

Shibuya Nozomu, *Midoru kurasu o toinaosu: kakusa shakai no mōten*, Tokyo, NHK shuppan, 2010.
Yuasa Makoto, *Hanhinkon: suberidai shakai kara no dasshutsu*, Tokyo, Iwanami shoten, 2008.

Alexander Brown
University of Wollongong

© 2016 Alexander Brown
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2016.1164023>

Hokusai's Great Wave: biography of a global icon, by Christine M. E. Guth,
Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015, 272 pp., US\$20.00 (paperback)

The main purpose of Christine M. E. Guth's new book, *Hokusai's Great Wave: Biography of a Global Icon*, is neither to explore the interpretation of Hokusai's print art nor to celebrate his talent or success. Rather, this monograph is a study of the globalisation of early modern visual arts. Through a rigorous analysis of the reproductions and adaptations of Hokusai's wave in the world, Guth examines the highly complicated process by which Hokusai's motif crossed national and cultural borders and the boundaries of genres and media to become recognised as a global icon. Guth tackles a vast number of examples, ranging from impressionist paintings, commercial posters, and manga to fashion products, daily products and street graphics.

"The Great Wave" cannot be reduced to a single interpretation or a simple form. Guth explains that it is the diverse connotations of the wave that facilitated the circulation of the image and the production of adaptations beyond Japan. Guth's study emphasises how the interconnectivity of people and cultures leads the cultural product to take on additional contexts and the image's semiotic richness expands its performativity and its space for interpretation. As the author implies, Hokusai's motif's pervasiveness reminds us of Iwabuchi Koichi's discussion about Japan's successful export of popular culture to East and Southeast Asia because of its "deterritorialisation" (*mukokuseki*). Yet, the significance of Guth's study lies in her emphasis on the productivity of the global flows of people and cultures rather than on the scale of Hokusai's image's distribution. Guth also stresses the ambiguous location of originality in the cross-cultural space, because the reproductions and adaptations of Hokusai's wave more often than not take a new life rather than being treated as imitations of an original.

Chapter 1 begins with a brief outline of Hokusai's life, and traces the process of the dissemination of his famous print series of Mount Fuji in nineteenth-century Japan. Guth explains that the success of Hokusai's work lies in the interplay of the familiar motif of Mount Fuji and the unfamiliar techniques imported from Europe. She shows how the hybrid use of the motif, material and techniques highlighted Japan's increasing connectivity with the outside world, which prompted viewers' interest in imagining broader landscapes beyond Japan.

Chapter 2 shifts to the circulation of Hokusai's great waves in Europe and America since the mid-nineteenth century, following the early introduction of Hokusai's *Manga*, vast collections of illustrations. Guth elaborates how Hokusai's great wave, carrying diverse images, has been translated in different cultural contexts and reproduced in various media.

Chapter 3, focusing on US–Japan relations since the opening of the ports in 1853, traces the shift of the forms and meanings of "The Great Wave" in the US and discusses how the shift reflects the political and economic relationship between the two countries. Guth explains that while Hokusai's wave was often employed as a device to portray Japan as an exotic other, such exoticisation ultimately prompted Japanese artists and American resident artists with a Japanese

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.

Chikako Nihei
Yamaguchi University

© 2016 Chikako Nihei
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2016.1148546>

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 stiflingly insular profession. From the outset, the author shows that far from

Copyright of Asian Studies Review is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.