Pacific Rim Modernisms. Edited by Mary Ann Gillies, Helen Sword, and Steven Yao. Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2009. 373 pp. $75.00 cloth.

Pacific Rim Modernisms is an excellent resource for scholars who are grappling with the transnational implications of modernism. The motivation of the book—to open up the domain of modernism to consider its manifestations beyond the interwar period and the established canon of British, Irish, and Anglo-American poets and writers—is not unique. As

early as 1987, Houston A. Baker Jr. published *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* to redress the absence of African American writers in the discourse of modernism, and projects establishing transnational approaches to modernism—among them, Paul Gilroy's now classic *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (1993) and Jessica Berman's recent *Modernist Commitments: Ethics, Politics, and Transnational Modernism* (2011)—have expanded modernism's global framework. Gillies, Sword, and Yao's project, however, is a particularly rich and ambitious attempt to encompass the "Pacific Rim," which means, geographically, the countries and communities on the Pacific Ocean, and discursively, the historical and ideological relationships among the groups. Although the book is uneven, both in its treatment of the varied geographical entities on the Pacific, and in the scholars' execution of the wide-ranging essays, this collection accomplishes its goal of rethinking modernism through the lens of the Pacific Rim. Beginning with a seemingly traditional representative of modernist texts, Ezra Pound's *Cathay,* the book sets into motion a rereading of such texts through this new lens, while simultaneously redefining modernism temporally to include turn-of-the-twenty-first-century books, spatially to include Japan's *Modanizumu*, Modern Korean poetry, the modernist "Blackfellow" painted woomeras of Australia, and Hispanic American Modernismo, and generically to include hypertexts.

The book is divided into fourteen essays broken down into 3 sections. They are poetically titled "Riffs on a Rim," "Terrains," and "Tectonics," suggesting the "seismic intensity of cultural activity that took place in and through the area during the modernist period," though they might be more accurately labeled: essays about Orientalism in Anglo-American modernism, essays about Asian modernisms, and essays about the conversation across the Rim (xi).

In the first category of essays, the authors concentrate on the appropriation of the East for the West. We tread familiar ground as we are asked to think about canonical modernist poetry and literature that engages Asian imagery: Ezra Pound's "translations" of classical Chinese poetry, W. H. Auden's *Sonnets from China*, the uses of Buddhism and Sanskrit in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, William Butler Yeats's Noh-inspired *At the Hawk's Well,* E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. Steven Yao and other writers here rely on and further the arguments of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, allowing us to see how Orientalism has been implicated in modernist art and the history of modernist art, and showing us how we can "re-orient" our readings of both (7). In these essays, we see how Pound—wholly ignorant of Chinese and depending on Ernest Fenollosa's translations—signified China through Japanese proper and place names, making *Cathay* a conflation of China and Japan, a "racial lumping" that amounts to a "generic 'Oriental' tonality in English" (28). This is problematic in terms of the poem itself, but more

significantly, in terms of the poem's very "canonicity," according to Yao: "*Cathay* ha[s] come to embody the authority of the cultural dominant in defining the framework of evaluation for other voicings of 'Chinese' and 'Asian' cultural heritage, whether or not specific individual poets write explicitly in response to or reaction against Pound himself" (29). We are asked to reconsider such representations in their Pacific Rim/global contexts. We need to think about how Japan became, in the nineteenth century, "an aesthetic ideal for the West" (59)—not only because Japanese woodcuts famously influenced many painters of that time (we think of Toulouse-Lautrec and Gauguin, Van Gogh and Whistler), but because writers and poets, too, conceived their art within an Orientalist ideology. Christopher Bush argues that "Proust's famous meditation on a hawthorn tree was originally about a flowering cherry tree, while Mallarmé's working title for his unfinished 'Le Livre,' certainly an extreme expression of aesthetic autonomy, was 'Pages from the Lacquered Cabinet,' after the lacquered Japanese chest in which he kept his drafts" (62). Japonisme is French Japaneseness; the translations alter or obscure the originals. In one translation, the Japanese woodcuts, which were packing material for Japanese ceramics sent to France, essentially trash, are transformed into unsullied, utopic art. In another, Japanese inspirational images (the cherry tree, the chest) disappear into the drafts of manuscripts that are tossed in the trashcan.

If the essays in the first category tell the story of the clear influence of the (always transformed, often bastardized) East on the West, the essays on Asian modernism effect quite the opposite sentiment: their collective goal, it appears, is to downplay the influence of the West on the East. The critics reject the pervasive belief that modernism in Asia was imitative, brought in entirely from Europe, and instead consider Asian modernisms that sprang up independently, or, as Choi Dong Ho calls them, "self-awakenings," a term he uses to demonstrate the Korean response to "general modern civilization, sweeping over Korean poetry like mountainous waves, rather than . . . created under the concrete influence of Western poetry" (100). Sadami Suzuki argues that within "the shift from symbolism to early modernism in Europe, one could locate hints of Japanese and Eastern art," and the "reception of Japan's classical art acted as a stimulus for European modernism," but, "in turn, the European movements inspired Japan's own modernism" (89). Yet Suzuki questions this influence, asking if we should see Japan's modern art as "an 'appropriation' of Western art, a 'translation,' or a cunning 'switch'?" (71). Although he never claims that Western influences played no roles in Japanese art, he contends these "seeds of European early modernism" were cultivated in distinct ways on Japanese soil (81). Is this much-altered Western influence not, then, a form of "Occidentalism," which would require a new theorization of cultural power decentering the West as the sole locus of imperial ambitions? Unfortunately, this question

is not taken up in these essays, but the idea of a homegrown (or only mildly influenced) modernism is further developed in William J. Tyler's essay on *Modanizumu*, which argues for non-European criteria by which to judge Japanese modernism (while admitting that "it is virtually impossible to find 'modernisms' that operated in total isolation"), and Kyoko Omori's essay on Japan's *New Youth* magazine, which focuses on the specific challenges of modern Japanese life weaved into Japanese film, art, and literature in the 1920s (221).

In the final category, we see continuous conversations taking place across the rim. European artist Margaret Preston was affected by Australian nationalism; in turn, Blackfellow artists like Albert Namatjira, influenced by painters like Preston, incorporated European-style watercolors into Aboriginal woomeras. The results are hybrid, a testament to the flow of influences and ideas across the rim. Another concurrent conversation resulting in hybrid art can be seen through Emily Carr's paintings and Katherine Mansfield's literature, both created through a relationship between ancestral Europe and the New World (Canadian, New Zealander) indigenous landscapes and people. These connections occasionally stretch the book's framework thin, as it is not always easy to see why, for example, Chinese and Australian women writing about the city, women, and war simultaneously makes for a conversation rather than just a shared moment in time. In other ways, these connections are the most important. It is through them that we understand the idea of the Pacific Rim as a place of dynamic intersections sparking so many modernisms.

Ultimately, in this compendium of definitions and redefinitions, a modernist text might bear the hallmarks of fragmentation, surrealism, imagism, symbolism, jazz, Dadaism, speed, machinery/technology, abstraction, opacity, futurism, feminism, the *moga* (modern gal), cubism, electricity, automobility, rapid transit, *modan raifu* (modern life), primitivism, irony, pastiche, or ethics. It can exist as easily in Bloomsbury as on Hong Kong's Babington Road. If there is a flaw in this proliferation of modernisms, it is that one could only with great difficulty *not* call a text modernist. Nonetheless, the book holds true to its promise: it remaps modernism and modernist studies, and, in doing so, allows scholars to rethink the complex transnational negotiations, conversations, and inspirations across the Pacific Rim.

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