

## BOOK REVIEWS

Susan L. Burns, *Before the Nation: Kokugaku and the Imagining of Community in Early Modern Japan*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003. 282 pp. ISBN 10: 0-8223-3172-1 (pbk), \$23.95. ISBN 10: 0-8223-3183-7 (hbk), \$84.95.

*Reviewed by Daniel A. Métraux*

Anthropologist Margaret Mead often commented that the people of any culture experiencing momentous change must have a firm knowledge of their roots and that the loss of this connection to the past can cause problems of self-identity. Contemporary Japan is a fascinating example of a modern culture that is continually striving to define itself through endless studies and debates over what it means to be Japanese. This process, however, is by no means modern, for Japanese scholars as early as the early Edo period have been studying classical Japanese literature and ancient writings with the goal of trying to identify especially Japanese cultural elements or examples of purely Japanese culture. One of the results of this current was the development of a late eighteenth century intellectual movement known as *kokugaku* (the “study of our country” or “national learning”).

Susan L. Burns, associate professor of History at the University of Chicago, has provided a superb analytical study of the *kokugaku* movement before and during the early stages of the Meiji era. Burns’ goal is to analyze how various early modern Japanese scholars began to define Japan as a unique social and cultural identity, the “prehistory of Japanese nationness” (p. 9). She begins her work with a thorough analysis of Motoori Norinaga’s *Kojikiden* [Commentaries on the *Kojiki*], which when completed in 1798, became one of the most important intellectual works of the late Edo period. She then contrasts Norinaga’s ideas with the work of three other contemporary *kokugaku* scholars, Ueda Akinari, Fujitani Mitsue, and Tachibana Moribe, all of whom variously challenged many of Norinaga’s conclusions and greatly expanded the *kokugaku* debate.

Burns regards her work as a “case study” of how “a self-consciously modern nationalism was constructed by deploying existing culturalist notions of community” (p. 225). Even though some scholars date the start of the *kokugaku* movement to the late seventeenth century, Burns chooses to start her analysis with Norinaga because it was his work which

formed the basis of subsequent debate on the idea of Japan. While admitting that her examinations of the work of these *kokugaku* scholars “represent disparate and with the exception of that of Norinaga, discontinuous forms of *kokugaku* that played no great role in the major histories of nationalism,” her study of *kokugaku* from this perspective reveals:

The emergence in the late Tokugawa period of a complex and contentious discourse on the nature of Japan. By interrogating language, textuality, and history, the *kokugaku* scholars made the early Japanese texts the means to articulate new forms of community that contested the social and political order of their time. Against divisions such as status, regional affinities, and existing collectivities such as domains, towns, and villages, they began to make “Japan” the source of individual and cultural identity (p. 220).

Burns’ study of these late Tokugawa writers exposes a gradually expanding debate concerning the nature of Japanese society during what was a tumultuous era marked by profound economic change, growing mobility, increased literacy, and the emergence of a burgeoning publication industry and a national media. One sees through Burns’ analysis of the debate among writers like Norinaga, Akinari, Mitsue, and Moribe how inadequate the early Tokugawa concept of a society where social and geographic mobility would be limited had become. Burns’ analysis of the profound differences between the intellectual ideas of these writers exposes the growing intensity of the intellectual ferment of the period.

In her last chapter, Burns explores how *kokugaku* became the basis for efforts by a variety of Meiji era scholars to develop new modern conceptions of nationness within such disciplines as national literature and intellectual history. She examines the work of such modern scholars as Konakamura Kiyonori, Haga Yaichi, and Muraoka Tsunetsugu who:

Selected, reorganized, and adapted aspects of *kokugaku* practice to sustain new conceptions of national character and national culture, a process that necessarily involved attempts to silence concepts of “Japan” that had the potential to challenge the modern version of the nationness. Moreover, the referencing of early modern *kokugaku* allowed modern scholars to conceal the historical moment that gave rise to the nation and its political exigencies. In

other words, the rise of the Meiji state was portrayed as the result of nationalism, rather than nationalism as the product of the nation-state (p. 224).

*Before the Nation* is a work that will best be appreciated by well-trained Japanologists who have a solid background in classical Japanese literature and language. There are extensive quotes in romanized Japanese without English translations that would only be helpful to experienced scholars of Japanese studies.

Susan L. Burns has prepared a thoroughly researched in-depth analysis of the development of *kokugaku*. She works from a very broad range of original sources and engages in extensive literary analysis of contemporary texts to support her arguments. Her work is like a brilliant searchlight that exposes the reader to both the complexity and as the brilliance of Japanese scholarship in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. She introduces us to long forgotten scholars who played a major role in shaping the modern concept of the Japanese state. *Before the Nation* is one of those rare feats of scholarship that should become mandatory reading for any student of pre-modern and modern Japanese history and politics.

**Yuasa Katsuei, *Kannani* and *Document of Flames*. Mark Driscoll, trans. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005. 208 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0822335177 [ISBN-10: 0822335174] (paper), \$21.95.**

*Reviewed by Leslie Williams*

The history of Japanese-Korean relations is a troubled one; vivid memories, dogged misconceptions, and fiercely-defended emotions thrive on both sides of the contested issues. The complexity of this politicized divide was greatly exacerbated by Japan's thirty-five year occupation of Korea prior to the end of World War II in 1945.

Mark Driscoll's smooth translations of two short novels by Yuasa Katsuei (1910-1982) open the "Pandora's box" of Japanese postcolonial discourse. Both of Yuasa's works are rather detailed, almost ethnographic accounts of life in Korea under the domination of Japan's imperializing military machine. While very much in touch with aspects of life in colonized Korea, these novels obtain their vivid credibility from the fact

that Yuasa grew up in the occupied nation prior to his education at Waseda University in Tokyo. The novels Driscoll has translated are alive with the detailed interactions of Japanese and Koreans who live side-by-side, but both pieces serve as allegories for deeper messages of political and social discourse.

The first, *Kannani* (1934), shows the life of a Japanese boy, Ryūji, who accompanies his family to live in occupied Korea. In particular, Ryūji's friendship with a Korean girl, Kannani, is the center of this piece. These two innocent children become friends, and Kannani, who is conversant in Japanese, introduces Ryūji to the wonders of life in her native country. As children, their friendship is straightforward and true. Largely because of his friendship with Kannani, Ryūji expresses his desire to be like the Korean children near whom he lives. The childlike simplicity of the two children from different cultural backgrounds serves as a foil, however, for the very complicated perceptions and interactions between Japanese and Koreans in the adult world. For example, Ryūji's mother tells him not to eat Korean food because it is "dirty," but he finds this odd adult label to be untrue. The disturbing political and social upheavals that take place between Koreans and Japanese in this novel serve to make the relationship between Kannani and Ryūji look all the more pure and natural, especially when they become adolescents and their friendship blossoms into young love. Yuasa's work skillfully drives home the point through the protagonists of his story that hate and misunderstanding are not innate, but are acquired aspects of the twisted, adult cultural world.

A much darker novel, *Document of Flames* (1935) is a disturbing account of Nuiko and her mother, natives of northern Kyushu. Nuiko's mother is severely abused by her husband. She suffers a brutal divorce, and takes little Nuiko with her back to her hometown. But society in the rural town is unsympathetic to the hapless two, and Mother decides to take Nuiko and make a new life for them in colonial Korea. Life in Pusan becomes even more despondent as they struggle to have sufficient food to survive. Mother works first as a street peddler, then as a dock porter, and finally desperate to provide for Nuiko, as a prostitute. Life changes when, through unforeseen circumstances, Mother inherits an estate near Suwon. Having been severely downtrodden by male-dominated society, first in Japan and then in Korea, a system that had callously exploited Mother in return for a pitiful level of survival, Mother becomes a landowner. She callously exploits the poor Korean peasants, milking them and the male-dominated system to provide for herself and Nuiko in grand style. In fact, Mother

becomes so good at the male-privileged game that she is absorbed by it all. She takes on male characteristics, jealously wants (now grown-up) Nuiko to serve and wait only on her, and at one point even stoops to seduce her own daughter. Nuiko and her mother become estranged, and finally have a horrifying reunion at a funeral.

Yuasa again skillfully weaves a tale that is a comment on colonial Japanese rule and economic exploitation of Korea. The disadvantaged and downtrodden in Japanese society, in this case a divorced woman, perpetuate the same harrowing system from which they escaped by transferring the position of the disadvantaged to Korean nationals. The exploitative system replicates itself repeatedly by driving the victims to victimize others. All that is humane is lost in the process, as the game twists both victimizers and victims into grotesque reflections of their former selves. In a couple of instances, Yuasa presents extremely uncomfortable scenes that could evince in the reader revulsion and a troubled state of mind. This, it seems, is the author's means of provoking the reader to think about the uncomfortable realities involved.

Lest the reader feel too comfortable about the untidy realities of other peoples in East Asia, Mark Driscoll reveals in his afterward the complexities of "postcolonialism in reverse." Driscoll divulges what he claims is a pervasive, joint political and intellectual collusion by the United States and Japan to present pristinely monolithic images of themselves that make "hybrid and postcolonial contaminants" anathema. Thus, by publishing Yuasa's work, Driscoll is revisiting and legitimizing multi-ethnic realities, ones that the myth of Japanese uniqueness has tended to discredit and leave out of the pattern of Japanese culture. Driscoll's translation is perspicuous and engaging; his explication of Japanese history's heretofore cautious presentation is thought-provoking and well-argued. His assertions about postcolonialism and postcolonialism in reverse illuminated (to this reader) intriguing aspects of certain idiosyncratic Japanese social attitudes, as well as some prevalent assumptions that have previously limited the field of American scholarship on Japanese topics.

**Jilly Traganou, *The Tōkaidō Road: Traveling and Representation in Edo and Meiji Japan*. New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004. xvii + 270 pp. ISBN: 0-415-31091-1, \$190.00.**

*Reviewed by Laura Nenzi*

In this richly illustrated and very informative book, Jilly Traganou reconstructs the many meanings of the Tōkaidō highway from the Tokugawa to the Meiji periods. It is her contention that the Tōkaidō ought to be looked at “as a metaphor” (p. 1) for the social, cultural, and geopolitical values that defined the two eras. Such values become evident first and foremost in the rich iconography and literary production that celebrated the road in all its manifestations. It is precisely through the examination of images and texts that Traganou follows the “major epistemological and sociopolitical transformations that shaped not only landscapes and representations, but also the geographical desires and imaginations of travelers and spectators” (p. 3).

Each one of the three lengthy chapters that constitute the core of the book follows a different aspect of the Tōkaidō and of its meanings across the Tokugawa-Meiji divide. Chapter Two considers the iconography of the Tōkaidō, from official maps, mandalas, and “labyrinthine” maps to the railway maps of the Meiji era. Chapter Three shifts to the literary creation of the Tōkaidō in guidebooks, travel fiction, travel diaries, and even railway songs. Finally, Chapter Four wraps things up by examining “the Tōkaidō’s micro-scale,” that is to say the road as a lived space and as a space of experience (p. 145).

While acknowledging that “the borders between the Edo and the Meiji eras are not clear-cut” (p. 5), Traganou still highlights important transitions and innovations that enriched and changed the discourse on space and mobility. The introduction of the railroad figures prominently in Traganou’s characterization of the new (modern) modes of travel and representation and is, in my opinion, among the most fascinating topics of this book. Traganou argues that technology transformed travel by linking time and money and by replacing an emphasis on the journey with an emphasis on the destination. At the same time, the old *sakariba* (“crowded places,” or spaces of play) of the Edo period were replaced by the Meiji era train stations, not only as main nodes in the flow of goods and people, but also as sites that promoted “new urban models and public behaviors, while at the same time operating as the back-stage of the townsmen’s activities”

(p. 149). Just as illuminating is her discussion of how Meiji period literary works and artistic representations of the road projected new, “modern” values onto the landscape. Works in the league of *Illustrated Guidebook of Owari* (1890) promoted industrial sites as must-see locations (pp. 124-125), while Meiji period iconography began to incorporate not only images of trains and telegraph poles, but also whimsical tributes to illumination, steam, tunnels, and bridges.

In the conclusion Traganou offers some especially intriguing considerations about the Meiji period reconfiguration of historical memory. She argues that, in the modern era, Edo period locales traditionally associated with hedonism and non-productivity ceased to be treasured. The Edo past was then “re-authorized through the ideals of modernity” (p. 216): in art, this resulted in the elimination of highway scenes or of scenes that would evoke “the licentious aspects of traveling” (p. 217). Purged of their libidinal/liminal connotations, Edo period travelscapes were simply recast within the frame of a nostalgic yearning for the (idealized) days of old – a trend that, as Traganou shows in the final pages of her work, persisted well into the 1990s in the politics of the “Tōkaidō Renaissance” movement.

Another important theme (or perhaps sub-theme) in *The Tōkaidō Road* is the notion that Tokugawa period travel literature and cartography fostered the creation of a “standardized language and commonplace iconography” that eventually “paved the way for the formation of a nationhood” (p. 119). Such proto-national character of Edo period maps is a point Traganou makes repeatedly throughout the book and then picks up again in the conclusion, which is aptly titled “The Tōkaidō as a medium of national knowledge.” I found this to be especially interesting when read against the final chapter of another prominent work on Edo period spaces, Marcia Yonemoto’s *Mapping Early Modern Japan* (University of California Press, 2003). In her conclusion (“Famous Places are not National Spaces”) Yonemoto questions the applicability of “the vocabulary of the ‘national’” to Edo period spatial representations and rejects any teleological claim that early modern mapping “constituted a form of ‘proto’-geography or cartography” (p. 176). Given such difference in interpretation, I would have liked to see Traganou engage directly and openly with Yonemoto’s position in the conclusion.

This is not to say Traganou ignores existing scholarship. To the contrary, *The Tōkaidō Road* is a meticulously researched book whose bibliography reads like a Who’s Who of Tokugawa and Meiji cultural, literary, and social history. Traganou’s interdisciplinary approach is rich in

theoretical underpinnings, from cultural geography to spatial anthropology, which may make the book difficult to use in an undergraduate class. Generally speaking, however, Traganou uses theory mostly in the introduction; the rest of the book is, for the most part, straightforward and clear. Overall, *The Tōkaidō Road* is well worth reading. The rich gallery of case studies it presents successfully brings to light the complex and intricate vocabulary of space and mobility in the transition between the Edo and Meiji periods, and greatly enriches our understanding of the many ways in which modernity reconfigured landscapes and their representations.

**Sawa Kurotani, *Home Away from Home: Japanese Corporate Wives in the United States*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005. 241 pp. ISBN-13: 0-8223-3630-8 (hbk), \$74.95; ISBN 10: 0-8223-3622-7 (paper), \$21.95.**

*Reviewed by Don R. McCreary*

Question: Why did the Japanese housewife ship a two-year supply of shampoo from her home in Japan to the U.S.?

The answer to this question and many others can be found in this fascinating fieldwork by Sawa Kurotani, an anthropologist at the University of Redlands in California. I found this book to be well worth my time because I have lived for twenty-two years in a small city with a Japanese manufacturing plant and have met most of the expatriate Japanese employees and their families that have come and gone. The family situations described by Kurotani, especially those in the Midwestern city, “Centerville” (a pseudonym), ring true and are replicated more or less in the expatriate families I have gotten to know well. In her ethnographic study, Kurotani analyzes the physical settings, housing situations, daily and weekly routines, educational conditions, family roles and responsibilities, emotional considerations, and psychological issues that confront expatriate Japanese housewives in the United States. It is clear that Kurotani was included in the housewives’ inner circles and was privy to their intimate thoughts and emotions.

This ethnographic fieldwork examines three very different locations in the U.S: the Midwestern city “Centerville” which has one large (car?) manufacturer, the North Carolina Research Triangle, with its high



tech firms, and the Greater New York City area, with its diversity and its stable Japanese communities. Since she was able to live in these three different settings and became close to Japanese women in several different social classes, Kurotani can claim that her findings may be applicable to a good number of the Japanese expatriates in the U.S.

Kurotani elucidates several key areas, “traveling” rather than settling, global rather than local, going native, and *uchi-soto* relationships. “Traveling” or “on a vacation” is a popular description by the housewives themselves. Ironically, Kurotani, in her very detailed accounting of their daily work schedules, demonstrates that they are working virtually non-stop, and are rarely on vacation. Similarly, they are traveling from time to time in the U.S., but they are not going anywhere to experience the culture first hand or in depth. Only in the New York area did Kurotani find anyone interested in assimilation.

As for global-local issues, the housewives feel ambivalent about globalization as applied to homemaking practices. The idea that the housewives are transnational hybridized workers, taking some cultural practices from Japan and mixing them with some Western practices is understood by the housewives but not fully accepted. Instead, they appear to be in denial about it. Combined with the notion of “traveling” above and the language barrier, they appear to insulate themselves from potential life-changing experiences in America, instead preferring to maintain their Japanese lifestyle. “Going native” does occur in the New York area, and by those Japanese expatriates who prefer “a more *ningen rashii ikikata* [human-like or humane lifestyle],” according to Kurotani (p. 211).

Kurotani relies heavily on the notion of *uchi* and *soto*: The home in the U.S. is the housewife’s *uchi*, a simulacrum of a cozy, cluttered urban home in Japan. As soon as they take off their shoes at the *genkan*, or rather its imaginary substitute, people enter a non-Western world created by the housewife. Kurotani describes the work routines, addressing homemaking as *shigoto*, one of the housewives’ perceived roles or responsibilities (*yakume*), and *kaji*, maintaining the physical space, illustrating this with colorful expressions, such as “*dosoku de fuminijeru* [‘trample on with the dirty feet’]” (p. 90). Kurotani’s fieldwork also examines herding practices by the Japanese wives, all going to the same Chinese restaurant, all trying out the same Asian grocery, all trying the same American restaurant during the same week, which occurs since the housewives’ rumor mill is efficient and specifies which places are “the best.” In addition to the shampoo buying in the opening question, Kurotani explains other odd or unusual

behaviors, such as buying “eggs for sukiyaki” only at the local Japanese or Asian grocery in the American town, since only these eggs can be eaten raw, or so they believe. The tendency to go out in a group is explained by Kurotani by linking it to the idea of America as a *kowai tokoro* [a scary place]. As for the huge supply of shampoo, the housewife believed that shampoos in the US would not be appropriate for Japanese hair.

Kurotani also reports on the racial perceptions of the housewives. In the New York area, expatriate Japanese divided white Americans into “true whites” and “lesser whites” (p. 172), those from southern and Eastern Europe, light-skinned Hispanics, and Jews. In Centerville and in North Carolina, the Japanese women understood the racial divisions only as a black-white dichotomy, with themselves in the role of “privileged outsiders” (p. 172). Around New York City, Kurotani finds that Japanese expatriates have strained relations with Japanese-Americans and Korean-Americans, while African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans are little known and are on the outer fringes of their *soto*, their world of outsiders.

Kurotani provides a penetrating analysis of a popular urban legend among expatriate Japanese wives, which has been circulating for at least thirty years. The story begins in New York. While shopping in New York (usually on Fifth Avenue at Macy’s), a group of Japanese women notice that one woman is missing. The missing woman has become separated from the group somehow while shopping. The rest of the group searches for her without success. A few days later, she comes home in a disheveled state. She tells them that she was kidnapped on Fifth Avenue (or in Macy’s) in broad daylight by a gang of armed black men. She is taken away, drugged, and repeatedly raped. She says she cannot identify the men or tell where she was taken. The tale has several endings that coexist. She disappears, finds her way back to the group to relate the terrible tale, is sent back to Japan by herself, or “she commit[s] suicide out of shame” (p. 169).

The Japanese Consulate in New York has looked into this tale and according to Kurotani, “Consulate personnel conducted a thorough investigation and concluded that the story was a complete fabrication” (p. 169). However, the folktale serves a useful purpose, maintaining the conformity and cohesion in the housewives’ groups in many expatriate communities. The implicit warnings noted by Kurotani include a lack of safety (even on Fifth Avenue), the probability of danger when acting alone outside the Japanese group, fear of blacks, fear of guns that are everywhere, the prevalence of drugs in the city, and the chance of solitary activity by a

housewife inviting rape. Kurotani explains, "Fear, then, had the effect of keeping the boundaries tight...and keeping women close to home" (p. 171).

As for frustrations caused by some weaknesses in the book, first, I found that the hints throughout the book about Kurotani's own lifestyle and attitudes made me want to read more of her own narrative since I noted a few indicators that she seems to have tried to assimilate into the culture; however, personal events, such as her divorce, are presented only as bits of information that tend to contrast with the housewives' lives. These personal narratives written in colloquial language are very readable, but the prose style often shifts to academic jargon. Second, Kurotani examines *nihonjinron* in two chapters and includes a discussion of "Japanese blood" as a measure of purity, but tends to leave the issue up in the air, distancing herself by relating ideas such as, "Whether objectively accurate or not,...insiders have often cited...the presumably uniquely Japanese combination of attributes" (p. 56). Since some of the housewives were permanently influenced by life in America and raised children who were becoming Americanized, Kurotani could have taken the opportunity to comment more about *nihonjinron*. Third, the housewives' work routines and play routines are repeatedly examined from several perspectives in three chapters, usually with *uchi-soto* as the analytical tool. For this reader, this repetition, combined with occasionally pedantic "dissertationese" left over from her thesis, caused me to lose interest at several points.

The strengths in this largely enjoyable book greatly outweigh the weaknesses. The workaday situations described by Kurotani sound familiar to me, and her ethnographic analysis also rings true. Several strong features are evident in her fieldwork. She was included in the women's inner circles and came to know her informants very well, in some individual cases getting to know them intimately. She found consistent themes that ran across three communities, even though they were geographically very far apart, involved very different work settings and policies, and that ran across several different social classes. She writes lucid prose, especially when she is inside the narratives from the housewives, gives ample illustrations, and has a cohesive narrative, one that is appropriate for both undergraduate and graduate students as a supplementary text in anthropology and gender studies courses.

**Sawa Kurotani, *Home Away from Home: Japanese Corporate Wives in the United States*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005. 241 pp. ISBN-13: 0-8223-3630-8 (hbk), \$74.95; ISBN 10: 0-8223-3622-7 (paper), \$21.95.**

*Reviewed by Patricia Pringle*

Sawa Kurotani's ethnography, *Home Away from Home*, will be of great interest to anyone wanting to know more about the Japanese women who accompany their husbands to the United States when their husbands are sent here on assignment by Japanese multinational companies. Kurotani is the first scholar to look closely at the experiences of these women. Much is written about the growth of Japanese multinationals in the U.S., but the wives' contribution has been taken for granted and completely overlooked by those researching Japanese business. This may reflect how the role of the housewife is perceived by Japanese businesses and the larger Japanese society, as well as our own. In addition, as Kurotani points out in her introduction, some scholars of migration and globalization have suggested that the mobility experience of Japanese housewives is not worthy of scholarly attention, since they are "sheltered" and remain "Japanese" throughout their sojourn in the United States. Kurotani's study shows how the wives' role of creating a Japanese home away from home to make husband's foreign assignment more livable for their husbands and children fits into the overall themes of globalization, migration, and women's domestic labor.

For this ethnography, Kurotani conducted formal and informal interviews with over 120 women in three large expatriate communities in the U.S.: "Centerville" (a pseudonym), a town in the Midwest with a major Japanese automotive manufacturing plant and related Japanese suppliers; the New York metropolitan area; and the Research Triangle area in North Carolina. Each of these areas has its own particular Japanese expatriate community, social structure for the wives, and own particular issues. For example, New York has convenient shopping for Japanese foodstuffs, but there are more concerns for personal safety. Centerville is comfortable and suburban, but the women have to deal with a hierarchy of wives mirroring that of the husbands. In the Research Triangle area, there is no oppressive hierarchy, but the wives spend many hours in traffic, chauffeuring their children back and forth to play dates and other activities.

Kurotani's book begins with a theoretical discussion of migration, gender, and national culture, linking her subject matter to these topics.

Throughout the book, she ties the findings of her ethnography to a broader discussion of globalization, domesticity, and Japanese cultural norms.

Relationships with other expatriate wives form an important part of the assignment experience. Other Japanese women provide support, friendship, and local information needed to live in an unfamiliar town. However, looking after one's own need for friendship is always subordinate to serving the needs of husbands and children. Kurotani met many of her informants through her own participation in a number of informal women's groups. Though she is a scholar and not a housewife, the women shared with her the details of their lives and relationships, and their fears about living in the U.S.

Kurotani's study illustrates a number of interesting points. Companies wish to be successful in the global marketplace and develop their (male) employees as global businesspeople, yet they rely on the wives to provide a Japanese haven for the husband to return to after an exhausting day of dealing with foreigners and using a foreign language. While their husbands are becoming global businessmen, the wives are the ones managing the day to day interactions in the foreign environment: children's education, maintenance on the house, the yard, and the car, and learning to navigate around unfamiliar cities.

The wives see themselves as "on a long vacation" (in the sense that they do not have the same responsibilities that they have in Japan), yet they must work very hard to maintain a "Japanese" home for their husbands and their families. For example, grocery shopping in Japan is relatively simple and can easily be done on foot every day. In the U.S., however, wives must often drive many miles across town to find Japanese ingredients for making familiar Japanese dishes. She may spend many hours a day preparing specialized meals for different members of her family: rising early to prepare the "o-bento" lunch box for her husband, meals for herself and her children, after school snacks, and even a separate late night meal for her husband when he comes home late at night from the office. In Japan, some of these meals could be made from or at least supplemented by prepared foods from supermarkets and department stores, but in the U.S., these meals have to be made from scratch. Kurotani discovered that her informants spent an average of four to five hours a day on food preparation, and an average of one hour a day on grocery shopping.

Throughout the book, Kurotani remarks on the incredible tedium of the wives' daily schedules – days fragmented by the endless cycle of feeding the various family members, chauffeuring the children around, and

tending to the household. I am an American housewife, and I was struck by how similar my schedule is to Japanese housewives' schedule she describes as being so oppressive. One does not have to be a Japanese wife to be constrained by the demands of caretaking and transporting our children in the U.S., where our children depend on us for transportation rather than walking or taking public transit, as is common in Japan. I found the adjustment of the Japanese informants to typical U.S. suburban lifestyles the most interesting part of the book.

Kurotani's ethnography of the lives of the Japanese wives provides a rare view of what a U.S. assignment for a Japanese multinational company means for the families involved.

**Cathy N. Davidson, *36 Views of Mount Fuji: On Finding Myself in Japan (With a New Afterward by the Author)*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2006 (reprint of original published by E.P Dutton, 1993). xv + 248 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-8223-3860-4 [ISBN-10: 0-8223-3860-2] (cloth) \$64.95; ISBN-13:978-0-8223-3913-7 [ISBN-10: 978-0-8223-3913-7] (pbk), \$19.95.**

*Reviewed by Pamela D. Winfield*

In 1980, Cathy Davidson signed up for Michigan State University's faculty exchange program with Osaka's prestigious Kansai Women's University (KWU). Her first ten months there and her three subsequent visits to Japan form the basis of this insightful 1993 travel memoir, whose title invokes Hokusai's famous series of woodblock prints. In this series, scenes of fleeting everyday life are set against the unchanging omnipresence of Mount Fuji, so that when viewed altogether, they form a composite portrait of the land as a whole. Davidson likewise looks back over the "individual encounters, intimate moments and small revelations that helped me make sense of Japan" (p. xiii), yet she also considers how her Japanese friends make sense of America and Americans. As a result, the volume provides the reader with a rich meditation on the nature of the cultural encounter and the transformative effect it has on both sides of the Pacific. *36 Views of Mount Fuji: On Finding Myself in Japan* thus helps both the first-time traveler and the seasoned veteran better understand some of Japan's most constant refrains. It also helps one to appreciate more fully

the feedback loop of expectation and accommodation that occurs whenever two Others meet and find their Selves remade in the process.

Davidson begins each chapter of her account with a carefully selected image from Hokusai's series of Edo-period life (fittingly enough, these images were influenced by European-style single-point perspective, then avidly collected by nineteenth-century Europeans seeking something but were "typically Japanese"). Chapter One on "Seeing and Being Seen," for example, contemplates the fact that tourists and foreigners are always and everywhere both the agents and the objects of vision. This reciprocity of gazes is suggested by Hokusai's print of an arched bridge with a passing boat of fishermen below and the ubiquitous Mount Fuji in the background. The horizontal gaze across the East-West gap, the vertical glances between the high and low within Japanese society, and the depth of vision established between Mount Fuji and the spectator observing from the outside suggest that things are often best understood when perceived from afar.

Davidson often ventures beyond her own frame of reference to perceive both sides of every coin – herself included. She is able to describe Japan's natural beauty and urban blight with equal passion, and she understands how America's unrivaled expanses and self-interested greed appear excessive when seen through Japanese eyes. She writes eloquently of mystical Okinawan shamanesses as well as overworked drunk salarymen, and she appreciates how many Japanese tourists stock up on Cartier, Gucci, and Hermes *omiyage*, even as they suffer from a profound inferiority complex when traveling in Europe. She is fully aware that her Japanese-style home in North Carolina literally reconstructs her idealized projection of traditional Japanese life, just as Kansai Women's University's Victorian-style Practice House near Osaka attempts to domesticate Japanese notions of Euro-American mores and manners. Insightfully, Davidson recognizes that for every opposite there is another opposite [*Ura ni wa ura ni aru*] (p. 105), and that all such imitations, "like most forms of nostalgia, pay homage to a place we never really knew" (p. 167).

Despite such disclaimers, it is evident that Davidson understands a great deal about Japanese culture, as well as her place in it and its place in her. She is highly attuned to Japan's visible and invisible boundaries, even noting its effect on her physical body. Her posture, comportment, walk, gestures, and entire way of being become more compact and less obtrusive in Japan, but re-expand like a sponge once returned to America. She paradoxically finds freedom within the confines of Japan's social

conventions and recounts one unforgettable night in Osaka's demi-monde, since foreign women technically slip between Japan's traditional gender roles and often get treated as fellow males by default. Her liminal social role allows her to "get away with" such taboos, and this liminality extends to her Japanese female friends as well, who are temporarily freed from their gendered, conventional behaviors when they are in her company. This dynamic attests to the mutually transformative nature of the cultural encounter.

Davidson is at her best when she analyzes such gender roles in Japan and America, but one wishes that this reprint of her 1993 manuscript updated her statistics either in footnotes or in her 2005 Afterward, which only updates how her friends fared ten years earlier in the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake. Her personal anecdotes and recalled episodes, however, continue to enliven such generalized principles as the boundaries between public/private space, inside/outside dynamics, individual/group identity, pure/impure activities, honorific/humble communication, and even the fact that when the ultimate boundary between life/death is crossed, "we have rules for how to break the rules" (p. 120). Her poignant reflections on her mother-in-law's passing, a tragic and fatal car accident, a Japanese funeral, the atmosphere of death in Okinawa, at Kōyasan, on Oki Island and in Kansai after the earthquake are informed both by her study of Buddhism and her interdisciplinary grounding in the humanities. However, unlike other travelogues such as Alex Kerr's *Lost Japan* or Pico Iyer's *The Lady and the Monk*, this travel memoir is not an elegy but a living and still highly relevant personal account of one woman's discovery of – and self-discovery in – Japan.

Davidson's insights still ring true twenty-seven years after her first trip to Japan, and are once more made available to a new generation of students and adventurers. Her explanations of Japan's pressure-cooker educational system are perfect for those about to study abroad or teach English in Japan, and her love/hate relationship with the language resonates with anyone who has experienced all the little victories and embarrassing frustrations of trying to master Japanese. Her hilarious episodes with unabashed *obaachan* and her thoughtful reflections on everything from the photographic lens to Japan's irrational street addresses are all written with a sympathetic voice in a highly engaging, accessible style. Taken together like Hokusai's images of Mount Fuji, Davidson has given us an overview of the land and has taught us that the grass may be greener on the other side, but with great distance there also comes great perspective.