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# History's Disquiet

By Harry Harootian



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## History's Disquiet By Harry Harootian

Acclaimed historian Harry Harootian calls attention to the boundaries, real and theoretical, that compartmentalize the world around us. In one of the first works to explore on equal footing European and Japanese conceptions of modernity—as imagined in the writings of Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin, as well as ethnologist Yanagita Kunio and Marxist philosopher Tosaka Jun?Harootian seeks to expose the problematic nature of scholarly categories. In doing so, *History's Disquiet* presents intellectual genealogies of such orthodox notions as "field" and "modernity" and other concepts intellectuals in the East and West have used to understand the changing world around them. Contrasting reflections on everyday life in Japan and Europe, Harootian shows how responses to capitalist society were expressed in similar ways: social critics in both regions alleged a broad sense of alienation, particularly among the middle class. However, he also points out that Japanese critics viewed modernity as a condition in which Japan?without the lengthy period of capitalist modernization that characterized Europe and America?was either "catching up" with those regions or "copying" them.

As elegantly written as it is controversial, this book is both an invitation for rethinking intellectual boundaries and an invigorating affirmation that such boundaries can indeed be broken down.



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## Editorial Review

### Review

By performing [the] dramatic, initial foray through an extraordinarily fertile research site that others can now settle and plow, *History's Disquiet* achieves the status of pioneering work.

(*The Journal of Asian Studies*)

This is an extraordinary book... It should be read and reread.

(Takashi Fujitani *Pacific Historical Review*)

### Review

A fearlessly critical book, freely integrating theories and opinions culled from all places and periods. One of the very few truly exciting books on Japan, it sees Japan as simply one of the countries in the world, thus shedding powerful light on contemporary intellectual problems of every society.

(Masao Miyoshi, University of California, San Diego, coeditor (with Fredric Jameson) of *Cultures of Globalization*)

In his magisterial account of modernity and the everyday, Harry Harootunian has offered an incisive critique of the politics of knowledge production regarding 'Japan,' 'Asia,' and beyond. The theoretical sophistication, passion, and vision of this work are exemplary.

(Rey Chow, Brown University, author of *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema*)

### About the Author

Harry Harootunian is professor of history and director of East Asian Studies at New York University. He is author of *Toward Restoration* and *Things Seen and Unseen*. He lives in New York City.

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