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POLITICS, ARTS AND POP CULTURE OF JAPAN IN
LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS

MUTUAL IMAGES

ISSUE 5 – AUTUMN 2018

MUTUAL IMAGES

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FOUNDED BY

AURORE YAMAGATA-MONTOYA, MAXIME DANESIN & MARCO PELLITTERI

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POLITICS, ARTS AND POP CULTURE OF JAPAN IN
LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS

EDITED BY

MARCO PELLITTERI & HERB L. FONDEVILLA

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A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

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CONTACT: mutualimages@gmail.com

MUTUAL IMAGES RESEARCH ASSOCIATION – Headquarters
1810 Route de la Champignière
42800 St Romain en Jarez – France

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In the capacity of general editor for this journal, I have supervised a few book reviews by fellow scholars and have written two myself: this one and another for the next issue (*Teaching Japanese Popular Culture*, edited by D. Shamoan and C. McMorran, AAS 2016). Through these experiences, I realised even more now than ever before how scholars share certain ways of thinking about edited books. A considerable number of academics, myself included, who have reviewed edited books—e.g. the reviews in this and in the upcoming issue—implicitly divide collections into two overarching groups: those which have an organically, *ex ante* designed structure, and those which are put together *ex post* (there are also “hybrid” cases). In the first, *ex ante* group are collective works organised around a theme proposed by the editor(s), which can be based either on an open but very specific CFP, or on *ad personam* invitations to contribute on the basis of a project designed *a priori* by the editor. The latter composition strategy is by far the best to follow for an edited book. It is also the criterion used for so-called “handbooks”, reference texts with a somewhat encyclopaedic organisation but which are far beyond the classic idea of knowledge listed in alphabetical order and, on the contrary, possess a certain agility, transversality, and scholarly dynamism in the display of their contents. In the second, *ex post* group we find, for the most part, collections stemming from conferences and symposia. It is not per se that collections based on this criterion are *ipso facto* worse than or inferior to the *ex ante* structure. The distinguishing trait is not quality; there are organically edited works in the *ex ante* group whose chapters oscillate from mediocrity to greatness, and miscellaneous collections in the *ex post* group whose chapters, however detached from each other, are all of good-to-outstanding value. But in my experience as a reader and a scholar, it is much

harder for unorganised collections to reach the same standard and orderly structure compared to the collections of the *ex ante* group.

I shall explain this further later on, but first let us talk about *Japanese Animation*.

Japanese Animation: East Asian Perspectives was put together by Masao Yokota, a professor at Nihon University in Tōkyō who is a prominent clinical psychologist and the current president of the Japanese Psychological Association, with a long experience in the psychological dimensions of animation, and Tze-yue Hu, a California-based educator and researcher with a remarkable experience in the historical study of animation in Asia (cf. Hu's website at <https://tyghu.webs.com>). Hu has also authored an appreciable monograph, *Frames of Anime: Culture and Image-Building* (Hong Kong UP 2010). *Japanese Animation* partly stems from a panel held at the 2008 European Association of Japanese Studies (EAJS) conference, but from the number of chapters it is evident that for the most part the collection consists of essays added at a later stage.

The two introductions by the volume's curators are a nice entry point into the book's spirit, in that they set some epistemological hallmarks and synthetically explain the sense and position of this collection, especially the fact that it deliberately includes only Asian scholars. Hu's introductory essay incorporates representative literature on Japanese animation and clearly explains to a potentially heterogeneous readership the actual nature of Japanese animation (animated cinema created and produced by Japanese artists, crews, studios, etc.). She distinguishes (and theoretically/operationally defines) so-called *anime* from the rest of the diverse range of animated cinema made in Japan. Hu contextualises the emergence of Japanese animated cartoons from the model and inspiration of Chinese animation before and between the two world wars, explains the relevance and relative positions of each of the book's essays, and underlines the disciplinary perspective of each contributor.

The main goal of this volume is to provide a historic overview and multinational Asian perspectives on the scholarship on Japanese animation. It is therefore a partial shortcoming, in my view, that Hu and the other authors in the volume only refer to a very few *animation* theorists. It has to be underlined, though, that among the most relevant theorists of animation in general, and also of Japanese animation in Japan, there are not only Japanese scholars but also European scholars; in both cases, North American animation theorists seldom take those authors into consideration in the development of their visions on Japanese animation. Therefore, there is a strange asymmetry to this book,

which intends to raise awareness of Asian scholarship and Japanese animation but uses as its main theoretical hallmarks the perspectives of North American (US and Canadian) scholars, who in their work show little to no knowledge of some of the most important cinema and animation theorists from Japan and Europe, and present ideas on Japanese animation that are at times blatantly Orientalist or aesthetically ill-informed. In all this, what becomes clear is that none of these scholars (both those who contributed directly to this book and those who are cited as references) appears to have a wide knowledge of the scholarship on animation produced worldwide, but only of that from a specific region of the English-speaking world.

Yokota's introduction, in its more specific goal of explaining the history of animation studies by Japanese scholars, provides concise and precise coordinates on the generations of researchers who have engaged in this field in Japan. These include the contributors to this volume, some of whom are among the *crème de la crème* of Japanese research or work on (Japanese) animation under various disciplines.

The book is divided into six sections, from whose structure and length one can infer how difficult it was to organise the heterogeneous range of writings collected: two sections consist of only two chapters, and one section includes just *one* chapter. The longest section is the first, titled "Animation Studies and Animation History in Japan". Its opening chapter, titled "A Bipolar Approach to Understanding the History of Japanese Animation" by Nobuyuki Tsugata, is a quick and informative summary of the development of animation in Japan. This development is defined as "bipolar" due to the two main areas of animation made in Japan: commercial animation made in the 2D animated cartoon technique, which later came to be called *anime*, and all the rest—that is, independent, auteur animation. However, in further chapters another "pole" emerges, that of animated cartoons made before, during, and just after the wars. These can be defined as neither anime nor independent animation; they were propaganda cartoons financed by the government (the Japanese experience is in this sense similar to that of several other countries and their wartime animated productions, such as the United Kingdom, Italy, France, and the United States), as well as animation using techniques other than the animated cartoon. The latter cannot be framed as auteur works, since they were productions made within film studios, namely for advertising purposes in the form of TV commercials. A dimension of Japanese animation that is rarely analysed outside of Japan is in fact that these productions for advertising, in the postwar period—before the

resurgence of the animation industry through the foundation of Tōei Dōga—kept an agonising form of expression alive through the emergence of the television medium and the investment of growing capitals into it. This and related topics, such as the synergy between art and industry in Japanese animation during and after World War II, are explained in chapters distributed across the first and second sections, the latter titled “Pioneers of Japanese Animation”. In particular, Yasushi Watanabe’s chapter “The Japanese Walt Disney”, which focuses on Kenzō Masaoka, and Hu’s chapter “Animating for ‘Whom’ in the Aftermath of a World War” discuss the rich dialogue between artistic aims, industrial needs, and government commissions in Japanese animation between the early 1930s and late 1940s, while also conducting art-centred analyses on the overall value of these productions and the biographies of their creators.

Hu also authors another chapter in the first section: “Reflections on the Wan Brothers’ Letter to Japan”, which outlines the historical background and contextualises the deep influence of Chinese animation on Japanese cartoon productions of the 1930s and 1940s (and beyond). This and the other chapters in the book devoted to the Japanese animated productions and productive/creative criteria predating the advent of anime are particularly useful to that ample category of Japanese animation scholars who concentrate their attentions on contemporary anime from the standpoints of fandom studies, aesthetics, or societal issues, without details on the actual production, creative, formal, and originating cultural features of Japanese animation.

Japanese Animation: East Asian Perspectives, however, does not only talk of the history and current developments of Japanese animation, but also of how a tradition of studies on this field has struggled to emerge in Japan. The chapters “On the Establishment and the History of the Japan Society of Animation Studies” (by Masashi Koide) and its complementary “More on the History of the Japan Society of Animation Studies” (by Hiroshi Ikeda) reveal the human and intellectual dimensions behind the birth of animation studies in Japan. These insights into the intricate vicissitudes of this association and other competing research groups on animation in the Japanese context are a precious tool for international scholars to understand how difficult is to formalise the organised study of an emerging subject like animation in universities. As noted, the two chapters are complementary, in two senses. One is written by an academic researcher and the current president of the association (Koide), and the other by a renowned filmmaker and outstanding pioneer of modern Japanese animation in the

making and transmission of its techniques to new generations of animators through teaching (Ikeda). Moreover, having the two perspectives on the same subject—in this sense, this diptych of chapters fully reflects the title and intent of the collection—offers great insight into the contradictions and obstacles, as well as the dedication of researchers and artists in Japan, in its endeavour to create a structured, solid, institutionally legitimate interest for animation.

In the second section, in addition to the chapters already mentioned, Akiko Sano presents a study titled “*Chiyogami, Cartoon, Silhouette*”, dedicated to master Noburō Ōfuji. This and the two aforementioned chapters in the section offer a clever and historically documented explanation of how and why Japanese animation of the 1930s–1940s owes so much of their techniques, styles, and general structure to US cartoons. This section also examines how and why Japanese animation nonetheless kept a steady focus on Asian-centred themes and poetic attitudes, strongly influenced by Chinese animation, as Hu’s chapter on the Wan brothers argues in the first section.

The third section, titled “Popular Culture, East-West Expressions, and Tezuka Osamu”, is the least compelling. Its topics are too divergent, and the three chapters comprising the section are hinted at in the very wording of the section’s. The first chapter, “Tezuka and Takarazuka” (by Makiko Yamanashi), reconstructs the deep relationship between manga and animation master Osamu Tezuka, with the town where he spent his whole youth represented by renowned theatre company of actresses, the Takarazuka Revue. Yamanashi explains that many of the styles characteristic of *shōjo* manga (Japanese comics intended for girls) originated from Tezuka’s fascination for the Takarazuka Revue. The chapter presents an interesting historical outlook, but it contains some factual and historical mistakes, from which one can infer that the author is not a specialist of manga or animation. For example, she claims that the *shōjo* manga genre was established by Tezuka. This is not true, as manga scholar Rachel Matt Thorne has shown; Yamanashi’s explanation that the reasons for the ample cartoonish eyes of Tezuka’s manga derive from his admiration for the rich on-stage eye make-up of Takarazuka Revue’s actresses is incomplete, given that there are many more technical-historical reasons for this visual device in manga and anime. While the chapter is well-documented and an interesting read, it hardly touches on animation. Instead, it is a study on Tezuka as a manga creator and the influence of Takarazuka (both the town and the women’s revue) on his sensibility as a manga creator and a man, rather than a study on

animation. Furthermore, the chapter makes a problematic, ungrounded reference to the so-called *mukokuseki* concept, which is a highly disputable notion when it comes to anime and the physiognomy of anime characters. Yamanashi assumes that certain features of Tezuka's characters were deliberately ethnically ambiguous, and she falls into the same misunderstanding into which many scholars have tumbled. *Mukokuseki* and "odourless" cultural products do exist, and Kōichi Iwabuchi's presents sound arguments on this notion in his book *Recentering Globalization* (2002), where he discusses certain industrial commodities made in Japan. The notion has no empirical grounding when applied to the visual features of Japanese anime characters and the actual expressive, aesthetic, technical, taste-driven, and/or production-related reasons for certain visual choices in the making of manga series or anime shows. I have demonstrated the inconsistency of the notion of *mukokuseki* in the case of anime and manga in my book *The Dragon and the Dazzle* (2010) and a few more recent publications. *Mukokuseki* will be further discussed in Joon Yang Kim's essay.

The following chapter, "Growing Up with *Astro Boy* and *Mazinger Z*" by Korean scholar Dong-Yeon Koh, focuses on the success that Japanese televised animated children's series gained in South Korea despite the Korean government's long political and cultural ban on Japanese cultural imports. The Korean case has, of course, its specificities, as does every other country in which Japanese animation has arrived either officially or unofficially. However, in the wake of the perspectives promised in the book's title, it may have been advisable to link in some way the Korean case to other (at least Asian) stories, such as the arrival and success of anime in the Philippines or mainland China. There are huge parallels in the experiences of Italy, Spain, and France with Japanese animation, which share many features with the Korean case, in terms of the general dynamics of broadcasting and love/hate for this foreign cultural product, and in the very nature of the anime series imported. *Mazinger Z*, *Tetsuwan Atom*, and other franchises cited by the author, such as *UFO Robo Grendizer*, were and are ubiquitously celebrated in the aforementioned countries. This chapter offers an outstanding depth of analysis and originality of its approach: the survey on how Japanese animation—namely, science-fiction anime—"have changed Korea" delves into anime's cultural and technical relationship with science and mechanical technologies, its organised industry taken as a reference and inspiration for techniques and narrative genres (exemplified in the great success of a Korean pseudo-Mazinger, *Taekwon V*), the styles and visual strategies of its

pop culture and advertising, and certain trajectories of the contemporary art produced in the receiving country. The section of the chapter devoted to Korean pop-artists who drew inspiration from Japanese cartoons, while not unique in the world, is a profoundly revealing analysis of the Japanese pop culture's penetrative power in national and political environments which, officially, are overtly hostile towards engage in such cultural dialogue.

Kenny K. N. Chow, in "From Haiku and Handscroll to Tezuka", gets technical and explains the content and goal of one of his animation courses at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. It is one of the chapters in this collection with outright theoretical (as well as hands-on) content on the substance of animation as an art and craft; it shows a knowledge of animation theory deeper than those provided in many of the other chapters, whose approaches are rather historical and descriptive or exploratory, or theoretical in regards to other topics while animation is just a means to other ends. By positing a contradiction in Asian and western animation approaches, Chow demonstrates how the former focuses more on the representation of space and time, whereas the latter focuses on characters' performance. Upon this premise, the author explains how he encourages his students to engage in the making of animation in which space and time are to be prioritised, establishing, moreover, subtle relations with other art forms such as Japanese poetry, Chinese handscroll painting, and manga and anime. The rich theoretical and intellectual pedestal of this short and dense chapter is reflected in its references, which include Arnheim, Deleuze, Eco, Lakoff, Johnson, and Wells. Animation theory should in fact engage in dialogue with wider sources in the fields of philosophy, semiotics, art criticism, and film theory. Although, it would have been satisfying to see more Asian cultural or film theorists cited besides Masako Hiraga.

The fourth section, "Female Characteristics and Transnational Identities", starts with a chapter by Akiko Sugawa-Shimada titled "Grotesque Cuteness of *Shōjo*", which focuses on the representations of the *Goth-Loli* subculture and fashion aesthetics in some Japanese contemporary TV anime. Her chapter is a beautiful study on gender issues in the representations of a certain composite subculture in anime. However, the standpoint and focus of this chapter feel like a stand-alone element in the context of this book's general scope and intention. There is little in this chapter that is actually connected to Japanese animation as such; anime is instead used as a medium, interchangeable with other forms of entertainment, such as live-action cinema, or light novels, or video games, in which there

is no lack of *Goth-Loli* characters. In terms of approach to the substance of animation as such, there is no reference to *who* made the animations cited in the chapter (*Death Note*, *Rozen Maiden*, and others), the objective production conditions of these series, why the studios decided to use characters dressed in *Goth-Loli* fashion, or whether the script writers and producers (men? women?) shared any interest in the postfeminist problematics outlined by the author. A cultural anthropology of subcultures and gender issues conducted through the analysis of a material cultural product (anime series) should not exclude *agency* as a key dimension: that is, why and how the actual creators of a visual narrative—first a manga, then an anime, in this case—decide to engage in certain aesthetic and thematic choices. Otherwise, the analysis will suggest an immanence of the theme itself, as if it had originated abstractly and not from specific people for concrete (cultural, fashion-related, market-driven, current trend-sensitive) reasons. To be clear, the chapter is a pleasant and dense reading, particularly the first part on the contextualisation of gender issues in Japanese society long before the emergence of the *Goth-Loli* subculture. The freedom accorded to all the contributors for the composition of their chapters is commendable in that it bypasses many of the (sometimes too stiff) constraints at play in the editorial process of many academic journals. But too much freedom in the scope, focus, and framework may create a feeling of disconnect with respect to the supposed goals of a collection, as seems to be the case with this chapter.

The following chapter by Korean scholar Joon Yang Kim is again linked to the theme of the feminine in anime, but tackles it from a completely different angle: the recurrent presence, in several films and series from a certain period in anime's history, of a romance between a Japanese man and a non-Japanese woman. Kim presents case studies of three famous science-fiction franchises: *Cyborg 009* (the original feature film and the first series, all from the 1960s), the first series and first two films of *Uchū senkan Yamato* (1974–1977), and the series *Chōjīkū yōsai Macross* (1982). Since it is true that when one reads a book there is always some topic that gets into better resonance with his interests, I cannot deny that this is the chapter of *Japanese Animation: East Asian Perspectives* I enjoyed the most. Not not only for the topic, its development, and the elegance of its arguments, but also because this kind of approach is useful to those fans—amateurs of Japanese animation, and western scholars especially—who *think* they know everything (or the important things) about the strategies and tactics of visual design of characters in anime, but they actually do not fully understand them to say the least, because of their powerful

perceptual and cultural biases—and because they sometimes don't do their homework. Many anime scholars have actually watched very few anime series and films, especially those that have defined the medium (1963–1984). Kim is a refined expert and theorist of animation and Japanese animation. He leaves nothing to chance in explaining the how and why of the aesthetic and narrational aspects he deals with. In so doing, he posits an educated doubt about the way the concept of *mukokuseki* has been used to address anime, whereas a more correct term could perhaps be *kokusaika* or internationalism, used by Hu (2010) in her own monograph. In effect, the anime films or TV shows that deploy casts of characters of diverse ethnicities and origins could not correctly be called *mukokuseki*, in that we are introduced to both characters that are narratively indicated as Japanese and characters that are indicated as non-Japanese. Above all, such characters are aesthetically and physiognomically codified using precise visual markers of ethnicity or national/regional origin. These markers vary: more or less pronounced eyelashes, the shape of the chin, nose size, and hair colour, among others. Kim focuses on this latter feature more than on the others, because the female characters who in the aforementioned anime films/series engage in romance with Japanese male characters often have blond hair. This trait indicates, as the author argues, an Other who may symbolise Russia, or the United States, or a more ambiguous European ethnicity; while the Japanese man has brown/black hair, a Japanese name, and those other features which—within the aesthetic standards, stylistic *routines*, and narrational ecosystem of anime—indicate a Japanese person. Kim pays much attention to the historical contextualisation of cultural stratifications in Japanese society and the self-representations of ethnicity and politically forced homogenisation of Japaneseness around the constructed and imposed idea of “*Yamato*”, which erased other forms of Japaneseness related to other areas of Japan outside the main island of Honshū (Okinawa, Hokkaidō, etc.).

The elegant discourse conducted, however, at times comes against the same limitations observed in other chapters in this and other books: there is no reference to the names and life experiences of those creators and producers. For instance, adding to the discussion considerations on the cultural milieu and nationalistic/nostalgic political ideas of Yoshinobu Nishizaki (the main creator and producer of *Uchū senkan Yamato*, as opposed to the more liberal and universalistic views of the other creative developer of the franchise, manga master Leiji Matsumoto) would have led the chapter to more complete explanations on the composite and at times contradictory messages and visual

strategies of these animated movies and series. The same mechanism applies to *Macross*. The creators of this space opera are generationally more attached to and influenced by US cinematography and science fiction than the previous generation of anime creators. The older creators' cultural background is, in fact, more refined and philosophically driven thanks to a higher and deeper knowledge of European and Japanese/Chinese thought and art. *Macross's* authors, following the inspiration of Hollywood and a specific sensibility, deployed a visual appeal that was meant to be explicitly globalist and universalist, but certainly not confusing or stateless (quite the opposite), as can be seen in the presence of characters who are visually explicitly Japanese, Chinese, of African origin, and of European name and appearance.

There is much beauty in Kim's essay, for instance in the remarks on why the *Uchū senkan Yamato* story features blond tall and skinny alien women who remind one, in their appearance and names, of Russia, and the historical allusions to a past that linked Japan and the Czars' Russia; or the superimposition of references to the technology of automata, literature, music, theatre, and ballet in the character of Françoise from *Cyborg 009*. But at times, perhaps because of a lack of a more detached viewpoint on the cultural inspirations of anime creators (tightly connected to the historical period in which they lived), some points are missing. For instance, it may be obvious enough that in an anime from 1964 such as *Cyborg 009*, the author of the original manga, Shōtarō Ishinomori, might have been inspired, to create a character that is a beautiful and curvy French woman, by Brigitte Bardot, the French actress who in those years was at the apex of her career and surrounded by a mythology purporting her to be the most beautiful diva to have ever walked on earth (not including Italian actress Sophia Loren). This would be a *boutade* if it were not for the fact that inspirations of this kind are the rule in anime and manga, not exceptions. The attitudes of anime creators toward foreign cultures and contemporary myths are a powerful fuel used to make certain characters fashionable, and the cultural knowledge of manga creators and animators in Japan is usually very refined, as we know from the literary and cinematographic inspirations declared and clearly deployed by authors such as Monkey Punch (*Lupin III*), Tetsuo Hara (*Hokuto no Ken*), Sampei Shirato (*Ninja Bugeichō*), etc. Furthermore, Kim is a little too insistent that there is a single explanation for the display of Japaneseness and other nationalities in anime, seeing such display as necessarily "nationalistic", whereas simpler or at least alternative explanations may have been found. Here, again, a more down-to-earth approach comprised of

interviews with the creators and producers, whose answers are often counterintuitive and help reorient researchers, may have been of great assistance. Regardless, this chapter is a great example of scholarship and I hope it will raise awareness about the “iconographic and iconological study of characters portrayed in the field of animation” (239).

The fifth section of the book, “Artistic Animation and Expression in Japan”, is composed of two chapters that are not connected by a particular subject or theme, but are two singular, valuable contributions to the collection. The creative duo Ikif (formed by animators Tokumitsu Kifune and Sonoko Ishida) authored the chapter “3-D Computer Graphics”, a short treatise and “board journal” on the technical solutions used for the realisation of a quantity of animated sequences for the movie *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* (2004) and the CGI films on *Doraemon* (2004–2008). The high value of this chapter is in its unveiling, through accessible language, at least some of the technicalities characterising work on complex animated sequences in computer graphics, all by respecting the visual ambients and logics of anime. This is one of those rare occasions when international readers—scholars, fans, and students alike—can hear the voice of actual animators speak about the way they deal with their technical work. This gives us access, at least in part, to the mind of animators and to the fact that every visuo-narrative choice in animation is for the most part the outcome of technical procedures and not of the abstract spreading of immanent forces. Behind every single animation sequence is authors who have struggled to create what audiences see on the screen, and that result is often a compromise of several concrete factors such as technical ability, time, money, and negotiations between the animators and the director. The chapter is also an interesting reflection on the uncertain fate of Japanese 2D animated cartoon in the age of computer graphics; the artistic duo sheds a ray of hope through their own work, which, however deeply embedded in the industry of commercial animation, enjoys a wide range of styles and aesthetic results, as can be seen in the various visual solutions applied to specific scenes (songs, main titles, etc.) of the *Doraemon* feature films, in which traditional animation and computer-aided techniques were harmoniously blended.

“Animation and Psychology” is the title and topic of Masao Yokota’s chapter, a psychological analysis of the work of late Kihachirō Kawamoto, the animation talent who, in a midlife crisis at 38 years of age, decided to quit the Shiba animation studio, temporarily stop his activity on commercial animation, to focus on perfecting the art of animating puppets (this technique is called frame-by-frame or stop-motion animation)

with the sole purpose of doing artistic animation. Thus, he spent a period of training with stop-motion genius Jiří Trnka in Czechoslovakia in 1963–1966. Yokota’s specific expertise, and his first-hand contact and interview with Kawamoto, allowed him to conduct a subtle analysis of the artist’s films within a purely psychological framework, shedding light on an aspect of animation as only a trained psychologist *and* a refined animation scholar can do. Again, this study is valuable not only for actual scholars of animation but also for those who use anime as a means to pursue their own research agenda, even when it is only tangentially related to animation as such. In fact, the core of Yokota’s chapter is not psychology, it is the animator Kawamoto as a man and his animation as his human, artistic, emotional, and aesthetic offspring. This approach to the psychology of an animator may look perfectly meaningful in the case of a single, outstanding auteur (and it is); however, it can also be a great tool of knowledge for other, lesser known figures who have worked or currently work in industrial animation. The inner, sometimes well-hidden meanings of serial/commercial children’s animation are no less important for the comprehension of Japanese animation’s success among international audiences. To this end, Yokota’s chapter could serve as a model to follow perhaps for other psychologists who are fond of animation, and/or animation scholars turned—up to a point—psychologists.

The title of the sixth and final part of the book is “Japan’s First Commercial Animation Studio after the Second World War: Tōei”, and includes Hiroshi Ikeda’s second contribution to the book (“The Background of the Making of *Flying Phantom Ship*”) and three short appendixes: two samples of Kenny K. N. Chow’s class assignments for his students from his 2008 course “Principles of Visual Design” and a set of explanatory notes that contextualise some details of Ikeda’s second chapter. Ikeda’s essay focuses on the film *Soratobu Yūreisen* (lit. ‘The flying ship’, 1969), based on another manga by aforementioned Shōtarō Ishinomori, produced by Tōei Dōga, and directed precisely by Ikeda himself. Ikeda shares his memories on the production and the cultural milieu that generated as a result. The amount of information on the historical situation in which he and the studio’s crew found themselves provides readers with a dive into the actual making of animated cinema in Japan in the 1960s and the factors that played into it: namely, the influences from live-action cinema (directors, techniques, themes) and the relevance of social and political changes and crises during years to the topics chosen for this and other animated films. Ikeda lists a series of historical facts and then concludes that all the “incidents, events, and

developments influenced the film directors' filmmaking as they were no longer able to remain indifferent to the social situation and circumstances of that time" (290). The reading of this chapter is therefore educational at multiple levels, one of which is the inevitable extension of Ikeda's story and sentiments to those of many more Japanese animators, directors, and scriptwriters who, in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, created their animated series or movies while keeping one or both eyes on current international or local affairs, turning their "industrial" products—with the support of their producers, or sometimes in spite of them—into multi-layered narratives, even more valuable because their audience was comprised of children, and in disguise of colourful stories meant to sell toys. Moreover, Ikeda displays refined cinematographic and literary cultural knowledge, and in this he is no exception among Japanese directors and animators of his generation. For example, his wide knowledge of Italian Neorealism and European cinema at large, Japanese history, and science fiction novel, all converged to form a solid cultural background for the making of a film that was both visual entertainment and clean fuel for the young minds. This chapter can therefore be seen as a wonderful "special content", like a Director's Commentary segment in a DVD, if you will, but in the form of a beautiful testimony, at once both scholarship and literature.

As I wrote at the beginning of this review, this volume stems partly from a panel on Japanese animation held at a conference, but for the most part is comprised of essays that were not presented at that venue. Thus, the collection falls into the "hybrid" case I made reference to in the preamble of this review. It is not a rare case in publishing; rather, it is quite normal and understandable: the nucleus of an idea is developed thanks to further contributions. What is important in this process, however, is to keep focus on the main topics and goals, and justify the possible thematic ramifications. Unfortunately, there is no such focus in this book. The "perspectives" the title announces are all there, but they are not alternative views on a compact topic or set of topics. They are rather, for the most part, isolated approaches to very diverse areas and themes of Japanese animation. In this sense, I can reassure the reader that each chapter of the book, taken individually, is a highly informative read to say the least, and in several instances a valuable, articulate study as well. But the collection could well be a journal's special issue based on a vague CFP on "Japanese animation, accepting applications from East Asian scholars only". I insist on this point because, from this shortcoming as in a chain effect, other problems arise. From the standpoint of thematic organisation, there are too many

trajectories, and some of the chapters are thematically very distant from others. From the point of view of the general quality, the severe peer-reviewing process of any international academic journal would have ensured a stricter academic filtering process to avoid the ample heterogeneity in the approaches and methodologies of the chapters, as well as the very different ways in which theory, concepts, and references were dealt with by one author compared to another. The essays do not engage in any real conversation or dialogue, the occasional cross-references between chapters having been discreetly pointed out by the editors in some endnotes. There are several conceptual and factual errors that expert peer-reviewers would have spotted and reported to the authors. From the point of view of editorial organisation, another aspect that should have been avoided is that each chapter has its own references; there is no general bibliography. This encourages the reader to frame the volume as a miscellanea of independent essays, each of which could be considered autonomous.

This review first reached readers in 2019, but the work reviewed is from 2013. This gives us a bit of “perspective”, to use the keyword in the book’s title. First of all, it must be emphasised that it is rare—to my knowledge, it was the first case when the book came out—for a collection of essays on Japanese animation all written by Asian scholars to be published in English. Publication in English, by a US publisher, is an important sign of recognition of the general significance of making essays written by Asian researchers available to an audience that largely cannot read Japanese or other East Asian languages. In the intellectual framework of mutual understanding and acknowledgment of the ideas of authors coming from different backgrounds, milieus, and therefore intellectual mindsets, using the English language as a “neutral”, vehicular medium of communication is a choice for which we should praise the University Press of Mississippi. Besides and notwithstanding the possible commercial potential of this book, its cultural mission is highly commendable. However, it should be noted, even just *en passant*, that this English as a lingua franca has not been perfectly proofread in several chapters of the book. This is not a major problem, especially for readers like me, that is, those who are non-native English speakers. For those of “us”, the English language is simply a means to communicate ideas, as stated above. As my mindset is not Anglophone, there must be a certain degree of socio-linguistic negotiation and tolerance for differences in linguistic backgrounds. As literary perfection is not chief among the parameters of assessment, international scholars do not and should not usually engage in mental musings on typos, syntactical stiffness, or

other eccentricities. Native speakers, however, might disagree; in this sense, this slight criticism of mine is not addressed to the book's editors and contributors but to the publisher's proofreaders and copy-editors, who should have polished the typescript more carefully. There are imperfections dealing with Japanese long vowels and the original titles of the works cited, which are too often reported in italics and in English only (even when there is no edition in English!). Another problem that is the publisher's responsibility: the poor quality of the images featured and the inelegant way they are paginated. Any book on a visual art should be, if not artistic, at least visual. This issue is not uncommon among academic publishers.

In the end, *Japanese Animation: East Asian Perspectives* is an important collection. It offers essays and, as the title accurately announces, different standpoints on Japanese animation by East Asian scholars and professionals of the field. It is a must-read for the following categories of readers: (1) scholars of Japanese studies in the fields of humanities and arts; (2) animation historians and scholars of the moving image at large, with particular interest in the East Asian (not only Japanese) contexts; (3) American and European film scholars who perhaps specialise in Asian/Japanese cinema, but have seldom had the opportunity to read about Japanese animation; and (4) students and scholars of Japanese popular culture who are fond of that area of Japanese animation called anime, and which is but one among many fields of the animation cinema made in Japan by Japanese creators. In fact, a vast, potential audience of anime fans can find in this book a way to widen their often too narrow and poorly informed understanding about Japanese animated cinema. To give even more value to the book and put it into greater perspective, in the recent news I was informed by the editors that a "sequel", that is, a new volume on similar themes, is to be published in 2019 by the same University Press. I don't know about you, dear reader, but I cannot wait to have the new installment of this scholarly endeavour on the study of Japanese animation in my hands.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marco PELLITTERI is a media sociologist. He teaches in the School of Journalism and Communication of Shanghai International Studies University. He has published extensively on histories and theories of Japanese pop cultures and soft power, television, video games, animation, and comics. Among his publications, the books *Mazinga Nostalgia* (1999, 4th ed. 2018, 2 vols) and *The Dragon and The Dazzle* (2008, Eng. ed. 2010).

