as many continents, between keen insights with which subsequent scholars will have to contend and superficial coverage of almost every topic to which she all too briefly gives her attention. That her analysis is usually based upon a small number of secondary sources only adds to the disappointment, at the same time that it challenges others to complete the journey on which she has so suggestively embarked.

In what she describes as “the first book-length study of the Bauhaus through the lens of critical social theory,” she is certainly unusual in the degree to which she fails to be seduced by Gropius’s rhetoric. Rather than focusing on his objective rhetoric of production, she relentlessly concentrates on the links to consumerism. “Supposedly an institution teaching art, design and architecture centered on industrial production principles, the Bauhaus suddenly stood revealed [in an account in which former Bauhaus student described his visit to the exhibition on the school staged at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1938] as a media phenomenon—a ‘dream-machine’ trading in desires,” she writes (7).

Ray is convinced that the history of the school is the history of commodities; never does she accept its own focus, or that of the modern movement more generally, on the supposedly objective alternative—production. This prompts her, for instance, to pay welcome attention to the importance of marketing both in the school’s self-promotion efforts and as a field of study there.

Ray’s other major contribution is her preliminary mapping of the dissemination of modern architecture. While her all too brief account seldom distinguishes between the impact of Bauhaus pedagogy and Bauhaus aesthetics on the one hand, and the presence of former Bauhaus students and faculty or modern architecture and design more generally on the other, she is right to suggest that its geographical reach was far greater than has usually been acknowledged. Here again she provides a tantalizing hint of how new directions might yield insights in an account that definitively refuses to privilege Europe, or even the West, over the rest of the world. Perhaps the most suggestive pages are those chronicling Hannes Meyer’s activities in Mexico. Ray is, not surprisingly, quite sympathetic to Meyer and offers glimmers of the major reassessment he deserves. Situating him in relation to the large German Communist exile community in Mexico City might have yielded further insights into his activities there. The fact that local architects such as Juan O’Gorman had already mastered the language of the European avant-garde nearly a decade before Meyer’s arrival suggests, however, that there was an indigenous engagement with modernism in Mexico and perhaps in other Latin American and Asian settings that hardly required the presence of Bauhaus exiles to manifest itself.

Bauhaus Dream-house covers a great deal of ground. Ray opens with a history of design education that begins with medieval guilds and ends with the Bauhaus. The second of her six main chapters briefly introduces critical theory. Heavily larded with quotes from secondary sources, they provide the background for her analysis of the Bauhaus “as a cultural commodity.” Two chapters focusing on the school follow. The first concentrates on the body and on the way in which the First World War shattered not only bodies but also traumatized minds in ways that influenced the experimental art produced at the school.

“In general,” Ray writes, “the Bauhaus responded to its psychosocial context by reconstructing personal identity through first, quasi-military and masochistic ritual and second, corporeal identities symbolically promising sexual equality through androgyny yet literally reinforcing the traditional superiority of men over women” (63). The second of these chapters focuses on the economic context in which the school operated, and its response to it. The issues it raises about the relationship of the school to the marketplace deserve further investigation. The two final chapters offer accounts in turn of the Bauhaus’s own publicity and, as described above, survey its international influence.

The book appears unusually lightly edited and contains many passages of extremely awkward writing. More frustrating for the fellow scholar are the many instances in which sources are not given, making it impossible to follow Ray’s promising leads without repeating her initial spadework. Most citations are embedded parenthetically in the text; the extensive bibliography is supplemented by footnotes, but very seldom does she provide the published sources (she has apparently consulted no archives) for the often fascinating nuggets she supplies in the notes.

Ray’s book offers compelling evidence of a welcome shift in the writing of history of the Bauhaus, and indeed of modern architecture and design in general, away from the acceptance of the rhetoric of its founders, whose convictions its earliest chroniclers generally shared. To be as convincing, however, as their often extremely polemical manifestoes and accounts, requires more than the substitution of one set of theories for another. Ray is derailed in part by her initial questions, which neither outline an approach nor define a thesis, but also by the tension between understanding design education as overwhelmed by external forces and yet having the agency to effect significant change. The power of the Bauhaus came at least in part from the degree to which its faculty and students were able to find forms that both contemporaries and their successors—opponents as well as champions—recognized as representing the myriad contradictions of Weimar Germany. This was a more substantive achievement than the marketing hype that failed to trigger the consumer demand that might have put the school on a more stable financial footing. That the school’s goals, whether economic self-sufficiency or objective industrial design, proved in many ways to be illusory dreams does not mean that they lacked intellectual and artistic rigor, as our apparently enduring fascination with it proves.

Kathleen James-Chakraborty
University College Dublin

Ken Tadashi Oshima
International Architecture in Interwar Japan: Constructing Kokusai Kenchiku

Ken Tadashi Oshima’s International Architecture in Interwar Japan represents a new
phase in English-language writing on architecture in Japan, but should be required reading for scholars and students working in modern architectural history regardless of location. As its title suggests, the book articulates how elite architects and their clients in interwar Japan combined a transnational modern subjectivity and modernist stylistic and thematic concerns with local context, in both design work and modes of practice. Oshima makes his case through close readings of the work of three architects: Horiguchi Sutemi, Antonin Raymond, and Yamada Mamoru. As a monograph on the three architects and incisive view into architectural practice anywhere in the twentieth century.

Global history approaches—examining the transborder flows of ideas, forms and materials or their synchronous implementation and transformation in different locales, for example—are one way to overcome the overdetermined and inherited emphasis on national borders that stubbornly refuses to relinquish its hold on architectural history (including the particularly insidious substrain, “the uniqueness of Japan”); so is showing how a specific set of practices can be both international and locally specific. This is precisely Oshima’s project. The book’s subtitle, Constructing Kokusai Kenchiku, introduces the argument. As Oshima explains, modernist Japanese architects active in the interwar period understood their work as part of a transnational continuum and had personal and professional ties with colleagues in Europe, but expressed this condition in a specifically local language, in reference to the history, climate, and political and social milieu of interwar Japan. Architects’ embrace of the phrase kokusai kenchiku—literally, “international architecture,” but with a specifically cosmopolitan political undertone—parallels the visual and formal language each architect developed in his design work.

In other words, “international” was both transborder and nationally specific. Oshima is also careful to point out that “international” did not mean universal access to information, but had a much narrower sense, in which architects as a privileged group operated within specific and limited networks of people and information. For his protagonists and their peers, unlike most Japanese, “international” was both “an ambition and an ideal” and an actual condition (8). It implied an express embrace of modernist principles and form, but for the three architects studied, all of whom traveled and worked abroad—Raymond in America and Japan, Horiguchi and Yamada in Europe—it described their formation and lives as well. And it was enabled by technology, most notably photography and print technology that allowed the three architects to access, document, and propagate information about overseas developments and their own work, and the railroads and steamships that allowed them to travel.

The structure of the book is extremely clear. Rather than setting up the protagonists in parallel, each with their own chapter, Oshima organizes each chapter around a different topic, and employs case studies from each of the three architects to discuss and illustrate it. This is an effective decision, as the proximity highlights differences and similarities in each architect’s methods and perspective, thus both illuminating their individual practice and providing a richer, higher-resolution image of the larger scene. After a brief introduction laying out the book’s themes and understanding of “international,” a similarly short first chapter reviews the formation of a self-consciously modern architectural profession in Japan in the 1870s, providing the historical basis for readers new to the topic, and traces discourse around internationalism as developed within Japanese architecture during the period. Importantly, Oshima points out that views of internationalism—as stylistic experimentation and structural rationalism—existed already among an earlier generation of architects, including Yamada and Horiguchi’s teachers, and that the modernist formal language later immortalized in the Museum of Modern Art’s International Style exhibition (1932) was readily available to architects from the early 1920s through photographs and drawings in the extensive architectural press.

The meat of the book lies in the following three chapters. Chapter two explores Horiguchi, Raymond, and Yamada’s formation as international architects, from a common early interest in art through training, early affiliations, theoretical and historical affinities, and travel abroad for work and study. Horiguchi and Yamada followed a similar path from rural Japan to the Tokyo Imperial University, where they were in the same class and, upon graduation, cofounded a modernist architectural movement, the Bunriha, or Japanese Secessionist Architectural Association. Their paths then diverged. Yamada went to the Ministry of Communications, which eventually sponsored a European trip in 1929–30, and Horiguchi, to design a major domestic exhibition and travel to Europe in 1923. Raymond’s path was not dissimilar, though he moved first from Bohemia to Prague for study, then to New York and Tokyo for work. As this summary suggests, travel—from the countryside to the city, as well as abroad—is central to Oshima’s view of the three architects’ self-constitution and intellectual stance. He argues convincingly that the physical fact of dislocation and their surprising encounters with buildings they had previously understood through photographs contributed to each architect’s formulation of a modernist local practice. The chapter’s documentation of Horiguchi’s encounter with Dutch expressionist architecture and the Palais Stoclet, and Yamada’s with Mendelsohn, is invaluable, as is the exciting discussion of Yamada’s use of 8mm film.

Horiguchi, Raymond, and Yamada’s conceptualizations of kokusai kenchiku as manifest in their designs for private homes and institutions are the subjects of chapters three and four, respectively. Here Oshima’s goal is to demonstrate precisely how—while connected by generation, experience, training, and concerns—the three architects interpreted kokusai kenchiku differently. In some cases these are well-known buildings within Japanese architectural
history, but the chapters shine in their marshaling of detail to make the argument. Oshima unfolds his reading of each architect’s stance through exemplary close analyses of key projects, considering plans, façades, details, scale, site, historical or contemporary models, materials, visual documentation, incorporation of nature, clients, and combinations of Japanese and Western-style living arrangements and elements.

The different messages conveyed through the three architects’ selection and treatment of standard materials—wood and exposed concrete—is particularly well-argued, and the role of photography and publishing in the design process and overseas dissemination of the architects’ preferred image of modern Japanese architecture carefully noted. Throughout the analyses, comparisons and connections with projects and architectural ideas elsewhere are regularly given, underscoring Oshima’s point that the context for the three architects’ practice was at once local, within Japan, and international, as part of a transnational modernist community. The buildings’ bases in the period’s shifting economic and political substrate are acknowledged, giving the three architects’ stances context, but ultimately this is architectural history, not political economy through architecture. Somewhat less defensible is the relative lack of attention to interiors, particularly furnishings and service spaces (the analysis of Horiguchi’s Shienso villa is a welcome exception). Both still tend to receive short shrift in architectural history, so here Oshima is hardly alone, but given the close attention paid to other elements, the rich visual documentation of interiors and the role that furnishings play in shaping a room’s identity—strengthening the architect’s idea or, at times, undermining or diverting it—more analysis of kitchens, chairs and lighting would have been appropriate. The book’s regular reminders of carpenters’ agency in determining a building’s form are important; similarly, knowing more about who made these things and where they were purchased would have usefully situated architects, clients, and construction alike within the socio-economic structure of interwar Japan.

This is a gloriously well-illustrated book, with period photographs of the buildings as well as personal photographs, drawings, and reproductions of print material. In combination with the book’s translated excerpts of key writings by Horiguchi and Yamada, the rich archival documentation provides English-language readers with access to previously inaccessible material, allowing for further comparative work. Given the generous extant body of Japanese-language secondary scholarship on Horiguchi, Yamada, Raymond, and their colleagues in Tokyo’s modernist architectural circles, it would have been similarly helpful to introduce this work further, too. While the book’s focus is interwar architecture, rather than its interpretation in the context of postwar Japanese architecture, a more extended historiography would give a sense of the importance of these three architects’ practice for architecture in Japan today, and underline the message that modernism was always simultaneously local and transnational, and that it can and should be examined from corners far and wide. But International Architecture in Interwar Japan does this on its own terms, too. For this, it should be read by modern architecture specialists of all stripes.

SARAH TEASLEY
Royal College of Art

Richard Longstreth
The American Department Store Transformed, 1920–1960

With his previous books and articles, Richard Longstreth has already established himself as an authority on the subjects that lie at the intersection of architecture, urbanism, and consumer culture. His latest work, The American Department Store Transformed, 1920–1960, will only cement his reputation. The book has a magisterial sweep that owes as much to the density of the information and the richness of the illustration as it does to the broad purview of the argument.

The nine chapters take the reader on a tour of the twentieth century retail landscape, beginning after World War I with the postwar expansion of the great downtown stores and store chains. The chapters continue with “the embrace of modernism in design and display” (34), the addition of remote service buildings and parking garages, the development of branch stores and shopping centers, the emergence of regional malls, and the largely failed attempt to use the mall idea to reinvigorate the urban core. Looming over this history are the challenges presented by suburbanization and automobilization and the threats posed by “competing distribution systems”—specialty stores like Saks Fifth Avenue and chain stores like the J. C. Penney Co., Sears Roebuck & Co., and F. W. Woolworth & Co. (9).

It is a big, comprehensive story that Longstreth wants to tell, and the book is clearly the product of an exhaustive research effort. Many of the photographs are the author’s own and provide evidence of a decades-long commitment. Unfortunately, an exhaustive effort does not always make for easy reading, and one frequently feels that he could have been more selective in his presentation of the evidence. Fewer examples, more deeply explored, would probably have made for a better book. As it is, the argument often gets lost in a series of anecdotes that add up to a conclusion of no particular pattern. As a case in point, the chapter “Stores in Shopping Centers” contains a trenchant section on the Broadway-Crenshaw Center in Los Angeles (1946–47), which the author tells us “attracted widespread attention as an emblem of the postwar retail landscape” but “did not serve as a direct model for subsequent endeavors” (174); the section ends with a string of additional examples that “were no less one-of-a-kind” (175).

In fairness, this tendency is more typical of the earlier than the later chapters, and the book steadily builds to a truly vigorous account of the emergence of the first regional shopping malls in the 1940s and 50s. The chapter “Stores Make the Mall” treats a string of significant complexes—Shopper’s World in Framingham, Massachusetts, outside of Boston (1949–51); Northgate in Seattle (1958–60); Southdale...