As a book for K-12 teachers and students, it will be of interest and use to those who are planning to go to China as teachers on exchange or who are planning to take students to China for study.

creating their own world. If Korea, Taiwan and Thailand can serve as examples, increased literacy, greater expectations of work opportunities and rewards, and the increase of news of how people elsewhere live will produce internal change in the life of the Chinese people in a relatively short period of time. As has been shown in the Philippines, there may be a point at which the central leadership will be obviously inept so that the people will be able to topple it and create their own forms of government. There is precedence for this in China's past. The mandate can move away from those in power if it is not diligently maintained and responsive, not merely repressive.

As a book for K-12 teachers and students, it will be of interest and use to those who are planning to go to China as teachers on exchange or who are planning to take students to China for study. The early chapters can provide topics for discussion on how to prepare for daily difficulties during a stay in China and can supplement study on China's history and culture. Those who are planning to teach or feel their main goal is to inculcate American ways and ideology will be able to see that the Chinese, like others, adopt what they feel is useful and try to screen out what they feel is harmful. The government isn't always successful in getting its definition of useful and harmful accepted, but its attempts to do so are a way to discern the values of the society. The greatest subversion, if that is the intent, is to just be yourself, so that Americans are seen as human beings just like the Chinese, able to share in likes and dislikes, able to laugh, play and work, and able to grow through experience. It is difficult for governments to rouse hate and fear of others when the others are individuals with faces. This is what these exchanges accomplish, not the introduction of American journalistic practices or the corrections of English prose, but the identification of the other as similar to self. ■

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My City
A Hong Kong Story

By Xi Xi

Translated by Eva Hung

HONG KONG: RENDITIONS PAPERBACKS, 1993
180 PAGES

Hong Kong, a place that is often considered the most international city in Asia, was Britain's last major colony, and is now the People's Republic of China's richest and most cosmopolitan urban center. Yet, for all that Hong Kong is a city open to the world, the works of its writers remain relatively unknown to non-Chinese readers. This translation of one of the most highly regarded novels of one of Hong Kong's most prominent and prolific authors is a product of the efforts of the Research Centre for Translation of the Chinese University of Hong Kong to make the literature of Hong Kong accessible to a larger audience.

My City was written in the mid-1970s, a particularly interesting period in Hong Kong's history. It was during this time that a sense of local identity began to assert itself, as the locally born and raised population began to outnumber what had been predominantly a society of immigrants and refugees from mainland China. This period also saw the emergence of other developments and issues that would preoccupy the people of Hong Kong until the end of colonial rule, and to this very day: the impact of vigorous economic growth, new influxes of refugees from China and Vietnam, and the looming issue of the Chinese government's resumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong.

Although all of these receive direct or indirect mention in its pages, *My City* is a book to be read less for the purpose of gaining specific insight into social issues, as to achieve a feeling for the ethos of time and place, in which the above developments have combined to create that distinctly Hong Kong atmosphere of East-West cultural fusion, restless movement and change, and a pervading sense of both anxiety over, and optimism for, the future.

This work is not a particularly easy one to read. It is written in a style which owes much to the influences of magic realism, and in a narrative tone that is at once childlike and wryly mature. There is little in the way of plot or story. What exists may be said to center around the character of Fruits, a child when the story opens, and later a young adult; however, an equal amount of effort is placed upon describing the thoughts and actions of Fruits's friends and family members. As the translator notes in her preface, the narrative technique adopted in *My City* has been compared to various approaches used in painting, particularly to the technique of "scattered perspective" in which different objects are shown from different perspectives (xi-xii). With no real center to the book, it is difficult not to occasionally get the feeling that the author is simply rambling on.

Certainly, much of the charm of the book lies in an understanding of the nuances of the language employed. But another dif-

ficulty for the non-Chinese reader arises from the fact that *My City* is very much a work written for a local audience, familiar with Hong Kong scenes and developments, and appreciative of the author's fondness for punning and word-play in the local Cantonese dialect. The translator's judicious annotations go a long way towards clarifying what might otherwise be a number of puzzling references, but this is clearly the sort of novel that poses challenges for both translator and reader.

That said, there is a universality in many of the episodes and sentiments narrated in the book, and both poignancy and humor in the author's language. Particularly memorable are Xi Xi's comparisons between writing and carpentry, and her subtle reflections on the means and meaning of communicating with fellow human beings. And, as a sample paragraph illustrates, Eva Hung's competent translation allows the essential beauty of Xi Xi's writing to shine through:

> *It is a fine, sunny day; the sun has been shining brilliantly since early morning. The sun shines on the yellow and white stripes of a toy horse floating in the swimming pool inside the high walls. The sun shines on a soft drink bottle on a pile of rubble facing the pavilion on the Peak. The sun shines on the tail of an aeroplane by the side of a cloud shaped like a lamb. On fine, sunny days, these are the things the sun loves to do. When the flowers travel down on the lift, the sun also shines on the cellophane wrapping around the flowers, and the silver-white ribbon, tied in a bow, shoots out arrows of light which pierce many eyes. After a while, the arrows are used up, the petals have fallen into the shadow, and of course the smiles on the flowers have nowhere to stay (p. 6).*

As a work for the classroom, *My City* would be most suitable for college use. It could be employed—most profitably in conjunction with a suitable textbook—in several ways. As a book by a Hong Kong writer, writing about her own city, the work could generate fruitful discussions on the impact of colonialism on a locality, particularly on the local mentality, and on the formation of local consciousness and identity. In a literature class, the work could serve as an example of colonial literature, or alternatively, of the worldwide influence of the literary approach of magic realism. In a class on China, *My City*, with its many references to things Western as part of everyday life and language, could be used to illustrate the differences between the people and city of Hong Kong and those of mainland China. It could also aid in discussions about Hong Kong's role in China's political history and in its economic development.

Most of all, the book can be recommended simply for the innate pleasure afforded when one encounters a worthy piece of literature made available for the first time to an English-speaking audience. ■

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The Japanese Discovery of America

A Brief History with Documents

Peter Duus, ed.

THE BEDFORD SERIES IN HISTORY AND CULTURE
BOSTON AND NEW YORK: BEDFORD BOOKS, 1997
XII, 226 PAGES, GLOSSARY
CHRONOLOGY OF JAPAN'S RELATIONS WITH THE WEST
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY,
INDEX, 1 MAP, 7 ILLUSTRATIONS

Use of documents in college (and to a lesser extent, high school social studies programs) has not been much in vogue in non-American classes. The audience outside of the large survey classes is small enough so few publishers make an effort, and even when some collections of documents are available, my impression is that they are underutilized. This is, I think, especially the case in courses like Japanese history survey classes. Indeed, there are really only two collections aimed at undergraduates: Ryusaku Tsunoda's *Sources of Japanese Tradition,* which was published first in the late 1950s as part of a larger enterprise under the guidance of Theodore de Bary, and David J. Lu's *Japan: A Documentary History*, a substantial revision of its 1974 predecessor. The former tends to stress intellectual and religio-philosophical developments; the latter gives a stronger weighting to elements of social history.

The present volume is distinguished from document collections designed to cover large stretches of time as in a survey course; Duus focuses instead on the four decades from 1840 to 1880, that singular era when Japan was once again forced into contact with the West. Japan's security was threatened, but nervousness about the foreign seafarers challenged more than that. It challenged Japanese cultural identity and self-image. Underlying both security and cultural concerns was the fundamental problem of how to fathom these barbarians at the gate. How could one make sense of these mysterious occidentals?

This focus is certainly worth pursuing and promises to be engaging for students. Duus has organized his collection of almost fifty documents into eight sections: "The Policy of Isolation," "American Views of Japan," "Japanese Reports about America," "The Arrival of the Americans," "The Opening of Trade," "The Bakufu Mission of 1860," "The Iwakura Mission of 1871," and "America as 'Civilization.'"

Japanese illustrations from the mid-nineteenth century are included as "documents" as well as the expected text materials. Unfortunately, all illustrations are in black and white. These six items are drawn from publications designed to appeal to the curiosity of the general public.

The earliest document, an excerpt from an anti-Christian tract, comes from the seventeenth century. Work by Japanese students of "Dutch Learning," Confucianism, a xenophobic scholar, an early