

newspaper editorialized, “If bad institutions and bad men can be got rid of only by killing, then the killing must be done.” Ugliness toward (and by) presidents is an old story. Despite huge Democratic majorities in Congress in the mid-’30s (and lesser ones later), FDR “also broke every record in making use of the veto power.” Thin-skinned capitalists who bemoan Obama’s mild rhetoric about them should heed FDR saying of “organized money” in 1936, “They are unanimous in their hate for me and I welcome their hatred.” The speech, Leuchtenburg writes, “did not so much foment class hostility as register the reality of it.” FDR’s assertion of presidential power during World War II was outrageous enough to make even George W. Bush blush, and also set precedents for things Bush did. Given the warm glow that has settled over George H. W. Bush in his old age, particularly in comparison with his president son, Leuchtenburg recalls the elder Bush’s “heinous racism” in 1988, his irresponsible

choice of Dan Quayle as running mate, and his vapid and mangled rhetoric (“I stand for anti-bigotry, anti-Semitism, and anti-racism”), as well as his achievements (though Leuchtenburg skips Bush’s big contribution to the mass incarceration of Americans under scrutiny now). Readers will find much, much more.

Taken to the Leader

Why did Pyongyang kidnap several dozen Japanese?

Review by Bruce Cumings

**THE INVITATION-ONLY ZONE:
The True Story of North Korea’s
Abduction Project**

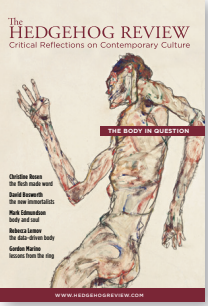
BY ROBERT S. BOYNTON

Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 288 pp., \$26

ON A COOL EVENING in mid-July 1978, near the city of Kashiwazaki on Japan’s east coast, Kaoru Hasuike and his girlfriend, Yukiko Okudo, rode their bikes down to the beach to watch a fireworks display, hoping to be alone. But they were not alone. Four men approached under the pretense of asking for a light. Suddenly, the two young people, barely out of their teens, were gagged, blindfolded, and stuffed into canvas sacks. The next time Kaoru and Yukiko saw daylight, they were in North Korea. For nearly two years, both were isolated from everyone but their “mind-ers,” who were determined to “clean and wash away [their] old thoughts” so that they would understand how lucky they were to be living in “the bosom of the Fatherly Leader,” Kim Il Sung. Finally reunited but still in captivity, they married and soon moved into a fully furnished, comfortable three-bedroom home in a North Korean “invitation-only zone.” Everything was

Bruce Cumings is the Swift Distinguished Service Professor in History at the University of Chicago, and the author of North Korea: Another Country.

The
HEDGEHOG REVIEW
Critical Reflections on Contemporary Culture




The HEDGEHOG REVIEW
Critical Reflections on Contemporary Culture

CHRISTOPHER BROWNE
The Body in Question
DANIEL FRIEDMAN
The New Internationalism
MARK EDWARDS
The End of the World
ROBERT S. BOYNTON
The 2011-2012 Election
GORDON MARSH
Success from the Sky

www.hedgehogreview.com

“One of the most stimulating, happily unpredictable, well-edited intellectual journals of our day.”

Joseph Epstein



Read • Think • Subscribe
\$25 in print/\$10 in digital

www.hedgehogreview.com
hedgehog@virginia.edu
434-243-8935

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA | INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES • CULTURE

provided for them, except the most important things: their freedom and an explanation for why they had been abducted.

Kaoru and Yukiko's disappearance didn't cause a sensation in their homeland. After all, people go missing all the time, leaving their anguished families to search for them, turning up no leads and no answers, alone with their terrible loss. Since 1977, people had been mysteriously vanishing from Japan's east coast. Even so, the disappearances represented only a modest uptick in police data, and no one imagined that a nearby nation-state would plot to steal the futures of several dozen of Japan's young people. Two decades later, in 2002, the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Il, did something almost as unexpected and bizarre as the original crime: he admitted to the scheme and apologized for it in a face-to-face meeting with Japan's prime minister, Junichiro Koizumi. Now the abductions were a sensation: a media frenzy enveloped Japan, a 24-hour-a-day bedlam that brought to bear huge pressure on Koizumi to do something—his public support dropped from 81 percent to 44 percent in a single week. It likewise left Kim Jong Il's not-so-well-laid plans in ruins: he had hoped that by apologizing, he could normalize relations with Japan and get billions of much-needed yen in the form of what Kim saw as reparations for Japan's colonial rule in Korea.

Robert S. Boynton has produced the first well-researched account in English of this abduction scheme (there is an enormous literature in Japanese), but it is far from a dry, academic text. *The Invitation-Only Zone* is lively and beautifully written, telling the story through the experience of Kaoru and Yukiko, as well as a number of other people caught up in the maelstrom of forces beyond their control. Boynton, who directs the literary reportage program at New York University, displays an admirably objective and nuanced perspective, unlike so much of the literature on the Hermit Kingdom. He also skillfully intersperses the personal stories with accounts of the modern history of Japan and Korea, which help the reader to understand how fraught and intractable the

relations between the two countries have been and will most likely continue to be.

Kaoru and Yukiko took up housekeeping in North Korea's version of a gated community: a mile-square neighborhood of pleasant-enough homes set among wooded hills and centered by an administrative building, from which all their needs were supplied by a coterie of guards, housekeepers, cooks, and tutors. Somewhat to his surprise, Kaoru found himself "touched by the kindness and humanity of the ordinary Koreans he met." Minders were supposed to accompany them everywhere, but over time the minding flagged, and they were able to get out and around, especially to small private markets, where using a small subsidy provided by the state, they could occasionally purchase little luxuries. Kaoru was even able to fashion a five-hole golf course, "using balls made from glued-together cotton swabs." All they lacked was an understanding of the North Korean regime's motive in secreting them away from Japan.

The Japanese conscripts found themselves in a country on a permanent war footing. Talk of the next war was as common as the innumerable memorials to the last one. The regime pursued an unending game of espionage with the South Koreans, going so far, Boynton writes, as to replicate beneath the streets of Pyongyang the streets of Seoul—a five-mile-long mockup of a downtown district, complete with restaurants, bars, and nightclubs, where spies could school themselves in the finer points of South Korean nightlife.

What was behind the kidnapping scheme? What did North Korea expect to get out of it? Boynton addresses these questions forthrightly and concludes that he doesn't know. If they were to be spies, why kidnap ordinary Japanese when hundreds of thousands of Koreans live in Japan, are fluent in the language, and might easily pass for Japanese? If they were to be language teachers, why not employ older Koreans who were fluent in Japanese, the language of the colonial period? He heard a multitude of hypotheses and theories, but ultimately, he writes, "there was no single motivation." It seems to have been a rogue

operation where even the rogues weren't quite sure what the point of it all was.

And it isn't over: Kim Jong Il admitted to kidnapping 13 Japanese, of whom five were returned to Japan; the other eight were said to have died in accidents or by suicide, though no one outside the North really believes that. Today, Tokyo and Pyongyang still have no formal diplomatic relations, both Kim Jong Il and his father are dead, and the country is run by a young man not much older than Kaoru was when this mystery began on that beach so many years ago.

Hot Rocks

A scientist's love of lava

Review by Sarah Zielinski

**THE LAST VOLCANO:
A Man, a Romance, and the Quest to
Understand Nature's Most Magnificent Fury**
BY JOHN DVORAK
Pegasus Books, 309 pp., \$28.95

IN MAY 1902, Mount Pelée on the Caribbean island of Martinique erupted, destroying the city of St. Pierre. According to reports, 25,000 people were killed, yet even the experts thought the death toll exaggerated—a volcano couldn't cause such devastation. Despite this skepticism, the U.S. government quickly dispatched a ship carrying supplies and several scientists, including Harvard geologist Thomas Jaggar, to provide humanitarian assistance and determine what had happened.

When they arrived, Jaggar and the other scientists found a modern-day Pompeii. No buildings remained standing. A thick layer of volcanic ash covered the ruins, and corpses lay everywhere. Taking in the scene, Jaggar wondered why, so many centuries after the catastrophic eruption of Mount Vesuvius, human knowledge had not advanced enough to prevent such suffering.

Jaggar had first become interested in vol-

Sarah Zielinski is a freelance science writer and editor based in Washington, D.C.

canoes as a teenager during a trip to Italy, where he and his family visited Vesuvius and the remains of Pompeii. But it was this expedition to the Caribbean, during which he explored several volcanoes and interviewed survivors of the St. Pierre disaster, that cemented his lifelong devotion to studying the mysterious mountains. "It was an ideal—and ideals come at a price," John Dvorak writes in *The Last Volcano*. That price, however—his cozy life in Boston and the happiness of his wife and children—appears one that Jaggar was more than willing to pay.

The Mount Pelée eruption occurred decades before scientists knew how volcanoes formed or why earthquakes were more common in some locations than others. Even simple facts, such as the temperature of lava and the composition of volcanic gases, were unknown. But geological knowledge was growing rapidly, and in 1909, when Jaggar gazed into the lava-filled crater of the Kilauea volcano on Hawaii, he saw an opportunity. Until then, scientists had studied geological disasters, such as St. Pierre or San Francisco—where a magnitude-7.8 earthquake destroyed 80 percent of the city in 1906—only after they had occurred. But if geological observatories could be established all over the world, scientists might be able to track conditions inside the planet and issue warnings when disaster approached. At the time, the slopes of Mount Vesuvius were home to the world's only such observatory, so Jaggar founded a second one on Kilauea.

Jaggar's wife, Helen, was not keen on this plan. Hawaii may be a paradise, but for her, the move from Boston to an isolated, two-room house on top of a volcano was more than she could bear. Within weeks, she moved out with the Jaggars'

