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Abstract

This thesis examines a single, multimedia “chain” of appropriation of the image of the ghost Oiwa. Originating from an 1832 ukiyo-e print from Katsushika Hokusai’s popular series One Hundred Ghost Stories (Hyaku monogatari, 1832) by Katsushika Hokusai, the image was physically disseminated from Edo (present-day Tokyo) to Osaka and reimagined in an actor print by the Osaka print designer Shunbaisai Hokuei. It was further circulated in the form of ivory netsuke—“ toggles” that attached items that were hung from the belt—carved in Osaka and Kyoto in the mid- to late nineteenth-century.

I argue that each reimagining of Hokusai’s Oiwa can be viewed as mitate, a “double exposure” or “parallel layering” that simultaneously alludes to an appropriated work while re-contextualizing it in a significant and startling manner. An examination of the
psychological and sociological motivations behind the consumption and value of
netsuke, which were male fashion accessories that functioned as visible status symbols,
additionally reveals a performative aspect of mitate that is “activated” when the netsuke
is worn.

Ghost in the Lantern: Consumerism, Appropriation, and Mitate in Nineteenth-Century Japanese Media,
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