



Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek Across the Pacific

By Christine R. Yano

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In *Pink Globalization*, Christine R. Yano examines the creation and rise of Hello Kitty as a part of Japanese Cute-Cool culture. Yano argues that the international popularity of Hello Kitty is one aspect of what she calls pink globalization—the spread of goods and images labeled cute (*kawaii*) from Japan to other parts of the industrial world. The concept of pink globalization connects the expansion of Japanese companies to overseas markets, the enhanced distribution of Japanese products, and the rise of Japan's national cool as suggested by the spread of manga and anime. Yano analyzes the changing complex of relations and identities surrounding the global reach of Hello Kitty's cute culture, discussing the responses of both ardent fans and virulent detractors. Through interviews, Yano shows how consumers use this iconic cat to negotiate gender, nostalgia, and national identity. She demonstrates that pink globalization allows the foreign to become familiar as it brings together the intimacy of cute and the distance of cool. Hello Kitty and her entourage of marketers and consumers wink, giddily suggesting innocence, sexuality, irony, sophistication, and even sheer happiness. Yano reveals the edgy power in this wink and the ways it can overturn, or at least challenge, power structures.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Christine R. Yano's deep meditations on Hello Kitty provide us with dizzying detail while simultaneously explaining the allure of what is ostensibly only a childish character. Most studies on the circulation of Japanese popular culture take a macro view, looking at a spectrum of manga and anime as aspects of a cool culture flow. Yano's achievement is to explore a specific commodity and its image, following the trajectory of Hello Kitty from Japan to the United States as she is created, produced, consumed and endlessly discussed."

(Laura Miller, author of *Beauty Up: Exploring Contemporary Japanese Body Aesthetics*)

"This is another absorbing study by one of our most accomplished anthropologists of Japan. Christine R. Yano's sophisticated formulation of Hello Kitty's pink globalization significantly advances our understanding of transnational popular culture flows. And it is great fun to read!"

(William W. Kelly, editor of *Fanning the Flames: Fans and Consumer Culture in Contemporary Japan*)

"Many feminists find Hello Kitty to be an example of a submissive, infantile undercurrent of Japanese culture. Other detractors see her simply as an example of manufactured corporate sweetness. Perhaps the best explanation for her popularity, however, was inadvertently provided by an overheated religious website called Hell of Kitty, which warned that the cat 'invades children's vulnerable hearts exactly through the weaponry of cuteness.' And who can resist that?"

(Meghan Keane *Wall Street Journal*)

"*Pink Globalization* isn't a primer for Hello Kitty lovers, it's a deep dive into the tale of the small feline that has dominated culture from East to West—all without saying a word or making a sound. Not every icon can make that claim, but, then again, not every icon is Hello Kitty."

(Scott Elingburg *Popmatters*)

"Required reading for anyone interested in contemporary Asian studies, American studies, globalization, popular culture, and cultural studies."

(L. Miller *Choice*)

"Featuring one-on-one interviews with Hello Kitty fans and detractors alike, it offers readers a rare insight into the iconic cat's influence on gender, nostalgia and national identity. By the book's end, you should understand Kitty-chan's journey from innocent kitten to sophisticated global superstar — even if you still don't quite get her overall appeal."

(Elliott Samuels *Japan Times*)

"If you've ever thought about or explained cool Japan, feminized consumerism, feminist reinterpretations, high art versus low art, Christine R. Yano's *Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty's Trek Across the Pacific* is the book for you. . . . Highly recommended for its careful and detailed analysis of the complete Hello Kitty phenomenon."

(Raizel Liebler *The Learned Fangirl*)

“Yano’s most impressive accomplishment with *Pink Globalization* is the way that she arranges the little details in such a way as to suggest the big picture without ever slipping into didacticism or the rhetorical register of narcissism. Tackling Sanrio, even in part, is no small task, but *Pink Globalization* manages it with honesty, empathy, and intelligence.”

(Ben Gabriel *The New Inquiry*)

“Yano has tied together in one package a number of disparate themes that share the common denominator of Hello Kitty. She artfully demonstrates that this well-traveled feline figure is not a flash-in-the-pan craze . . . Her book is an invaluable contribution to the study of transnational flows of culture.”

(Brian McVeigh *Journal of Japanese Studies*)

“*Pink Globalization* represents a well-inflected look at the Hello Kitty phenomenon. The writing is assured and theoretically rich yet quite accessible to a general readership, including undergraduates. Despite this theoretical richness, it also manages throughout the light, humorous touches one would hope for from a book on this topic.... *Pink Globalization* is a valuable contribution to the anthropological, Japanese studies, gender studies, and other literature on the internationalization of Japanese popular culture.”

(Marvin D. Sterling *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*)

“Yano’s book is an engaging and interesting read and will appeal to a wide readership—ranging from business history, to Japanese studies, to popular culture studies, as well as marketing and consumerism. ... [A] rich and sophisticated portrayal of a seemingly cute but, in reality, complex commodity.”

(Helen Macnaughtan *Business History Review*)

“Obviously, Japan specialists and symbolic anthropologists will love this book. But this is one of those anthropology books that you can actually give to someone outside the tribe without fear of them looking at you askance or with polite boredom—it will be anything but. And this book is going to make a fine text next semester when I teach Japanese popular culture.”

(James Stanlaw *American Ethnologist*)

About the Author

Christine Yano is Professor and Chair of Anthropology at the University of Hawaii. She is the author of *Airborne Dreams: "Nisei" Stewardesses and Pan American World Airways*, also published by Duke University Press, *Crowning the Nice Girl: Gender, Ethnicity, and Culture in Hawai'i's Cherry Blossom Festival*, and *Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song*.

Users Review

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Gary Lewis:

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