

Sawada, Mitziko. *Tokyo Life, New York Dreams: Urban Japanese Visions of America, 1890–1924*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996. Pp. xvii, 268, 11 halftone illustrations, 9 tables, 2 maps, bibliography, index. US\$40.00

J. Matsumura

Volume 26, numéro 1, octobre 1997

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1016671ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016671ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)

1918-5138 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Matsumura, J. (1997). Compte rendu de [Sawada, Mitziko. *Tokyo Life, New York Dreams: Urban Japanese Visions of America, 1890–1924*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996. Pp. xvii, 268, 11 halftone illustrations, 9 tables, 2 maps, bibliography, index. US\$40.00]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 26(1), 57–58. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1016671ar>

As interestingly, McNamara pursues the dialectic between signifier and signified to measure the "regime of space construction" articulate in the structural grid that controls conversations in *The Naked City* (p. 207), examines the desire to "increase the legibility of designated public areas of cities" achieved within the City Beautiful movement (p. 214), and releases the postmodernist irony constructed by Venturis's and Scott Brown's "formal analysis of the historical sources and visual logic of space and signage in the commercial vernacular" (p. 220).

And, while I have learned a great deal about how urban centres have been represented visually and verbally, there are some problems within McNamara's analysis that trouble my regard for the project overall. First, McNamara often does not pursue the verbal artifact in terms of its own techniques of construction. He identifies the "restless analyst" situated in Central Park in James's *American Scene* (pp. 19, 166), for example, but makes no attempt to identify the rhetorical strategies and literary figures James employs to create the persona within this pseudo-autobiographical form. As perplexing, the reader must reconstruct the chronological and recursive development of essential critical vocabularies whose meanings fluctuate throughout McNamara's commentaries. No initial provision, for example, is made for the range of meanings the author relies on in his discussion of modernism as a period concept. The single term seems to promote contrasting styles because an internally coherent approach that could comprehend the diversity among various emerging modernisms is infrequently attempted. In the chapter on Ferriss, then, modernism suggests an "heroic and unifying vision," a "reunification" of "signifier and signified" buoyed by beliefs in coherence and wholeness (pp. 114-16): "In most familiar images of the artist as agent of cultural reunification, he (our canonical high-modernist is all but inevitably male) wills a coherence out of the fragments that are all that remains of an earlier, healthier culture; think of ... T.S. Eliot shoring fragments against his ruin a decade later" in the *Waste Land* (p. 114). In the subsequent chapter on Williams, "a more historical-minded modernism is evident in varying degrees in works about civic culture by several American modernist poets" including Eliot and the same shored fragments (p. 138). While the fragments generated by Eliot's allusive method expose the co-presence of representational and non-representational values in his long poem and modernism generally, McNamara under-develops the dialectical nature of this tension between description and construction as intrinsic to Eliot's practice as it is to Williams, Dreiser, and James.

Another weakness in McNamara's text concerns the often frugal nature of the connective tissue that could more systematically integrate the various chapters, as well as the sometimes incompatible analytical approaches that create uneven experiences for the reader. Thus the predominantly dense, polysyllabic prose, which assumes a working knowledge of the primary texts and an insider's grasp of sociological, economic, and literary theorists, steps aside for chapter-long and some-

times superficial plot summary of both *Where the Sidewalk Ends* and *The Naked City*.

While I suggest that overall the commentary on the verbal and cinematic artifacts does not equal the quality of the detailed and concrete analysis that distinguishes many of the primary architectural sites selected for *Urban Verbs*, McNamara has provided someone like me with contexts and possible correlations that confirm why the representation of urban myths, cultures, sites, and vocabularies is important to the study of literature.

Deborah Schnitzer
Department of English
University of Winnipeg

Sawada, Mitziko. *Tokyo Life, New York Dreams: Urban Japanese Visions of America, 1890-1924*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996. Pp. xvii, 268, 11 halftone illustrations, 9 tables, 2 maps, bibliography, index. US\$40.00.

The subject of *Tokyo Life, New York Dreams*, the history of the small number of Japanese emigrants to the East Coast, may seem narrow. But Mitziko Sawada's treatment of the subject fills in gaps found in a number of other studies.

For example, Sawada adds another dimension to studies of early twentieth century Japanese immigration to the United States, the majority of which have focussed primarily on emigration to the Pacific States, by revealing how different the Japanese in New York were from their West Coast countrymen in terms of their class, urban origins, and the cultural baggage that they brought with them. Unlike these earlier studies which have relied mostly on English-language sources, Sawada also examines the Japanese literature, which helped shape the emigrants' ideas about other peoples, such as that of a "homogeneous, mysterious and exotic American Other" (p. 12). In addition, Sawada provides a balance to studies of Japanese-U.S. relations during this period, which have concentrated on American pressures to restrict Japanese immigration, by revealing how the Japanese themselves took the initiative in addressing this problem. She observes that after 1908 officials in Japan banned the emigration of labourers and tried to limit passports to their more educated, middle-class countrymen in the hopes that they would convey a more positive image of Japan to Americans.

It is these preferred travelers to the United States, the *hi-min* or so-called non-immigrants, who are the subject of Sawada's eight-chapter study. Chapter 2 describes the average New York *hi-min* as a man over the age of thirty, who had mistakenly envisioned an easy transition from a Japanese to an American urban world: they might have arrived in the United States as students, businessmen or professionals, but many could find

employment only as domestic workers. Chapter 3 describes the *hi-min* system as legitimizing class differences emerging in capitalist Japan and notes how the system reflected official desires to maintain control over the people. Chapter 4 describes Tokyo as representative of the *him-min*'s preimmigration environment and discusses the city's middle-class ideal and the problems of maintaining one's position in this class. Chapter 5 deals with the use of American examples of achievement in Japanese popular literature and the construction of those notions of success that encouraged ambitious, urban middle-class readers to seek their fortunes outside of Japan. Chapter 6 examines the writings of supposed Japanese experts of life in the U.S. and their instructions on how the *hi-min* should behave in order to further their own interests and that of the Japanese nation. Chapter 7 discusses the views of Western women held by Japanese men and the belief that personal relationships in the United States would be emotionally richer than those in Japan.

Sawada's discussion of the politics of emigration, which reveals the expectations of Japanese officials and advocates of travel to the United States that the *hi-min* act as unofficial good will ambassadors for Japan, is highly interesting. Her examination of the mentality of her subjects, the reasons behind their decisions to seek their fortunes on the U.S. East Coast, is thorough. The only questions that are not so clearly answered involve the *hi-min*'s own perception of themselves, or their future, and their commitment to a permanent life in the United States: Did the majority, and not just the leaders of their overseas community, buy into the idea that they were to be representatives of their country? Were they prepared from the start to set down roots in the United States, or did they originally see themselves as non-immigrants who would eventually return to Japan after making money or finishing their education? Many may have come to prefer life in America, even after their rude awakening from their dreams of easy success, but could it be that a proud reluctance to be greeted as a "failure" by family and friends in Japan also influenced their decision to remain in the U.S.? These small questions notwithstanding, *Tokyo Life, New York Dreams* is an enlightening bicultural study that deserves the attention of scholars of modern Japan, Asian-American studies, urban and immigration history.

J. Matsumura
Département d'histoire
Université de Montréal

Drummond, Diane K. *Crewe: Railway Town, Company and People, 1840–1914*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995. Pp.xiii, 259. 8 black and white plates, bibliography, tables, index.

Crewe is a quintessential company town. It was established by the Grand Junction Railway in 1842–43 on a then poorly populated part of the Cheshire Plain. Within a generation its railway

factory became world renowned for its advanced production methods, innovative technologies, management and skilled workforce. From its inception, the railway dominated the town both physically and socially. It defined its political culture, determined the physical growth of the community, and created a social hierarchy based on occupation and position within the company. Until the end of steam in the late 1960s, work in Crewe meant work for the railway in one capacity or another, in the "Works" the "Sheds" or the "Offices." It shaped life in Crewe.

This book, though not the first to tackle the social history of the town, breaks new ground in examining the relationship between the company and its employees and the effects of this relationship upon the society of the town. Victorian Crewe is used as a case study of company paternalism and influence politics. Through an analysis of employer paternalism by the LNWR, Dianne Drummond evaluates a number of theories which have sought to explain the changing nature of nineteenth-century politics, especially working class politics, and the connections between work and politics.

The book is organised into three parts. The first section examines Crewe's origins, the process of migration into the town, and the resultant patterns of residence and occupational structure. The second part examines the relationship between the Company and people in the LNWR workshops: the company's managerial strategies, skills and the labour process, and the labour market within the Works. The final part of the book examines paternalism and politics within the context of local religious and political history, and presents the study's conclusions.

Drummond argues that despite the overwhelming presence of the company in Crewe's social and religious life, its attempts to control local politics and determine the political behaviour of its employees, it never succeeded in producing outright deference on the part of all the townspeople. Rather a whole range of deferential to non-deferential responses was manifested. She explains the range and the changing nature of responses to Company paternalism (though from some of the evidence cited it seems that Company intimidation might be no less an appropriate term) arose from the traditions and beliefs of the workforce assembled in Crewe. Company culture was never total because the workers brought with them traditions of independence in work, nonconformism in religion and radicalism in politics. Craft unionism in the Works and Liberalism and nonconformity in the town gave workers a value system which led them to criticize the Company and its heavy-handed "paternalistic" policies. Workers who gained their self-identity through their nonconformism and skill in work were not inclined to see themselves as of inferior standing, and hence rejected Company direction of civic, religious and individual affairs, even at the cost of loss of livelihood and home.

The book's strength lies in its careful analysis and meticulous research. It is based on a wide variety of manuscript sources, official publications, and newspapers and periodicals,