

## The Pacific Rivals

by the Staff of *Asahi Shimbun*  
(Foreword by Edwin O. Reischauer;  
Weatherhill/Asahi; 431 pp.; \$10.00)

The title is misleading, for the focus is not on rivalry in the Pacific. The book is, rather, as the subtitle suggests, "A Japanese View of Japanese-American Relations." Imagine, if you will, a Tokyo resident reading 400 pages of articles from the *New York Times* on Japan and you get some idea of what this volume, put together by the staff of one of Japan's leading newspapers, is about. Imagining the American counterpart to the book is difficult, however, because neither the *Times* nor any U.S. newspaper has devoted that much attention to Japan. The reasons are obvious—not the least being that we conquered and occupied their country—but the result is nonetheless a "curtain of ignorance" for which Americans are primarily responsible. *Pacific Rivals* is composed of several hundred brief articles focusing on history, economics and politics. Although religion and culture tend to be shortchanged, the collection remains an eminently useful reader that explains the daisy-plucking ambivalences of Japanese love, resentment, admiration, disgust, hatred, and apparently endless fascination for America.

## Witness to the Faith

by Gary Lease  
(Duquesne; 158 pp.; \$6.95)

A scholarly little book about John Henry Newman and the teaching authority of the Church. It is no secret that Cardinal Newman is in need of rehabilitation among moderns, what with his insistence upon a One True Church and other items similarly unpalatable in our dialogical era. Mr. Lease of Loyola University, Los Angeles, brings Cardinal Newman into line with Vatican II with skills of historical reconstruction that will no doubt be admired highly by readers devoutly determined to keep the saints in step with the times.

## Correspondence

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prove further if both sides discarded outdated or untrue images of one another.

Paul F. Power

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## American Community

To the Editors: In "The Death and Rebirth of American Community" (*Worldview*, July) James Sellers writes about the greatest affliction a society can suffer: the lack of life-informing myths. I regret that his article was so tentative and question-begging. But I do not blame him for this. Having myself on several occasions written on the same theme and not got much beyond the starting line, I realize the difficulties involved and so am always grateful for a fellow-groper's efforts.

In that spirit, then, I offer the following observations. I take it that Mr. Sellers would agree with me that the great intellectual and political task of our century is to restore the category of life to a position of primacy in our thinking, our talking and our doing. To this end it is helpful to invoke, as he does, mythic archetypes. Mythology is the strongest and most persuasive affirmation of life that human culture has furnished. I am not altogether happy with the appeal to initiation rites, however. For one thing, the practical rite of initiation in our own society is enacted in the schools. But the latter are so much part of the problem under discussion that I wonder if we can continue to look hopefully to them for any solution. Second, initiation rites suppose that there is some more or less stable and accepted scheme of values into which the young can be initiated. Again, it is this scheme that is under protest. Thirdly, since Sellers is much concerned with the hero theme, I think it might be better to stress the classic hero's mythic path

through separation from present values, to contact with a deeper vision, to a return with some salvific message. Separation-renewal-return. Our present predicament could then be located somewhere between the first and second step. It is true that America has departed from its innocence and "died" to its "recent past." But it has not yet made effective contact with those sources of replenishment that make a "moral revolution" promising. It does little good to appeal to such "structural bonds" as federal power and property holding. Equally well one could argue that these are prime causes of our alienation. And I fear that Mr. Sellers is quite wrong when he says that the gladiator hero of the American past is no longer reflected in the movies. The Godfather and Detective Doyle (to cite but two examples from recent film fare) are very much "aggressive, masculine and egoistic."

I agree that there are "stirrings." The voices of creative protest he mentions—blacks, women, students, the poor—are real enough and significant. But one stirring is conspicuously absent from most of our deliberations on this question, and I refer to an affirmation of the continuity and solidarity of all forms of life. We cannot both hope for rebirth and, for example, continue our exploitative ways with nature. As the poet Wendell Berry has written beautifully: "There is no earthly promise of life or peace but where the roots branch and weave their patient silent passages in the dark." We reach step two of the mythic pattern when we learn again the fertilizing power of the earth and the humbling lesson that man too is subject to the eternal rhythms of all living things, that there is a necessary homology between things cosmic and things human. Because we have forgotten this we have (as Berry says) made ourselves lonely among the creatures and have alienated ourselves from the ways of creation.

Sellers touches gold when he says that the Declaration of Independence needs to be worked over by a new generation of artists and story tellers. And not just this document

but our experience as a whole. It is, again, one of mythology's enduring lessons that our existence is stale and flat until it is transformed by the vivifying touch of the artist. But I would hope that the task he proposes would be carried out in rich anthropological context rather than a narrowly political sense. A "saving myth for all of us" implies much more than equal rights for minority groups. And we would go very wrong if we limited our efforts to bringing about a "new American myth." One of my correspondents (Robert Reiss of Arlington, Va.) suggests that the 200th Anniversary of the promulgation of a Declaration of Independence be celebrated by the promulgation of a Declaration of *Interdependence* of all peoples. He writes: "It would seem appropriate when the United States marks this event, having developed from a small nation to a nation of world stature, and when many other peoples have won political independence or are in the process of doing so, that the emphasis in world affairs should be changed from political independence to human interdependence, from political values to humane values, to those natural attributes which underlie all human aspirations and action—regardless of nationality, race, color, religion, economic and technological development, or of *political systems*" (my emphasis).

The ancient doctrine that the human psyche is woven into the fabric of the whole world, that we live best when we acknowledge this community of living things, is the *fons et origo* of images of rebirth, or, as I prefer to call them, images of wholeness. One regular exercise I engage in with my students is to scrutinize our art and culture for such images. We don't come up with too many in a century that has been dominated by so many negative images. Most frequently mentioned are such images as the swim scene in Camus's *The Plague* and Zorba's dance. Next in order of frequency are the various images of community now emerging (some of which Sellers mentions). Now and again a student will bring

up the architecture of Paolo Soleri or the cosmic vision in *Dr. Zhivago*. Occasionally, too, some of the better students call attention to centering images in such poets as Wallace Stevens or George Seferis.

I think it would be a very useful service at the present time to draw up a reasonably complete inventory of such images (as a step toward offsetting the prevailing negativity and directing attitudes toward a more celebrative way of life), and I would be grateful to any readers of *Worldview* who care to contribute some.

Bernard Murchland

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James Sellers Responds:

Mr. Murchland and I have little to quarrel about. On most of the points about which we seem to disagree, I am inclined to say, quite simply, that he presents convincing counter-arguments.

On two points, however, I would like to respond.

First, Mr. Murchland has misunderstood me if he thinks I made an "appeal" of some kind to the "structural bonds" of federal power and private property. What I said was that these bonds are so tightly in place that it may be futile to assault them directly by conventional revolutionary means—hence our need of alternatives; of mythic images, for example, that will push toward a change of identity by other means.

Second, one can easily argue, as he does, that classical American hero types, aggressive and egoistic, do *continue to appear in the movies and other art forms*. What I was concerned to show is that a new image of hero is now appearing and that it, rather than the older image, may have to bear the burden of our next crisis. The question is which of these two images is more salvific, hence more living. In the sense that the older image of hero cannot any longer "save" us, I argued that this image is suffering the fate of any symbol that no longer truly symbolizes: it is dead or dying,

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(signed) **SUSAN WOOLFSON**

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