freedom MITI enjoys from political interference and pork-barrelling. In almost every other country which operates an industry policy, much of it has been concerned with propping up inefficient industries in the interests of keeping jobs and votes. Why is this less so in Japan? In what I consider to be the most original chapter of *Between MITI and the Market*, Okimoto attributes MITI's leeway to a range of factors including:

- the capacity of MITI and industry to reach consensus;
- MITI's minimal reliance on formal legislation (it uses consultation and guidance instead);
- MITI's relatively small budget for public procurements (unlike, e.g., the Ministries of Construction or Agriculture), which limits opportunities for pork-barrelling; and
- the electoral importance to the LDP of labour-intensive groups, such as farmers, on whom politicians' attention is concentrated; these groups are outside MITI's area.

Okimoto suggests that the combined effect of these factors on a political party secure in office is for them to let well alone when it comes to industry policy.

In summary, Prestowitz has written a polemic for politicians, although he marshalls plenty of facts to support his arguments. His book assumes little advance knowledge of Japan. Okimoto's book is more detached and academic in tone; it presents general analyses supported by references to many other studies, rather than a few detailed but illustrative case studies as Prestowitz does. Although clearly written, *Between MITI and the Market* lacks the bite and quotability of the other. It would have been improved by a more detailed table of contents, to enable the reader to more readily perceive the organisation of the book. However, its content is complementary, informative, and important to anyone seeking to understand industry policy in modern Japan. I found both books worth reading.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Chalmers Johnston, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: the Growth of Industrial Policy 1925-1975,* Stanford University Press, California, 1982.
2. *ibid.*

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* The views expressed here are those of the reviewer, and not necessarily those of the Department or the Australian Government.

Notes on the Underground *by Rosalind Williams*
(MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1990), pp. xi + 265, ISBN 0-262-23145-X.

Those given the task of judging books should never be supplied with the covers. The dust jacket of Rosalind Williams' book, with its picture of a 19th century

railway tunnel, cannot but suggest, at least to a British reviewer, that *Notes on the Underground* has something to do with the London Tube. Not at all; according to the blurb inside the jacket, the book is a "new type of history", a work that "masterfully combines the study of technology with the study of literature". It is nothing of the sort. Would that publishers would read what they publish.

The underground here is certainly what lies beneath our feet, but very much more what lies in the depths of our subconscious. Sewers and tunnels are given short shrift in favour of the psychological impact of the underground as underworld. Williams is fascinated much more by minds than by mines, and when she digs it is into the nature of our being. Her vehicle for exploring the underground is literature, largely that of the late 19th century. Those who have delved no deeper into this literature than *War of the Worlds* and *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* will find some difficulty following an argument that is almost totally based on literary allusion, often to obscure characters in obscure novels. The author pays the penalty for knowing her subject well: she forgets how less well others know it. At one level, then, this is a book for those who are at least passinggly familiar with Hope-Hodgson's *The Night Land,* Bulwer-Lytton's *The Coming Race,* Villiers' *L'Eve Future,* and Hay's *Three Hundred Years Hence.*

Williams is at her best early in the book when she is linking reality — or at least discovery — to perceptions and preconceptions. Their classical education equipped the refined classes to see the excavations of the Industrial Revolution as technological metaphor rather than technological fact. The cave tour, which had gratified genteel senses in the eighteenth century, rapidly became the tunnel tour. Though it was man and his technology that allowed increasing exploitation of the underground, perception was still of technology as a mystical force, an ally rather than a tool of man. Pit disasters, for instance, were invariably likened to volcanic eruptions and could be assumed to be equally beyond the control of man. The actress Fanny Kemble, having witnessed for herself the appalling conditions under which men were digging the Thames Tunnel in 1827, could still ultimately deny the hand of man.

> . . . . the appearance of the workmen themselves, all begrimed, with their brawny arms and legs bare, some standing in black water up to their knees, others laboriously shovelling the black earth in their cages (while they sturdily sung at their task), with the red, murky light of links and lanterns flashing and flickering about them, made up the most striking picture you can conceive. As we returned, I remained at the bottom of the stairs last of all, to look back at the beautiful road to Hades . . .

And thus it is that the literature of the late 19th and early 20th centuries could continue to portray technology as detached from man's endeavours. Technology is simply a force which allows the underground to be tunnelled, to be illuminated, to be habitable, to provide refuge from the hazards of Nature on the surface, to mould political and cultural values, and to create superior subterranean civilizations. And if all this can happen underground, then why not on the surface too? Enter the argument that new technology can bring an end to old strife and misery, that technology is beautiful, is architecture, is art. The idea of technological bliss certainly survived to welcome the microelectronics revolution, and is no doubt still alive and well in many business schools. Williams is resolute in demolishing this argument, pointing out that the technological living room and shopping precinct are as much a fantasy — a denial of the real world — as the themes of H.G. Wells and Jules Verne. Retreat from Nature to technology

(from the surface to the underground) offers no permanent solution, at least not one without devastating disadvantages. Thus, even in the best subterranean civilisations of the 19th century imagination, there is still a longing — usually a fatal longing — to return to the sun and the fresh air. Similarly, we seek to escape from our technological capsules, our houses, our cars, our cities, to return to Nature. Our own perception of Nature, though, is as distant from reality as the perception of the underground a century and more ago. And our green ambitions to use sympathetic technology to make Nature more natural for future generations bear a disturbing resemblance to previous notions that appropriate technology could make the underworld a superior environment for a superior civilization.

Williams has put much thought into the presentation of her argument and in return expects the reader to put much effort into its understanding. She expects too much. Not only is she less than considerate towards those who have not brushed up on their Wells and Verne, and can only vaguely recall the antics of the Morlocks and the powers of vril, but she is also as guilty as most of her authors in her disregard for technological exactitude. The book is not about technology at all; it is about literature's impressions of what technology can do. That is forgivable, but the book's pretentions to be a history are not. Contemporary literature provides but one perspective on the past; it is not the historical totality that Williams often seems to assume.

Inevitably, *Notes on the Underground* attempts too much. The early chapters are delightful, presenting the reader with a view of the underground he is not likely to have encountered elsewhere, if he has thought about it at all. The middle chapters are akin to notes in the literary sense; they are literary criticism and one admires the author more for her erudition than for her elucidation. Towards the end of the book, Williams begins to lose the thread of her own argument. She tries to find it in some unlikely places and labours in the process. Thinly disguised as social historian, she delves "below the surface of society". "The social investigator, as much as the natural one, must dig down to find the truth." This is desperate and unworthy stuff. And so too is her frenzied dash through a random selection of modern scribblings to a climax which she terms either Jungian or Freudian, and which is simply pretentious. A pity, because this is an original and clever book about ideas, ideas about the relationship between the underground and technology. It is contribution enough to reveal, explain and order such ideas. They are fascinating in themselves without the decoration and obfuscation which are now so often considered the hallmarks of scholarship.

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