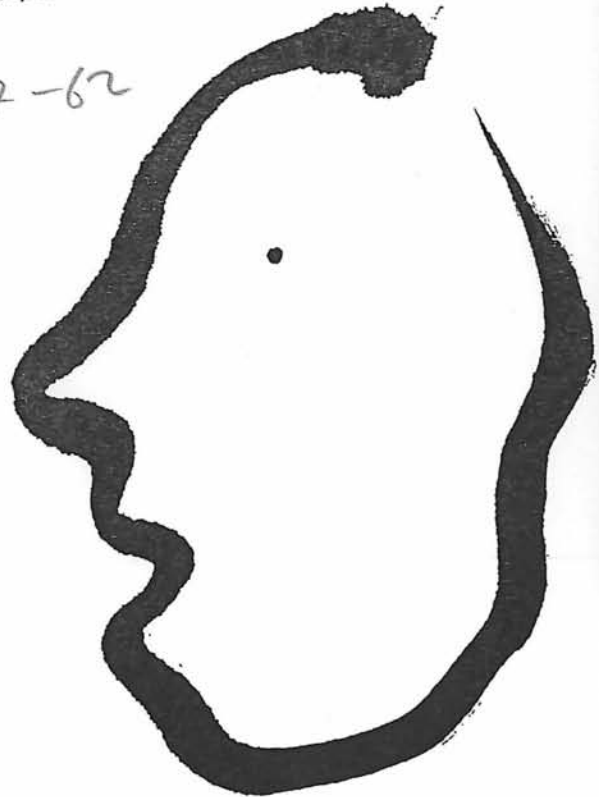


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The Making of Hokusai's Reputation in the Context of Japonisme

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Hokusai's reputation is beyond question, but his popularity is an historical product. Many Hokusai studies have contributed to justify and consolidate his reputation while leaving behind a social and historical context which required Hokusai as the most eminent hero of Japanese art. By questioning the apotheosis of Hokusai in the context of the second half of the 19th Century Europe under the vogue of Japonism, this paper tries to elucidate some of the underlying conditions which enabled and prepared Hokusai's glorification. How was a simple Japanese *ukiyo-e* craftsman transfigured into the ultimate Oriental master, comparable to such giants as Michelangelo, Rubens and Rembrandt? And why was he so highly admired by such champions of modern art as Edouard Manet and Vincent Van Gogh?

It must be pointed out at first that Hokusai's reputation as the most eminent Japanese painter owes mainly to French Japonisme's interpretation. In his *chefs d'oeuvre des Arts industriels* published in 1866, Philip Burty, a leading Republican French art critic, appreciates Japanese prints as superior to Chinese prints or European lithographs, and points out as the most curious examples 28, as he writes it, books by the famous Hokusai, namely, the *Manga* and other books, with countless illustrations of specimens from natural history, scenes from family life, caricatures, demonstrations of martial arts, depictions of pilgrimages to the sacred Mt. Fuji. Burty compares these sketches to Watteau in their elegance, to Daumier in their energy, to Goya in their fantasy, and to Eugene Delacroix in their movement. Burty also declares elsewhere that Hokusai's richness in subject matter and dexterity in brushstrokes are only comparable to Peter Paul Rubens. Such a whimsical comparison is not as gratuitous as it looks at first glance. On the one hand, Burty insists on Hokusai's importance as a master in the Euro-

pean category of Art, thus recognizing to a non-Western nation an artistic status competitive with European nations. On the other hand, let us be reminded of the fact that Burty's book was treating industrial arts by comparing Japanese industrial and popular design art to European masters of fine art. Burty audaciously tried to violate the academic hierarchy. The highest esteem for Hokusai implied criticism toward the dominant authority of the Acadmie des Beaux-Arts. Next year, in 1867, Japan made a public appearance at the Exposition Universale held in Paris. In a semi-official report of the World Fair, *Le Nation Rival in art*, Ernest Chesneau another Republican art critic, recognizes Hokusai, as "le plus libre et le plus sincères des maîtres japonais." Champfleury's illustrated anthology cats, "Chats was published next year, in 1869. Novelist and caricaturist Champfleury, known as one of Gustave Corbet's defenders and a combative propagandist of realism, inserted in this popular encyclopedia several sketches of Japanese cats he believed to have been drawn by a Japanese extraordinary artist, dead about 50 years ago, thus killing Hokusai 30 years earlier than in reality (which reveals the lack of precise biographical data), and what is still worse, without distinguishing Kuniyoshi from Hokusai. It is worth being reminded that Edouard Manet's famous lithography, "Le Rendez-vous des Chats," was executed as an advertisement poster for this book by Champfleury. The primitive brushstrokes, the contrast between black and white, and the humorous caricatures of the cats' behavior, "en chaleur" could be Manet's intentional imitation, [Manet no mane] of Hokusai's illustrated books.

Now the second part. During the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune which followed Edouard Manet deposited his main paintings with a young Republican friend and art critic Théodore Duret, and Duret happened to become the first French specialist of Hokusai. In 1872 Duret made a world tour with Henri Cernuschi and stayed for two months in Japan. In his "Voyage in Asie," published in 1874, Duret refers first to Hokusai as one of the masters in Japan, "famous for his 14 representative illustrated books," in which Duret admired the gesture, the behavior, and even the grimace of the Japanese people, marvelously rendered, and he pretended that it was just as he had seen himself in Japan, but in reality one of Hokusai's caricatures is based on his copy of Albrecht Dürer. As an early and privileged eyewitness of Japan, Duret published an influential article, "Les japonais les

livres illustré les albums imprimé Hokusai,” in a prestigious art magazine, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, in 1882, in which Duret, follower of Herbert Spencer recognizes Hokusai as the culminating figure of Japanese art. “Hokusai is the greatest artist that Japan has produced,” he said. The following year, in 1883, Louis Gonse, chief editor of the same magazine, organizes a great retrospective exhibition of Japanese art, and also publishes a sumptuous, book “*L’Art Japonais*,” the first tentative synthesis of Japanese art in the world. Of the 10 chapters that compose the book, one whole is given to Hokusai. This “*pieillard fou du dessin*” and Gonse repeats Duret’s assertion by explicitly quoting from him. And Gonse adds that “Hokusai’s work rides high in the domain of esthetic Japanese art and may establish for it a definitive formula,” and so on.

This high French appreciation of Hokusai caused the sarcastic reaction and objections among Anglo-Saxon specialists, like Ernest Fenellosa and William Anderson. Both for Anderson and Fenellosa it was out of the question to compare a simple print craftsman like Hokusai, to the 15th Century master Zen Buddhist painters. For Anderson it was no less scandalous to compare Hokusai with Chou Den-su, Sesshu or Shubun, than daring to draw the parallel between, say, John Rich, Mr. Punch, and Fra Angelico. It is clear that the Anglo-Saxon specialists apprehended Japanese art and its history according to the classical and academic judgment, which they never put into doubt, and thanks to Professor Donald Keene we knew yesterday that Yashiro Yukio was still under the influence of the same kind of value judgment.

Now, part three. A French Japanese art critic was therefore mainly responsible for Hokusai’s glorification. Both Duret and Edmond Goncourt called their beloved Japanese prints, “impressions.” Here a certain ideological affinity between Japanese prints and Impressionist esthetics is easily supposed. Let us take a brief look at the meaning Hokusai would take in the context of esthetic renovation. Three points can be made, namely, first, composition, or rather, lack of composition, second, drawing technique and brushstroke, and third, vividness of color.

First, in terms of composition, both Ernest Fenellosa and Théodore Duret remark that the Japanese dislike symmetrical repetition. In 1869, Chesneau invents the term dissymmetry (which was already quoted from the previous paper), and characterizes Japanese esthetics by this

word. The idea is implicitly borrowed by an American artist, John LaFarge, and also by James Jackson Jarvis, in his *A Glimpse at the Art of Japan*. And as Oshima Seiji has suggested, August Renoir’s manifesto of irregularist esthetics, published in 1884, can be also understood as an outcome of this conception. The most striking example of this dissymmetry and irregularist approach would be “Mt. Fuji off the Coast of Kangawa,” as you know, but one fact must be reminded here. As Naose Fujio has already proposed in the case of the Akita school, the Western ‘linear perspective’ was reinterpreted and transformed in Japan into an esthetic device of exaggerating the effect of supernatural contrast between the near and far, and the fact that linear perspective was also translated into Japanese as ‘en-kin-hoo,’ i.e. a contrast between near and far also testifies to this tendency, or reinterpretation by the Japanese, ‘en-kin’ being already used by Sazaki Sozan in 1778 and also by Shiba Kokan in 1799. The free arrangement of the pictorial plane – clearly deviating from the principle of linear perspective – is commonly observed in the layout of Hokusai’s *Manga*. Duret says that in the first volume of *Manga*, “the human figures and objects have only one inch or so and are scattered here and there from the top to the bottom of the pages without a ground to sustain them, nor the background to put them forward, and yet they are posed there with such a convenience, an economy, that each of them retains its movement and characteristics of its own line and position.” And curiously enough, the similar strangeness of assemblage, montage, and decoupage were what the contemporary critics blamed Manet for. Quoting from reproduction prints, Manet used to make up a combined image and where the public noticed apparent lack of composition skill, distorted or miscalculated perspective, and anatomically disproportionate human figures. Such shortcomings in Manet, however, can be perfectly defended in terms of Japanese esthetics visualized in Hokusai’s *Manga*.

Secondly, similar lack of perfection is also frequently noticed in Manet’s violent brush strokes and certain drawing techniques. Once again, Théodore Duret’s remarks on Japanese art justifies these apparent defects in Manet, and turns them into Manet’s merits. “Using the exclusively the brush sustained by the hand, the Japanese artist for who no retouch is possible, fixes his vision on the paper by the first attack with such a boldness, gracefulness and confidence that even the most talented Euro-

pean artist cannot attain." Already in 1874, shortly after Duret's return from Japan, Manet imitated this Oriental brush stroke. A drawing conserved at the British Museum is a typical example, as it gives one at the same site, the head of a raven prepared for the illustration of Edgar Allan Poe's poem, translated by Mallarme, some awkward imitations of Japanese painter's seals, and a head of Japanese spaniel, Tama, which was brought back by Duret from Japan. The bold dripping ("taches hardies") of the raven was applauded by Ernest Chesneau in 1878 as a successful Japonism achievement. It is therefore not surprising that Duret, in his biography of Manet published in 1902, draws a parallel between Manet and Hokusai in order to convince his readers of Manet's unfinishedness as his merit rather than defect. Manet's unfinished brushstroke is justified as an instantaneous fixation of the fugitive aspects. His impressionistic manner is also explained by the first attack ("du prime saut"). However, Duret's explanation would have easily lost its ground if the fact had been known that Hokusai and other *ukiyo-e* craftsmen did not make their drawings "du prime saut," but that their technique depended much more on "du sic," that is, by the memory of the hand, as Charles Baudelaire despicingly defined.

The third problem is relative to color and previous lectures have already answered to that question. Duret observed: "when we look at Japanese images, where most contrasting tons of colors are spread out, side by side, on the leaf. We finally understood that there was a new procedure worth trying which would reproduce certain effects of nature, which we had neglected or thought impossible to render until then. For these Japanese images which we had at first taken for a 'bario loge' were, in reality, particularly faithful to the nature. 'Bario loge' was the term chosen by the conservative art critics Paul Manz when he criticized in 1863 the violent tone of color Edouard Manet had employed in his "Laura de Valance". Here Duret tries to justify this 'bario loge,' or an inharmonious jam of primary colors by insisting on the faithfulness of the Japanese print to nature. Partly influenced by Duret's debateable statement, not only Manet, but also Monet went to Argenteuil to paint landscapes by juxtaposing side by side without attenuation the most striking tones, just as the Japanese saw nature with such vivid color, full of luminosity. The effect was so supernatural and inhabitual that even a friendly critic like Joris-Karl Huysmans ironically called it 'indigo-manie,' or an in-

indigo maniac disease. According to his diagnosis, the Impressionistic painters were suffering from a sort of daltonism. Again, it was against such an ill-natured criticism that Duret proposed the above-mentioned comparison of Manet, Monet and the Japanese. In his opinion, it was not the Impressionists' eyes that were ill, but that the Europeans' eyes were too weak and too lazy to resist the truth of light's effect in experiencing in the 'plain air,' open air. How valid is this statement? Already from the previous papers, especially the one on indigo, you already have the answer. As you have already heard, Hokusai prints, and especially the "Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji," was realized by the use of Prussian blue, which was a newly-introduced chemical pigment, and Duret took this newly-imported pigment as something essential in Japanese aesthetics but this assumption is completely false, as you have already seen.

Throughout the three points we have examined so far, French Japonist's interpretation of Hokusai proved to be strongly biased, yet it can not be denied that these interpretations, however whimsical and distorted, contributed to the development of European art in the second half of the 19th Century. Take some prominent examples in the *fin-de-siecle*. Emile Bernard's experimental composition, *Les Bretonnes dans la Plairie*, which intentionally gets rid of the yoke of the linear perspective by scattering the human figures on pictorial plane is evidently an application of the layout we have observed in the *Manga* pages. Bernard himself complained that this arrangement had been plagiarized by Paul Gauguin's appropriation in "La Vision après le sermon," where the composition is cut off into two separate parts by the trunk of a tree. Gauguin inserts a sketch of this painting in a letter to Vincent Van Gogh in Arles. Probably inspired by this kind of spatial effect, the latter executes "Les Semeur." Both these works have strong affinities with the way Hokusai, and Hiroshige after him, reinterpreted the newly-imported linear perspective. Even Paul Cezanne, who seems to have ostentatiously opposed to Gauguin's Japonism, still betrays some resemblance to Hokusai in his tendency to transgress the academic linear perspective. The comparison between the "Mont de St. Victoire" and the "Mishima" and that of "Jas de Bufant" and 'Hodogaya' show clear parallels between the two in their efforts to destroy the Renaissance pictorial space, to use Pierre Francantep's terminology. As for the juxtaposition of primary colors, it is evident that Van Gogh is also 'contaminated' by the 'indigo-

manie.' *La Pont du Langrais*, executed a short time after his arrival in Arles, can be regarded as an application of the color effect Van Gogh has already experienced by copying Hiroshige's *Evening Rainfall at Ohashi Atake*, which Van Gogh has mistaken to be a print by Hokusai. Not only the vivid blue of water directly contrasted with the yellow of the bridge, but also the similarity of Japanese climate with the Midi in France could be inspired to him, by Théodore Duret, who had wrote as follows in 1885: "It was not until the Japanese album arrived to us that the painters could juxtapose on a canvas a roof of audacious red and a yellow road and a blue of water. Before the model had been given by the Japanese it was impossible. Every time I contemplate a Japanese album I say to myself, 'Yes, it was like that.' that the Japanese nature appeared to my eye in a luminous and transparent atmosphere in Japan, without attenuation or gradation, just like in the Midi of the France, where every color appears glaring and intense in the summer."

Finally, let us propose a new hypothesis for spiritual inspiration Hokusai and other Japanese print craftsmen could have given to Van Gogh. As Dr. Kōdera Tsukasa has already demonstrated, Vincent Van Gogh was making a remark on Japanese artistic philosophy, where a Japanese artist contemplated and past their days and life by drawing only one, in French, '*brin d'herbe*' – a simple grasse, and this inspiration came from *Le Japon artistique*, which was published at that date, and Dr. Kōdera identifies the source of Van Gogh's inspiration, as the image which was inserted in the same magazine. Vincent fancies that the Japanese artists were living in an ideal community sustained by their mutual admiration and brotherhood. He writes to Emile Bernard that Japanese painters were freely exchanging their own works. The supposed exchange of works that Van Gogh believes Japanese artists were practicing remains a mystery among Japanese specialists. Dr. Kōdera has mentioned one copy of *Shin-sen-kachōga-shiki* as a source of inspiration, yet the album of birds and flowers is executed by an individual artist and does not suggest any possibility of exchange. A personal hypothesis I want to advance here is that Vincent Van Gogh would have had a look at the example of *surimono* prints put together and bound as an album. One such specimen is still preserved intact today at *Bibliothèque nationale* in Paris. The piece composed in three albums as 'ten-chi-jin' by a certain Kyōka satirical poet, Nagashima Sadahide, in token of his collabora-

tion with other poets, contains rare *surimono* prints made by such famous contemporary *ukiyo-e* craftsmen and writers as Santō Kyōden and Shun-man, Kiyonaga, Utamarō and especially Hokusai.

Van Gogh might have seen this while he was in Paris because this album belongs to Théodore Duret, who is supposed to have had his collection deposited with Maurice Joyant, and as most of you know, Maurice Joyant was nobody else than the successor of Théodore Van Gogh after Van Gogh's death, at the Société Gaupil. One glimpse at such an album would have been enough for Vincent to be convinced the practice of exchange by the Japanese, as many prints of different size of, by several artists were assembled on the face of the folder. Here we can see two conjunctive reasons why Vincent repetitively declared that the future of new art, *Art nouveau*, is in the Midi. On the one hand the climate and light effect in Arles is said to be comparable to that of Japan. On the other hand, the ideal community of artists is now under construction in Arles by Vincent's own initiative after the Japanese model. From this conjugation, probably suggested by Duret, Arles is finally identified with Japan. "Here in Arles I am in Japan," Vincent repeatedly said. Is Vincent dreaming to become a Dutch Hokusai in Arles? Here you see one of the portraits of Théodore Duret, who had probably given not only some inspiration as for the resemblance of Arles to Japan's climate but also the idea of Japanese artists' exchanging works.

Now, conclusion: In 1896, Edmond Goncourt publishes his last book, *Hokusai, as a series of biographies, des impressionnistes Japonais.*" It must be noted that shortly before S. Bing had protested in the *Revue Blanche* that his project of publishing a translation of Hokusai's biography had been smuggled by the hand Hayashi Tadamasu and Edmond Goncourt. This controversy of priority suggests two things. First, the dispute on Hokusai was of primary importance in the *fin de siècle* European art market. Second, Hokusai's biography, promoted by Kobayashi Bunshichi, and realized by Kiyoshiki Iijima Hanjūrō, (we spoke of them yesterday), had been involved in this dispute from the outset. The first serious historical research of the life of Hokusai in Japan had been therefore undertaken at the instigation of French requests. The same year, 1896, Michel Revon also published his *Etude de Hokusai* as a Ph.D. dissertation presented to the Faculty of Letters of the Université du Sorbonne. While Edmund de Goncourt's biography represented the end of

Japonism interpretation, the latter announces the change of perspective. Edmund de Goncourt enthusiastically compares Hokusai's erotica, identified as *Kinoe-nokomatsu*, and at first he thought it was made by Utamaro, and he compares this erotica to the sketch of a hand attributed to Michelangelo with such an emotional expression of which, I omit the quotation in French, in French as in "cette force...cette énergie de la linéature qui fait du dessin d'un verge un dessin égal à la main du Musée du Louvre, attribuée à Michel Ange." In contrast, Michel Revon rectifies the French Japonists' excessive praise of Hokusai by saying in his conclusion that the cultivated Japanese were no less astonished by the French admiration of Hokusai than what would happen if the Frenchman saw the Japanese put Gavarni at the summit of French art.

The World's Fair in Paris in 1900 contributes to relativizing French Japonism interpretation of Hokusai. The first official version of Japanese art history published by the Japanese Imperial Commission for the exhibition in Paris in 1900 lists Hokusai's name among 40 or so designers with a short biographical summary in 12 lines, illustrated by only one plate. No discussion at all on his meaning in Japanese art history. The gap between Japanese official art history based on the national treasures transmitted from antiquity and recognized as such recently, and the European Japonism amateurs' vision of Japanese art, based on *Manga*, *ukiyo-e* and applied arts, is made decisively clear even for the European public (although this book was not sold widely and that its influence was quite limited).

In 1914, Henri Focillon published his "*Hokusai and recapitulates*," in the introduction, this debate on appreciation. Focillon is not satisfied with keeping a neutral position between the European view and the Japanese view, nor does he agree with the German scholar, Julius von Seidlitz, and he makes another proposition. Focillon proposes to reevaluate Hokusai's value as an artisan by refusing to yield the literary culture of Japan's most sophisticated connoisseurs.

In a second edition published in 1925, Focillon adds a new preface, in order to justify his view of Hokusai in the midst of these oscillating estimations. Focillon refers to Okakura Ten-shin. At first glance the choice is surprising, for Okakura was mainly responsible for the conception of *L'Histoire de l'art du Japon*, which ostentatiously ignored and officially denied Hokusai's high ap-

preciation in Europe. Yet, in *The Ideals of the Orient*, by Okakura, Focillon sees Okakura "rescue," "probably a fictive but nevertheless genuine-like continuity as the structure of an organic thinking of the idea of Asia as a common heritage constituting the patriotism of the Continent." In this context, Focillon tried to recognize Hokusai as a genius of the whole Asia people who made Asian virtue communicable to all human beings. To finish let me quote from Focillon as quoted in "A travers ces oscillations de nos préférences, Hokusai demeure intact. C'est qu'il conserve en lui, c'est qu'il porte à leur plus haut degré de puissance expressive, c'est qu'il rend communicables à toute l'humanité quelques-uns des traits permanents et profonds de l'âme asiatique. Il n'est pas seulement un des plus grands créateurs de formes vivantes qui furent jamais, il appartient à l'ordre héroïque, il est au nombre de ces artistes, qui, visibles de tous les points de l'horizon, nous font connaître, en même temps qu'un génie singulier, celui de leur race et quelque chose de l'homme éternel." Thanks so much for your patience.

○質疑応答 Discussion

河野元昭氏（東京大学）：

今、稲賀先生から『ガセットボザール』の、引用が随分ありましたけれども、世界三大美術誌というのに、『パーリントンマガジン』ともう一つ『国華』がありますけれども、『国華』でいかにそういうものが扱われているかということと比較してみるとまた、おもしろいというか興味深いじゃないかなと思って拝聴したんですけれども、いかがでしょうか。

稲賀氏：

学習院の方で天心と北斎という発表をされる予定の方がいらっしゃいますよね。それで、天心の息がどこまで公式美術誌編集にかかっている、それが福地復一に乗っ取られ、また『国華』の編集も滝精一という天心とは敵対される方にいわば乗っ取られてしまう。そのことと、その『国華』の中で何を日本美術の精華として扱ったかという、かなり政治的な問題が絡んでくるだろう。私はそこをやるのはちょっと恐ろしいので、今控えている状態で、勇気のある学生さんの中で河野先生のお許しを得てそういう研究をしてくれる方が出現することを楽しみにしております。

河野氏：

先程、先生のお話の中に『稿本 日本帝国美術略史』の話が出ましたけれど、結局あれもお話にあったように天心が始めたものですよ。始めたというか最初の企画は天心がやったもので、そういう点から大変興味深いんじゃないかなと思ったんですけれども、これは墓穴を掘るといことになるかもしれないけれども。そう私は拝聴しておりました。

Dr. Timon Screech (University of London):

You mentioned at the beginning about Hokusai's reputation being essentially a construction. I agree with you. The simple question is, why Hokusai, why, was he taken up rather than any other artist, that potentially the French could have latched on to say the things they wanted to

say the things they wanted to say against the state of art in the Academy? Was it just because he was a landscapes, or were there other reasons?

Dr. Inaga:

Rather it's my assumption, but the decisive factor was the availability of the *Manga*. Huge copies of earlier or later versions, and anyway several states of prints were so easily accessible. In one sense Hokusai was almost a representative name of the Japanese image, *ukiyo-e* in general, and in Vincent Van Gogh's case, he was looking at Hiroshige and other printmakers, but he called them for the most part "Hokusai." The scientific identification of works to an individual artist is one thing and how the appreciation was connected with the name of Hokusai is another.

Dr. Screech:

In the very beginning Utamaro's name is very significant, and he sort of gets eclipsed...

Dr. Inaga:

Utamaro appears only in the 1880's, whereas Hokusai's name has been already tried to be transcribed as Okusai or something by Philippe Burty and others. Hokusai's name was already known in 1866, so there is 20 years of gap between the two.