

## *Explorations in Sights and Sounds*

Wow Grounds," the journey to "claim breath," for now, has reached a new plateau: "All I saw is / these Hymbian totems / this renascent self. / I believe I'm here, disappeared and back. / I want a library in a bundle. / Fax, man / this God head up there / this re-written self / I've got to see."

*Claiming Breath* received the North American Indian Prose Award, an award it richly deserves. In the title poem, the poet says, "I think it's also important to know why you write," and in this journey through space, time, memory, and consciousness, the poet can come to a renascent self through the recognition of the necessity and importance of spirituality and art to all cultures, a recognition that is necessarily inherent in the oral tradition of Native American people. For Glancy, the power of language is as essential as breathing.

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**Roger Goodman. *Japan's 'International Youth': The Emergence of a New Class of Schoolchildren.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) xv, 275 pp., \$65.00.**

Japan's rapid expansion in the world of commerce since the 1960's has not only brought economic prosperity to the country but new social phenomena to its isolated monolithic culture. Roger Goodman's book focuses on just one such problem concerning "kikokusijo", or secondary schoolchildren returnees who resided abroad more than one year due to overseas assignments of their parents. The increase of returnee school children from 1, 543 (1971) to 10, 498 (1986) began to raise concerns in the mid-1970's with the Ministry of Education, mass media, and various public and business communities. The creation of remedial schools and special classes was hastened largely due to powerful lobbying by the returnees' parents who are mostly social elite. Why does a handful of returnee children raise a major social concern in this age of global travel and communication? A plausible explanation is the main undertaking of this book.

A useful demography of the returnees including their overseas locations, returnee community and schools, and sources of their financial support is initially provided to develop their backgrounds. Subsequently, readjustment problems of the returnees to Japan's cultural and educational systems are brought up in Chapters three and four. Previous studies are reviewed critically for overemphasis on the returnees' conflict with the moral values of homogenous, exclusivist, and conformist Japanese society which are perpetuated further by the Japanese educational system. Drawing from his own

teaching experience in one of the schools with special provisions for returnee students, the author observes that contrary to popular image

of the returnees as social misfits, the returnees do not have many problems nor are their problems different from those of mainstream Japanese adolescents. In addition, calls for means of alleviating returnees' mental and physical suffering are dismissed by the fact that returnee education is better off than that of other ethnic or class minorities and even mainstream Japanese students. The author speculates in Chapters six and seven that discrepancies between his own observations and the conventional image of the returnees is attributable to an emerging national aspiration for internationalization of post-modern Japan. Central government, education reformers, influential parents, the media, and commercial institutions, among others, came to seek in the returnee children a potential for articulating Japan's interest in the outside world and unconventional, creative thinking for business and industries. Hence, heavy governmental investment in educating returnee children and the elevation of their status from problematical minorities to 'international youth' results.

The author left the matter here without speculating on the future of this emerging breed of Japanese youth. Information on patterns of employment of earlier generations of returnee children is absent from the book, and whether limited childhood experience overseas makes a person international or not is unanswered. This is, however, a most crucial aspect of the phenomenon of Japanese 'international youth'. Intellectual curiosity, insight, and unprejudiced commitment to multicultural values are essential to being international. Overseas experience is either a minor part or not even a prerequisite. The realization of Japan's aspiration for internationalism in its returnee youths requires more than material investment in their education and change in image. The book introduces a number of topics for further discussion on comparative education and intercultural and interlingual issues in education, as well as producing a concise and accurate characterization of Japan in cultural and historical contexts for general readers.

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