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PILGRIMAGES IN THE CONTEXTS OF POP
CULTURE AND THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
FROM AND TO EAST ASIA

MUTUAL IMAGES

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A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

FOUNDED BY

AURORE YAMAGATA-MONTOYA, MAXIME DANESIN & MARCO PELLITTERI

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AESTHETIC JOURNEYS AND MEDIA
PILGRIMAGES IN THE CONTEXTS OF POP
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FROM AND TO EAST ASIA

EDITED BY

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MUTUAL IMAGES

A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

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A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

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Editorial

Fulfilling the purpose of a rich, productive, and successful 2021. And preparing for an as much as possible, definitely “true normal” 2022

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Dear readers, students, fellow scholars, welcome to this tenth instalment of *Mutual Images* Journal, which we have titled “Aesthetic journeys and media pilgrimages in the contexts of pop culture and the creative industries from and to East Asia”, trying to subsume in it the variety of themes the volume hosts.

Audaces fortuna iuvat

The Latin adage of this introduction states: “good luck helps the daring ones”. We think this is what happened to us and *Mutual Images*, both the journal and the association as a whole. We had left 2020 with more than just the proverbial mixed feelings: we were all uncertain and confused about what would and could happen in 2021. We won't give you a summary of the many facets of what 2020 has been for the world, because each of you knows that all too well. But for MIRA, at least, 2021 was a moment of rally and refocus on what we hold dear: research, publishing, and the careful organisation of workshops and similar events. We rolled up our sleeves as so many people around the world did, and, in our microcosm of transcultural research in the humanities, media, cultural sociology, and area studies — whether supported by universities or independently run — we brought home two very nice workshops and a summer school. One workshop was held in Italy and Spain in November 2020 and the other in Japan in January 2021, although, for obvious reasons, both were technically conducted mainly online; and the summer school took place on-site in China, in June 2021.

The two workshops saw the participation of a wide range of early-career and established scholars from Europe and Japan, and the summer school — hosted by and

co-organised with the Department of Media and Communication, part of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU) in Suzhou — proved a true success, with its 14 international scholars as lecturers and a selection of 24 brilliant Chinese students from various universities out of the larger number of total applications XJTLU received.¹

In this sense, these three events, especially the two that were held in 2021, set the course for what we can call, with some sentiment, a progressive return to normal, although we are not entirely there yet as a plurality of societies at large and as academic community/ies.

One more step towards not only a return to normal but an improvement in our practice as a research-centred association has been the internal bet that we made: that of turning our six-monthly journal into an annual publication, with the goals of a better management of the workflows and of issuing a thicker and more structured yearly instalment.

Well, we did it: you are reading it right now. In this sense, we think we did our best, within our limits and possibilities, to hinder that insidious notion that has been emphasised last year, called “the new normal”: an idea we find appalling. We do not want to teach, attend, be friends/children/relatives, and in the end, live & love, online: we want all of this to be happening concretely, face to face. The “new normal” seems to us, and we know we are saying it even too bluntly, an aberration: we all must do our best and force our way back to what we would like to call “the true normal”.²

As per usual, this tenth issue stems from the events that we have hosted, held, and/or co-organised most recently: in this case, the two workshops mentioned earlier on. They are the ninth edition of our annual series *Mutual Images International Workshop* and a one-time edition of our more sporadic autumn series. They nourish the first and second sections of this volume respectively, and are followed by four challenging reviews.

In the three next sections, we introduce and summarise this issue’s contents.

¹ For more information about the summer school, see: <https://mutualimages.org/international-summer-school-2021> and [Xjtlu.edu.cn/en/news/2021/05/diving-into-popular-media-cultures-international-summer-school](http://xjtlu.edu.cn/en/news/2021/05/diving-into-popular-media-cultures-international-summer-school).

² Many professional, educational, and academic settings around the globe are reframing their situations using this label, “new normal” (Hinssen, 2010; Asonye, 2020), a definition, alas, officialised by the WHO (2020).

On Section I: “Styles, images, and cultural tourism from and to East Asia”

Co-organised by Jessica Bauwens-Sugimoto, Manuel Hernández-Pérez, and Maxime Danesin, Mutual Images’ 9th international workshop was titled *Japan Pilgrimages: Experiences and Motivations Behind Cultural and Spiritual Peregrinations from and to East Asia*. Held online from the 22nd to the 24th of January 2021 — after being postponed for a few months because of the Coronavirus crisis — it was hosted by our main partner for the occasion, Ryūkoku University (Japan), founded as a Buddhist school in 1639. The guest editors of this section are the selfsame Jessica Bauwens-Sugimoto and Manuel Hernández-Pérez.

Interrogating contemporary forms of pilgrimages in East Asia has been, over the years, a popular topic among researchers, and many have succeeded in producing consequential works — such as the well-known Ian Reader, who recently delivered, with John Shultz, a new enlightening book on the famous Shikoku pilgrimage (Reader and Shultz, 2013). Our workshop was in continuity with those studies, while adopting a specific posture based on two remarks: first, the commonalities among East Asian countries have made the rise of economic and cultural transnational flows possible, which include, as a relevant cluster, pilgrimage destinations; second, exploring such topic requires asserting the relevance of the creative and cultural industries and their influence on collective global imaginations.

Part of the proceedings will appear in a collective book edited by the aforementioned researchers, but we’ve selected specific articles to appear in this issue of the journal, starting with the one by Dennis Yeo. In a perspective that will find a complementary analysis in this issue’s second section — namely with Giulia Lavarone and Marco Bellano’s article — it examines the frame-to-frame animated movie produced by Laika Studios, *Kubo and the Two Strings* (2016). To the discussion of its *mise-en-scène* — which is a pilgrimage in itself for both the main character and the viewer — as a case study on potentially film-induced tourism focussed on Japanese culture and history, the next article by Giovanni Ruscica provides a counterpoint with the transfer of the ancient piece of Chinese literature known in English as ‘Journey to the West’ to Japan and the world. The discussion of its legacy — such as the interconnection between the monkey king Sun Wukong and Son Gokū, its Japanese counterpart, the hero of the *Dragon Ball* manga/anime series — exposes the “meta-pilgrimage” that has been and is still constitutive of its history and dissemination.

The third article, written by Lucile Druet, explores the multi-layered consumption of the kimono in the context of content- and fashion tourism. A traditional and “exotic” garment and symbol, a heavily promoted and marketed product, the kimono finds itself,

through its usage *via* rental and second-hand shops in Japanese cities, in a nexus where past meanings are rearranged and new ones added, by this pushing forward a form of pilgrimage in which fashion is the medium, thus revitalising in the process a production on the decline.

Shiri Lieber-Milo, in the following article, takes the readers into the new topic of the *otona-kawaii* (“adult-cute”), which is now challenging the culture of “cuteness” based on *kawaii*, a prominent aesthetic style of Japan’s past and present, historically associated with the young female culture. As the author’s survey suggests, we are witnessing both the continuation and the extension of the original notion, through the (generally positive) inclusion of a more mature version of cuteness. One can only wonder, at the sight of this new phenomenon, about its impact over content tourism, in particular with foreigners who have been, up until now, attracted by more narrow and stereotypical versions of *kawaii* culture.

Finally, the first section closes with an article by Olga Antononoka, who discusses how the borrowing and representations of kabuki theatre’s tropes in manga and the gender fluidity of their characters and situations play an intriguing part in the distortion of the notion of “gendered genres”, which had been at the core of the manga industry up until recently, thus pushing forward the current trend of reading manga across genres and genders.

On Section II: “Travelling (through) images around the world”

Held on the 6th and 7th of November 2020, our latest autumn workshop, which fosters this issue’s second section, was the result of the collaboration between MIRA and the University of Padua (Italy) and the University of Vigo (Spain), represented by Marco Bellano and José Andrés Santiago Iglesias respectively, who also are guest editors of Section II. Entitled *The Journey Around the World Through Images: From the 19th Century to the Contemporary Age*, that workshop aimed at discussing the notion and experiences of the “simulated journey”, their historical evolution, as well as their impact on our cultural representations.

Our own journey towards the implementation of this event started a few months after the release of *Dans la peau de Thomas Pesquet* (by P.-E. Le Goff and J. Hansen, 2018), the first ever VR movie shot in space. Giving the the viewer the opportunity to fully share the experience of French astronaut Thomas Pesquet aboard the International Space Station (ISS) during his 2016-17 mission, it is one of the latest evolutions of the simulated journey.

And, in one of those ironic twists of fate, this section is being published less than three months after Russian actress Yulia Peresild and director Klim Shipenko spent 12 days (5-17 October 2021) inside the ISS to shoot scenes of *Вызов* (*Vyzov, int. t. The Challenge*), the first (forthcoming) movie literally set in orbit. Such a new step in the making of simulated journeys is more than a simple anecdote for film studies, as we ought to remember that it inserts itself in the Russia-USA competitive relationship, the Americans having a similar project in place, linked to the famous franchise *Mission: Impossible* starring Tom Cruise.

In its own way, this reminds us of the necessity to carefully observe the potential impacts of simulated journeys, the images they convey, the technological evolution they represent, and their overall outcomes. The following articles, in that sense, provide an answer to the increased attention that this constellation of themes is gathering in academia.

This special section is thus introduced by Jeremy Brooker and his review of the Scottish painter David Roberts's (1796-1864) legacy. Roberts's travels in southern Mediterranean's countries in 1838-39 brought a set of exceptional drawings, journals, and sketchbooks to life. Along with approaching how the most advanced technologies of his time — such as the “double-effect” diorama — participated into elevating part of his works into simulated pilgrimage, this article offers an interesting peek into the marketing of the dissemination of Roberts's artwork in the context of London's exhibition culture of the 1840s.

The second article takes us to the early 20th century, with Angela Longo and her analysis, based on art historian Aby Warburg's theories, of the survival of bodies as potential motion in images. The question of the simulated journey is here not exposed *via* the bodies themselves, but through the travel of human movement and dance analysis, from France to Japan, developing here and there new visual formats, techniques, of which we can see an offspring in more recent productions such as anime and Japanese video games. We stay in the realm of theoretical analysis with the next article, by Nicolas Bilchi, who takes us to review and discover a few stylistic and aesthetic principles at the core of travelogue films.

Giulia Lavarone and Marco Bellano then discuss film-induced tourism in the fourth article of the section, or, more exactly, anime tourism and pilgrimage. If such a topic, when in relation with tourism *in* Japan, has been growing popular lately, there is a certain lack of research on the employment of European sceneries in anime and its

consequences on media pilgrimages *outside* of Japan. This article works towards closing that gap, with a welcomed focus on Studio Ghibli's films and Italy as an imaginary travel destination.

The fifth article, authored by Maitane Junguitu Drona, offers an interesting follow-up on the interconnection between travels and animation in a cultural sphere that is rarely an object of attention in animation studies: the Basque Autonomous Community or Basque Country, in northern Spain. The case study on *Ipar Haizearen Erronka* (*The Challenge of the North Wind*, 1992) — an animated Bildungsroman depicting a Basque whale hunting vessel travelling to Terra Nova or Newfoundland (Canada) in the 16th century — opens an interesting window onto the social, cultural, and historical background of the narrative, while giving our journal the opportunity of an unexpected perspective, complementary to our more usual research on Japanese or Asian animation.

Putting behind films and animation, the sixth article of the section, born from the collective thinking of Stefano Caselli, Farah Polato, and Mauro Salvador, reflects on the potential of digital games when it comes to discovering and experiencing the real world. Such a use has seen major investments over the years in many countries and cities to engage in, with the purpose of developing new modalities of tourism and urban development. Here is presented and discussed one of those most recent cases, the *Urban Histories Reloaded* project and the mobile game *MostaScene*, set in one of the districts of Padua, in Italy.

The last article of this section, by Zhang Xiaolong, is an addition to the proceedings of our workshop in Padua. However, that is not to say that it doesn't fit the theme; far from it. Its analysis of Vaporwave — a 2010s digital-born electronic music genre, with specific visual aesthetics — and its impact in Chinese visual media's context takes us inside the US-based online communities of the 1990s, the Metaphysical art of Italian painter Giorgio De Chirico (1888-1978), and the growingly popular visual styles of Japanese comics from the 1980s-1990s. The readers will experience both temporal and cultural travels.

Reviews

What would a journal's issue be without its reviews, to keep us up-to-date with some outstanding research works from all over the world? The four reviews we host are the results

of the (critical) efforts from two guest authors, Jose Montaña and Vicky Young, and two pillars of MIRA and *Mutual Images* journal, Aurore Yamagata-Montoya and Jamie Tokuno.

The latter opens up the section with a discussion on *Diverse Voices in Translation Studies in East Asia*, edited by Nana Sato-Rossberg and Uchiyama Akiko. Born from the pioneering *East Asian Translation Studies Conference* of 2014 at the University of East Anglia, this volume provides, as demonstrated by the reviewer, an extensive view of the many applications of translation studies within the East Asian context that is worth the read not only for what it offers regarding the presentation of this particular field, but also for its capacity of reminding its readers that the very nature of translation studies requires to also engage outside of the Anglophone world — something other fields ought to consider more often.

Under the scrutiny of Jose Montaña, the next review analyses the recent work of William V. Costanzo, *When the World Laughs: Film Comedy East and West*. We are journeying with him in a not-so well-known part of the movie industry, a genre frequently downplayed or simply ignored if compared with more “serious” works. Beyond the book’s limitations that Montaña notes and the constant feeling that the volume could have been *more*, this piece of scholarship is still a most-welcomed contribution, according to the reviewer, and ought to be built upon to improve our reading and understanding of film comedy.

The third review, conducted by Vicky Young, observes the complex interaction between computational methods and Japanese literature and its impact on digital humanities, as it has been thoroughly exposed by Hoyt Long in *The Values in Numbers: Reading Japanese Literature in a Global Information Age*. This challenging read offers an alternative angle on the application of statistical methods in literature by looking at the Japanese context; it is refreshing, to say the least, since most literary scholars have been essentially — if they have been at all — familiarised with digital humanities through works in the English language. Still, as the reviewer points out with a level of composure that we can only support, its conclusions need to be read while carefully considering the impact of such approaches, and taking a step back from the fervent — and sometimes blinding — enthusiasm over computational methods as a mean to “radically reshape” the profession.

This section, and the issue as a whole, finds its conclusion in Aurore Yamagata-Montoya’s review of *An Affair with a Village* by Joy Hendry, one of the most famous Japanese studies scholars. This autobiography takes the readers to her early days as a

researcher, giving us a more personal perspective to her previous academic works on the village of Kurotsuchi (Japan). It is a curious “peek behind the curtains”, as the reviewer elegantly puts it: a nostalgic account that is not necessarily a piece for researchers — despite following a certain tradition of personal narrations by anthropologists — nor a challenger to literary autobiographies, but a work that could be enjoyed for what it is: a trip down memory lane.

Conclusions. In loving memory of Giannalberto Bendazzi

While we are very happy with this tenth volume of *Mutual Images* journal, we are going to prepare and finalise the eleventh one hopefully a bit earlier than late December 2022, and we will do our best to ensure that the new instalment will be as thick as this. Meanwhile, we shall also endeavour to plan and hold a new international workshop. Stay tuned!

One last note.

If 2021 has been richly productive and full of good, attainable promises for 2022, it has also been studded with sad events. Some of them had, most likely, to do with our personal lives (family, friends). Some, on that area where personal friendships and global academic relevance intertwine, have been particularly stunning. We refer here to the passing of Prof. Giannalberto Bendazzi, whom one of the two authors of this Editorial (Marco Pellitteri) as well as one of the guest editors in the Section II of the journal (Marco Bellano) were dear friends with. For those among our readers who are not exactly in animation studies, let us just say that Giannalberto was the animation scholar *par excellence*, globally: the greatest pioneer of all in the study of animation’s history/ies and authors. His seminal book on the history of world animation, *Cartoons* (1988, in Italian, then republished in improved versions in a few editions also in other languages, including English in 1995 by Indiana University Press and in Spanish in 2003 for Ocho Y Medio), as well as other works on the art of living legends animation director Bruno Bozzetto (*West and Soda, Allegro non troppo*) and Guido Manuli (a master of caustic short films, among which *Opera, Striptease, Fantabiblical, Incubus*, and many more), another legend of animation, *La Linea* funny animated strip’s author Osvaldo Cavandoli, and the masters of retractible pin screen animation Alexandre Alexeieff and Claire Parker, made him the most important animation scholar in the world, even more so after the publication of the deeply revised and thickened edition of *Cartoons*, which came out in 2015 for Routledge in three volumes as *Animation: A World History*, then in Italian in 2017 for UTET with the title *Animazione: una storia globale*. Giannalberto was

also a live action cinema scholar: he had published various works on film directors such as Woody Allen and Mel Brooks.

Giannalberto Bendazzi left this world on 13 December 2021. He was born in Ravenna on 17 July 1946, was raised in Milan mainly, and conducted a brilliant but not always easy career as a cultural and film journalist and self-funded researcher, later on gaining growing recognition as a leading cinema scholar in general and more notably as an animation historian. Giannalberto, who managed to get in direct contact with many old and legendary animators before they passed away (a remarkable example, besides aforementioned Alexeieff and Parker, was Argentinian director Quirino Cristiani, the author of the very first feature-length animated films in 1917 and 1918), adopted a direct approach to original documentation and living animators, through the method of in-depth interview and collegial discussion of the artists' materials in their own houses or ateliers. In 1982, he co-founded the Italian branch of ASIFA (Association Internationale du Cinema d'Animation). From 1996 to 2008 he taught Animation at Università Statale in Milan, which was the only official course on the history and languages of animation in any Italian university. He had received numerous acknowledgements and awards throughout his career, among which a honorary doctorate from the Universidade Lusófona in 2019.³

Many younger or established scholars around the world who pretend to write on animation — be it Japanese or not — and its languages and aesthetics often display a blatant ignorance of the basics of animation's history, authors, and techniques; they clearly have not read any of the pivotal books on animation's history and theory that should constitute the ABC's of any researcher who wanted to hit the keyboard and write something about the topic. To close this gap, in remembering our friend Giannalberto we can only suggest those scholars to retrieve *Animation: A World History* and, possibly, a few others among his most important books on animation's authors and histories.

So long, dear Giannalberto.

³ More information on Bendazzi's achievements are found at https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giannalberto_Bendazzi and Lfb.it/fff/giorn/aut/b/bendazzi.htm. The sources can be translated with any automatic translator of your browser, if you can't read Italian. His official website is still online: Giannalbertobendazzi.com.

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