the local and the global. She accepts Lukacs’ classic critique of French naturalism as her inspiration and uses Edward Said’s *Orientalism* as the starting point for her broadly historical discussion. However, she rarely makes explicit the equally strong connection to current

empirical and theoretical work in human geography and anthropology. Greater acknowledgment of and reliance upon critical geographers might lead Lye to some stronger conclusions about the textual material. In the central Steinbeck chapter, for example, entitled “A New Deal for Asians,” Lye uses Don Mitchell’s work to begin a discussion of the visibility of rural conditions in the state of California. She then relegates to a brief footnote her reference to what Mitchell calls “a racialized landscape”. Like Mitchell, who is the director of the People’s Geography Project at Syracuse University, Lye wants to make clear connections between race, landscape, labor, social programs, and discourse. She recognizes Asia and Asians as central figures in an ever-emerging U.S. empire and an endlessly constructed American identity. Because she does not fully explicit the critical terminology that Mitchell’s work offers, Lye misses the opportunity to link her imagined communities to an ongoing conversation about the ramifications of constructed space.

In the keynote address for the first meeting of the East Asian Regional Conference in Alternative Geography (EARCAG) in Kyongju, the Republic of Korea, Neil Smith speaks to the urgency felt by critical geographers today:

Most, if not all of our assumptions about the geographical ordering of the world, from the local to the global scale, are now obsolete, and we find ourselves in a period where theory and political organization have to be reinvented together in order to match new circumstances. The most urgent task today, and one that broadly occupies most human geographers, is trying to put the pieces of the global jigsaw puzzle back together, both conceptually and in practice...

The final revised version of this talk is still available on the EARCAG website, along with a link to the allied International Critical Geography Group, a group whose stated aim is to develop “the theory and practice necessary for combating social exploitation and oppression.” Lye’s critical work contributes to this project of understanding the “geographical coherence” or lack of it in a political and economic order. She adds to the geographical formulation of the issue the question of whether and to what extent cultural texts and literary representations might influence political actors as well.

Lye is most concerned with a fifty-year period in American history when “a vision of California as a post-frontier about to be engulfed by coolie hordes and Oriental despotism is succeeded by premonitions of a Pacific Rim utopia, where the local and the global could be made happily coextensive”. Yet, the clarity of this movement from embattled borderland to utopia is obscured at times in a general language of literary theory. What does it mean to say that the “historical archive served by Steinbeck’s fiction will help to illuminate the imaginative extravagances of governmental practice and social scientific thinking”? Can an archive be served by fiction and can the same archive then act to illuminate something vague called extravagances? The sweeping connection Lye makes here between governmental practice and social scientific thinking certainly elides important distinctions within and between them. These occasional lapses into broad claims, however, do not detract substantially from her analysis or her close attention to a range of twentieth century texts. Lye’s book is a thoroughly researched contribution to American cultural studies.

Current events in the Asian Pacific, broadly conceived, suggest to me the continuing relevance of critical work such as Lye’s. I happened to read this argument about early to midtwentieth century representations of Asia in the U.S. at the same that I began to read news stories about two seemingly disparate but geographically intersecting international concerns—Japan’s whaling and North Korea’s nuclear weapons tests. While the U.S. and many other nations reportedly find Japan’s push to open up commercial whaling both perplexing and disturbingly nationalistic, they reunite with Japan to condemn North Korea’s recent launch of seven nuclear missiles. “We want to make it very clear that we are all speaking with one voice on this provocative action by the North Koreans,” Christopher Hill, chief U.S.

negotiator on North Korea announced to reporters after meeting with Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Aso on July 10, 2006. "The North has a choice before it: whether to go for continued isolation or to join the international community," he said.

In 1851, Melville's great white whale, Moby Dick, made its first bid for public attention in the U.S. In 1853, Commodore Perry's fleet arrived off Japan's coast, seeking to conclude a treaty of peace, one consequence of which would be the creation of a source of food and fuel for U.S. whalers also off the coast. The whale oil produced by these far reaching whaling ships in the mid-nineteenth century brought wealth to the somewhat newly independent New England. Like Lye, I present these texts as parallel representations of a still-contested landscape. "In the world turned upside down of the 1930s, the Orient and the American frontier appeared to have switched places", Lye reminds us. I remain intrigued by the recurring U.S. habit of finding itself in the seas of Japan.

Kimberly Engber