are told that “local governments with many foreign workers sometimes must
deal with problems of delinquent children and youth crimes among foreign
workers [sic], or such neighborhood nuisances like foreigners’ improper
disposals of their garbage” (66). In the conclusion, the editor opines,
“Globalization has rendered Japan’s policy making at the mercy of dynamic
changes both inside and outside Japan” (228), the implied results of which
he proffers in the introduction: the “breakdown of the family,” “increased
divorce,” “unbalanced diet,” the “study of economics through comic books”
and the emergence of “porno and annoyance on Internet and telemarketing”
(11). “All in all, the industrialized and modern Japan seems to have reached
a point of diminishing return” (11).

Arguably the strongest contribution is a chapter by Keiko Hirata that
applies international relations theories to the Japanese government’s
intransigence to discontinue its support for “scientific research whaling” in
the face of overwhelming international opposition. But this effort will not
overcome the significant weaknesses of a book replete with inconsistencies,
unsubstantiated assertions and numerous editorial lapses that are more than
distracting. In the concluding chapter, the editor writes, “Observing the sense
of superiority complex among the Japanese toward the Westerners, Yasumasa
Kuroda deems it imperative for the Japanese to acquire the universal norm
of equality for all, and at least pretend to believe in equality so that they
might get used to the norm” (228). It is left to the reader to evaluate the
veracity of this curious assessment, and the extent to which it drives Japan’s
relations with the world.

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RICHARD LEITCH

JAPANAMERICA: How Japanese Pop Culture Has Invaded the US. By

With the rising demand of anime-related products on a global scale, including
academic books on the topic, there has been an increase of indiscriminate
publication under the guise of being “academic.” Japnamerica: How Japanese
Pop Culture Has Invaded the US, by Roland Kelts is one of these. This book tries
to show how Japanese anime has become deeply entrenched in US culture
without really talking much about US consumption. Most of the chapters rely
on journalistic interviews with Japanese industry personnel. The explanation
of how anime “invaded” the US is reserved for the final chapter with a few
episodic anecdotes on anime fans.

First, Kelts attempts to establish a socio-historical connection between
the consumption of anime in both Japan and the US through the rhetoric
of war; he tries to understand why something as unique as Japanese anime is
popular by borrowing artist Murakami Takashi’s view that *manga* and anime emerged from the “underground expressions of [postwar] trauma in Japan” (37). Kelts associates Japan’s past to the “now” of US culture, that anime has been consumed as a symptom of post-9/11 trauma, and extrapolates that the US audiences’ interest in Japanese anime is because “Japan’s popular culture is speaking to us in a visual and psychological language that we may find fresh and entertaining—but it may also be telling us something we need to hear” (37).

This premise, however, seems problematic as it does not adequately explain the massive popularity of anime that occurred a few years before 9/11. Also, Kelts falls short of being critical of Murakami’s self-proclaimed importance of utilizing anime-like imagery. Leading scholars in Japan, such as Asada Akira, have argued that Murakami exploited “postmodern Orientalist” tactics to appeal to the Western-biased consumption of “Japan” (“Modern Art that is so Childish,” *Voice*, October 2001) and Ueno Toshiya noted that rather than being uniquely Japanese, “Japananimation” is popular in the West precisely because it was developed in relation to the Western gaze (“Japanimation and Techno Orientalism: Japan as the Sub-Empire of Signs,” *Documentary Box*, 9 (1996) 1). Such critical analysis is missing in this book.

In the ensuing chapters, Kelts introduces the big names in the Japanese anime and toy industries, providing an outline for those who want to learn more about who’s who in the field. However, most interviews sound like trite self-promotion tactics, and Kelts, unfortunately, appears to simply record the information given to him. He also misses a decade of the Japanese government’s policy, saying that “the pop culture campaign will start in 2007 and will be promoted directly through Japan’s global embassies” (113). In fact, the promotion policy began at the turn of the millennium.

In short, this book promotes existing Western stereotypical portrayals of Japan through sweeping statements, providing examples from *Lost in Translation* (2003) and quoting already partial studies, forever situating Japan into a strange land of perverted pleasures and *honne*/tatemae (182) without providing fresh insights. When discussing anime porn, called *hentai* and *yaoi* (boy’s love) and the cultures of devoted fans called *otaku*, Kelts states the following: “Japan is intensely serious about the pursuit of happiness, even without having it mentioned in a formal declaration of independence” (134). Such grave generalizations make one realize that even in the twenty-first century, the distorted notion of “Japan” in the Western imagination is still strong.

In the field of anime studies, Western scholars have often appeared authoritative even when their ideas are simply an expression of their affinity for or dislike of anime. Nevertheless, readers can still learn much from the various interviews that Kelts conducted with the industry personnel. Although misleading in its title, this book offers valuable insights into the current
anxieties and uncertainties of the Japanese anime industry. Therefore, even though *Japanamerica* may not be the most intellectually stimulating work on Japan or on anime, it is still valuable for those who are interested in pursuing a career in anime studies, both inside and outside of academia.

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