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Eiko Maruko Siniawer. *Waste: Consuming Postwar Japan.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018. 414 pp. $53.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-5017-2584-5.

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I admit that when first opening Eiko Maruko Siniawer's *Waste: Consuming Postwar Japan*, my initial move was to shed any pretext of scholarly sophistication and search the index for Marie Kondo. Kondo has built an empire of best-selling books, a Netflix reality show, and a line of products that are all aimed to help grown adults sort their underwear. For a Western audience, Kondo taps into a belief in an inherent Japanese simplicity that is informed by an ancient tradition of venerating all objects as inhabited by spirits, making even the most mundane ephemera and waste of everyday life worthy of, at the very least, a nod of appreciation before you chuck them in the trash. Kondo certainly makes an appearance in the book, in which readers will learn that she is only one manifestation of *danshari*, a term coined by the "clutter consultant" Yamashita Hideko to mean something akin to the "sense of freedom, mindfulness, and serenity" that comes with decluttering (p. 266). Siniawer, a historian, sees the current boom in *danshari* methods and guidebooks as part of a pattern of waste consciousness in modern Japan.

This makes *Waste* a timely book, not least because of the work Siniawer does to messy and historicize the current global "tidying up" craze. There is the material waste, the trash, of course. Anyone who has spent an hour in Japan has likely found themselves producing shocking amounts of plastic waste: well-known is the single banana at the local supermarket, still in its perfect peel and yet curiously wrapped in plastic. The accumulation of trash on the go will also allow one to appreciate the seeming dearth of trash receptacles in Japan. In my own American town, trash cans abound, yet so does the trash accumulating around them.

The four parts of the book draw us through a teleological telling of waste as a metric to understand Japan's postwar development and middle-class consumption habits. Well written and clearly organized, *Waste* helps us understand the political, environmental, and social understandings of accumulation in the modern world. For Siniawer, it is the "idea of waste," just as much as the actual accumulation of trash, that tells us much about postwar Japan. Most compellingly, *Waste* introduces us to a wide range of individuals, institutions, and government programs that have grappled with how to live in, accommodate, and address a world of objects (and ideas) that were both desperately desired and, frequently, forgotten or later loathed.

Parts 1 and 2 detail the early postwar through the economic boom years, in which modernity and wealth were clearly linked to middle-class accumulation, though some made efforts to valorize

frugality. Much of the story centers on the effects of the famously expanding middle class in the 1960s and the materials that they accumulated. Amidst an environment with a growing appetite for consumption, deprivations brought about by the 1973 Oil Shock served as a reminder of the war years, when rationing of goods was a constant reminder of everyday struggles. The Toilet Paper Panic after the 1973 Oil Shock, when shoppers descended on markets to hoard goods that they feared would be limited in a paralyzed economy, is an example of consumer panic that will likely hit home and remind many readers of the early weeks of the first COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020 (*Waste* was published in 2018). Together with the interurban "Garbage War," in which neighborhoods fought to keep trash incinerators as far away as possible, Siniawer shows that the late 1960s and the entirety of the 1970s were years in which people became more keenly aware of the garbage they created. Of course, this did little to stop the waste from piling up. Siniawer shows that the Oil Shock (and to a lesser extent, the second Oil Shock of 1979-80) played a significant role in compelling people and institutions to rethink their attachment to consumption, but after the shock subsided, levels of trash continued to climb for the rest of the decade (p. 152).

One of the great strengths of *Waste* is that, even with an ambitious and extensive array of sources, the overall theme of capitalist modernity and its discontents is never lost. Children's literature, government campaigns, newspaper archives, and fashion advertisements are only a few of the sources Siniawer separates into their appropriate bins. The text uses an abundance of trash, fears of wasted work time and inefficient household management, and gratuitous consumption that served as a substitute for deeper meaning, to more brightly illuminate modern Japan. Siniawer writes: "As the warts of recent achievement were laid bare, waste became a site of reflection about the values and priorities of the society that high growth had created. The recognition dawned that a society of mass consumption might also be one of mass waste. Japan was declared a 'throwaway culture' with a 'culture of disposability' epitomized by wasteful attitudes towards things, resources, and energy" (pp. 95-96).

Over time, "views of rubbish were modified" and many consumers began to question the entirety of modern economics and culture. Society had entered a dirty new epoch: the "throwaway age" (pp. 101, 113). The author's discussion about the formation of the Association for Thinking About the Throwaway Age is a wonderfully enlightening journey into a revanchist attempt to highlight what was being lost in the age of accumulation (p. 121). With a slogan of "For convenience, disposability even throws away the future," organizations sounded the alarm of the "throwaway age" and understood that a society based on consumerism was likely to lose deeper meanings of community and place.

While the finger wagging of the anti-disposability crowd sought to curtail waste, Siniawer shows that "waste" could also be a life devoid of joy, as depicted in a 1975 manga in which the miserly main character finds meaning in a new romantic relationship (p. 142). This was a moment in which a top-down stinginess (***kechi***) movement was flowing through both the home and the workplace, with recommendations on how people could use less and value more. Long before the energy conservation measures put in place after the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami disaster that brought down a Fukushima nuclear power plant, companies and governments were asking offices to limit their air cooling and for men to shift away from the stifling corporate business suit. We are introduced to the sartorial wonder that was the short-sleeved suit, which unsurprisingly never took off. *Waste* includes a photograph of Prime Minister Oyhira Masayoshi wearing one and looking a bit like an uncomfortable pharmacist (p. 155). It turned out that politicians were not really the clothing models that the public wanted,

though these campaigns did signal an approval for lighter summer suits. Amid these calls for frugality and conservation, which once again echoed war rationing to many ears, some companies pushed back. Siniawer shows how the department store Isetan Shinjuku's advertising campaign slogan of "Luxury is Splendid" was a nod to the wartime sentiment that luxury was the enemy. "The declaration of indulgence as 'splendid' (*suteki*)," she observes, "was unequivocal in its encouragement to purchase the advertised products, from Camembert cheese to pearl necklaces" (p. 161).

Parts 3 and 4 of *Waste* focuses on the "Abundant Dualities" of wealth and waste and the "Affluence of the Heart" from the 1980s to the present. In 1987, the avant-garde artist Akasegawa Genpei saw a world awash with objects both necessary and useless, which compelled him to help establish the Society for the Study of Disposability (Tsukaistue Kōgen Gakkai), a discussion group that explored how Japan had become a "disposing superpower" (p. 185). Siniawer notes that Akasegawa "highlighted the ubiquity of meaningless objects intentionally created by the desires of a commodified society by drawing attention to the rarity of their antithesis—objects that had seemingly outlived their use" (p. 186). A peculiar staircase that went nowhere was part of a collection of random objects that Akasegawa dubbed "Thomassons," after the American drafted late in his career by the Yomiuri Giants who, disappointingly, "had a fully-formed body and yet served no purpose to the world" (p. 187).

Some readers might already be aware of the Island of Dreams, which was built atop a vast landfill in Tokyo Bay (*Waste* is a generally Tokyocentric book) and opened in 1978. This marked a transformation from mountains of Japan's postwar trash to a space of recreation and amusement. As Siniawer keenly observes, "There is something metaphorical about the Island of Dreams Park that presaged the decade to follow—that on a hidden foundation of material waste would rise a symbol of enjoyment and leisure in daily life" (p. 193).

Siniawer identifies the seemingly natural consequence of material affluence, which is the inevitable "poverty of affluence" (p. 198). In this section, the author again expertly synthesizes a wide range of sources in order to paint a fuller image. The office of Social Welfare Division's Lifestyle Section, an economist, an NHK commentator, and a social commentator all variously conclude that "financially and materially affluent lives" are but superficial measurements for what is truly important: spiritual and emotional wealth. The manga *Manual for Poor Living in Greater Tokyo* provided a tantalizing example of this, suggesting "how to get by on a small budget and much more about how to engage intentionally with structures of labor, money, and consumption in order to lead a full life" (p. 202). Siniawer writes, "The desire for an affluence of the heart was thus not born of a period of economic downturn as a response to the elusiveness of realizing any other kind of wealth, but a time of financial affluence and material plenty, even excess" (p. 208). As in other parts of *Waste*, the author is illuminating a global condition as much as one of Japan.

The final section of the book looks at the most recent decade ("The Decluttered Self"), with Marie Kondo and other purveyors of *danshiri*. If material affluence had not solved modernity's happiness dilemmas or made everyone happy, the next course was toward an "affluence of the heart." Japanese society is in the paradox of "economic anemia and material plenty," where underemployed young people who never knew the boom years of high growth are nonetheless awash in a world of readily available stuff (p. 275). "The recent popularity of decluttering, minimalism, and the theme of looking beyond money and things," the author writes, "both reflect the dissonances of contemporary Japan and suggest ways in which people are attempting to work through them" (p. 292). In a way, *Waste* asks readers to perhaps see the cur-

rent happiness industry, including its subcontractors of self-care and wellness, as fitting into a longer history of institutions and government responding (wisely or poorly) to the needs and desires of individuals, who are themselves continually reshaping their own relationships to the things around them.