

ESSAYS

What is a good way to get people interested in Japan? For us, teaching in rural West Virginia, this is not an academic question. Our students are often reluctant to study something that is seemingly so foreign and unrelated to their own lives as Japanese culture. They are also turned off by the highly negative images of the Japanese that pervade contemporary hit movies and best sellers. In books such as Tom Clancy's *Debt of Honor* and movies such as Michael Crichton's *Rising Sun*, the Japanese come off as dangerously inscrutable "economic animals" who are "out to get us" both economically and politically. To counter this, we must find a "hook" to get them interested, an approach that challenges one's students intellectually by getting them beyond the crass stereotypes. We need to do so not only within the classroom but also in outreach programs for local secondary schools and community groups.

We got our chance by directing a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) regional Institute on "Japanese Culture through Literature" during the Summer of 1995. Originally, we designed the Institute as an intensive five-week introduction to Japan for twenty social studies, literature, and foreign language secondary school teachers from Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. However, as we discovered, our program can also be used in introductory college courses on Japanese civilization or in two or three-day outreach programs that require something more than just the superficial "guest lecture" about Japan and the Japanese.

There are many reasons for introducing Japan through its literature. The most obvious advantage is, of course, that compared to the dry and dull textbooks, literature is fun to read. But beyond the sheer entertainment value, literature is useful pedagogically because it calls attention to the deep complexities in world view and ways of life

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TEACHER OUTREACH IN JAPANESE STUDIES

A CASE STUDY

By Mark MacWilliams
and Joseph Laker

that the Japanese have constructed for themselves. It gives the class or group a common literary context that allows for stimulating conversations from different thematic and historical perspectives. Most important, using stories, essays, novels, and poetry allows the Japanese to speak for themselves—to tell their own tales and to give their take on their history, culture and character. This is precisely what is lacking in the usual American pop-cultural or mass-media treatments of Japan.

By Japanese "literature" we do not limit ourselves solely to the recognized classics. Participants read and discussed seven major works reflecting a wide range of genres and time periods that we supplemented with lectures, films, short literary works, and a number of scholarly essays. These included early masterpieces, such as Lady Sarashina's *As I Crossed a Bridge of Dreams*, and Yoshida Kenko's *Essays in Idleness*; novels, such as Shusaku Endo's *Silence*; and even contemporary pulp fiction, such as Taichi Sakaiya's *The Baby Boom Generation*.

The rationale behind our choices was not aesthetic quality so much as usefulness for looking at seven major themes throughout the Institute: (1) The Religious-Aesthetic Context; (2) Women and the Japanese Family; (3) Education; (4) Japanese and Outsiders; (5) Literature and the Visual Arts; (6) Social and Political Life; and (7) Labor and Business Life.

Generally, we tried as much as possible to arrange the readings chronologically, introducing new themes as we progressed from the ancient to the modern period. The Institute began with a focus on the religious-aesthetic context and ended with modern Japanese business novels with a focus on contemporary labor and business practices. The outline (see pages 25–26) of the Institute shows the specific ways we used Japanese literature to discuss the seven major themes.

THE GOAL OF THE INSTITUTE WAS TO LISTEN TO AS MANY JAPANESE VOICES AS POSSIBLE

Through reading a wide variety of literary works, participants had to come to terms with a host of different Japanese perspectives on the structure and meaning of their own culture. By doing so we attempted to counter the more propagandistic treatments such as can be found, for example, in Michael Crichton's best seller *Rising Sun*. In Crichton's novel, the Japanese businessmen are made mute and therefore appear threateningly inscrutable. All the reader knows about them comes from the harangues of the American detective-hero, John Connor, who as the "expert" on "Orientals" provides his own definitive monologue about them. Here the typically harsh judgment of the Western critic is the only voice that is permitted to be heard.

During the Institute, we showed *Rising Sun* and asked participants to write their own reviews of the movie based upon their reading of Robert Christopher's book, *The Japanese Mind* and Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's short essay, *In Praise of Shadows*. Tanizaki's work was particularly useful in this regard. Written in 1933 at a time of rising ultra-nationalistic sentiment, *In Praise of Shadows* attacks outright westernization in defense of what Tanizaki considers to be the "traditional" Japanese way of life. *In Praise of Shadows* is written from the perspective of a writer who in some ways is in Crichton's shoes, though of course in his case, Tanizaki confronts the rise of the West as a cultural (rather than economic or political) force in prewar Japan. While presenting a sometimes unflattering portrait of the West from time to time, Tanizaki still goes beyond simple stereotypes with his insights into the aesthetic and practical differences in

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THE OUTLINE FOR THE
NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES (NEH)
REGIONAL INSTITUTE ON "JAPANESE CULTURE THROUGH LITERATURE"

WEEK #1

1. INTRODUCTION

- Background reading: Robert Christopher, *The Japanese Mind* (main text)
Conrad Schirokauer, *A Brief History of Japanese Civilization* (reference work)
Screening of *Rising Sun*
- Lecture: Japan and America as Others
 - Discussion of Crichton's *Rising Sun* and Western Stereotypes of Japan
Reading: Robert Christopher, *The Japanese Mind*, Chaps. 1 and 2
Selected film and book reviews on *Rising Sun*

2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

- Lecture: Japanese History through Literature
- Discussion: Texts and Context
Reading: short selections from:
Ivan Morris, *The Nobility of Failure* (chapter on Yamato Takeru)
The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon, *The Tale of Heike*, Chikamatsu, *The Love Suicides At Sonezaki*, and Yamakawa Masao, "The Talisman" from *As the Japanese See It* (Aoki)
- Discussion: The West as the Other
Reading: Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, *In Praise of Shadows*

THEME 1: THE RELIGIOUS-AESTHETIC BACKGROUND

3. THE JAPANESE WORLD OF MEANING

- Lecture/discussion: Japanese Images of the Sacred
Reading: Joseph Kitagawa, *The Japanese World of Meaning*,
Short selections from the *Kojiki* and "Japanese Folktales" from *As The Japanese See It* (Aoki)
- Slide lecture: Japanese Religion
- Viewing/discussion of the movie: Kurosawa *Akira's Dreams*

4. BUDDHISM

- Lecture: The Buddhist Re-visioning of Nature and Human Nature
- Participant-led discussion: *As I Crossed the Bridge of Dreams*
- Researching Japan on the Internet

5. BUDDHIST AESTHETICS

- Lecture: Yoshida Kenkō's *Essays in Idleness*
- Participant-led discussion of selections from *Essays in Idleness*
- Curricular project consultation on religion
- Guide to Japanese pronunciation
- Evening movie: *Ugetsu*

WEEK #2

THEME 2: WOMEN AND THE FAMILY

1. WOMEN IN EARLY JAPAN

- Lecture: Women in Early Japan
- Participant-led discussion: Images of women in the previous readings and *Ugetsu*

- Field trip to the East Asian Resource Center, University of Pittsburgh

2. PRE-MODERN CONTEXT OF GENDER AND THE FAMILY

- Lecture: Pre-modern Context of Women in Japan
- Participant-led discussion: Ōhara Tomie's *A Woman Called En*
- Lecture: Modern Images of Women and the Family: Change and Continuity
Reading: Robert Christopher, *The Japanese Mind*, Chap. 3, "All in the Family" and Chap. 5, "A Woman's Place"

3. MODERN IMAGES OF WOMEN AND THE FAMILY: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

- Participant led discussion #2 of *A Woman Called En*
- Discussion of Ariyoshi Sawako's *The Twilight Years*
- Curricular project consultation on women in Japan

4. MODERN IMAGES OF WOMEN AND THE FAMILY #2

- Lecture: Japanese Women and the Family—Problems and Prospects
- Participant-led discussion of *The Twilight Years*
- Afternoon movie/discussion: *A Taxing Woman*

THEME 3: EDUCATION AND IDENTITY

5. MODELS OF LEARNING IN THE ARTS, POPULAR CULTURE, AND POLITICS

- Lecture: Japanese Education in Historical Context
- Discussion: Models of Learning/Models of Mastery
Reading: Jennifer Anderson, "The Tea School Structure," and "Learning the Grammar of the Tea Ritual" (from *An Introduction to Japanese Tea Ritual*)
- Afternoon session: The tea ceremony
- Evening movie: *Rikyū*

WEEK #3

1. SCHOOLING IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

- Screenings: Video resources on Japanese education
- Lecture: Schooling in Traditional and Modern Japan
Reading: Robert Christopher, *The Japanese Mind*, Chap. 4, "The Education Race."
Merry White, "Japanese Education—How Do They Do It?"
John Singleton, *Nichū: A Japanese School*

2. EDUCATION IN JAPAN—DIVERSE IMAGES

- Lecture: Education in Japan—Diverse Images
- Discussion on the readings:
J. Singleton, "Japanese Folkcraft Pottery Apprenticeship: Cultural Patterns of an Educational Institution"
J. Singleton, "Gambaru: A Japanese Cultural Theory of Learning"
- Curricular project consultation on education

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ESSAYS

OUTLINE, CONTINUED

3. EDUCATION IN LIFE AND FOR LIFE/AMBIVALENCE
TOWARD THE OUTSIDER

1. Discussion: Critical Images of Japanese Education
Reading: Shimizu Yoshinori, "Japanese Entrance Exams for Earnest Young Men"
Takeno Masato, "Yamada Diary," from *Monkey Brain Sushi*
2. Movie: *The Japanese Version*/ Discussion: Ambivalence Toward the Outsider—Japanese, the Outside, and *Gaijin*—Post-War Japan America as the Other
Reading: Robert Christopher, *The Japanese Mind*, Chap. 9 "The *Gaijin* Complex"

THEME 4: LITERATURE AND THE VISUAL ARTS

4. FIELD TRIP TO THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART
 1. Lecture: Literature and the Visual Arts in Japanese Culture
 2. Tour of the Cleveland Museum of Art East Asia Collection and Teaching Resource Center
5. VISUAL ARTS IN THE CLASSROOM
 1. Visual Arts: Reading poetry in art and art in poetry
Reading: "Evening Faces," from Edward Seidensticker, trans. *The Tale of Genji*; Selections from *The Tales of Ise* and *The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon*
 2. Curricular Project Consultation on the Visual Arts

WEEK #4

THEME 5: OUTSIDERS (*GAIJIN*) AND THE JAPANESE

1. IMAGES OF OTHERNESS
 1. Lecture: Pre-Modern Context of Christianity in Japan and Shusaku Endo Reading: "Amakusa Shirō," from *The Nobility of Failure* by Ivan Morris
 2. Discussion on Endo Shusaku's *Silence*
 3. Lecture: Japanese Religion(s) and Identity
2. CHRISTIANITY AND THE AMBIVALENCE OF THE OUTSIDER
 1. Discussion of Endo Shusaku's *Silence*
 2. Curricular project consultation on otherness/outsiderhood
 3. Afternoon Movie: *Chinmoku*
 4. Discussion: Christianity in Modern Japan
Reading: Ariyoshi Sawako, "The Village of Eguchi"

THEME 6: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

3. SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LIFE
 1. Lecture: Modern Japanese Social Life and Politics
Reading: Robert Christopher, *The Japanese Mind*, Chap. 7, "Masses and Classes" and Chap. 8, "Automatic Controls."
 2. Lecture: Origins of Modern Japan—The Meiji Revolution—Politics and Political Change
Reading: George Wilson, "The Meiji Restoration"

4. PREWAR JAPAN AND "WESTERNIZATION"

1. Lecture: Social-Political Context of Prewar Japan and "Westernization"
2. Discussion: History, Autobiography, and the Novel: Introduction to Mishima Yukio's *Runaway Horses*
Reading: "Kusunoki Masashige," and "The Apotheosis of Saigo the Great," in *The Nobility of Failure* by Ivan Morris
3. Curricular project consultation on Japanese history and politics

5. ULTRA-NATIONALISM IN PREWAR JAPAN

1. Lecture: Ultra-nationalism in Prewar Japan—The Case of Kita Ikki
2. Discussion: Isao as an Ultra-nationalist in *Runaway Horses*
3. Japanese Politics—The Contemporary Scene, Movie: Itami Jūzō, *A Taxing Woman Returns*
4. Discussion: *Runaway Horses* and *A Taxing Woman Returns*

WEEK #5

THEME 7: LABOR AND BUSINESS LIFE, AND CONCLUSION
(4 DAYS)

1. LABOR IN MODERNIZING JAPAN

1. Lecture: Labor and Business Life in Modern Japan—Correcting the Stereotypes
Reading: Robert Christopher, *The Japanese Mind*, Chap. 11, "Machines and Mandarins" and Chap. 12, "The Fruits of Industry."
2. Images of Industry—Discussion
Readings: Ian Buruma, "Work as a Form of Beauty," Akio Morita, "Attitudes Toward Work," Jeannie Lo, "A Day in the Factory," (from Merry White, *Comparing Cultures*), Kamata Satoshi, *Japan in the Passing Lane*

2. CORPORATE JAPAN—STRUCTURE, PROBLEMS, AND PROSPECTS

1. Lecture: The History of Corporate Japan
2. Discussion of selections from Tamae Prindle, *Made in Japan and Other Business Novels*
3. Curricular project consultation on labor and business life

3. IMAGES OF THE SALARY MAN IN CORPORATE JAPAN

1. Participant-led Discussion: Prindle, *Made in Japan*
2. Preparation by the participants for the final session

4. CONCLUSION: SUMMING UP AND EVALUATIONS

1. Concluding remarks
2. Participant presentations—Class activities, ideas/plans for teaching about Japanese culture
3. Participants' reflections on studying Japanese culture through literature

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what he sees as typically Western and Japanese sensibilities. He does this in a most interesting way, for example, by comparing the most pedestrian of objects, a Western toilet versus a traditional Japanese outhouse.

Several questions guided our discussion of Tanizaki:

1. Like Crichton, Tanizaki is constructing an image of the Japanese and Japanese culture in his essay. What does he see that is characteristically "Japanese?"
2. If Crichton and Tanizaki found themselves in the same outhouse, what would they say to each other? Would they find that their images of Japan are vastly different? If so, how?
3. To what historical, political, economic, and cultural differences do you attribute the two images of Japan?

By working through these questions, participants began to see that what Tanizaki is really trying to do is to come to terms with his own identity. By analyzing the contradictions and incommensurabilities between Western and Japanese things, he constructs his own image of what it means to be a Japanese. With the movie *Rising Sun* and Tanizaki's essay, therefore, participants had two good examples of writers who attempt to deal with the problem of otherness. They could also see that Americans are just as much involved in the ideological project of making our own image by defining ourselves against the Japanese as they themselves have done by arguing in favor of Japan's cultural, racial, political, and economic uniqueness.¹

To what extent does any observation about a culture that is "different" from one's own have validity? As our participants discovered, this question cannot be easily answered. They became sensitized to the problems of interpreting cultures and gained a better critical perspective for assessing such interpretations because of this initial comparison of Crichton and Tanizaki.² Raising these questions was the *modus operandi* of the Institute for the next five weeks as we compared and contrasted the diverse images of Japanese culture—from literary works and to the more "objective" studies by western scholars. By the end of the Institute, participants realized that Tanizaki's image of Japan, while intriguing, was only one image among many. Like all such images, it was also influenced deeply by the times in which he lived.

Literature can be a primary focus for discussing any of the seven major themes for a unit on Japan for community outreach programs or for units within a college course about Japan. Such an approach not only fulfills the teacher's goal of improving students' Japanese cultural literacy, but also contributes to the greater goal of the humanities generally. It exposes people who would not ordinarily have the chance to the Japanese literary imagination with its varied ways of portraying the world and living a human life within it. ■

NOTES

1. This is called the *Nihonjinron*. One very informative reading on this topic is by Kosaku Yoshino, *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan: A Sociological Inquiry* (London: Routledge, 1992). See especially chapter two, "The *Nihonjinron*: Thinking Elites' Ideas of Japanese Uniqueness." See also, Jackson Bailey, "Japan on the World Scene: Reflections on Uniqueness and Commonality," *Occasional Papers*, vol. 1, number 2 (Earlham College, Richmond, IN: Institute for Education on Japan, 1989).
2. See Harumi Befu, "Introduction: Framework of Analysis." See also Harumi Befu and Josef Kreimer, eds., *Otherness of Japan: Historical and Cultural Influences on Japanese Studies in Ten Countries*, Monographien aus dem Deutschen Institut für Japanstudien der Philipp-Franz-von Siebold-Stiftung (München: Ludicum, 1992), 15–35.

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COMMENTARIES

WHY EXCORIATE CRICHTON AND LET CHRISTOPHER OFF SCOT-FREE?

A syllabus is a recipe—an imprecise forecast of the finished product. Great chefs transform mediocre recipes; poor chefs ruin great recipes. The same goes for teachers and syllabi. I'd hate to have anyone come to firm conclusions based solely on my syllabus!

The Institute found that Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's image of Japan was "deeply influenced by the times in which he lived." Well and good. But what of the image of Japan in the Institute's "main text," Robert Christopher's *The Japanese Mind* (1983)? Don't we need to contextualize it, too? Why not treat this text the same way this syllabus treats Tanizaki?

How might such a treatment go? Robert Christopher (1924–1992) was a Yale graduate (1948) who served twice in military intelligence (1942–46, 1950–52). Wartime language training and the experience of Tokyo in September 1945 led him to "a lifelong fascination with things Japanese" (*Japanese Mind*, p. 19); that fascination led to two books on Japan (1983, 1986). Between 1945 and the 1980s lay a distinguished career, not as Japanist, but as a journalist: *Time*, 1950–1963; *Newsweek*,

1963–1979; *GEO*, 1979–1981. For the last decade of his active career, he supervised the awarding of the Pulitzer Prizes in journalism. As the title suggests, *The Japanese Mind* purports to offer "a psychic [*sic*] and institutional guidebook to today's Japan that might capture the interest of busy, intelligent and responsible Americans whose previous exposure to Japan had been largely confined to what the media offered them" (p. 7). *The Japanese Mind* belongs firmly to one discourse in American studies of Japan, a discourse of difference. It grew out of the "national character" studies of the era of World War II (Ruth Benedict, E. O. Reischauer, et al.). It privileges distinctions and obscures similarities. It contrasts ideal-type (read: stereotypic) Japanese and ideal-type (read: stereotypic) Americans. For example (p. 21): "Because we ('Americans') cannot conceive that they could be radically different from our own, we cannot duplicate the logical processes of the Japanese or grasp the value system that underlies Japanese behavior." Even today, alas, this discourse is still perhaps the dominant discourse in American studies of Japan.

Do we read Tanizaki and Yoshida Kenkō and Ohara Tomie to get at some unique essence of Japaneseness, to confirm or illustrate Christopher's analysis of a Japanese "psyche" that we then contrast with an American "psyche"? Or do we read these Japanese writers not as Japanese but as writers—to find out what they tell us of the human condition? If our goal is the latter, who needs *The Japanese Mind*, with or without context?

Yes, Tanizaki deals in stereotypes and so has something in common with Michael Crichton's despicable best-seller. But *Rising Sun* has a good deal in common, too, with the tradition Christopher represents. Why excoriate Crichton and let Christopher off scot-free? Until we see Christopher himself—like Tanizaki and all other writers and scholars—as "deeply influenced by the times in which he lived," we cannot begin to understand the images of Japan he purveys.

RICHARD MINEAR

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PERCEIVED ASSUMPTIONS

All can applaud the goal of projects like those of last year's NEH Regional Institute on "Japanese Culture through Literature," i.e., "to get students to question [negative] stereotypes," and we can remain sanguine about the objectives of such NEH grants these past years as we seek to maintain our fragile funding sources against the threat of conservative vendettas. It is something else to be concerned with academic and pedagogical standards and with the thorny issues of teaching critical thinking, above all in the complex areas of cultural production and forms.

The seminar described here is typical of a number of grants that seek to "integrate the study of Japan (or Asia or another "non-Western") culture into the (presumably standard Western) curriculum." The idea is that a battery of "experts" on the culture in question will guide a group of teachers, presumably specialists in pedagogy but with limited or no background in the target subject, in the essentials of knowledge about the area these experts have studied for a lifetime. They will distill for them the basic components and assist teachers in applying their pedagogical skills to the teaching of Japanese or Chinese

culture to the primary target audience, K-12 or college or community students. It is assumed that the university professors need only provide their expertise, and the secondary teachers will know how to make use of it.

The issue here is not an elitist territorial concern with expertise. Some scholars of Asia might even admit to being as guilty of Orientalism and ethnocentrism as a Michael Crichton, a Tom Clancy, or a James Clavell were they able to receive comparable levels of royalties for their books. Promoting the exotic is part and parcel of the scholarship of the "unknown." And both scholar and teacher-learner are complicit in their exploitation of this still very vibrant form of essentialism. As this report makes clear, there are different categories of stereotypes, those that are to be "challenged" and those that are to be "promoted" with the sanction of scholarly expertise. What few are willing or able to do is to examine the process of "stereotyping" itself, which must begin with a critical look at ethnocentrism; in this instance, in the United States historical, political, and cultural context. The Institute goal of "listen[ing] to as many Japanese voices as possible" (p.6) is more likely to result in a Babelic cacophony than to produce some "authentic Japanese

voice" in contradistinction to our self-acknowledged "politically incorrect" Crichtonian voice. And if the movie (and novel) *Rising Sun* presents the Japanese as "dangerously inscrutable economic animals," why include this film (and extensive discussion of it) as the opening gambit of a course designed to present a different, indeed presumably indigenous, view of Japanese culture?

Let us see how this project undermines its own concerns via a collusion of expert and learner complicities. First, there is an unquestioned use of the term and category of "literature." This is the "hook" to be used not only to entrap future unsuspecting students, but to allow secondary teachers to access a truer and "deeper" Japan. Thus, argue the organizers, not only is literature "fun to read" compared to "the dry and dull textbooks" (!), but it also "calls attention to the deep complexities in world view and ways of life that the Japanese have constructed for themselves" (p.1). However, the familiar dichotomy between dry and dull social science and the "deep truths" of literature is belied by the fact that the main texts for the seminar are two studies by Western scholars (Christopher and Schirokauer). So much, then, for Japanese voices; the voice of authority, the textbook,

remains Western, and male to boot. Notwithstanding the Institute's claim to use "literature" as a way of allowing "the Japanese to speak for themselves," the privileging of a book like Christopher's *The Japanese Mind* (1983)—whose very title and distant date of production alone should give rise to suspicion—as the seminar's designated "main text" makes even clearer the determination to frame the reading of "Japanese voices" within the protective contours of a Western voice of authority.

The Institute provides little exposure to Japan's indigenous popular culture and its concerns, although these have been given serious attention by scholars in the last several years, and may be said to provide considerable insight into the variety and conflict that sparks much of Japanese culture today. The assumption that there is such a thing as "a Japanese voice" to be found in "literature" results instead in a mishmash of texts from the eighth-century *Kojiki* on, jumping back and forth over hundreds of years with little coherence or direction. The use of Tanizaki and Mishima as representative voices is ironic, as these are two of Japan's most chauvinistic voices arguing for a purity of Japanese spirit, esthetics, and "race" that is more akin to the ultranationalistic right wing in Japan than to the cosmopolitan image many Japanese today are trying to project. *In Praise of Shadows* is an eccentric, difficult work of the early twentieth century replete with overtones of racism and xenophobia. To say that it is "useful because it forces the reader to realize that the

Japanese people have their own take on life and art" is like saying that the writings of a Céline, a D'Annunzio, or for that matter other extremist pundits of their own cultures, such as a Camille Paglia, are valuable because they reveal a presumably representative view of French, Italian, or American culture.

The bulk of the reading and lectures deals with the same materials and issues taught in any introductory course on Japan throughout the United States. If anything, the Institute tries to squeeze far too much into its five-week format, what with seven (!) thematic categories ranging over all of Japanese history and contemporary society (from the "religious-aesthetic" to "business practices"). While we are reassured that the selection criteria will guarantee that we go beyond the "recognized classics," the program is still heavily weighted with ancient and medieval works, although with no indication how these are to be used to dispel the pervasive stereotypes of modern Western writers. The choice of the novel *Silence* by contemporary author Endō Shusaku, known as Japan's preeminent if not its only Catholic writer, is particularly puzzling, as this novel deals with issues of Christianity (a very minor element in Japanese culture) in sixteenth-century Japan, and has next to nothing to say about contemporary Japanese concerns.

What about the "voices" of Japanese TV and film? The Japanese films chosen are primarily esoteric and exotic (*Ugetsu*, *Dreams*, *Rikyū*, *Silence*). The only two which deal directly with contemporary Japan are satirical

pieces by Itami Jūzō, which do suggest some of the concerns of contemporary Japanese culture, but are not easy to digest for the uninitiated. Only the documentary *The Japanese Version* can be said to begin to raise the questions about stereotypes the Institute professes to be concerned with, and this in a mode which has been accused by many viewers of reinforcing the same stereotypes they seek to counter. From the present document, it is unclear whether the film is being used to problematize issues of stereotyping or not.

In sum, the program described here chooses to base its entire raison d'être on perceived assumptions in a few transitory works of American pop culture, yet its choice of materials and thematic concerns is ultimately the prosaic syllabus of several introductory courses thrown together in an uncertain mélange which ends up reinforcing the very process of dichotomizing and stereotyping castigated in the works of Crichton and others. If United States culture is, as it perhaps should be, the proper venue for understanding American stereotyping of Japanese and other foreign cultures, a very different approach is called for.

ALAN WOLFE

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I WAS THERE

Before considering my reaction to MacWilliams and Laker you should be aware that I was a guest speaker (Japanese business and economic culture) in the West Virginia Institute. It was a personal pleasure for me to participate in the Institute, reflect upon the program after-the-fact, and consider the reactions of two esteemed colleagues. I look upon this essay and accompanying commentaries as exactly the kind of "conversation" about teaching that should regularly appear in *Education About Asia*.

When working with non-specialists, I believe there is a strong case for including the works of journalists. Still, I agree with Minear in his criticism of the use of *The Japanese Mind*.

While Minear focuses largely on Christopher, Wolfe's criticisms are more extensive. Wolfe contends that the Institute goal of listening to as many Japanese voices as possible "is

more likely to result in a Babelic cacophony." There is a substantial amount of research indicating that even educated Americans think of the Japanese as monolithic. To me, an understanding on the part of more Americans that Japanese culture is heterogeneous is a great intellectual leap forward.

The West Virginia teachers with whom I talked felt that many of their prior beliefs about the Japanese being "all alike" were shattered by their readings. I view these reactions as evidence of the great success of the Institute in combating an insidious American stereotype about Japanese culture.

Wolfe also questioned the use of the film, *Rising Sun*, in the Institute. I thought the choice was excellent because the film epitomizes several of the most wrong-headed American beliefs about the Japanese. As a speaker, I was well positioned to extensively critique some of the worst ideas in *Rising Sun* because my entire audience had seen the film.

Finally, Wolfe presumably criticizes the

Institute because "the bulk of the readings and lectures deal with the same materials and issues taught in any introductory course to Japan throughout the United States." For the last eleven years, I have worked with thousands of teachers in Japanese studies institutes. Most of these teachers, for a variety of reasons, have never taken even a single university course on Japan. I consider it a compliment to MacWilliams and Laker that they corrected this gap in their participants' educations by providing a reading and lecture program of great breadth.

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