



ELMER ADLER UNDERGRADUATE BOOK
COLLECTING PRIZE

The winners of the 2012 Elmer Adler Undergraduate Book Collecting Prize were announced at the winter dinner of the Friends of the Princeton University Library on March 25, 2012. The jury awarded two first prizes, one second prize, and one honorable mention.

First prize went to Chloe Ferguson, Class of 2013, and Mary Thierry, Class of 2012. Chloe's essay, "The Farther Shore: Collection, Memory, and the East Asian Literary Tradition," discusses how she came to love and collect titles about East Asia. She received a prize of \$2,000 and a copy of Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney's *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities through Time*. Mary's essay, "Mirror, Mirror: American Daguerrean Portraits," is about her interest in the intimate nature of daguerrean portrait photography. She received a prize of \$2,000 and a copy of Roger Taylor and Edward Wakeling's book *Lewis Carroll: Photographer*.

Second prize was awarded to Mohit Manohar, Class of 2013, for "An Indian Reading Life," in which he recounts his discovery of Indian literature at a young age and his difficulties in collecting modern literature in India before he had access to online shopping. Mohit received a prize of \$1,500 and a copy of Partha Chatterjee's narrative history, *A Princely Impostor? The Strange and Universal History of the Kumar of Bhawal*.

Honorable mention was awarded to Lily Healey, Class of 2013, for "Running after Gatsby," in which she describes her passion for collecting modern editions of *The Great Gatsby*. Lily received a prize of \$500 and Paul Giles's *The Global Remapping of American Literature* as well as the Winter 1992 issue of the *Library Chronicle*, which contains Charles Scribner III's essay on Francis Cugat's cover art for *The Great Gatsby*.

Each of the winners also received a certificate from the Dean of the College. The book prizes were sponsored by Princeton University Press. Thanks to Director Peter J. Dougherty for his continuing support of this competition. The two first-prize essays will represent Princeton in the National Collegiate Book Collecting Competition, which is sponsored by the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America.

My sincere thanks to this year's judges for their congenial service: Richard J. Levine, member of the Friends Council; Louise Marshall, also a member of the Friends Council; John Logan, Literature Bibliographer and member of the Friends Council; Paul Needham, Scheide Librarian; Maria DiBattista, Professor of English and Comparative Literature and member of the Friends Council; and Rob Wegman, Associate Professor of Music.

—REGINE HEBERLEIN

Processing Archivist

THE FARTHER SHORE:
COLLECTION, MEMORY, AND THE EAST ASIAN
LITERARY TRADITION

If I had known then that it was to be *the* first, *the* beginning, perhaps I could have marked the occasion more ceremoniously. Tabulated a list, with a single item at its top and a vast expanse of white space below, suggesting tantalizingly of more additions to come. Written my name on its title page in a somber, carefully lettered hand, the way one marked notebooks in elementary school. Instead I stared at it, at once challenged and intrigued. I could read only a few of the myriad squiggling characters on the cover. “*Marugoto*.” “Whole.”

“My mother sent this from Japan when she heard you were studying Japanese. I think it’s good practice. Take a look at it at home and see what you can read.”

The book, *Japan at a Glance* by Kodansha Bilingual Books, was to become more than a bit of reading practice casually handed to me by my young Japanese tutor. The cowed fourteen-year-old self that picked up the slender little volume with the cringing hesitancy of the linguistic newcomer could not have know that this, this small little book, this after-thought of a gift, *this* was to become Book One in an East Asian scholarly collection that has ultimately shaped both my academic path and future trajectory more strongly than ever imagined.

Raised in a family in which French, English, and German language skills were *de rigueur*, I expressed my youthful rebellion in an unyielding refusal to add another European or Romance language to my repertoire. “I want to do something Asian,” I informed my parents flatly and then followed up with the double punch of an adamant desire to learn Japanese. “At least do Chinese! Chinese is practical!” my mother urged, to no avail. It was to be Japanese or nothing. So, grudgingly, slowly, haltingly, a tutor was found, a schedule drawn up, worksheets printed, flashcards made, hours toiled, until finally, finally, I could stare at Japan’s first, most basic forty-eight character system and puzzle through the secrets encoded therein.

Enter Kodansha. True, I had in my possession the staid teal textbook and orange-pink workbook pressed upon me by my tutor, but

this was the first Japanese book that took more than it gave, that fit into the palm of my hand, that seemed so seductively *bookish*. *Read me*, it hissed, to which I could only wail in return, “I’ll get there! I’ll get there soon!”

My visions of “soon,” however, quickly receded in the face of the Japanese language’s two forty-eight-character writing systems and one multi-thousand-character overarching system. It had become apparent that I was in it for the proverbial long haul—and to my parents, this seemed the perfect occasion to ply me with Japan’s other cultural offerings, in the hope that they could stoke this intellectual fire into a full, roaring burn. For my father, the economist and political scientist extraordinaire, this entailed fishing out a dusty copy of *Japan, Inc.* from some forgotten attic box in the hope that I could glean some economic savoir from its yellowed pages (never mind that the book addressed the Detroit/Japan auto-dumping controversy as “a recent event”). My mother in turn rediscovered all her old Japanese fiction favorites in translation, urging me to take up her copies of Mishima and Tanizaki in the name of literary self-education. If a book could be found in the house that in some way pertained to Japan, it inevitably crept in to my room—an insidious, comical flood of economic and political treatises intermingled with canonical modern literature from the last fifty-odd years.

Inevitably, through the far-reaching social networking that parents term “pride” and their teenage daughters term “Mom, stop embarrassing me!” word of my newfound academic focus began to percolate among friends of the family. Dinner parties became occasions not of “would they” but “when”: “So, Chloe, I hear you’re taking Japanese?” Eager to share, I expounded on everything from my frustration with the thousand-odd daily usage *kanji* characters to my hope to one day read the newspaper. Then a curious thing happened: the tidal flow of books within the house began to be joined by a slow, steady trickle of books from outside as well. From well-meaning friends came a copy of “oh, just something I picked up used, since it looked like your thing,” or a tome of “I had this lying around and was going to toss it, so just take it” from relatives in far-flung places. Course books, phrase books, and, in particular, media and pop cultural studies—I became the Ferguson Kid Learning Japanese, home for all flotsam on Japan.

And yet, I began to notice that the books that beached themselves

upon my desk were not simply the cast-offs of a shelf- or closet-cleaning spree. Some bore the traces of careful study; others, the detailed notes of an attentive student or the loving dog-ears of a committed scholar. On one Thanksgiving, my mother's colleague stopped me on the stairs of her dizzyingly multistory apartment and asked me to follow her to a particular set of bookshelves. "When I was about your age, maybe a little older, in college," she began, "I took Japanese. It's all gone now mostly, but..." Fingering the spines of the vintage dictionaries and grammar guides lovingly, she paused a moment, as if unsure whether to continue. "I think you should take them," she finished and pulled them gently from their shelf. Explaining each offering with the nostalgic glee of the perpetual student, she carefully piled them in my arms one by one, as if making peace with the separation from each. At the end, she snatched one back, "Oh, wait, I just can't part with this yet!"

It dawned on me then, fully, that I was not simply a dumping ground for the books of my myriad donors, but with each offering became the repository for their own little flames of East Asian interest. These books did not so much hiss to be read as whisper to me, their bearer, of what they meant: *remember who studied us*, they murmured, *and continue what they didn't*. In each jotted character and underlined word lingered a ghost of a student past who harried me onward toward my own budding goal of not simply mastering Japanese, but of understanding East Asia with breadth and depth.

As an increasingly serious student of Asia, I understood that the mastery I desired was not to be obtained from my twice weekly tutoring sessions and penchant for side reading. "I think," I informed my parents, "that I should study abroad. In Tokyo. Next year." And so my parents, with more than a few exchanged glances and hanging questions, patiently bore with my sixteen-year-old self's summer of study abroad applications to a Tokyo high school. When I was summarily accepted and enrolled, the mood in the house hung between an odd sort of pride and a deep undercurrent of parental anxiety— anxiety that was then assuaged with a deluge of books. To Barnes and Noble, used bookstores, library sales went the family car for "stocking up" purchases of just about every living-in-Japan book known to mankind, and likely a few that weren't. "Mom," I'd admonish, "this Tokyo guide is from 1995. I don't think it's useful anymore." "Take it anyway," came the brisk response. "You might want it."

So off I went to Tokyo, and back I came (of course, with a suitcase full of Japanese books), and soon thereafter the year-long counterpart to me arrived: a petite Japanese girl by the name of Nao, eager to fit in and unsure of how to break in to the family dynamic. “What did they tell you to do at school to help adjust?” I asked at one point. “*Eto ne*,” she puzzled, “they said, you should try reading books together. I brought.” And lo and behold, from the bottom of her suitcase appeared not one, but two Kodansha Bilingual Books, those same slender little manila volumes, the plasticky paper slick as ever with black typeface cascading across the front. Handling them reverently, I flipped the nearest title on origami folding and began to read—this time, on the Japanese side of the page.

When I discovered that this thing that I did, this odd, unfolding interest in Japan, then Korea, then China, was something that could be pursued in college, my fate (and major) was sealed. I arrived freshman year at Princeton eager to delve into the East Asian Studies Department and promptly inserted myself into an advanced EAS seminar that, in the capable hands of classical literature specialist Richard Okada, became the touching-off point for a head-over-heels love affair with classical East Asian literature. The class was for seniors and juniors, the topic was the Tale of Genji, and the book was *large*. My first encounter with the now-familiar Seidensticker translation of Genji was the shock-awe of seeing this tome (capital T) thunk down on the counter at the local campus bookstore. “We read this?! *All* of this?!” I squeaked. Little did I know that my Seidensticker would later be joined by the more recent Tyler translation and, yes, it would *all* get read, more than once, in fact. Nipping at the heels of my classical literature books came a slew of pop-culture and politics offerings as I dove deeper into the department. Theory books, textbooks, memoirs, fiction, comic books, workbooks for Japanese, Korean—in flowed the waters for my own personal sea-change as the semesters rolled onward. A second year of study in Tokyo, a second suitcase of books—this time, the petite, palm-sized paperbacks that are mass-market Japanese fiction in its original language. My Kodansha days are long over.

And yet, it is only very recently that I have recognized my sprawling collection for what it is: a collection. As someone who grew up in the embrace of the most traditional of European cultures, book collecting, for me, had always borne the indelible hallmarks of some-

thing done by Serious Collectors engaging in Serious Collecting. The very words “book collecting” conjured images of tweed-clad searchers rising from amidst a pile of leather-bound volumes, prize in hand, triumphant, or of the airless, crumbling collections encased behind glass at so many historic homes. My collection was not leather-bound. It bore no gilt tooling. I did not handle it with white gloves or fear sneezing in its presence, lest it crumble to ashes in my hands. My collection consisted of old economics treatises, dated grammar guides, and written-in character guides. It was vintage dictionaries and broken-spine fiction classics. It was many, many books about Japanese history, economy, pop culture. It was coursebooks and study guides and old picture books from the sixties, replete with Technicolor pastels of overly exuberant samurai and courtesans. I didn’t quite know *what* to make of it until someone else did: “Chloe, do you want me just to put it with your East Asian books collection?” Alas, the eternal wisdom of a parent engaged in spring cleaning.

Perhaps this cognitive dissonance arises from the fact that I continue to think of my collection not for the thematic whole it so obviously is, but rather for the singular story each donation and addition represents. My fault lies perhaps in imagining collecting as an end in itself rather than as the means to an end that is less easily grasped or elucidated through material objects. My own collection represents my attempt to stand on the foundations of others, on their notes, their markings, their leavings as I move toward an understanding of my own. It is fitting, then, that I have chosen East Asia as my field of scholarly focus, as the notion of books and collecting, or being versed in text, of possession of the past through possession of the physical is intrinsic across its written tradition. Early Chinese kings were buried with perhaps the richest tribute of all: hundreds of texts written on thin bamboo slats, a book collection for the afterlife. The figure of the poet-hero in the Chinese tradition is intrinsically linked to the role of the bibliographer, of the passer-down-of-knowledge. In third-century China, the poet Wan Xi-zhi wrote:

Those in later times will look on today as we today look on the past—
there is the sadness! For this reason I have written out the list of those
present at that time and copied their compositions. Though ages
change and experiences differ, all may share what stirs deep feelings.
And those who read this in later times will also be moved by what is
in this writing.

Though I cannot hope to pass on copies of written words that will endure through millennia, my small but carefully curated collection continues to expand as each new year of study opens new fields that demand new books, even as expanding networks bring me into contact with new expressions of “I had this lying around and was going to toss it, so just take it” and all the homeless volumes and thoughtful gifts in between. I like to imagine that Princeton’s own Gest East Asian Library began with another hobbyist-turned-collector somewhere, who accrued enough knowledge and textual bric-a-brac to merit chucking the whole lot in a building for the sake of keeping it all organized. My collection, however small it may be, is a work of no less dedication at its core than this most visible of East Asian textual repositories. It is my own treasure, but I hope, unlike the Zhou kings, that I *don’t* take it to the grave. Rather, I’d like one day to meet an eager teenage girl at a dinner party so that I can call her over to my shelves, pile each title reverently, and maybe, just maybe, snatch one back.

—CHLOE FERGUSON

Class of 2013