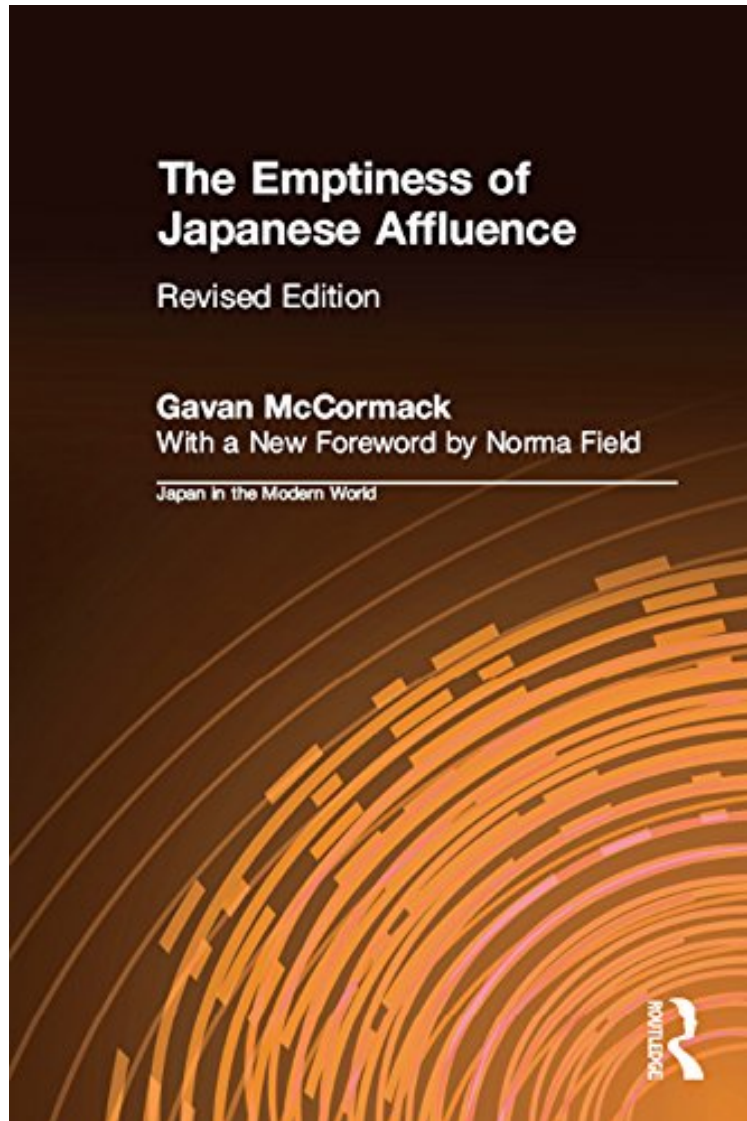


[Free read ebook] The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence (Japan in the Modern World (Hardcover))

The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence (Japan in the Modern World (Hardcover))

Gavan McCormack, Norma Field
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Gavan McCormack, Norma Field : The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence (Japan in the Modern World (Hardcover)) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence (Japan in the Modern World (Hardcover)):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A No-Punches-Pulled Look at JapanBy Bob NewmanIn the 1970s and '80s, Japan seemed to be unstoppable. Its economy grew endlessly and rapidly. Japanese individuals and corporations bought up iconic companies and sites all over the world. Tokyo property values skyrocketed beyond all

imagination. It was the Japan that could say "More". But after all the media attention and wild predictions of Japan being No. 1, what was the reality? Was all this a miracle? Was Japan the best model for a number of developing nations wanting to go for broke? McCormack, fluent in Japanese and deeply interested in the society he'd chosen to study for life, delves deeply into the underside of the economic "miracle" and--surprise, surprise--finds out that Godzilla might have feet of clay. But if anyone thinks that mine is a snide comment, let me hasten to say that he proves that he has every reason to doubt. The book is divided into several sections. In the first, he argues that "Japanese expansion has outrun the social and political structures necessary to determine social priorities and needs and has begun to threaten the fragile ecosystem." That is, such a giant boom was not sustainable. He analyzes three areas: construction, leisure, and farming, noting the way the first two impact the third. The use of state-financed construction of public works (whether necessary or not) and the encouragement of vast "leisure" areas for a population rather deprived of actual leisure time (areas whose construction helped destroy the environment of a not very large country) have wreaked havoc on the Japanese environment and depleted farming land. Though not an expert on these matters, I very much appreciated that McCormack used JAPANESE sources for his arguments and did not indulge in "Japan-bashing" from afar. The book goes on to discuss Japanese identity and the ins and outs of being a "peace state", that is, one without a formal military (though Japan's "self-defense force" is one of the major militaries of the world). I think this section is usefully connected to the first part of the book because knowing who you are and where you want to go help a nation to decide its long-term goals. The last part of the book, on Japan's treatment of its past, especially World War II, may be accurate and compelling, but seemed to me to be tangential to "the emptiness of affluence". However, a country that cannot unwind itself from its mid-20th century imperialist vision, that is led by people with the same mindset, cannot find a proper path to that more sustainable affluence that McCormack and many Japanese scholars envision. Now that China has become an enormous power---not really foreseen in this book---the chickens may come home to roost. This is a most serious study of Japan. If you'd like the background to Japan's current malaise, you've definitely come to the right place. Disclosure: I was a colleague of Gavan McCormack's a couple decades ago at La Trobe University. I have not seen him or contacted him in 25 years and so have no reason to praise without merit. He always seemed to be determinedly iconoclastic and not one to take sides easily. His view of Japan was not the usual one found in Australia. In this case, I think time has proven him to be right.

This work aims to show that Japan even at its height of success, while the successful version of capitalism was blighted at its core, being unsustainable. This revised edition features an introduction which gives an analysis of Japan's contemporary crisis.

From Library Journal
The author or editor of numerous books on Asia (e.g., *Democracy in Contemporary Japan*, M.E. Sharpe, 1986) and a professor at Australian National University, McCormack here scrutinizes the political economy, national identity, and war remembrances of Japan in an attempt to understand an apparently successful economic model with its own unique problems. The author has spent years studying and working in Japan, and it is evident that he knows the country well. Some of the more intriguing war legacies he relates are the "Shinjuku Bones Affair" (bones of prisoners tortured and killed at a military hospital during World War II are discovered years later) and the "left-behind children" of the Manchukuo area of China. Finally, we are left with a plea for zero population growth and more equitable economic distribution. Not a Japan-bashing book, McCormack's work is well documented, with extensive footnotes. Recommended for economics collections. Lisa K. Miller Paradise Valley Community Coll. Lib., Phoenix
Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. "What an intellectually marvelous world we would have if university folk all wrote prose like McCormack. His well-tempered assessments are the product of a wisdom that comes from much direct experience with, and a profound interest in, his subject." - Karel van Wolfren in *The Australian of Books*
About the Author
A graduate of Melbourne University and London University, Dr Gavan McCormack became Foundation Professor of Asian Studies at University of Adelaide in 1988 and was appointed to his current position as the chair in Japanese History in the Division of Pacific and Asian History of the ANU's Research School of Pacific Studies in 1990. He is fluent in Japanese, and has a good command of Chinese and French. He is also well-known as a media commentator, especially in Australia but also in Japan, on matters to do with Japan and the Australia-Japan relationship.