

nations of some of the theorists he quotes as well as noting, for example, the page on which he mentions tacos. Only zealous readers will find this useful.

The titles of the first two seminars, "Right Bam Now!" and "What Did They Do With My Future?" hint at how time influences perception of evolving technology. Shepherd tries to make sense of the modern world of machines and architecture by using traditional classification systems, such as those of the natural sciences: genus, family, species. One of his characters is hooked on the idea of writing a "Field Guide to the Machines," yet he realizes that machines defy classification because of their complex evolutionary history. The second pair of seminars, "Quadrigas" (an alternate title for the book) and "Fields and Visions," continue Shepherd's attempts at ordering the world of machines he encounters. He uses terms such as "quadrigas" and "the three objects of desire" as analogous ordering systems, yet we never learn why this is appropriate. Many of these passages seem intellectually capricious.

The "story" portion of the book tells about the family reunion in Houston at Thanksgiving. One can almost hear the hum of the giant mechanical equipment serving the glass office towers of that city and feel the presence of NASA throughout his narrative. Shepherd even classifies his family members, using Shakespeare's "seven ages of man" motif from *As You Like It*. From his infant son to his aging father, each male family member represents a phase of the human condition. Their combined presence provides a vivid image of the passage of time and evolution. The contrast to human evolution through growth versus technological evolution as an accumulation of parts or functions is striking.

When presented as a story, the intensity of Shepherd's ideas on technology and our relationship to it is somehow lightened. Yet the reader is forced to pick out Shepherd's theories from the story line and draw his or her own conclusions. Shepherd calls all this material a meal of speculations, but the effect is like eating a lot without feeling sated. This is a book that wants to be reread so that more of the ideas will sink in, and the writing and storytelling style makes the proposition palatable.

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Modernity and Technology.

Edited by Thomas J. Misa, Philip Brey, and Andrew Feenberg. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003. Pp. vi+421. \$40.

Modernity studies deal with some of the fundamental questions of our time: What is it like to be "modern"? Where are the roots of this modern

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condition to be found? Are our lives different in an essential way from the lives of our predecessors? To most people, the proposition that modernity is connected to technology is more or less self-evident. Still, the large part of modernity studies pays very little attention to the actual role of technology in modern society and, consequently, the modern condition. This circumstance is one of the starting points for the anthology *Modernity and Technology*.

As Thomas J. Misa points out in the introduction, technology may be the truly distinctive feature of modernity, and still the modern society outlined by social theorists and philosophers is a theoretical construct surprisingly devoid of technology. This serious critique against modernity theory is accompanied by an equally serious but different critique aimed at technology studies. While modernity theory misses what is modern about technology, technology studies fail to relate their empirical findings to an abstract level and to make far-reaching interpretations about modernity. The relationship may be described as mutual black-boxing.

Modernity and Technology attempts to bridge the gap between these two traditions, to combine the “technological shaping of society” prevailing among theorists of modernity with the “social construction of technology” of historians and sociologists, by adopting the notion of co-construction. This not so modest ambition is carried out in three different sections. The first deals with methodological and theoretical questions about combining studies of technology and modernity. The second is focused on specific technologies and technological systems, transferring the methodological issues to empirical material. The third has a more normative approach, offering critique and suggesting alternate ways of thinking about technopolitics and development.

Several authors confront the notion of a single, general condition describable as “modern.” Paul Edwards shows that what we define as modern is, to a considerable extent, governed by our choice of scale. In order to properly understand both technology and modernity, Edwards advocates scholarly work that is multiscale and gives attention to phenomena on a macro scale as well as on a meso and micro scale. Similarly, Don Slater, writing on the use of Internet in Trinidad, shows how the concept of modernity depends on geographical considerations. To be modern in one part of the world may mean an entirely different thing than it does in another. The dominant Euro-American idea of modernity/postmodernity, as it turns out, is just not applicable to Slater’s Trinidad.

Another aspect of the complexity of modernity is touched upon by Junichi Murata in an essay about the introduction of modernization in Japan. Murata shows that the sociotechnical network that conditioned this process had a distinctive dual structure: one “advanced” sector of transferred technology and one domestic sector of traditional technology. Mediation between these was made possible first by artisans and later by

engineers, who translated new technology to traditional society. In modernity, concludes Murata, there is always a dual structure of modern and traditional factors.

Johan Schot examines the development of a “typical modernist practice of technology politics” during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The distinctive feature of this practice was the separation of the initial promotion of technology from its subsequent regulation. In the modernist view, technology in itself is value free, neither good nor bad, and needs nurturing in order to develop. The undesirable effects that new technology may produce are treated as unrelated to the choice of technology, things to be dealt with through regulation. As Schot shows, separating technology from its consequences has repeatedly resulted in conflicts.

This is a much needed book. By bringing an international, multidisciplinary group of historians of technology, sociologists, philosophers, and economic theorists together with experts in gender studies, information, and environmental history, *Modernity and Technology* gains strength as a whole. Unlike many anthologies, it has a single more-or-less coherent message, one that is important to the development and vitality of both modernity studies and technology studies. *Modernity and Technology* may not be the big picture, but it offers fruitful angles of approach for painting such a picture. One hopes that it will fuel a debate about technology and modernity for years to come.

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The Digital Revolution and the Coming of the Postmodern University.

By Carl A. Raschke. London and New York: Routledge, 2003. Pp. x+129. \$19.95.

“OU?” or rather, “où?” (“where?”) is the question that Carl Raschke’s book kept provoking during the afternoon that I spent with this short study of the “hyperuniversity.” Raschke seems to answer this question by suggesting that cyberspace is the “where” of a postmodern education. He finds models in two “OUs”: Britain’s Open University and the Oklahoma University system, which have both taken giant steps in fine-tuning their distance education programs. At these institutions, the material, architectural spaces of education take a back seat to a “hypercognitive,” simulated knowledge space, “a knowledge space that is unrelated to physical space, and, as with hyperreality itself, involves a movement of ‘simulacra’ that are not traditionally associated with the usual ‘divisions’ of subject areas and curricula” (p. 100).

But Raschke does not put all his eggs in the distance-education basket, which is the case of many other studies on the future of education. So,