

background to articulate their ironical and critical response to the American imagination, which also played a role in their negotiation with their Japanese identity.

Chapters 4 and 5, further expanding the object of study, delve into cases where Hokusai's motif is used in the design of commercial products and even functions to construct a collective identity in local communities. Guth concludes her monograph by mentioning another implication of the wave, its reference to tsunami after the 2011 Northeast Japan earthquake.

The large number of samples analysed in the book unquestionably highlights Guth as a rigorous cross-disciplinary scholar, an approach that is crucial to her study of the hybrid construction of Hokusai's wave as a global icon. However, in the last two chapters the detailed explanation of each product is at times a bit too lengthy and repetitive, slowing down the flow of the discussion. For example, in the case of the rice paddy art in Chapter 4, the detailed account of geography and history seems unnecessary and the reference in US art to other kinds of representations of crops such as Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* seems to go off on a tangent. It seems that the author's attempt to place equal weight on each work led her to overestimate the significance of such similarities. This may correspond to Sara Ahmed's warning that the utter appreciation of diversity may lead to a diminishing critical edge. At the same time, this approach also helps Guth to demonstrate in concrete terms what hybridity really is.

The book would be of great interest to scholars and students interested in Japanese studies, cultural studies and art history. The most intriguing argument made in this book is that the productivity of the cultural flow lies in the interconnectivity and interdependency of cultures, rather than the discursive spread of different cultures, which provides us with an essential instrument to better understand and negotiate with the era of globalisation.

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**Henry Black: on stage in Meiji Japan**, by Ian McArthur, Clayton, Vic., Monash University Publishing, 2013, A\$34.95 (paperback/eBook)

The roller-coaster journey of Henry Black's life and career as a *rakugoka*, or professional storyteller, forms the subject matter of Ian McArthur's intimate portrayal of a forgotten virtuoso. This fascinating chapter of cultural interaction between Japan and the West during the Meiji era is similar in vein to Hamish MacDonald's recent book, *A War of Words* (2014), which itself conveys the familiar themes of the travails of a stranger in a strange land. McArthur's story deals with, among other things, the oft-neglected phenomenon of Westerners who essentially turned their back on the trappings of their own culture to become naturalised Japanese. In this respect, Henry Black should rightfully join the ranks of Will Adams and Lafcadio Hearn who, had he lived longer, might have found a like-minded companion in Black, who seemed more at home in a yukata than a tweed suit.

Based largely on McArthur's doctoral thesis, the analytical appraisal of what emerges from the author's meticulous dissection of Black's life and career is the single-mindedness and overwhelming commitment that would have been necessary for Henry Black to not only boldly go where no other foreigner had gone, but also to have a modest degree of success in what would have been a stifflingly insular profession. From the outset, the author shows that far from

being an anachronistic throwback to the Edo era, *rakugo* was firmly rooted in the *bunmei kaika* (Civilisation and Enlightenment) doctrine and jingoism of modernity in the early Meiji era. The chrysalis-like rise of Henry Black, reborn as Kairakutei Burakku, was anything but traditional. Truth be told, Black's transformation epitomised the modernity of the New Japan in a way that no other foreigner of his generation had been able to do.

Yet McArthur credits Black's transition from respectable English teacher from a well-to-do foreign family to the Bohemian lifestyle of professional storytelling to anti-foreign sentiment. Attitudes toward Westernisation amongst the politically minded Japanese of the 1880s were caught between wholeheartedly embracing "foreign" ideas of modernity and "favouring a Japanese path to modernity that did not necessarily preclude Western values" (p. 72). In this regard, anti-foreign feeling was the catalyst that provided Black with the impetus for his success as a *rakugoka* by combining both his status as a British subject (at least to Japanese eyes), and therefore the epitome of the modern, and his unquestionable talent for anecdote which he could convey in colloquial Japanese. Thus his career change into storytelling "re-established Henry Black as a protagonist in the debate over modernity" (p. 71).

One of the central themes throughout the book is that of *rakugo* as an important instrument for the propagation of mass culture, and as one of the key vehicles for reflecting on modernity in the Meiji era. However, the shifting trends regarding how that modernity was consumed by the Japanese public highlight the repositioning of early British influence as an increasingly urbane public began to look further afield for cultural stimulation. Increasing numbers of *oyatoi* (hired foreigner experts) from Europe and America were partly to blame, but Black's fleeting fame, and later life of relative obscurity, leave one reflecting on whether the contemporary evanescence of foreign personalities on Japanese television has much deeper cultural roots.

Contrary to the theme of Black as an early Meiji moderniser is that of the impact upon his family of his naturalisation as a Japanese citizen. The reactions of his brother and sister towards his chosen career/life-path contrast sharply with the unquenchable thirst for modern expression amongst the Japanese working classes, and make the foreign community of the treaty ports appear somewhat staid by comparison.

The clearest example of this dynamic is arguably the embarrassment Black caused to his siblings, particularly his older brother John, who regarded Henry's immersion in the world of *rakugo* as having "gone native". John Black II's career meticulously followed the rules of a middle-class British resident of Japan. A clerk who rose through the ranks of merchant business, his essays on "progressive matters" in the treaty port press, and eventual appointment as the head of the Kobe Club, exemplify everything that his misfit brother was not. His angry interruption of one of Henry's performances (p. 211) only added to the scandal of Henry's lifestyle, perhaps furthering his notoriety among his Japanese audience. Yet this rather tragic scene highlights that, with hindsight, it was John and not Henry who was the anachronism in Japan's Meiji modernism. One is left wondering whether Japan would have benefited from a bit more of the Henrys and a lot less of those like John. If there had been, the relationship between Japan and the West might have taken a considerably different course.

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