

Janus-faced *Hana yori dango*: Transnational Adaptations in East Asia and the Globalization Thesis

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Theories of regional formation need to be rigorously examined in relation to East Asian popular culture that has been in circulation under the successive “waves” of Japanese and Korean TV dramas from the 1990s onward. Most overviews of the phenomenon have concentrated on the impact on the region of Japanese, then Korean, TV products as they spread southward to the three Chinese communities of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Mainland China. In the voluminous studies devoted to the subject, most conspicuously represented by those of Iwabuchi Koichi, two outstanding points of emphasis are noteworthy.¹ First, the majority of evidence is drawn from the so-called “trendy” love dramas, like *Tokyo Love Story* (1991), *Long Vacation* (1996), *Love Generation* (1996) and *Beautiful Life* (2000) from Japan as well as *Autumn Tale* (2000) and *Winter Sonata* (2002) from Korea.² Many of them were so successful that they altered TV drama production in the receptor communities. Second, the preponderant concern in these studies is with the reasons for the spectacular successes achieved by these media products, and views are divided between those who champion the “cultural proximity” thesis, stressing the close links between the three East Asian traditions, and those who uphold the “quest for modernity” thesis, viewing the upbeat, fashionable lifestyles depicted in the dramas as the root appeal for a predominantly young, middle-class and Westernized audience living in the cities. Interestingly, in both camps, one sees illuminating echoes of issues and terms repeatedly theorized and problematized in recent adaptation studies, like manipulation, appropriation, rewriting, localization strategies, and the opposition between regionalization and globalization as explanatory modes for translation activity.

In fact, one clue to the Japanization and Koreanization brought about by the popularity in the East Asian region of TV dramas from Japan and Korea is provided by the newly emerging theories of adaptation. The scant attention paid to the role of adaptations in the spread of Japanese and Korean TV dramas is therefore little short of amazing. The study of their impact has been couched in terms of “influence studies,” something long familiar to students of literature. Influence has been described in terms of the emergence of comparable forms in Anthony Fung’s analysis of the homologies between Hong Kong and Japanese TV soap operas.³ For Wen Zhaoxia, Japanese and Korean “idol dramas” have inspired Mainland China to come up with similar products.⁴ Lee Dong-hoo discusses how the inflow of Japanese trendy drama has given rise to Korean “imitations” in the 1990s.⁵ She lists 15 such examples, beginning with *Jealousy* (1992), which are “suspected” of having copied Japanese ver-

sions.⁶⁾ She focuses on the outrageous case of *Chongchun*, condemned for its plagiarism of *Love Generation* and subsequently removed from airing, and on the affinities and divergences between *Jealousy* and its prior version *Tokyo Love Story*.⁷⁾

The major defect of Lee's article consists, however, not in her use of the influence model, but in her insistent references to the Korean versions as "adaptations." From time to time terms such as "transplant," "imitation," "copies" and "plagiarism" are deployed in her article, but she generally places the examples she cites in the category of "transnational adaptations",⁸⁾ thus blurring the finer distinctions between these different categories. The difference between adaptation and imitation is particularly crucial: generally speaking, the former openly, or overtly, acknowledges the debt, whereas the latter does not.⁹⁾ Most Korean producers of TV dramas of the latter type—like Lee Seung-Ryul (*Jealousy*), Auh Jong-Rok (*Happy Together*) and Zang Ki-Hong (*Tomato*)—deny any link between their works and the imputed Japanese originals. The refusal to concede any linkage is quite characteristic of imitators anywhere, when they are confronted with identified evidence. The reason behind this is that artistic works are valorized for their originality, so one would at most admit to being inspired by a predecessor rather than to having copied another work. But more important than this is the premium placed on the local (as opposed to "foreign") content and style of the dramas. The issue of localization is precisely what makes the transnational adaptations of the Japanese *manga* by Kamio Yoko, *Hana yori dango* (*Boys over Flowers*), so outstanding. Not only does it travel successfully to Taiwan, South Korea and (even) Mainland China in adapted forms,¹⁰⁾ but it reveals a subtle privileging of the local over the foreign, with the local elements consistently foregrounded.

Further, in East Asian TV drama adaptations one sees not so much the "localization of the global" as the "localization of the regional." Anthony Pym defines localization as "taking a product and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate to the target locale (country/region and language) where it will be used and sold."¹¹⁾ In contrast to "internationalization," which eradicates differences, localization prizes them. It is crucial to all forms of adaptation, more so even for those written translational practices often considered to have localizing tendencies, like subtitling and dubbing. While often discussed in relation to translation for business, localization has assumed new importance in our world because of the advent of the international lingua franca, English, which is powerful in erasing cultural differences. Adaptation, as much as translation, can assist in the preservation of differences between a source culture and a target culture. Pym's view is that internationalization, promoted by Global English, should be balanced by localization for individual communities, and the two should work complementarily. In the face of the triumph of English as an internationalizing agent, localization gives the receptors "the home product."¹²⁾ An illustrative example is the sequence of localized adaptations of the 36-volume *Hana yori dango*, the bestselling Japanese girls' *manga* series of all time.

The East Asian Travels of a Japanese *Manga*

1. The Original Text

Hana yori dango attained enormous success soon after it came out, becoming one

of the bestselling *shōjo manga* (girls' comics) at the turn of the twenty-first century, along with such popular titles as *Nana* (2000) and *Furūtsu Basuketto* (Fruit Basket; 1999), among others. It features Makino Tsukushi, a girl from a lowly family who gets admitted to an elitist high school but, because she stands up for a classmate, starts to be harassed by a group of four bullies who call themselves "Flower Four" (F4). However, Dōmiyōji Tsukasa, the leader of the gang, gradually falls for her, though his love is unrequited at first because Makino has developed strong feelings for another gang member, the handsome but detached Hanazawa Rui. On top of this love triangle, there are sub-plots that revolve around the other two members of the group, Nishikado Sōjirō, the playboy who is incredibly fond of traditional Japanese tea ceremonies, and Mimasaka Akira, the peacemaker whose family has connections with the Japanese underground. In the main plot, matters come to a head when the hero declares his love for the heroine, although it takes a while for Makino to accept the relationship and see Dōmiyōji, alienated from herself in terms of class and social rank, in a completely new light. As is common to these teenage romances, further obstacles are put in the way, in this case from a domineering mother Dōmiyōji Kaede, who tries in various ways to break up the couple. It is only when Makino enters the Dōmiyōji household as a maid that the mother slowly comes to approve of her as her son's loved one.

It can readily be seen, from the brief synopsis given above, that although the story features some universal themes in teenage romances, there is much that is not amenable to transference to non-Japanese contexts, even within East Asia. It is not surprising that adaptation is the principal mode in which the story is transmitted beyond Japan. Apparently, the class and family issues can be appreciated by many receptor communities in the region, but culture-specific elements, like the family businesses of the well-to-do in Japan, pose an obvious barrier and therefore need to be altered to a greater or lesser degree. Above all, the abundance of depictions of sex and violence in the original *manga* has to undergo drastic adaptation, including outright deletion. For instance, near the beginning of *Hana yori dango* there is a scene that suggests gang rape, when male students at Eitoku High School, acting under the orders of Flower Four, chase after Makino, catch her and pin her to the floor, only to be stopped when Hanazawa shows up. How can these plot features, along with the Japanese characters and value systems, "travel" to other parts of East Asia?

2. *The Meteor Garden of Taiwan*

Fujii Shozo's conception of the "clockwise expansion of a shared East Asian culture," introduced to explain the geographical shifts occurring in several phases of the reception of *Norwegian Wood* by readers in Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and finally the Chinese Mainland, may just as well be applied to the East Asian reception history of *Hana yori dango*.¹³⁾ In the years that followed its initial publication in 1992, written translations appeared in a host of Asian and Western languages, but in terms of impact these can hardly be compared to the range of adapted live-action TV versions in the East Asian region. The first of these, the Taiwanese TV drama series *Meteor Garden* (Liuxing huayuan), aired in 27 episodes, caused a sensation when it premiered in 2001 and gave instantaneous fame to the boys' band (F4, or

“Flower Four”) who played the four bullies intimidating their schoolmates. In this adaptation, localization strategies are deployed at several levels. First, Eitoku High School, the setting for the romance between the story’s heroine and her super-rich boyfriend, is replaced by a university campus in Taiwan, to make plausible the outrageous adult behavior of the unruly gang. The *kanji* in the Japanese names are mostly retained and pronounced as they should be in Chinese. For instance, “Dōmyōji Tsukasa” becomes “Dao Mingsi”; “Hanazawa Rui” is simply pronounced in Chinese as Hua Zelei, though “Hua” is very rare as a Chinese surname. The Chinese version of the heroine’s name takes into account the fact that the original Japanese word “Tsukushi” means “weed.”¹⁴⁾ A list of the characters’ names as adapted in the three East Asian languages is given in the table below, in which Chinese characters show the link between the different versions, while a comparison is made with the Korean version, where Japanese the pronunciation is not retained:

<i>Japanese</i>	<i>Taiwanese</i>	<i>Korean</i>
牧野つくし Makino Tsukushi	董杉菜 Dong Sancai	甘艾草 (금잔디) Geum Jan Di
道明寺司 Dōmyōji Tsukasa	道明寺 Dao Mingsi	瞿峻珀 (구준표) Gu Jun Pyo
花沢類 Hanazawa Rui	花澤類 Hua Zelei	尹梓皓 (윤지후) Yoon Ji Hoo
西門総二郎 Nishikado Sōjirō	西門 Ximen	蘇堯政 (소이정) Soo Yi Jung
美作あきら Mimasaka Akira	美作 Meizuo	宋佑彬 (송우빈) Song Yoo Bin

Table 1. Names of Characters in the Japanese, Taiwanese and Korean Versions

Other than the name changes, the Taiwanese version freely showcases “local” Taiwanese elements, incorporating the colloquialisms popular among the younger generation at the time, referring occasionally to sensational current affairs (like the marriage of President Chen Shui-bian’s daughter), and altering the locales in which some of the events take place. As far as the heroine’s part-time job is concerned, whereas Makino works in a shop selling Japanese delicacies, Sancai is employed in a Western-styled bakery, of the kind that sprang up and spread widely across Taiwan in the mid-1990s. A blogger (see www.slideshare.net/tangfion/case-study) has noted the deletion of the parts about the beauty pageant and the cosmetic surgery that Sancai’s female friend Li Zhen goes through. S/he also mentioned the frequent appearances of coffee shops as a backdrop for the action in *Meteor Garden*. All this is meant to create a teenage “trendy” love drama taking place against a Taiwanese cultural context which viewers can immediately relate to.

When the series was dubbed in Cantonese for Hong Kong viewers a year later, the *manga*’s success via its Taiwanese version was repeated in a different locale. In 2002, even before it was broadcast in Mainland China, the drama series had ignited great interest. Its popularity was so alarming that, after only 6 episodes, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) ordered that the broadcast

be halted on 8 March of that year. Similar successes were reported farther afield beyond the East Asian region, in the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand, where versions dubbed in the local Chinese dialects enjoyed spectacular receptions by the overseas Chinese communities, as evidenced by record-breaking audience viewing ratings everywhere. In both the Philippines and Indonesia, *Meteor Garden* was the most popular TV drama ever, while in Thailand it was reported that a fad for learning Chinese was kindled after the series was broadcast on Thai television in 2003.

3. *Meteor Shower over the Mainland*

The next stage in the afterlife of the adapted *manga* came when a Mainland Chinese version, *Let's Go Watch the Meteor Shower* (Yiqi laikan lixingyu), produced by the controversial Hunan Satellite—the TV station that often runs into difficulties with the censors—was aired in 2009 in all the major cities of China, including Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Tianjin and Chongqing, with over-the-top viewership ratings. This is an even more localized adaptation.¹⁵⁾ Besides the change in the title from *Meteor Garden* to *Meteor Shower*, the characters are almost thoroughly Sinicized: they are given Chinese surnames like Murong, Duanmu and Shangguan (see Table 2 below). The Chinese atmosphere is accentuated with the story taking place in so-called Aliston College and being shot on location in Xiamen University in Fujian province. The sexually explicit material (like kissing and caressing scenes) and the violent content of the Japanese original and the adapted Taiwanese version are deleted, clearly to dodge the censors, since the official position had remained a threat since the censorship of *Meteor Garden* barely seven years ago. In interviews the Hunan producer Ren Yaojia insisted that *Meteor Shower* was an original piece of work, though acknowledging that it was somehow “inspired” by its predecessor. With major roles played by winners in the well-known talent singing contest “Super Boy” (*kuaiile nansheng*) organized every year by the TV station, the “idol drama”—a new genre on the Mainland—found a mesmerized teenage audience, despite the wave of criticism it faced. Paradoxically enough, one serious criticism revolved around the failure to successfully accommodate the foreign work to a Chinese context. Comparing it with the Korean version, one commentator saw the latter as a more endearing Korean fairytale, “aesthetically satisfying yet shot through with humor as well as a sense of real life experienced.”¹⁶⁾ Albeit on a smaller scale, the same cycle of popular endorsement was repeated by *Meteor Shower*: the key actors rose rapidly to stardom, and associated products like soundtracks, CDs and DVDs entered the market, enjoying astounding sales.

<i>Japanese names in the original</i>	<i>Chinese version</i>	<i>As Romanized</i>
Makino Tsukushi	楚雨荨	Chu Yuxun
Dōmyōji Tsukasa	慕容雲海	Murong Yunhai
Hanazawa Rui	端木磊	Duanmu Lei
Nishikado Sōjirō	上官瑞謙	Shangguan Duanqian
Mimasaka Akira	葉燦	Ye Shuo

Table 2. Names of Characters in *Meteor Shower*

Some “foreign” elements are nevertheless carried over from the original (more of them from *Meteor Garden* than from the *manga*). Murong Yuhai has curly hair, his “trademark” in the *manga*. Also he speaks Chinese awkwardly like Dōmyōji, but an explanation is added—he is an Aussie-born Chinese returning to the Mainland for his education. Duanmu Lei has long, dyed golden hair. Both male leads have therefore a feminine, pretty-boy look, which continues to be a talking-point for fans of the TV series. On the whole, however, the “local” dominates. Chu Yuxun’s mother is turned into the owner of a cafeteria, a “local” equivalent to the small business run by her Taiwan counterpart. The bullying culture at school also figures in this adaptation, though on the whole it is not bloody. In the original version, references to virginity and abortion are plentiful and conspicuous, in the nature of much of Japanese *manga*. In particular, Nishikado is portrayed as a womanizer busy with his many sexual escapades. But none of this is reproduced in the Chinese adaptation. In one instance Shangguan Duanqian and his girlfriend “book into a hotel room” (*kaiyang*) (Episode 23), but the audience’s expectations are dashed on knowing that they only want to play a plank on the leading couple.

Plot-wise, one major difference between the Mainland version and its Japanese and Taiwanese counterparts is seen in the story of how the heroine, Chu Yuxun, gets admitted to Aliston College. While both the Japanese original and its Taiwanese adaptation present the heroine’s parents as snobbish money-diggers hopeful that their daughter will find a rich husband at school, the Chinese adaptation shows how the hardworking Chu Yuxun seeks admission in order to improve her own prospects. The critique of money-minded seniors in the Japanese and Taiwan versions does not inform either this version or the Korean one. Nevertheless, all four versions show the youths resisting their parents or guardians, symbolized to a greater or lesser degree by the figure of the scheming, domineering mother of Dōmyōji Tsukasa, though for different reasons. In *Meteor Shower*, for instance, the gang H4 (“Handsome Four”) is held together by the four rogues’ shared reluctance to have their future careers carved out for them by their parents; they resort to mischievous behavior so they can be expelled from school. While there is a different emphasis, given the preponderance of plot elements it has taken over from the Japanese original (like the love triangle, the conflicting demands of love and friendship, and the subplots), *Meteor Shower* can hardly be viewed as just an “imitation” loosely based on the Japanese original.¹⁷⁾ Many of the deviations from the Japanese and Taiwanese versions should in fact be seen as an attempt either to avoid charges of plagiarism or to make the story palatable to a local audience.

4. *Flower-like Boys Back in Japan*

Back in Japan, a movie adaptation, starring teen idols Tanihara Shosuki and Uchida Yuki and produced by Toei Tokyo, had appeared as early as 1995, though curiously it was not the sensation that the later adaptations in the other East Asian countries became quickly and easily. It did not even contest any national, linguistic or cultural boundaries, as *Meteor Garden* did, nor is there any indication that the Taiwanese producer (Angie Chai) and director (Cai Yuxun) of *Meteor Garden* made any use of it. In 2005, perhaps as a response to the transnational adaptations, the Japa-

nese station TBS produced a TV drama series. It met with great success, both locally and when exported overseas in translated (i.e., dubbed and subtitled) versions. It is obvious that this is a case of outside success fueling audience interest back home. Naturally, it invites comparison with the Taiwanese version, as it was also released to receptive communities elsewhere in East Asia. A much shorter version consisting of only nine episodes and starring Matsumoto Jun, the lead singer from the pop group Arashi, it traced the same trajectory of success trodden by its predecessors, although it still paled a little beside *Meteor Garden*. Such a fact is borne out by a cursory look at the comments by viewers in websites like “meteorgraden.com.” Since this adaptation is not of a transnational nature, detailed analysis of its reception is irrelevant to the present discussion.

5. *Final Flowering in Korea*

In another bid to capitalize on the popularity of the *manga*, South Korea’s KBS produced a 52-episode adaptation in 2009, the same year that the Mainland Chinese version appeared. The name of the heroine is Koreanized as Geum Jan Di; the leader of the Gang of Four is renamed Gu Jun Pyo, heir to the global corporation, Shin-Hwa Group. In a similar move as the two *Meteor* versions, from episode 13 onwards the Korean adaptors of *Boys over Flowers* (*Kkochboda namja*) situate the story in a university, which furnishes a justifiable context for a story that is at times quite racy and mature. Other evidence of the localization effort abounds,¹⁸⁾ but the most significant changes are connected with the image of the family in the story. First, Yoon Ji Hoo (the counterpart of Hanazawa Rui), the introverted, melancholic romantic hero whom the heroine falls for initially, is said to be orphaned when his parents died in a car accident; this deviates clearly from the well-to-do family background of Hanazawa in the Japanese original. Second, the heroine is offered a place in the elitist school after she prevents a student from committing suicide; in the original Makino applies for admission to Eitoku High School because she wants to be near Tōdō Shizuka, the rich heiress whom she adores. In sharp contrast to both is the negative portrayal of the family in the Taiwan version, in which the Cinderella-like heroine from a lowly background is forced by her parents to enroll in the elitist university because of the chance that offers her (and her family) to move up the social ladder.

As much as the Taiwanese and Chinese versions foreground their respective cultures, the Korean *Boys over Flowers* is remarkable for its deliberate showcasing of Korean-ness. Stylistically it is a more fast-paced version of the Japanese *manga* than its Taiwanese predecessor, from which it is separated by almost a decade. The structural alterations are also quite noticeable, as in the opening episode, where Shin-Hwa High School is introduced through a news report on its founder, the father of Gu Jun Pyo. This is immediately followed by the sensational suicide of a bullied student: a blood-smeared Lee Min Ha jumping off from a building. The incident is witnessed by Guem Jan Di, who happens to be delivering laundry for the dry cleaner that her family runs. Yet again it is the localizations that are most conspicuous. Jan Di works part-time at a congee shop—not a common establishment in Japan—while Soo Yi Jung (the womanizer) belongs to a prestigious family engaged in ceramics production, in contrast to his counterpart in the Japanese original, Nishikado, whose

family is well-known for hosting tea ceremonies. Besides food and art, other elements of Korean culture, like religion, etiquette and leisure activities (e.g., horse-riding), are tactfully woven into the drama, where they are mixed with an array of Korean songs, high-end Korean fashion and lavish settings, both interior and exterior.

The success of the Korean adaptation followed very much the by-now familiar trajectory. By the seventh week it had surpassed its fierce competitor, *East of Eden*, a drama series broadcast on another channel in the same prime-time slot. It also got some unprecedentedly high viewers' ratings (35.7% in Seoul and 35.5% in the country as a whole) in the course of two and a half months. The main actors, especially Lee Min Ho, the male lead, were propelled to super-stardom with a spate of acting awards. An avalanche of associated products, like original soundtracks and CDs featuring songs by the four male actors, was soon put into the teenager consumer market. The feverish adoration of the main male characters assumed unexpected proportions as young South Korean men started to pay greater attention to personal grooming and imitated the gestures and mannerisms of the F4 characters/actors. In imitation of the more flashy fashion of F4, males started to wear make-up and give excessive attention to accessories. At the same time, the filming locations of the drama series have turned into overseas tour destinations for viewers in other parts of East Asia.

6. *Other Paths, Other Versions*

Yet another phase in the "afterlife" of the Korean adaptation began when it traveled to other places in East Asia, and then Southeast Asia. In the same year as it was released in South Korea, subtitled and dubbed versions were aired in Taiwan (GTV, CTV), Hong Kong (J2), Mainland China (Xing Kong channel), Vietnam (H1/HN1, HTV3), Thailand (BBTV-7) and Malaysia (8TV). The circle was complete when it made its way back to the country of its original, with a subtitled version shown on Japan's TBS in July 2009. Just as in Korea, it garnered rave viewing figures among the new target audiences, who received the story in their own languages mostly through dubbing, but unadapted. In Taiwan, a record high of 9.69 points was reported for female audiences aged between 15 and 22 watching the CTV airing on 7 June 2009.¹⁹⁾

Beyond TV drama, *Hana yori dango* has spawned adaptations in other media. An anime version of *Boys over Flowers*, consisting of 51 episodes, produced by Toei Animation and broadcast by Asian Broadcasting Corp., had been aired in Japan in 1996–1997. Generally faithful to the original, it was subsequently dubbed in Cantonese (for ATV) and Mandarin (for TTV) for broadcasting in Hong Kong and Taiwan respectively. There was also a 2008 film adaptation named *Hana yori dango: Final*, in which band members of Arashi again played the lead characters. Following the same route of East Asian dissemination, its subtitled version also reached the cinemas of Taiwan and Hong Kong later. However, the intriguing question of how the later Japanese versions might have been affected by the East Asian adaptations is beyond the scope of the present article.

Features of *Manga*-Based TV Adaptations

The story of *Hana yori dango* adaptations into Chinese and Korean TV drama is only one example of a recurrent formula adopted by East Asian media production companies, though it is a phenomenon hardly ever studied. Recently, however, a special publication by Tatsumi Publishing in Tokyo—*Kanryū and Karyū rimeiku dorama*, edited by Inoue Yuhiko et.al.²⁰⁾—devotes full attention to the TV drama remakes based on Japanese materials, *manga* mostly, in Korea and China. A range of such adaptations is discussed, with the degree of affinity to the original noted in each case. But how the percentages were obtained is not accounted for; most likely these are based on the editors' impressions. The Taiwanese adaptations listed are as follows:

Taiwanese adaptation	Date	Japanese original	Date	Affinity
<i>Absolute Boyfriend</i> (絶對達令)	2012	絶対彼氏 (<i>Zettai kareshi</i>)	2003	80%
<i>Skip Beat!</i> (華麗的挑戰)	2011	スキップ・ビート! (<i>Sukippu bito</i>)	2002	90%
<i>Romantic Princess</i> (公主小妹)	2007	ろまんす五段活用 (<i>Romansu godan katsuyō</i>)	1989	90%
<i>Sweet Relationship</i> (美味關係)	2007	おいしい関係 (<i>Oishī kankei</i>)	1993	70%
<i>The Hospital</i> (白色巨塔)	2006	白い巨塔* (<i>Shiroi kyotō</i>)	1963	—
<i>Hanazakarino Kimitachihe</i> (花様少年少女)	2006	花ざかりの君たちへ (<i>Hana zakari no kimitachi e</i>)	1996	90%
<i>It Started with a Kiss</i> (惡作劇之吻)	2005	イタズラなKiss (<i>Itazura na Kiss</i>)	1990	90%
<i>Mars</i> (戰神)	2004	<i>MARS</i>	1996	95%
<i>The Rose</i> (薔薇之戀)	2003	薔薇のために (<i>Bara no tame ni</i>)	1992	80%
<i>Tomorrow</i> (愛情白皮書)	2002	あすなろ白書 (<i>Asunaro hakusho</i>)	1992	70%
<i>Meteor Garden</i> (流星花園)	2001	花より男子 (<i>Hana yori dango</i>)	1992	90%

Table 3. Major Taiwanese TV Adaptations of Japanese *Manga* and Novels
(based on *Kanryū and Karyū rimeiku dorama*, 2012)

* Original text is a novel.

Of these only one is based on a novel—Yamazaki Toyoko's *Shiroi kyotō*; the rest are recastings of Japanese *manga* of since the late 1980s. Taiwanese TV producers' active engagement in adapting Japanese *manga* contrasts sharply with the “relative indifference” of Mainland China, where the aforementioned *Meteor Shower* is the only instance found. Comparable to the Taiwanese scene is that of South Korea:

Korean adaptation	Date	Japanese original	Date	Affinity
<i>Dr. Jin</i> (닥터 진)	2012	仁 (<i>Jin</i>)	2000	60%
<i>To the Beautiful You</i> (아름다운 그대에게)	2012	花ざかりの君たちへ (<i>Hana zakari no kimitachi e</i>)	1996	—
<i>City Hunter</i> (시티헌터)	2011	シティーハンター (<i>Shitei hantā</i>)	1986	60%
<i>Royal Family</i> (로열 패밀리)	2011	人間の証明* (<i>Ningen no shōmei</i>)	1976	60%
<i>Playful Kiss</i> (장난스런키스)	2010	イタズラなKiss (<i>Itazura na Kiss</i>)	1990	80%
<i>Master of Study</i> (공부의 신)	2009	ドラゴン桜 (<i>Doragon sakura</i>)	2003	80%
<i>Boys Over Flowers</i> (꽃보다 남자)	2009	花より男子 (<i>Hana yori dango</i>)	1992	70%
<i>I Am Sam</i> (아이엠샘)	2007	教科書にないッ! (<i>Kyōkasho ni nai-tsu</i>)	1995	60%
<i>White Tower</i> (하얀 거탑)	2007	白い巨塔* (<i>Shiroi kyotō</i>)	1963	90%
<i>Alone in Love</i> (연애시대)	2006	恋愛時代* (<i>Ren'ai jidai</i>)	1996	80%
<i>101st Proposal</i> (101번째 프로포즈)	2004	101回目のプロポーズ (<i>101kaime no puropōzu</i>)	1991	90%

Table 4. Major Korean TV Adaptations of Japanese *Manga* and Novels
(based on *Kanryū and Karyū rimeiku dorama*, 2012)

* Original text is a novel.

Three of these were based on novels rather than *manga*: Morimura Seiichi's *Ningen no shōmei*, Yamazaki Toyoko's *Shiroi kyotō* and Nozawa Hisashi's *Ren'ai jidai*. This shows once again the strong preference for *manga*, specially *shōjo manga* as sources. The only exception, perhaps unique among the transnational adaptations, is *Dr. Jin*, which is based on *Jin*, a Japanese *manga* by Murakami Motoka about the life of the much-loved historical figure Sakamoto Ryoma (1836–1867), a samurai who, by ousting the Tokugawa Shogunate, engineered the transition of feudal Japan into the modern age. Embedded in Korean culture, the adaptation changes the setting from the Edo period to the Joseon Dynasty, replacing Sakamoto with the Korean political figure Lee Ha-eung, Regent of Joseon in the 1860s. For Inoue, et.al., it is also one TV adaptation where the original is drastically altered, getting an affinity rating of only 60%.

A few characteristics emerge from a comparison of the adaptations that cross cultural and linguistic boundaries in East Asia. First, the success of an adaptation in one place seems also to guarantee its counterpart's success in another. Several *manga* have been adapted, and enthusiastically received, in both Taiwan and South Korea—Nakajo Hisaya's *Hana zakari no kimitachi e*, Tada Kaoru's *Itazura na Kiss* and Kamio Yoko's *Hana yori dango*. Interestingly, film adaptations of the same materials

(like *Shitei hanta*) are relatively rare: Japanese *manga* does not apparently serve well as the basis for filmic transnational re-presentation.

Second, adaptations appear in most instances to “click” better with local audiences than subtitled or dubbed versions imported from a different geographical locale, even within East Asia. A case in point is *Hana zakari no kimitachi e*, a story about a young girl disguised as a boy in order to attend the school of her athletic dream-lover. The Taiwanese version (*Hana zakari no Kimitachi e*) stars Wu Chun from the Mandopop boy band, Fahrenheit, and Ella Chen, the tomboyish pop-singer of the girls’ band S.H.E. In the Korean adaptation, Choi Min-ho from the South Korean boy group Shinee plays the male lead. Both adaptations scored spectacular successes with their respective audiences. There exist two Japanese TV versions of this famed *manga* series, one in 2007 and the other in 2011, but neither version made its way to South Korea and Taiwan. This reveals indirectly how adaptations can be more popular than imported and “translated” versions from the same place of origin.²¹⁾

Third, the East Asian intermedial border-crossing does not occur only on the textual level; the manner of production has been affected in the sense that a transnational East Asian cast and/or crew appear in some of the adaptations. For example, in the Taiwanese adaptation of *Zettai kareshi*, a story about a 16-year old girl falling in love with a cybernetic boyfriend she accidentally created, Taiwanese pop-singer Jiro Wang is cast as “Night” alongside the Korean actress Ku Hye Sun as “Riiko.” For the Taiwanese version of *Skip Beat!* (2009–10), too, there were Korean and Japanese crew in the production team.

Globalization versus East Asianizations

Currently, in East Asian TV studies, adaptations appear to be a negligible part of the bustling transnational media traffic. There are innumerable studies of the inroads made by Japanese and Korean TV dramas into the region as a whole and China in particular.²²⁾ Their successes are often explained with reference to the attraction that the Western trends purveyed in the dramas have for the audience in diverse localities. Globalization is therefore the common cord that these studies strike. Undoubtedly East Asian TV dramas are shot through with elements of Western modernity, yet they are still distinctly East Asian—and they show this blatantly. While global Western values are often superimposed on all of East Asia, creating complications for interpretation for critics examining the transferred and transferrable culture of the region, the unthinking reduction of Japanization and Koreanization to globalization wherever possible is nevertheless a serious distortion. What has resulted is the erasure of Japanese-ness and Korean-ness. Iwabuchi Koichi has emphasized the shortcomings of globalization studies and stresses the distinctiveness of the East Asian situation:

“Global” is still apt to be associated with the West, and global-local interactions are mostly considered in terms of how the non-West responds to, resists, imitates, or appropriates the West ... [My book will] fill in the lacuna in the West-centered analysis of cultural globalization by ... attending to ways in which the intra-regional cultural flows forge transnational connections both dialogically

and asymmetrically in terms of production, representation, distribution, and consumption.²³⁾

The ebbing of the Japanese wave, as it was superseded by the Korean wave, shows the shifting fortunes that such phenomena are subject to. Much of the theorization based on the former is in fact turned on its head when it is eclipsed by the latter in recent years. The popular Korean dramas work differently than the Japanese ones, seen in the fact that the Western valorization of youthfulness and urban life is not the main source of appeal for audiences. The claims of globalization can be misleading, too, when they are based primarily on the technological and material products shown in Japanese TV dramas (e.g. Sony mobile phones, Mitsubishi washing machines, Sharp cookers, Nissan cars, etc.) rather than on observable textual features. In this context, the localization processes in adapted TV drama are worth special consideration.

The issue of adaptability as it relates to the Japanese and Korean waves can be viewed against the cultural proximity thesis, according to which Japanese and Korean cultural products find easy acceptance among East Asian consumers because they are embedded in certain Confucian values (like filial piety, respect for seniority, familial values, patriarchy, etc.) and embody a conservative attitude toward love and sexuality. But cultural closeness alone will not account for the invasion of Japanese and Korean cultures in the region. Cultural distance, as Lisa Y. M. Leung pointed out, is also part of these products' strong appeal to the Asian audience, and it is hard to formulate an argument without allowing it to play a part.²⁴⁾ Some critics have queried the postulation of an "Asian consciousness" (believing instead in the onset of a "global consciousness"). But it is the delicate interplay between closeness, which makes possible identification, and distance, which gives rise to the exoticism of the Other, that underlies the reception of trans-East Asian media material. As far as adaptability is concerned, it is the degree of overlap between the source and target cultures that determines the possibility of reworking the original text successfully in a different locale, and thus proximity cannot be discounted as a crucial factor in such cases of reception.

In her insightful article on "the Asian formula," Leung lists a number of reasons for the phenomenal success of Japanese and Korean TV dramas other than that of cultural proximity. These include "global" factors like: urban appeal, technical brilliance, skillful deployment of the romance and melodrama genres, glamorization of the teenage actors, etc. But obviously not all of these—especially the last two—can be divorced from local or regional culture. Whatever similarities exist among different East Asian peoples cannot be all consigned to the realm of the global or universal. Unfortunately, both national and regional dimensions are erased in much of the current critical discussions of the subject. The equation of what is Japanese with what is "global" is seen characteristically in a statement like the following by Lee Dong-Hoo: "the construction of South Korean popular culture is hybridization through the re-adaptation of Japanese popular culture *which is an adaptation of Western media culture or global consumer culture.*"²⁵⁾ The global is always given precedence.

By contrast, Younghan Cho presents a more nuanced understanding of the inter-

penetration of the local, the national, the regional and the global in his analysis of the popularity of South Korean pop culture in Asia:

The asymmetric but synchronous spatialities expressed in the Korean Wave indicate that East Asian sensibilities are neither identifiable nor incommensurate with Euro-American modernity. Instead, East Asian sensibilities, already and always inscribed by global modernity, have been historically cultivated and generated by the national and by regional specifics.²⁶⁾

Even though East Asian values may show certain affinities with those of the West, the two simply cannot go undifferentiated, much as Orientalist arguments would like them to be so. In emphasizing the “similarities” between the audiences of Japan, Korea and China—even the “connectivity” created by a “shared historical past and modernizing desires”²⁷⁾—Cho seeks to restore the regional to academic discourses on transnational popular cultural movements.²⁸⁾ He denounces the tendency among cultural critics to subsume “East Asian sensibilities” under the universality claimed by Western modernities and reasserts the need for regionalism to be taken into consideration.²⁹⁾

One should note other factors that facilitate the easy adaptability of cultural material within East Asia as well. Leung notes one element of striking importance: corporeal likeness. Recent American TV dramas that have been popular with East Asian audiences, like *Friends*, *Sex and the City*, *Ally McBeal* and *ER*, have never been adapted, nor will they be adaptable, even though some have inspired imitations in East Asia already (especially in Hong Kong). Physiognomy poses a barrier to the adaptation of Western material, as was seen in the case of *Hana yori dango*. Reporting on the findings from interviews she conducted with focus groups, Leung notes how audience identification in the case of Japanese and Korean TV dramas is enhanced for Chinese audiences who feel that “[the actors] look like us: dark hair and eyes, we are all Asian looking.”³⁰⁾ Indeed it is impossible to identify characters’ nationalities in these TV dramas simply by looking at their physical appearance. What is more, similar notions of physical beauty are shared among the East Asian peoples, and this makes possible the appreciation of dramas produced “elsewhere in the region.”³¹⁾ The importance of bodily likeness is that it encourages vicarious indulgence in fantasies, especially those that pertain to the romantic heroes and heroines of the dramas. This being the case, corporeal similarity is just as significant as, if not more than, that of cultural similarity. As an element conducive to the success of the waves of adaptations from Japanese *manga*, it is just as important as economic and consumerist factors, which have been over-emphasized in debates on the subject.

Conclusion

Though a major TV phenomenon of the past decade in East Asia, the adaptations of *Hana yori dango* have received scant attention in audience studies³²⁾—in fact, they have seldom been discussed in more than two paragraphs. Many critics have, instead, focused attention on the globalization processes at work in the successes of

exported TV drama from Japan and Korea in the region *as a whole*. Most notably, there is selective treatment of certain kinds of cultural exports from the two countries. The predominant concern is with dramas, dubbed and subtitled, that occupy prime-time slots in the various terrestrial and cable channels, rather than locally produced adaptations or (the even more localized) imitations.³³ The special nature of East Asian adaptations, as we have seen in those TV dramas derived from *Hana yori dango*, alerts us to a problem in globalization studies, revealing the lopsidedness of much of the research done under this rubric.

By simplifying the multi-layered, multi-faceted dimensions of cultural transfer cross linguistic, national and cultural boundaries, many of those who study Japanese-influenced and Korean-influenced “East Asian Pop” have sought to explain the two waves in terms of the spread of late twentieth and early twenty-first century “globality.” Their thesis can be substantiated with reference to a certain body of cultural exports, but other pertinent materials are excluded from examination. Most noticeably, there is the overwhelming emphasis placed on trendy drama, which is generally interpreted as the carrier of a Western modernity that had reached Japan before it did the other East Asian nations. Evidence that contravenes this thesis is brushed aside. For instance, the Korean period drama series *Jewel in the Palace* (*Dae Jang Geum*), indisputably the most successful of the TV drama exports from the two countries in terms of audience ratings, is often characterized as an “exception.” It is hard to consider it as evidence of globalization, whichever way one looks at it. Furthermore, failure to note terminological distinctions is seen in the fact that Japanization and Koreanization are spoken of as equivalents of globalization, while modernization is invariably regarded as the laudatory result of all inter-cultural, inter-national and inter-racial processes. All this has happened in spite of a call by leading theorists in this area to be wary of the direct transference of Western models to the East Asian context. For Chua Beng Huat and Iwabuchi Koichi, “the multiple connectivities and socio-political implications of popular cultural flows and exchanges in East Asia ... cannot be ascertained in existing US-centric analyses.”³⁴

These problems are highlighted by the aforementioned absence of sustained consideration of adapted TV dramas—the local response to the Other—in the ongoing scholarly conversation. After *Meteor Garden*, an endless stream of adaptations has appeared in Taiwan, from *Mars* (2004) to *The Hospital* (2006), *Sweet Relationship* (2007) and *Romantic Princess* (2007), all runaway successes. Besides *Boys over Flowers*, the long list of adaptations in South Korea of Japanese *manga* features such ratings triumphs as *Dr. Jin* (2012) and *City Hunter* (2011). Adaptations, in contrast to dubbed and subtitled TV dramas, show interesting facets of the Japanese and Korean waves; but, like imitations, they exemplify the manipulations to which cultural imports are subject when reconfigured for local audiences, though in a slightly different way.

Chua Beng Huat has elaborated on the intricate mechanisms whereby the receptors of a TV drama from abroad, whether Japanese or Korean, deal with the foreign (“not us”) and familiar (“like us”) elements.³⁵ Subtitling and dubbing, each in its own way (but especially the latter), help indigenize the media imports. The foreignness, Chua argues, is preserved in the visual elements, since the audience sees recognizably foreign locations and costumes on screen. Thus the two poles of

domestication and foreignization are unavoidably blended in the audience's viewing experience. By contrast, while adaptations evince a blend of foreignization and domestication, too, they are highly "domesticated" products. For instance, for those Taiwanese and Korean viewers who are not cognizant of the Japanese "source" of the drama they are watching because the story unfolds in a Taiwanese or Korean setting, complete localization has been achieved. This is like reading a translation that does not identify itself as such. Of course, the foreignness of TV adaptations can be rather explicit at times, and this is not because of the foreign location or costume, but because of the retention of some of the original elements. However, adaptations are not geared to the display of the Other, and the "like us" dimension is usually enhanced, to encourage audience identification. It has been argued that the desire for things Japanese (which is then equated with things modern, global and American) lies behind the Japanese Wave of the 1990s. Can one then see the ebb of the Japanese Wave—which must have occurred for more reasons than just the fact that Korean imports are cheaper—as recession of the modern? And can the decrease in Japanese imports be related in any way to the surge of adaptations? The success of the adaptations suggests that localized products may be as charming, or can appeal as much to an audience, as media imports from abroad that are dubbed and subtitled.

Why, then, have American TV dramas—or, for that matter, those of other Western countries—rarely (if not ever) been adapted, even though there may be imitations from time to time? If adaptations are attractive to audiences primarily because they have a strongly localized character, one can see that the wave of adaptations coming after the "invasion of the originals" from Japan as proof that American media imperialism has to contend with powerful forces as it enters East Asia. The globalization of American values and norms is not to be realized without overcoming regional and local barriers. The Korean Wave has made possible a re-evaluation of many of the accepted explanations offered for the Japanese Wave. To put it simply, since popular Korean TV dramas depict (as is often claimed) an earlier stage of "modernity" than that seen in the equally popular Japanese TV dramas, the globalization thesis falls short as a rationale for understanding the circulation and reception of East Asian drama. East Asian TV adaptations are an exemplary case of how globalization, regionalization and localization, rather than working in a top-down hierarchical manner, interpenetrate, interact and intertwine.³⁶⁾

Notes

- 1) See, for instance, Iwabuchi Koichi, ed., *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of Japanese TV Dramas* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004). Following established convention, in the present article macrons are not placed over the vowels of Japanese words in cases of familiar personal and place names.
- 2) For discussions of Japanese TV drama, see Nakano Yoshiko, "Who Initiates a Global Flow? Japanese Popular Culture in Asia," *Visual Communication* 1.2 (2002), 229–253; Cui Baoguo, "Japanese TV Drama in China" (2010), at: http://www.jamco.or.jp/2010_symposium/006/index.html; and Lee Dong-Hoo, "Cultural Contact with Japanese TV Dramas: Modes of Reception and Narrative Transparency," in Iwabuchi, *Feeling Asian Modernities*, 251–274. For discussions of Korean TV drama, see Leung Yuk Ming Lisa, "An Asian Formula? Comparative Reading of Japanese and Korean TV Dramas," (2004) at: http://www.jamco.or.jp/2004_symposium/en/lisa/index.html;

- and Mori Yoshitaka, “*Winter Sonata* and Cultural Practice of Active Fans in Japan: Considering Middle-Aged Women as Cultural Agents,” in Chua Beng Huat and Iwabuchi Koichi, eds., *East Asian Pop Culture: Analysing the Korean Wave* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 2008).
- 3) Anthony Fung, “Inter-Asian Cultural Flow: Cultural Homologies in Hong Kong and Japanese Television Soap Operas,” *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 51.2 (2007), 265–286.
 - 4) Wen Zhaoxia 温朝霞, *1980 nian hou Ri Han yingshiju zai Zhongguo de chuanbo* 一九八零年後日韓影視劇在中國的傳播 [The Spread of Japanese and Korean Films and TV Drama in China since 1980] (Ph.D. thesis, Jinan University, 2006).
 - 5) Lee Dong-Hoo, 251–274.
 - 6) *Ibid.*, 259.
 - 7) *Ibid.*, 267–271. The influence model is also discussed by Jung Sun, “The Shared Imagination of *Bishōnen*, Pan-East Asian Soft Masculinity: Reading DBSK, *Youtube.com* and Transcultural New Media Consumption,” *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific*, no. 20 (2009), footnote 15. Online: <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue20/jung.htm>
 - 8) Lee Dong-Hoo, 260, 266.
 - 9) Imitations are of course also marked by more significant departures from their originals.
 - 10) All textual references are made to: Kamio Yoko 神尾葉子, *Hana yori dango* 花より男子 (Flower-like Boys) (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1992–2004). It is worth noting that TV adaptations are extremely rare in Hong Kong, while imitations are abundant—perhaps a reflection of the importance the Westernized former colony attaches to originality.
 - 11) Anthony Pym, *The Moving Text: Localization, Translation, Distribution* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004), 29.
 - 12) One other possibility is that we can think of “interlocalization” in the interaction between three major cultures of the East Asian region now deploying “minoritized” languages—Chinese, Korean and Japanese.
 - 13) See Fujii Shozo 藤井省三, *Murakami Haruki no naka no chūgoku* 村上春樹の中の中国 (China in Murakami’s World) (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 2007), 75–79.
 - 14) There are actually two Korean names given to the same character. “Jan Di” means “grass,” while at one point in the drama Gu Jun Pyo confuses it with “Jap Cho,” meaning “weed.”
 - 15) At the time, parallel with the popular acceptance, there was strong reaction against the Japanese and Korean waves, expressed in newspaper articles like He Yonghai, “How Can We Resist the Korean Wave?,” in *Zhongguo funubao* 22.6. (2005); and anonymous author, “Should We Worry about the Craze for Japan and Korea Phenomena?,” in *Beijing zhoubao* no. 7 (2005).
 - 16) Dong Shaoyan 董绍妍, “Cong *Yiqi laikan liuxingyu* kan neidi zizhi ouxiangju de fazhan” 從一起來看流星雨看內地自製偶像劇的發展 [The Development of Indigenized Idol Drama in Mainland China: A View from *Let’s Go Watch the Meteor Shower*], *Chuanmei luntan*, no. 330 (2012), 94.
 - 17) Wen Zhaoxia gives a long list of Mainland imitations (“cloning”) of Japanese and Korean TV drama, including *Facing Doors* (*Duimen duimian*, cf. *Winter Sonata*), *You Are Too Kind-hearted* (*Nong xin tai ruan*, cf. *Long Vacation*), etc. See Wen, 119–120. Adaptations are, by contrast, a rarity.
 - 18) See Wikipedia article: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boys_Over_Flowers.
 - 19) Figures courtesy of Wikipedia entry on “*Liuxing huayuan*.”
 - 20) Inoue Yuhiko 井上祐彦 ed., *Kanryū and Karyū rimeiku dorama* 韓流&華流リメイクドラマ [Drama Remakes: Korean and Chinese Waves] (Tokyo: Tatsumi Publishing Co., 2012).
 - 21) Ironically, the Taiwanese version adheres more closely to the original than the Japanese “adaptation” of 2007, adding the part about the competitions between the various dormitories.
 - 22) See bibliography in Wen. Incidentally, the mediated nature of the TV imports has also been ignored, since there is hardly any recognition of the role played by subtitles and dubbing. Such mediation can be as significant as that of adaptation. Nonetheless, “translated” TV drama in East Asian is a topic so vast in scope that it must be left to a separate occasion.
 - 23) Iwabuchi, 43–44.
 - 24) The Japanization-as-globalization thesis is also undercut by the fact that Chinese TV drama, most notably the Taiwan series *Bao Qingtian* (Judge Bao), was received enthusiastically in South Korea in the early 1990s. Going back further, the spread of Hong Kong TV drama (like *Chu Liuxiang*

and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* [Wang Chung Yan]) to Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, etc., is also proof that such “waves” do not move only “clockwise,” as Fujii (2007) suggests. Though on a much smaller scale, they show that reverse traffic from China to her East Asian neighbors is not inconceivable.

- 25) According to Lee Dong-Hoo, quoted in Jung. Italics added.
- 26) Cho Younghan, “Desperately Seeking East Asia amidst the Popularity of South Korean Pop Culture in Asia,” *Cultural Studies* 25.3 (2011), 395.
- 27) Ibid., 391.
- 28) In fact the obvious differences between Japanese and Korean TV dramas, both of which find ready reception among East Asian audiences, show indirectly that the argument that viewers of the region are only fond of Japanese TV dramas because they showcase young, middle-class, urban Western modernity (which reached Japan well before it did the other East Asian nations) does not hold water.
- 29) For an advocacy of the regionalization thesis, see Nissim K. Otmazgin, “Cultural Commodities and Regionalization in East Asia,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 27.3 (2005), 499–523.
- 30) See Leung, sec. 7.
- 31) In asserting that these characters are “nationless,” Jung Sun makes essentially the same point, though the word must be taken to mean “not distinguishably Korean, Chinese, or Japanese.”
- 32) See Choo Kukhee, “Girls Return Home: Portrayal of Femininity in Popular Japanese Girls’ Manga and Anime Texts during the 1990s in *Hana yori Dango* and *Fruits Basket*,” *Women: A Cultural Review* 19.3 (2008), 275–296.
- 33) Lee Dong-Hoo, in her study of Japanese TV drama in Korea cited above, has noted the role played by imitations. But she uses the two terms “adaptations” and “imitations” interchangeably. This obscures some central points related to the transnationalization of popular culture in East Asia. Of course, to a certain extent, it must be admitted that the line of demarcation between the two is hard to draw.
- 34) Chua and Iwabuchi, *East Asian Pop Culture: Analysing the Korean Wave*, 12.
- 35) See Chua Beng Huat, “Structure of Identification and Distancing in Watching East Asian Television,” in *East Asian Pop Culture: Analysing the Korean Wave*, 73–89.
- 36) The idea of “East Asia,” following the defeat of Japan and the consequent demise of the East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere at the end of the Second World War, has lost its ideological force and becomes little more than a neutralized geographical designation. The post-War decades have seen a major paradigmatic shift. The dominant framework in terms of which East Asia is viewed is now provided by the West, in the new guise of globalization. Some scholars from Japan and Taiwan scholars (like Takeuchi Yoshimi and Chen Kuan-hsing) have sought to restore primacy to the notion of East Asia through evaluating the possible use of it as a “method” for conceptualizing the world. Economists, on the other hand, have noted how the developmental path of East Asia diverges from that of Western capitalism, the imposition of which has time and again been decried. All the same, the hegemonic Western model continues to wield enormous power, and East Asian values, patterns and predilections have generally been repackaged in “global” terms. The autonomy of the region is erased, along with more traditional distinctions between East and West. The pervasive but misguided interpretation of East Asian phenomena, as in the cases of the Japanese and Korean waves, is thus symptomatic as well as exemplary.