I want to say unequivocally, however, that this is a book eminently worth reading. Probably nobody will accept unconditionally all of the author's "paradigms." But becoming newly aware of the significant and timely problems to which he directs our attention, and seeing how he goes about fashioning paradigms of understanding, is an educational experience. All who read this book will find themselves indebted to Winston Davis.

Patriots and Redeemers in Japan: Motives in the Meiji Restoration

George M. Wilson

Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992. xvi + 201pp. Notes, glossary, bibliography, index. Paper. n.p.

Reviewed by J. Mark Ramseyer, University of Chicago

GEORGE M. WILSON promises an intellectual history of the Meiji Restoration. Although he delivers a brilliant book, it is also a bit oxymoronic. Whatever the restoration may have been, it was not primarily an intellectual event. Although serious intellectual changes ensued, the event itself seems more a cross between coup d'etat and revolution. People seldom win coups and revolutions by ideas. Although they invent elaborate ideologies to justify killing the people they do, they usually win them by guns and bombs. Neither do they usually organize the guns and bombs for ideas. They organize them for wealth and power, and convince their followers to fire the guns and plant the bombs by promising them the same. Often with a ideological gloss, to be sure, they promise their followers lower taxes, higher wages, and land redistribution.

Not so Wilson's Meiji Restoration. The men who headed it fought neither for power nor for wealth. According to Wilson, they fought to "redeem" the realm. He could be right, of course, though readers who have seen the homes of early Meiji leaders may wonder. Those men may have had altruistic motives, but some of them paid themselves handsomely for their efforts. If it was all a matter of redemption, then at least for the Meiji oligarchs redemption was a well-paying job.

Wilson also claims from the outset that the restoration leaders acquired "legitimacy" by invoking the emperor (Chapter 1). He would be hard put to find a more tired "fact" about Meiji Japan. Yet sometimes tired facts should just retire. Consider first how the Emperor might have benefited the leaders. If the "legitimacy" he gave them made any difference, it should have lowered the costs involved in taking and retaining military control. That Wilson never shows us. Consider too whether this "legitimacy" was hard to obtain—whether manipulating the Emperor (a) was difficult, or instead (b) was something any of the serious pretenders to the government could have done if they could just win militarily. If hard, Wilson should tell us why it was hard, and how the eventual victors successfully obtained it. If (as seems more likely) any of the plausible pretenders could have manipulated the Emperor, Wilson should tell us why anyone cared. Suppose that any Japanese group able to win the military battles could have captured the imperial symbol. If so, then if Group "A" rather than Group "B" eventually invoked the Emperor, that fact conveyed no independent information to the public. It told people only the obvious point that "A" had beaten "B." Unless the people swore blind obedience to the Emperor (unless, in effect, they were fools), they would not have deferred to "B" out of reverence. They would have deferred to "A" because it controlled guns and bombs.

These are questions of emphasis. Whatever the ultimate significance of

redemption and legitimacy in the restoration, Wilson writes some brilliant social and religious history. In the course of this book, he also examines the Japanese conception of time (Chapter 2), the shape of Tokugawa feudalism (Chapter 3), the motives of the various participants in the restoration (Chapter 4), and several millenarian sects (Chapters 5 and 6). He does his finest work with these social and religious groups. He nicely describes the Tenrikyō and Konkōkyō sects (Chapter 5), for example, and draws a delightfully amusing picture of the "*ee janai ka*" movement of 1867 (Chapter 6). The peasants and merchants in the movement cross-dressed wildly and danced orgiastically. In the process of throwing a grand party, Wilson argues, they helped build the social and political basis for the radical changes that accompanied the restoration.

All that makes this a great book. Unfortunately, Wilson analyzes very few things straightforwardly. Instead, he packages his account in heavy-handed "theory." The theorists he chooses are (mostly) the certifiable *interi*—some of the fanciest darlings of the modern academy, and the men with the most obscure polysyllabic neologisms. Throughout the book, he scatters in bold typeface their bite-sized quotations: from (the very French) Michel Foucault (p. ix), to (the not French at all) E.P. Thompson (p. ix), to (the out-of-date) Claude Levi-Strauss (p. 43).

Count the bold type a blessing. During the Cultural Revolution, Chinese scholars often began their books with the words of the Chairman. When they printed his words in red, readers knew which sentences to skip. So too with Wilson's quotations. Mostly, these are zen koan look-alikes. One quotation reads: "But a storm is blowing from paradise" (Walter Benjamin, p. 95). Another tells us: "The meaning of an event is the sense of its forthcoming interpretations" (Paul Ricoeur, p. 1). No doubt many readers will enjoy this. Some of the rest of us will hope we are better people for reading it, wonder why we suffer indigestion for eating things that are good for us, and begin to suspect that maybe—just maybe—George Bernard Shaw had a point after all when he claimed that fifty million Frenchmen can't be right.

Wilson never makes clear what this high-status theory does, other than cloud an otherwise excellent historical monograph. In Chapter 4, for example, he divides *bakumatsu* actors into four groups: westerners, *bakufu* officials, "popular revivalists," and "imperial loyalists." Fair enough, though hardly surprising. He then proposes to describe each group through a "matrix of motivational determinants" (p. 69). Obscure enough for most of us already, but he now assigns each group a "story line" (comedy, satire/irony, tragedy, and romance) and a season (spring, winter, autumn, and summer). He adds to that a "cognitive strategy" (organicist/integrative, contextualist/dispersive, mechanist/integrative, and formist/idiographic/dispersive), and tops it off with the "Trope, Rhetorical Prefiguration" for each group: Synecdoche/integration, irony/negation, metonymy/reduction, and metaphor/identity (p. 69).

Back to the restoration, most readers will plead. What does all this tell us about why the Meiji Restoration took the shape that it did, why it happened when it did, or how the ultimately successful group managed to beat its competitors? What indeed. At times, Wilson seems to consider these an outdated (and perhaps slightly philistine) set of questions: "The approach offered in this chapter," he says half-way through the book, "tries to play down the historian's old favorite explanatory scheme—the one based on cause and effect" (p. 68). We can thank him for ignoring his own rhetoric in the bulk of his book. There, he asks exactly these "old favorite" questions. And he answers them well. Only when he takes his

rhetoric more seriously will some of us find ourselves turning perversely anti-intellectual. "Nothing in the annals of Japan before 1868," writes Wilson, "prepared those who thought in historical terms for the divorce of time from history that accompanied the Meiji Restoration" (p. 25). *Merci, monsieur*. And "the indigenous provenance of the premise did not soften the blow to continuity struck when the central myth of Japan's history had to end, if it were to be used" (p. 26). Sometimes, we could use more old favorite explanatory schemes.

The Creative Edge: Emerging Individualism in Japan

Miyanaga Kuniko
New Brunswick, NJ: Tansaction Publishers, 1991. 137pp.

Reviewed by John Gano, Tokyo

IN *THE CREATIVE EDGE*, Miyanaga presents a dream, some interesting life-stories, and a jumbled assortment of idiosyncratic concepts and tenuous inferences. The book begins with an ingenuous renunciation of the author's claim to scholarly objectivity: "This book grew out of my conviction that if ever there were a time when individualism could spread actively in Japan, it would be now." It wraps up its unsurprising conclusion in the second sentence, "My research…confirmed my personal feeling" (p. xv). While this dream of the dawn of Japan's "active individualist movement" is refreshingly candid, it does shift the burden of critical analysis and evaluation from the author to her readers.

Miyanaga addresses a fascinating question: is Japanese society becoming more individualistic? She notes that traditional Japan was not a monolithic "groupist" society but tolerated individualistic elements at its fringes. She also cites interesting interviews with four contemporary Japanese fashion designers and over a dozen manager-entrepreneurs of smaller firms which might reveal a surprising degree of independence and individualism to readers not in contact with these milieu.

The author's dream is that the rising importance of design in the manufacturing process will force the Japanese "mainstream/core/large corporate/Ritual Man" to become more accepting of the "fringe/peripheral/small and intermediate business/Individualist" and thus build a new Japan that imports more foreign goods and boosts domestic economic growth, as well as being more tolerant and humane. There would be little to criticize if the book stopped at this. However, it has been encouraged to much grander ambitions, with disappointing results.

The fundamental failing of this book is that it makes no significant contribution to knowledge. The author clearly wishes that individualism is growing in Japan, but the only empirical evidence she cites is a dozen-odd interviews with rather likely individualists. The fact that the author interviews four fashion-designers (including some who have held Paris shows) and find them to be individualistic is hardly surprising. But it is ludicrous for her to then attempt to generalize from these four cases to the 710,000 small and intermediate-sized Japanese businesses. The reviewer discovered that one *konyaku*-processor in Fujioka has created orange-flavored konyaku-snacks for children! But this does not answer the question of how many konyaku-processors in Gunma Prefecture are becoming motivated to work by the desire for individual artistic self-expression. How much more tenuous to generalize about all Japanese small and intermediate-sized enterprises.

Although this book lacks conceptual clarity, some sifting reveals a basic scenario