

Mutual
Images

ISSUE 10

2021

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

MUTUAL IMAGES

ISSUE 10 – 2021

MUTUAL IMAGES

A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

FOUNDED BY

AURORE YAMAGATA-MONTOYA, MAXIME DANESIN & MARCO PELLITTERI

Previously published issues

ISSUE 1 – *Between Texts and Images: Mutual Images of Japan and Europe*

ISSUE 2 – *Japanese Pop Cultures in Europe Today: Economic Challenges, Mediated Notions, Future Opportunities*

ISSUE 3 – *Visuality and Fictionality of Japan and Europe in a Cross-Cultural Framework*

ISSUE 4 – *Japan and Asia: Representations of Selfness and Otherness*

ISSUE 5 – *Politics, arts and pop culture of Japan in local and global contexts*

ISSUE 6 – *Mediatized Images of Japan in Europe: Through the Media Kaleidoscope*

ISSUE 7 – *Layers of aesthetics and ethics in Japanese pop culture*

ISSUE 8 – *Artists, aesthetics, and artworks from, and in conversation with, Japan part 1 (of 2)*

ISSUE 9 – *Artists, aesthetics, and artworks from, and in conversation with, Japan part 2 (of 2)*

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

EDITED BY

MARCO PELLITTERI, MAXIME DANESIN, JESSICA
BAUWENS-SUGIMOTO, MANUEL HERNÁNDEZ-PÉREZ,
MARCO BELLANO & JOSÉ ANDRÉS SANTIAGO IGLESIAS

The logo for Mutual Images is written in a cursive, handwritten style. The word "Mutual" is in black ink, and the word "Images" is in red ink. The two words are stacked, with "Images" positioned below "Mutual".

MUTUAL IMAGES – ISSUE 10 – 2021

MUTUAL IMAGES RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

MUTUAL IMAGES

A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

Mutual Images is a semiannual, double-blind peer-reviewed and transcultural research journal established in 2016 by the scholarly, non-profit and independent [Mutual Images Research Association](#), officially registered under French law (Loi 1901).

Mutual Images' field of interest is the analysis and discussion of the ever-changing, multifaceted relations between Europe and Asia, and between specific European countries or regions and specific Asian countries or regions. A privileged area of investigation concerns the mutual cultural influences between Japan and other national or regional contexts, with a special emphasis on visual domains, media studies, the cultural and creative industries, and popular imagination at large.

Mutual Images is registered under the ISSN 2496-1868. This issue's Digital Object Identifier is: [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/9](https://doi.org/10.32926/9).

As an international journal, *Mutual Images* uses English as a *lingua franca* and strives for multi-, inter- and/or trans-disciplinary perspectives.

As an Open Access Journal, *Mutual Images* provides immediate open access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge.

© MUTUAL IMAGES RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

Mutual Images Journal by [Mutual Images Research Association](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](#).

DISCLAIMER ABOUT THE USE OF IMAGES IN OUR JOURNAL

Mutual Images is an academic journal: it is aimed to the scholarly analysis of ideas and facts related to literary, social, media-related, anthropological, and artistic phenomena in the Humanities. The authors of the journal avail themselves, for the contents of their contributions, of the right of citation and quotation, as in the Art. 10 of the *Berne Convention* and in the Title 17, § 107 of the *Copyright Act* (United States of America). The works hereby cited/quoted and the images reproduced—all of which include the mention of the creators and/or copyright owners—are aimed to validate a thesis, or constitute the premise for a confutation or discussion, or are part of an organised review, or anyway illustrate a scholarly discourse. The illustrations and photographs, in particular, are reproduced in low digital resolution and constitute specific and partial details of the original images. Therefore, they perform a merely suggestive function and fall in every respect within the fair use allowed by current international laws.

MUTUAL IMAGES RESEARCH ASSOCIATION: www.mutualimages.org

OPEN ACCESS JOURNAL: www.mutualimages-journal.org

CONTACT: mutualimages@gmail.com

MUTUAL IMAGES RESEARCH ASSOCIATION – Headquarters
3 allée de l'avenir, Les chênes entrée 3
64600 Anglet – France

MUTUAL IMAGES

A TRANSCULTURAL RESEARCH JOURNAL

MAIN EDITOR

Marco PELLITTERI, *Department of Media and Communication, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (China)*

JOURNAL MANAGERS

Maxime DANESIN, *Independent Researcher (France)*
Aurore YAMAGATA-MONTOYA, *Independent Researcher (Spain)*

EDITORIAL BOARD

Alejandra ARMENDÁRIZ-HERNÁNDEZ, *Department of Sciences of Communication, University Rey Juan Carlos (Spain)*; Matteo FABBRETTI, *Graduate School of Core Ethics and Frontier Sciences, Ritsumeikan University (Japan)*; Christopher J. HAYES, *TUIBS Finance, Performance & Marketing, Teeside University (UK)*; Manuel HERNÁNDEZ-PÉREZ, *Department of Arts & Media, University of Salford (UK)*; Fabio Domenico PALUMBO, *Department of Ancient and Modern Civilizations, University of Messina (Italy)*; Marie PRUVOST-DELASPRE, *Department of Cinema and Audiovisual, New Sorbonne University (France)*; Deborah Michelle SHAMOON, *Department of Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore (Singapore)*; Rik SPANJERS, *Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis and Modern Dutch Language Department, Utrecht University (The Netherlands)*; Bounthavy SUVILAY, *Department of Modern Literature, University of Montpellier III (France)*; Guido TAVASSI, *Independent Researcher (Italy)*; Jamie TOKUNO, *Independent Researcher (USA)*

SCIENTIFIC BOARD

Marco BELLANO, *Department of Cultural Heritage, University of Padova (Italy)*; Jean-Marie BOUISSOU, *International Research Centre, European Training Programme Japan, Sciences Po CERI (France)*; Christian GALAN, *Centre of Japanese Studies (CEJ), INALCO, Paris (France)*; Marcello GHILARDI, *Department of Philosophy, University of Padova (Italy)*; Paolo LA MARCA, *Department of Humanities, University of Catania (Italy)*; Pascal LEFÈVRE, *LUCA School of Arts, Campus Sint-Lukas Brussels (Belgium)*; Boris LOPATINSKY, *Centre de recherche en études philologiques, littéraires et textuelles, Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium)*; Ewa MACHOTKA, *Department of Asian, Middle Eastern and Turkish Studies, Stockholm University (Sweden)*; Paul M. MALONE, *Waterloo Centre for German Studies, University of Waterloo (Canada)*; Toshio MIYAKE, *Department of Asian and North African Studies, Ca' Foscari University of Venice (Italy)*; NAGATO Yohei, *Kyōto Seika University (Japan) and Kyōto University of Art and Design (Japan)*; Nissim OTMAZGIN, *Department of Asian Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Israel)*; ŌTSUKA Eiji, *The International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyōto (Japan)*; José Andrés SANTIAGO IGLESIAS, *Department of Fine Arts, University of Vigo (Spain)*; WONG Heung Wah, *School of Modern Languages and Literature, The University of Hong Kong (Hong Kong SAR, China)*

MUTUAL IMAGES

ISSUE 10

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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

MAXIME DANESIN (Independent Researcher, MIRA, France)
& **MARCO PELLITTERI** (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China)IX-XVIII

SECTION I:

STYLE, IMAGES, AND CULTURAL TOURISM FROM AND TO EAST ASIA

Guest Editors:

JESSICA SUGIMOTO BAUWENS (Ryūkoku University, Japan)
& **MANUEL HERNÁNDEZ-PÉREZ** (Salford University, UK)

The virtual cultural tourist: Film-induced tourism and *Kubo and the Two Strings*

DENNIS YEO (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore)3-20

From China to the World: The main media pilgrimages of Sun Wukong and Son Gokū

GIOVANNI RUSCICA (Fudan University, China)21-50

Fashionable pilgrims: Rental and second-hand kimono shops styling paths of new embodied communities

LUCILE DRUET (Kansai Gaidai University, Japan)51-92

Cute at an older age: A case study of *Otona-Kawaii*

SHIRI LIEBER-MILO (Osaka University, Japan)93-108

Undermining the gendered genre: Kabuki in manga

OLGA ANTONONOKA (Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan)109-134

SECTION II:

TRAVELLING (THROUGH) IMAGES AROUND THE WORLD

Guest Editors:

MARCO BELLANO (University of Padua, Italy)
& **JOSÉ ANDRÉS SANTIAGO IGLESIAS** (Vigo University, Spain)

In the steps of the Prophets: The dissemination and reinterpretation of David Roberts' Holy Lands sketches through the Shows of London

JEREMY BROOKER (Independent Researcher, UK)137-170

Bodies in motion and image recomposition in the early 20th Century

ANGELA LONGO (Tokyo University of the Arts, Japan)171-190

Immersed, yet distant: Notes for an aesthetic theory of immersive travel films NICOLAS BILCHI (Roma Tre University, Italy)	191-216
Anime tourism in Italy: Travelling to the locations of the Studio Ghibli films GIULIA LAVARONE & MARCO BELLANO (University of Padua, Italy)	217-250
<i>Ipar Haizearen Erronka</i> : A boat trip from the Basque Country to Newfoundland MAITANE JUNGUITU DRONDA (Independent Researcher, Spain)	251-270
Journeying to the actual World through digital games: The <i>Urban Histories Reloaded</i> project STEFANO CASELLI, FARAH POLATO & MAURO SALVADOR (University of Malta; University of Padua, Italy)	271-294
What is visual Vaporwave? Vaporwave arts and their history and position in China ZHANG XIAOLONG (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China)	295-326

REVIEWS

<i>Diverse Voices in Translation Studies in East Asia</i> – Nana Sato-Rossberg & Akiko Uchiyama (eds) JAMIE TOKUNO (Independent Researcher, MIRA, USA)	329-334
<i>When the World Laughs. Film Comedy East and West</i> – William V. Costanzo JOSE MONTAÑO (Rikkyō University, Japan).....	335-342
<i>The Values in Numbers: Reading Japanese Literature in a Global Information Age</i> – Hoyt Long VICKY YOUNG (University of Cambridge, UK)	343-346
<i>An Affair with a Village</i> – Joy Hendry AUORE YAMAGATA-MONTOYA (Independent Researcher, MIRA, France).....	347-354

Editorial

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

Maxime DANESIN | Independent Researcher, MIRA, France

Marco PELLITTERI | Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/2021.10.PEL.EDITO](https://doi.org/10.32926/2021.10.PEL.EDITO)

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.

REFERENCES

- ASONYE, CHIME (2020, June 5), There's nothing new about 'the new normal'. Here's why. *World Economic Forum* [Online]. Available at: [Weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/theres-nothing-new-about-this-new-normal-heres-why](https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/theres-nothing-new-about-this-new-normal-heres-why).
- BENDAZZI, GIANNALBERTO (1988), *Cartoons. Il cinema d'animazione, 1888-1988* ('Cartoons: Cinema of animation, 1888-1988'). Venice: Marsilio. Edition in English: *Cartoons: One hundred Years of Cinema Animation*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. Edition in Spanish: *Cartoons: 110 años de cine de animación*, Madrid: Ocho Y Medio, 2003.
- BENDAZZI, GIANNALBERTO (2015), *Animation: A World History*, 3 vols. London and New York: Routledge. Edition in Italian (amended and improved): *Animazione: una storia globale*, 3 vols, Turin: UTET.
- HINSSEN, PETER (2010), *The New Normal*. Edison, NJ: MachMedia.
- READER, IAN — SHULTZ, JOHN (2021), *Pilgrims Until We Die: Unending Pilgrimage in Shikoku*. Oxford and New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- WHO (WORLD'S HEALTH ORGANIZATION) (2020, 17 September), The New Normal. Available at: [Who.int/singapore/emergencies/covid-19-in-singapore/information/the-new-normal](https://www.who.int/singapore/emergencies/covid-19-in-singapore/information/the-new-normal).

SECTION I:
STYLES, IMAGES, AND CULTURAL
TOURISM FROM AND TO EAST ASIA

The virtual cultural tourist: Film-induced tourism and *Kubo and the Two Strings*

Dennis YEO | Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/2021.10.YEO.VIRTU](https://doi.org/10.32926/2021.10.YEO.VIRTU)

ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, there has been growing research in film-induced tourism. Much of this research is focused on how film influences tourist destination choices. There has been less emphasis, however, on the nature and types of movies that may induce this attraction to such locations. By examining Kubo and the Two Strings (Knight, 2016), a stop-motion animation produced by Laika Studios, this paper aims to apply film studies to explore current understandings of film-induced tourism. This paper argues that Kubo is itself a form of film-induced tourism by positioning the viewer as a virtual cultural tourist whose cinematic experience may be likened to a veritable media pilgrimage through Japanese culture, history and aesthetics. The movie introduces the viewer into an imagined world that borrows from origami, Nō theatre, shamisen music, obon rituals and Japanese symbolism, philosophy and mythology. The resulting pastiche is a constructed diorama that is as transnational and postmodern as it is authentic and indigenous.

KEYWORDS

Kubo and the Two Strings; Japan; Film-induced tourism; Contents tourism; Laika Studios; Virtual cultural tourist.

Date of submission: 15 April 2021

Date of acceptance: 06 December 2021

Date of publication: 20 December 2021

Introduction

In their seminal work, Riley, Baker and Doren (1998) firmly established the relationship between the box-office performance of particular movies and the increase in tourist footfall at iconic attractions featured in these movies. Movies act as a catalyst of tourist interest in a quest for “sight/sites” (1998: 920) seen onscreen. Coupled with a fanatic obsession with celebrity, this drive to relive experiences, re-enact narratives, and reimagine fantasies expresses an emotional connection between film tourists and movie locations, characters and stories. Over the past two decades, there has been growing research in film-induced tourism. Much of this research is focused on how film influences the tourist destination choices; there has been less emphasis on the nature and types of movies that may induce this attraction to such locations.

Instead of “simply repeating what is known” about film-induced tourism (Beeton, 2010: 5), Connell notes that “what is particularly notable is the dearth in cross-disciplinary working between tourism and media studies (Beeton, 2010; Kim, 2012), given the consumption-related focus and approach adopted widely in both subjects” (2012: 1025). By examining *Kubo and the Two Strings* (Knight, 2016), this paper aims to apply film studies to explore current understandings of film-induced tourism. Released in August 2016, *Kubo and the Two Strings* (*Kubo: Nihon no Gen no Himitsu*) is a stop-motion animation film directed by Travis Knight and produced by Laika Studios in Portland, Oregon. Set in Japan, the movie was initially pitched as a ‘stop-motion samurai epic’ and in the words of Knight, ‘What we’re trying to do is create an impressionist painting of Japan’ (Knight, Wired, 2016). The production of this mutual image of Japan stands at the crossroads of cultural and creative imagination of two different countries. This paper argues that *Kubo and the Two Strings* (hereafter referred to as *Kubo*) is itself a form of film-induced tourism. As ‘a wholehearted love letter to Japan’ (Knight, Jennifer Wolfe, AWN, 2017), the movie positions the viewer as a virtual cultural tourist whose cinematic experience may be likened to a pilgrimage of Japanese history, culture, and aesthetics.

Film-induced tourism and contents tourism

Film-induced tourism occurs when people are attracted to and motivated by television or cinema to visit a featured film-related destination. Research papers cite instances in which the identification of travel destinations as film locations has resulted in an increase in tourist numbers. Dann (1977) suggests that there are ‘push factors’ and ‘pull factors’ in a decision to travel. As push factors, Carl, Kindon and Smith (2007) stress that travelling or watching films are both forms of escapism; but films also act as effective pull factors to motivate tourists to visit a specific place. Although movies are not primarily produced to induce tourism, they convey powerful impressions of potential tourist destinations, often creating a mythical aura around the appeal and reputation of various countries and cities that is enhanced by imagery, narrative and imagination. Schofield (1996) concurs that these images of travel destinations are shaped through the vicarious consumption of film and television without the perceived bias of promotional material. Kim (2012) proposes that the lure of television destinations is potentially more powerful than that of films as a television serial can

continuously and create the addiction to the series, the familiarity of these locations, and the emotional involvement with the characters and actors. With the ability to now own films or watch them at our own leisure and convenience, Monaco (2009) observes that “the frequency of film watching has increased tenfold, thus making this medium inseparable from and very influential on people’s lives”. The high consumption of movies as entertainment has also been bolstered by streaming platforms like Netflix, which has made movies more accessible.

A prominent example of film tourism is anime pilgrimage. In anime tourism, *otaku* identify and access real locales depicted in animated form and that are associated with these storylines in terms of ‘place, protagonist and production’ (Wing *et al.*, 2017: 1424). The *otaku* fan base refers to these film sites as *seichi junrei*, which is a portmanteau of “*seichi*” which means “sacred site” and “*junrei*” which means “pilgrimage”. Thus, to an anime fan, embarking on a journey to these *anime seichi* is a spiritual experience, and a fulfilment of a dream fantasy, as it actualises ‘the two-dimensional world of the anime to the three-dimensional setting on which it is modelled’ (Andrews, 2014: 218). Even though anime is considered a major export of Japanese culture, anime is intended for a local or regional audience unless it achieves global recognition and garners a massive international fan base. ‘By watching and growing up with anime, individuals potentially develop deep emotional connections and relationships with characters that affect their later self-identities’ (Wing *et al.*, 2019: 1430), eventually, the child becomes an adult with spending power to buy paraphernalia and travel on specially designed tours that identify locations featured in anime, and who may, in turn, introduce anime to their children. The popularity of anime, and other animation forms and genres, thus has a long-term impact and a sustained popularity that spans generations.

Anime, however, distinguishes itself from animated films that are international and target a global audience. A study of the history of anime in the UK reveals, for instance, that despite its cult status, the presence of anime is limited to Ghibli Studio productions, particularly Hayao Miyazaki’s films. It notes that “not a single anime title was found in the Top 100 charts of the last five years (The Official UK Charts Company, 2015)” (Hernández-Pérez *et al.*, 2017: 21). In contrast, Laika stop motion animation features like *Coraline* (2009), *Paranorman* (2012), and *The Boxtrolls* (2014) has been distributed worldwide. *Kubo* grossed a modest box-office profit, but it has won acclaim. It received ten Annie Award nominations, won a British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) Award

for Best Animated Film and was selected by numerous film critics associations as the top animated movie of 2016. It was also the first movie to be nominated for both Best Animated Feature and Best Visual Effects at the Academy Awards. Recently, it was made available worldwide on Netflix in 2020. This attests to the global reach and economic impact that an animated production is capable of.

In his study of movies from 2003 to 2015 that are set in Japan “or are at least related to Japanese culture, music, or mythology (sometimes all three)” (198), Strielkowski selects a 2015 Hungarian dark comedy entitled “Liza, the Fox-Fairy” (“Liza, a rokatunder”), directed by Karoly Ujj Meszaros as his point of discussion. The obscurity of his choice is telling. In terms of the way Japan has been portrayed in Hollywood cinema, films usually focus on limited aspects of Japanese culture, for example, samurais (*The Last Samurai* (Zwick, 2003) or *47 Ronin* (Rinsch, 2013)), geishas (*Memoirs of a Geisha* (Marshall, 2005)), the *yakuza* (*Black Rain* (Scott, 1989) or *The Outsider* (Zandvliet, 2018)) or its urban cosmopolitanism (*Lost in Translation* (Coppola, 2003) or *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift* (Lin, 2006)). The influence of Japan on Hollywood production is also evident in remakes of Japanese movies like *The Ring* (Verbinski, 2002), *Ghost in the Shell* (Sanders, 2017) and different iterations of *Godzilla* (Emmerich, 1998; Edwards, 2014; Dougherty, 2019; Wingard, 2021) and sequels of *The Grudge* (Shimizu, 2004, 2006; Wilkins, 2009; Pesce, 2020). Japan also provides the setting for cult favourites like *Kill Bill: Volume 1* (Tarantino, 2003), *Inception* (Nolan, 2010), *The Wolverine* (Mangold, 2013) and *The Isle of Dogs* (Anderson, 2018). While this diverse range of films may hint at the richness of Japanese culture, most thrive on trite stereotypes, even caricatures.

This misrepresentation is significant as film-induced tourism is a type of cultural tourism (Busby *et al.*, 2001). A cultural tourist learns, discovers and experiences the tangible and intangible cultural expressions in a tourism destination, including its history and heritage, arts and architecture, and lifestyle, beliefs and traditions. In modern Japan, pilgrimages are performed more for cultural identity than for religious devotion. This secularisation of the concept of pilgrimage extends the scope of motivations and desires that undergird global tourist traffic. “Modern pilgrimage is deeply embedded in ordinary secular institutions and activities—the travel industry and tourism, the mass media and advertising, the economic production and the mass consumption of pilgrimage-related consumer goods, and so on” (Wilkinson, 2016: 20); the pilgrim has been replaced by the

traveller in search of his roots. The pilgrimage of the cultural tourist is devoid of faith “as long as it remains photogenic” (Reader, 2007: 28).

This paper argues that *Kubo* offers its viewers a veritable media pilgrimage through Japanese history, culture, and aesthetics, in an article entitled *Japan's Gross National Cool*, Douglas McGray observes that ‘from pop music to consumer electronics, architecture to fashion, and food to art, Japan has far greater cultural influence now than it did in the 1980s, when it was an economic superpower’ (2002: 47). This resulted in efforts by the Japanese government to promote Japanese culture abroad targeting Contents Tourism (*kontentsu tsurizumu*) which intended to feature Japanese *poppu karucha*. The Investigative Report on Regional Development by the Production and Utilisation of Contents such as Film states that the essence of the approach of *kontentsu tsurizumu* is ‘the addition of a “narrative quality” [*monogatarsei*] or “theme” [*teemasei*] to a region namely an atmosphere or image particular to the region generated by the contents and the use of that narrative quality as a tourism resource’ (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism *et al.* 2005: 49 qtd. in Yamamura, 2015: 61). This meant that ‘at the heart of tourism promotion was not ‘objects’ but ‘contents’, namely stories’ (Yamamura, 2015: 61) and the relationships/connections (*kankeisei*) that readers shared with fictional characters. In Japan, contents tourism focuses on narratives, character, and location, and considers anime as its primary resource. This centrality of storytelling can be extended to include other forms of Japanese cinema as well.

Kubo goes beyond the mere surface of using Japanese culture as token tropes but features *poppu karucha*, ‘culture produced in the course of the daily activities of ordinary people (including traditional culture) ... refined through people’s daily lives; and it is through this culture that the sensitivity and spirit of the Japanese people is communicated, and a portrait of the nation is presented’ [Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2006), qtd. in Beeton *et al.*, 2013: 143].

The Virtual Cultural Tourist

It may appear obvious that the more successful a film is, the more awareness it will create about where it was shot, but not all films will motivate travel, and even if they do, may influence only a particular segment of film enthusiasts. Seaton and Yamamura (2015: 3) propose five types of cultural tourism: the purposeful tourist where visiting a cultural destination is its primary motivation, the sightseeing tourist who includes a cultural

destination as part of a broader holiday, the serendipitous tourist that has a chance encounter with a cultural destination which stimulates deeper interest in the country's culture, the casual tourist who is motivated by a weak motive to visit destinations like Disneyland, and the incidental tourist whose visit to a cultural destination is not the reason for travel but is part of a detour. These same categories can be found relevant to film tourism, for instance, the purposeful film tourist who visits a destination specifically to seek film locations or the sightseeing tourist who may go on a film tour without even having watched the movie. This may indicate that the rising numbers attributed to film tourism may be fallacious as "film tourism is merely incidental and neither the main nor the sole motivation of most tourists traveling to a film destination" (Rittichainuwat, 2015: 137). Tourists may visit a film set as it is included in the tour itinerary (Cray & Buchman, 2009). The film may also not be the sole reason why a tourist visits a country (Croy & Heitmann, 2011). Besides practical matters like time, money and distance, the desire to travel to a specific film destination may be stimulated by a multitude of other reasons. Rittichainuwat concludes that "a less well-known film but an individual favourite film and a favourite actor can motivate one to participate in film pilgrimage, rather than a more well-known successful film" (2015: 144). For film tourism to gain the most mileage from a film, Destination Management Organizations (DMO) have to launch a strategic extensive international media campaign that intentionally connects film images from the movie to the destination country before, during, and after the release of the film (Croy, 2010).

Advances in digital technologies now provide access to virtual spaces that alter the way by which we know, experience, and remember the world. 'Indeed, spaces and practices of everyday life are mediated not only through the physicality and materiality of our surroundings, but also through virtual media spaces' (Lester *et al.*, 2013: 255). Due to the mediatisation of culture, the Internet has "collapsed the distinction between 'media' and 'tourist sites' by unifying the act of consuming media products with the act of visiting (web)sites" (Beeton *et al.*, 2013: 149). Building on the work of Seaton and Yamamura, this paper proposes a sixth type of cultural tourism: the virtual cultural tourist. The virtual cultural tourist may encounter the culture of other countries through documentaries, that may feature landscape, tradition or history, or vicariously through travel vlogs of amateur tourists or professional guides on the Internet. 'Consuming visualised images and representations of a place or a country through popular media forms some basic perceptions of an individual's understanding of the place, and thus creates expectations

and imaginations of what he or she would experience at the place when he or she actually becomes a tourist' (O'Connor *et al.*, 2013: 13). While these videos feature the real place, virtual cultural tourism includes a film-induced experience through the cultural cinematic products that feature the destination.

Tourism research generally presumes that a destination can only be experienced through actual visitation. Most tourists, however, have vicariously travelled their destination even before they set off through the reception and interpretation of photographs, video, brochures, and other authentic or inauthentic representations of the location. The constructed reality of a place offered by the media may even dominate or alter objective reality. Authenticity is a key motivator for film tourists who want to live out their projected fantasies of reliving scenes from the movie or connecting with celebrities who may once have been physically present at the site. This may call into question the impact of movies like *Kubo* which do not have a specific location, and thus do not offer any on-site experience. In truth, "it is not the objective reality of the place ... but instead the meaning it represents that transforms places depicted in motion pictures to symbolically meaningful tourist attractions" (Kim *et al.*, 2003: 234). It must be noted that while Tolkien located *The Lord of the Rings* in a mythical place, Middle-earth is now associated with New Zealand. On the other hand, tourists visited Scotland, the setting of *Braveheart* (Gibson, 1995), even though the movie was shot in Ireland. Reality becomes secondary to the tourist experience. Film destinations are constructs that merely allow the film tourist to superimpose their imaginations on a real backdrop, and may not translate into any acquisition of cultural capital. The "tourist gaze", posited by Urry (1990), is fulfilled by this visual encounter that constructs place imagery as their next Instagrammable background. The very quest for fictional characters in an imaginary place reveals that any meaning attributed to these spaces is imposed thus rendering authenticity "highly personalised, subjective and unique to each individual based on their own pleasure, emotion, imagination, interpretation, and memory" (Kim, 2012: 389). This creates a simulacrum in which reality is mediated, sites of simulation and fiction made accessible, and mythologised spaces fabricated as authentic.

The interest of fans in a narrative world that will be enough to encourage travel to the actual place of the film can be inspired by an identifiable, attractive and accessible location, a popular narrative that rings true, and a deep emotional engagement with the characters. In film, the basic perceptions and understandings that a tourist has of a country, place or

culture are already shaped through the camera when they identify with the perspective of film characters. The film tourist becomes personally engaged and emotionally involved when they relate to screen characters as if they were real people. Celebrity Involvement (Lee, Scott & Kim, 2008) can further amplify the identification and empathy fans may feel creating a mix of fantasy, nostalgia, memory and emotion. This attraction may express itself in an attachment to location, storylines, character, dialogue, scenes, music and the degree to which these elements are related to personal experience. This infatuation endures with a film that is durable with multiple viewing, especially if it achieves classic or cult status. While the absence of human actors and a specific location in *Kubo* may appear to do a disservice to the purposes of contents and film tourism, this instead removes the limitations of physical boundaries and feeds into the aspirations of going to Japan and to embrace all the culture that it offers. “A film that can induce tourism will need to have a storyline that smoothly intertwines with locations so as to create settings that will entice viewers to relive or recount the vicarious cinematic fantasy or *déjà vu*” (Pan *et al.*, 2014: 408). Because it is based on fictional characters who inhabit imaginary spaces, *Kubo* possesses greater potential to inspire a deeper interest in the intangible culture of Japan, rather than being contained by a physical ‘landscape’ of a specific film destination. In a way, this fulfils the objective of ‘promoting the attractiveness of localities and Japan as a whole, and for the overseas promotion of the Japanese brand’ (Yamamura, 2015: 62). Film tourism is thus not a physical pilgrimage to a location but the “post-modern experience of a place that has been depicted in some form of media representation” (Macionis, 2004: 87) that reinforces myth, storytelling or fantasies.

The representation of our national spaces, histories, cultures and philosophies in the creative works of artists from other countries produce mutual images that may evoke pride or anger depending on our evaluation of the accuracy of these manifestations of our identity. It may be argued that *Kubo* presents a fictional, fantasised pseudo-Japan that is of a foreign origin and subject to stereotypes of exotic otherness. *Kubo* can be described as a pastiche film that mixes “cultural artefacts and spaces without an established sociological or historical context” (Hernández-Pérez, 2017: 48). In many of his interviews, Knight recalls his fascination with Japan when he first visited the country when he was eight years old, and how he returned home with a bag of manga books. In his work on *Kubo*, he says ‘I was trying to capture visually the feeling I had going to Japan for the first time’ (Knight, Wired, 2016). Knight’s pilgrimage to reconstruct a memory is a spiritual one. Stop motion

animation is a meticulous gruelling process. To give an idea of how painstaking stop motion animation is, it takes over an hour to shoot a frame. Shooting at eight frames a day, it takes a whole week to shoot three seconds of film. The entire world of *Kubo* had to be built by hand from scratch in eighty miniature sets in proportion to 9.5 inches tall puppets. The next sections will illustrate the meticulous care and respect that Laika employed to research and depict the vivid landscape and rich culturescape of Japan. Even though the Japanese content is being created by a foreign studio, the movie powerfully conveys Japanese beliefs and values, and its global dissemination has an enormous impact on the perspectives and impressions of other countries and their desire to learn more about Japanese culture.

Japanese History

The *mise-en-scène* of *Kubo* sets the movie in sixteenth century Japan. The hamlet at the start of the movie is designed in the style of the Heian period (794-1185 A.D), a period of peace in Japanese history when national culture matured and flourished. The character design of Kubo and the other human characters was inspired by the doll-making of *Edo Kimekomi ningyo* from the late Edo period in Japan, from the early 1600s to the mid-1800s. Careful research ensured cultural authenticity while blending the old and the new. The town folk wear Heian and Nara (710 – 794 A.D.) dress but the costumes are tinged with the aesthetic folds and drapes characteristic of Japanese fashion designer Issey Miyake (b. 1938). Each costume is individually crafted. Kameyo's clothing, for instance, emulates patchwork from the *Boro* tradition and the Moon King's *sokutai* robe is from the imperial court. Even the kimono that Kubo wears is modelled from an earlier historical context from the story as it belongs to his father. Kubo's helmet is of an early-neolithic *Jōmon*-era Shinto bell with its rope markings (about 300 B.C.). The costume of the sisters is inspired by Tomoe Gozen who was a *onna-bugeisha*, a fourteenth century female samurai warrior. Tomoe Gozen was celebrated in literature and culture and impacted future generations of samurai. The representation of different props and styles from different periods of historical Japan in the production design illustrate how the history of Japan is intricately woven into the detailed attention to the fabric of Japanese culture in *Kubo*.

The anthropomorphism of the protagonists in the narrative borrows heavily from Japanese mythology. Kubo's father is named after Hattori Hanzō (1542-1596), a famous ninja of the Sengoku era (1467-1615). The cult personality of Hanzō has taken on

legendary proportions in depictions of him in modern popular culture and with the attribution of supernatural abilities like teleportation, psychokinesis and precognition. In *Kubo*, Hanzō takes the form of a rhinoceros stag beetle or *Kabutomushi*. The word “*kabuto*” refers to the horned helmets worn by ancient samurai warriors. This warrior bug is popular in anime and *tokusatsu* and is the basis of characters from the *Kamen Rider*, *Godzilla* and *Pokémon* franchise. To Travis Knight, the beetle is a ‘symbol of transformation and metamorphosis’ (Haynes, 2016: 95). Kubo’s mother is represented by a Snow Monkey. The Japanese macaque, *Nihonzaru* is native to Japan and is a prominent feature of Japanese religion, folklore and art, for instance, in popular Japanese fairy tales like *Momotarō*, or ‘Peach Boy’ or *The Crab and the Monkey*. In historical records of the eighth century, monkeys were sacred mediators between gods and humans. In Shinto belief, mythical beasts called *raiju* appeared as monkeys and monkeys are said to have healing properties. Originally, the monkey in *Kubo* is a small, handcrafted token that protects Kubo called a *netsuke*. Significantly, *netsuke* were talismans that fastened items to the *obi* (sash) so that it would not be lost or stolen. A *netsuke* shaped as a macaque was common during the Edo period. In this clever use of animal symbolism, their associative significance makes them aptly chosen to enhance the narrative and characterisation of the movie. Kubo thus presents to the virtual cultural tourist iconic visual references that draw from and allude to deeply rooted Japanese associations.

Kubo is a story about stories, or about telling stories. All three main characters relate narratives. Monkey’s tale of how she met Hanzo and fell in love echoes the well-loved tale depicted in Studio Ghibli’s *Kaguya-hime no monogatari* (*The Tale of Princess Kaguya*) (Takahata, 2013), which is based on the oldest surviving work in the *monogatari* form written in the Heian period, *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*. Harassed by the Emperor of Japan, Princess Kaguya had asked the moon to remove her from earth. The Moon Emperor causes her to forget everything about her life on earth by making her wear a shroud, a cost of feathers similar to the ones worn by the Sisters in *Kubo*. Princess Kaguya leaves earth to join him in her celestial home on the moon. *Kubo* finds resonance in Japanese folklore by exploring parallel themes of captivity, domination and freedom. This also echoes the Shinto mythology of the celestial relationship between Tsukuyomi, the King of the Moon, and his wife, Amaterasu, the Goddess of the Sun and the Queen of Heaven. The power of storytelling is demonstrated in the denouement when the villagers use narrative to convince the Moon King of his goodness when he believes their version of him. The movie’s thematic emphasis

that identity and reality is a product of narrative is demonstrated when Kubo forges his powers through the imaginative reframing of his personal story. The movie rewrites history and retells myth, creatively fictionalising a national identity in the collective imagination.

Japanese Culture

The cultural experience is rendered more authentic by the foregrounding of Japanese handicraft, the rich heritage of theatre, storytelling and music, and the re-enactment of traditional festivals and practices. The magic of Kubo's imagination brings his creations of *origami* and *kirigami* to life at his command. While Kubo is literally a puppet in the hands of the invisible Laika puppet masters manipulating him, he is himself an animator of puppets. As stop motion animators working with puppets, Laika draws upon the Japanese puppet tradition of *Bunraku*. Animating Japanese dolls called *ningyō*, which literally means "human form", *Ningyōtsukai* or *Ningyōzukai* puppeteers appear on stage dressed in black but are "invisible" to the audience. *Bunraku* draws upon the strong oral tradition of the *Joruri* who narrates the action while playing a *shamisen* and Kubo's street performance also blends the storytelling of the *tayū* chanter and the *shamisen* musician. This street act is also reminiscent of the itinerant *Biwa hōshi*, travelling minstrels who were often blind. This is especially since Kubo is himself blind in one eye.

This music belongs to the *Tsugaru-jamisen* genre of *Shamisen* music. In the movie, the music produced by the *shamisen*, a 150-year old folk instrument, is seen to weave a magical spell, animating objects and as a powerful weapon to fight against evil spirits. This belief in *shamisen* music as magical is expressed by Kenichi Yoshida of the Yoshida Brothers, a popular Japanese *shamisen* playing duo,

Kubo is always threatened with the possibility of not being able to see. That resonates very deeply with anyone playing *Tsugaru-jamisen*, and not just because the first players were blind. It's because we don't have music sheets ... We're not seeing so much as feeling or doing battle with some unknowable force. We're beating the *shamisen* like it's a weapon, and still there's a beautiful melody. We don't know if there's any other instrument like that in the world. ("The Yoshida Brothers get in on Kubo's big adventure" by Kaori Shoji, *The Japan Times*, Nov 22, 2017)

In the climax of the movie, it is the music, magic and story-telling powers of the *shamisen* that proves instrumental in defeating the Moon King.

Kubo's story is accompanied by the soundtrack of *Taiko* drums and *koto*, a zither which is the national instrument of Japan. *Taiko* drums provide rhythm, atmosphere and tension in Japanese theatre. The story that Monkey tells of her falling in love with Hanzō is depicted in the form of *Kabuki* opera. As Kubo plays his *shamisen*, the *origami* figures that appear this time are made of a Katsura pod, Maple leaf and Japanese crane orchid, flora and fauna native to Japan and East Asia. The two sisters wear *Nō* masks which often represent supernatural creatures taking human form. The *Nō* mask looks different depending on how the mask is held or lit and this gives the Sisters an uncanny ambivalence and a phantasmic quality. In *Mugen Nō*, supernatural worlds are presented with gods, spirits and ghosts in the role of the *shite* or main actor. The performance of storytelling dramatically delivers a narrative that serves as a spectacle for a cinematic audience but with recognisable Japanese theatrical elements.

Besides the personal narrative of identity, the collective narrative determines the cultural identity of the community and the nation. *Kubo* features the rituals, beliefs and festivals that are an integral part of Japanese culture. Kubo participates in *Obon* or just *Bon*, which is a Japanese Buddhist-Confucian custom to honour the spirits of one's ancestors by visiting their graves. The elderly Kameyo tells Kubo that at the festival "we listen to their tales and guide their safe return" reiterating the importance of narratives and storytelling in Japanese culture. The celebrations are represented as accurately as possible. A Japanese choreographer was consulted to ensure the authenticity of the *Bon Odori* dance at the festival and a *Tankō Bushi* song is diegetically used. The movie also stays true to the Japanese reverence for the sacredness of nature as seen in the cemetery scene. In the movie, these traditions are explained and passed on to the next generation suggesting a continuity of cultural practice. Beetle's assurance to Monkey that her story will never end is also an affirmation that the culture of Japan embodied in the movie will continue to live on through the movie.

Japanese Aesthetics

Kubo transcends the mere application of Japanese tropes by rooting itself firmly in the appreciation of Japanese philosophy and aesthetics. To Knight, 'Japan is the birthplace of the modern cinematic epic' (Knight, Laika, Crafting an Epic). Its *homage* to Japanese *auteur* Akira Kurosawa is evident in its cinematography and intertextual allusions. The appearance of Kubo's father, for example, is based on Toshiro Mifune. As Kubo matures,

he exhibits the seven virtues of the *Bushido* code of the samurai – integrity, respect, heroic courage, honour, compassion, honesty and duty. In this coming-of-age Bildungsroman, it comes as no surprise that Knight sees ‘Laika as a kindred spirit to Ghibli’ (Knight, Associated Press, Japan inspired ‘Kubo’ director), especially in Hayao Miyazaki’s whimsical sensibility in his creation of juvenile heroes in fantastical Japanese worlds. ‘The kind of prism that Miyazaki applies to Europe is what I wanted to apply to Japan, offering my view on a place and culture that have been vital to me for so long’ (Knight, in *Nichi Bei*). While the movie has the sweeping scale of David Lean and the animatronic fantasies of Ray Harryhausen, the production worked with Japanese culture consultant Taro Goto to create a world that borrows freely while constructing an accurate representation of the traditional heritage of Japan. The most prominent visual influence on the movie was the aesthetic of *Ukiyo-e*, which literally means ‘picture[s] of the floating world’. Since the movie was shot frame by frame, this served as an apt description of the enterprise of stop-motion animation. The aesthetics of *Kubo* was influenced mostly by the woodblock prints of twentieth century graphic artist Kiyoshi Saito, who was part of the *Sōsaku-hanga* art movement. Saito was inspired by painters like Gauguin and Matisse but blended their styles with his to create something new and progressive. In Saito, Laika saw an artistic kinship of someone working with a traditional artform but applying the craft in a modern context; a philosophy which “was completely consistent with the way we make films at the studio. It’s a fusion of old and new. It’s a fusion of the east and west. It’s a fusion of the real and the imagined” (Knight, Interview with Dan Sarto). Saito’s work also inspired the grainy texture of the movie. Laika wanted *Kubo* ‘to look and feel as if it’s a moving woodblock print’ (Knight, Wired, 2016). The first scene in *Kubo* alludes to *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* by Katsushika Hokusai, a *Ukiyo-e* woodblock print (1829-33). For a scene when Kubo meets a Giant Skeleton in the Hall of Bones, Laika created the largest stop motion puppet. This eighteen-foot centrepiece is another tribute to *Takiyasha the Witch and the Skeleton Spectre* by Utagawa Kuniyoshi, a classic *ukiyo-e* woodblock triptych (1798–1861). Together with the Giant Eyes and the Moon Beast, this hearkens back to the *yokai* or monsters that inhabit Japanese folklore, anime and pop culture.

Another Japanese aesthetic that resonated with Laika was that of *Wabi-sabi*, a concept in traditional Japanese aesthetics constituting a world view centred on the acceptance of the transience and imperfection of beauty. ‘The specter of impermanence’ (Haynes, 2016: 6) was likened to the imperfect nature of stop-motion animation. ‘They’re flawed. They’re

imperfect. And there are mistakes in every single frame of one of our movies but I think that's part of the beauty of stop motion. There's an inherent humanity to how these things are done' (Interview with Al Moloney, BBC Click). This idea of process, transformation and incompleteness also pertains to identity, culture and narrative.

A pilgrimage is a quest. Kubo is on a quest and his pilgrimage brings him home to a sense of family and belonging. Hanzo tells Monkey "you are my quest" and his journey ends just when both of them discover their true identities. Still, the true pilgrimage in *Kubo* is the resulting postmodern bricolage of Japanese history, culture and aesthetics. This pastiche is a constructed diorama that is as much transnational and postmodern as it is authentic and indigenous. The pilgrimage of the viewer in *Kubo* is a quest not for a film location but something more intangible, a sense of connection with a narrative. *Kubo* offers an immersive experience that will bear repeated audience viewings and multiple virtual visits to Japan.

Conclusion

By showcasing a destination in the context of a narrative, films can potentially be instrumental in enhancing the image, appeal and profitability of a media-related tourist destination in encouraging an actual visit to the country. "Increased visitor numbers is not the only measure of "success" in film tourism; rather enhanced awareness of and familiarity with a destination should be viewed as indicators of success" (Beeton, 2010: 2). Furthermore, film can compensate for traditional tourist promotion campaigns which lack the resource to prolong destination exposure to sustain the interest of potential holidaymakers, especially for lesser-known locations. With online streaming on-demand, movies have both a wider outreach of millions and an extended shelf life of reruns and reboots. With audiences viewing movies repeatedly, every encounter has the potential to inspire actual travel to a film location.

To leverage on film tourism, DMOs need to work with film distributors to ensure maximum exposure of the location as a tourist destination. In 2018, the Singapore Tourist Board (STB) partnered with Warner Bros during the Hollywood premiere of the movie *Crazy Rich Asians* (Chu, 2018) and collaborated with American public relations companies Edelman and Bullfrog + Baum to ensure that it was featured heavily in promotional activities that included offering journalists exclusive interviews with cast members and tour experiences of the city. In February the following year, the STB reported that "organic search

interest in Singapore increased by more than three times in the US during the movie's release, according to Google data, while there was a 110 per cent spike in searches on travel planning site Orbitz" (*The Straits Times* 13 Feb 2019). *Kubo* had offered Japan a similar opportunity which would have resulted in a win-win situation for both Japan tourism and Laika studios. Film-induced tourism is a post-film phenomenon but DMOs should identify upcoming films that feature their country to optimise tourism opportunities.

REFERENCES

- AGYEIWAH, ELIZABETH — SUNTIKUL, WANTANEE — LI, YEE SHAN CARMEN (2019), 'Cool Japan': Anime, soft power and Hong Kong generation Y travel to Japan. *Journal of China Tourism Research*, 15 (2), pp. 127-48.
- ANDREWS, DALE (2014), Genesis at the Shrine: The Votive Art of an Anime Pilgrimage. *Mechademia Second Arc*, 9 (1), pp. 217-33.
- ASSOCIATED PRESS (2016), *Japan Inspired 'Kubo' Director*. Available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCRpy5xTfUQ> (accessed 27 Feb 2021).
- BAIN, MARC (2020), *How Japan's global image morphed from military empire to eccentric pop-culture superpower*. Available from <https://qz.com/1806376/japans-image-has-changed-from-fierce-to-lovable-over-the-decades/> (accessed 27 Feb 2021).
- BEETON, SUE (2010), The Advance of Film Tourism. *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development*, 7 (1), pp. 1-6.
- BEETON, SUE — YAMAMURA, TAKAYOSHI — SEATON, PHILIP (2013), The Mediatization of Culture: Japanese Contents Tourism and Pop Culture. In: Lester, Jo-Anne — Scarles, Caroline (ed.), *Mediating the Tourist Experience: From Brochures to Virtual Encounters*. London: Routledge, pp. 139-54.
- BUSBY, GRAHAM — KLUG, JULIA (2001), Movie-induced tourism: The challenge of measurement and other issues. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 7 (4), pp. 316-32.
- CARL, DANIELA — KINDON, SARA — SMITH, KAREN (2007), Tourists' Experiences of Film Locations: New Zealand as 'Middle-Earth'. *An International Journal of Tourism Space, Place and Environment*, 9 (1), pp. 49-63.
- CONNELL, JOANNE (2012), Film Tourism – Evolution, Progress and Prospects. *Tourism Management*, 33, pp. 1007-29.
- COULDRY, NICK (1998), The view from inside the 'simulacrum': visitors' tales from the set of Coronation Street. *Leisure Studies*, 17 (2), pp. 94-107.
- CROY, W. GLEN (2010), Planning for Film Tourism: Active Destination Image Management. *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development*, 7 (1), pp. 21-30.
- CROY, W. GLEN — BUCHMAN, ANNÆ (2009), Film-induced tourism in the high country: recreation and tourism contest. *Tourism Review International*, 13(2), pp. 147-55.
- CROY, W. GLEN — HEITMANN, SINE (2011), Tourism and film. In: Robinson, Peter — Heitmann, Sine — Dieke, Peter (eds), *Research themes for tourism*. Oxfordshire, United Kingdom: CAB International, pp. 188-204.
- DANN, GRAHAM (1977), Anomie, Ego-Enhancement and Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 4, pp. 184-94.
- ELKJER, APRIL (2016), *'Kubo' delivers an animated love letter to Japanese culture*. Nichi Bei. Available from <https://www.nichibeio.org/2016/08/kubo-delivers-an-animated-love-letter-to-japanese-culture/> (accessed 27 Feb 2021).

- HAYNES, EMILY (2016), *The Art of Kubo and the Two Strings*. San Francisco, United States: Chronicle Books LLC.
- HERNÁNDEZ-PÉREZ, MANUEL (2017), Thinking of Spain in a flat way': Visiting Spain and Spanish cultural heritage through contemporary anime. *Mutual Images*, 3, pp. 43-69.
- (2019), *Otaku* Tourists Out of Japan: Fictionality, Shared Memories, and the Role of National Branding in the Japanese Pilgrimages of Anime Fans in the United Kingdom. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 52 (6), pp. 1512-35.
- HERNÁNDEZ-PÉREZ, MANUEL — CORSTORPHINE, KEVIN — STEPHENS, DARREN (2017), Cartoons vs Manga movies: A brief History of Anime in the UK. *Mutual Images*, 2, pp. 5-43.
- KIM, HYOUNGGON — RICHARDSON, SARAH L. (2003), Motion Picture Impacts on Destination Images. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 30 (1), pp. 216-37.
- KIM, SANGKYUN (2012), Audience involvement and film tourism experiences: Emotional places, emotional experiences. *Tourism Management*, 33, pp. 387-96.
- Kubo and the Two Strings* (2016), produced by Laika Studios. Portland, Oregon, Focus Features, 102 minutes. Laika Studios (2018), *Kubo and the Two Strings | Crafting an Epic*. Available from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5DFV_FkOb4 (accessed 27 Feb 2021).
- LEE, SOOJIN — SCOTT, DAVID — KIM HYOUNGGON (2008), Celebrity Fan Involvement and Destination Perceptions. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 35 (3), pp. 809-32.
- LESTER, JO-ANNE — CAROLINE SCARLES (2013), Mediating Tourism: Future Directions? In: Lester, Jo-Anne — Scarles, Caroline (ed.), *Mediating the Tourist Experience: From Brochures to Virtual Encounters*. London: Routledge, pp. 255-69.
- MACIONIS, NIKI (2004), Understanding the Film-Induced Tourist. Paper presented at *The International Tourism and Media Conference*, Melbourne, 24-26 November 2004. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242536274_International_Tourism_and_Media_Conference_2004/link/5de97e4f92851c83646559fe/download (accessed on 26 Aug 2021), pp. 86-97.
- MCGRAY, DOUGLAS (2002), Japan's Gross National Cool. *Foreign Policy*, May/June, pp. 44-54.
- MOLONEY, AL (2016), *Interview with Knight, Travis. Behind the scenes of Kubo and the Two Strings* -- BBC Click. Sep 9. Available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JncuykDwt8A> (accessed 27 Feb 2021).
- MONACO, JAMES (2009), *How to Read a Film: Movies, Media, and Beyond*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- MONJI, JANA J. (2016), *'Kubo and the Two Strings' and the Buddhist Moon*. Available from: <https://ageofthegreek.org/2016/08/19/kubo-and-the-two-strings-and-the-buddhist-moon/> (accessed 27 Feb 2021).
- MUFSON, BECKETT (2016), *How a Japanese Printmaker Influenced 'Kubo,' the Biggest Stop-Motion Film Ever*. Available from <https://www.vice.com/en/article/bmyev4/kubo-two-strings-japanese-printmaker-influenced-laika> (accessed 27 February 2021).
- O'CONNOR, NOËLLE — KIM, SANGKYUN (2013), Media-Related Tourism Phenomena: A Review of the Key Issues. In: Lester, Jo-Anne — Caroline Scarles (eds), *Mediating the Tourist Experience: From Brochures to Virtual Encounters*. London: Routledge, pp. 13-31.
- OKAMOTO, TAKESHI (2015), Otaku tourism and the anime pilgrimage phenomenon in Japan. *Japan Forum*, 27 (1), pp. 12-36.
- ONO, AKINORI — KAWAMURA, SUMIAKI — NISHIMORI, YASUTO — OGURO, YUKI — SHIMIZU, RYOSUKE — YAMAMOTO, SARI (2020), Anime pilgrimage in Japan: Focusing Social Influences as determinants. *Tourism Management*, 76, pp. 1-10.
- PAN, STEVE — TSANG, NELSON (2014), Inducible or not - A Telltale from Two Movies. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 31 (3), pp. 397-416.

- READER, IAN (2007), Positively Promoting Pilgrimage: Media Representations of Pilgrimage in Japan. *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions*, 10 (3), pp. 13-31.
- RICHARDS, GREG (2018), Cultural Tourism: A Review of Recent Research and Trends. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 36, pp. 12-21.
- RILEY, ROGER — BAKER, DWAYNE — VAN DOREN, CARLTON S. (1998), Movie Induced Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25 (4), pp. 919-35.
- RITTICHAINUWAT, BONGKOSH — RATTANAPHINANCHAI, SUPHAPORN (2015), Applying a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative design in explaining the travel motivation of film tourists in visiting a film-shooting destination. *Tourism Management*, 46, pp. 136-147.
- SCHOFIELD, PETER (1996), Cinematographic images of a city: Alternative heritage tourism in Manchester. *Tourism Management*, 17 (5), pp. 333-40.
- SINGH-KURTZ, SANGEETA (2018), Singapore is turning “Crazy Rich Asians” into a rebranding opportunity. *Quartz Media, Inc.* Aug 18. Available from <https://qz.com/quartz/1362090/singapore-hopes-crazy-rich-asians-will-bring-it-luxury-tourism/> (accessed 20 Sep 2021).
- SARTO, DAN (2016), *LAIKA's CEO slides into the director's chair to helm the studio's stunning new stop-motion/CG hybrid animated feature*. Available from <https://www.awn.com/animationworld/travis-knight-talks-kubo-and-two-strings> (accessed 27 Feb 2021).
- SCARLES, CAROLINE — LESTER, JO-ANNE (eds) (2013), *Mediating the Tourist Experience: From Brochures to Virtual Encounters*. London: Routledge.
- SEATON, PHILIP — YAMAMURA, TAKAYOSHI (2015), Japanese Popular Culture and Contents Tourism - Introduction. *Japan Forum* 27 (1), pp. 1-11.
- SHOJI, KAORI (2017), The Yoshida Brothers get in on Kubo's big adventure. *The Japan Times*, Nov 22. Available from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2017/11/22/music/yoshida-brothers-get-kubos-big-adventure/> (accessed 27 Feb 2021).
- STRIELKOWSKI, WADIM (2017), Promoting Tourism Destination through Film-Induced Tourism: The Case of Japan. *Market-Tržište*, 29 (2), pp. 193-203.
- TAY, TIFFANY FUMIKO (2019), “Crazy Rich Asians, Trump-Kim summit propel tourist arrivals, spending in Singapore to record highs”. *The Straits Times*, Feb 13. Available from <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/crazy-rich-asians-trump-kim-summit-propel-tourist-arrivals-spending-in-singapore-to-record> (accessed 20 Sep 2021).
- URRY, JOHN (1990), *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. London: Sage Publications.
- WILKINSON, GREG (2016), Thinking about Pilgrimage, Particularly in Modern Japan. *Religious Studies Review*, 42(1), pp. 19-27.
- WING SUN TUNG VINCENT — LEE, SUNA — HUDSON, SIMON (2019), The potential of anime for destination marketing: fantasies, *otaku*, and the kidult segment. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 22 (12), pp. 1423-36.
- WIRED (2016), *The Art of Animating Kubo's Epic Opening Scene* | WIRED. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cu0d4gvDBs8> (accessed 27 Feb 2021).
- WOLFE, JENNIFER (2017), ‘Kubo and the Two Strings’ Headed for Japan Release. *Animation World Network*. Available from <https://www.awn.com/news/kubo-and-two-strings-headed-japan-release> (accessed 27 Feb 2021).
- YAMAMURA, TAKAYOSHI (2015), Contents tourism and local community response: *Lucky star* and collaborative anime-induced tourism in Washimiya. *Japan Forum*, 27 (1), pp. 59-81.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dennis YEO, PhD, has taught at primary, secondary, junior college and tertiary levels in a teaching career spanning over three decades. His school leadership positions include Subject Head (Literature), Head of Department (Pastoral Care & Career Guidance) and Vice-Principal of Pioneer Junior College. He lectures at the English Language and Literature Academic Group at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. His research interests include film studies, popular culture, literature pedagogy and Gothic literature. He is the editor of *Ku*lit: Asian Literature for the Language Classroom and The World, The Text and the Classroom: Teaching Literature in Singapore Secondary Schools*. He received the NIE Excellence in Teaching Award in 2013.

From China to the World: The main media pilgrimages of Sun Wukong (孙悟空) and Son Gokū (孫悟空)

Giovanni RUSCICA | Fudan University, China

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/2021.10.RUS.CHINA](https://doi.org/10.32926/2021.10.RUS.CHINA)

ABSTRACT

The 'Journey to the West', also translated as the 'Pilgrimage to the West', is one of the masterpieces of ancient Chinese literature. Published anonymously by the putative author Wu Cheng'en in the late 16th century, the story traces in broad outline the journey taken by the monk Tripitaka in the year 629 a.D. to India to acquire Buddhist scriptures, and it is the result of reworking antecedent works, such as 'Poetic notes on the pilgrimage of Tripitaka of the Great Tang to acquire the Sutras' and 'Journey to the West' Opera'. In this fiction, the writer moves away from the authenticity of the traditional pilgrimage: here the monk is escorted by sinful-followers (i.e., a dragon-horse, a pig, a demon, and a monkey) capable of removing malevolent beings throughout the journey. Sun Wukong is the wild and skillful monkey that ascends to Buddhahood, becoming a 'Victorious Fighting Buddha' at the end of the literary work. Later on, the Chinese work of fiction was used as a source of inspiration for the creation of Dragon Ball, a Japanese fantasy & martial arts manga. Published in 1984 as a manga and then adapted into an anime, Dragon Ball sketchily follows the Chinese work of fiction. After coming across Bulma, young Son Gokū decides to escort the girl in her quest to collect seven magic dragon spheres. The series' success allowed the manga's author, Akira Toriyama, to continue the story arc and launch a new series in 2015. Since 1986, several videogames with a monkey character have entered the market. The purpose of this article is to highlight the main affinities between Sun Wukong and his Japanese counterpart Son Gokū first, and then attempt to explain how the monkey character has become a world-famous symbol, and contextualise it into the phenomenon of 'worldwide pilgrimage'.

KEYWORDS

Pilgrimage; 'Poetic notes of the pilgrimage of Tripitaka of the Great Tang to acquire the sutras'; 'Journey to the West' Opera; 'Journey to the West'; *Dragon Ball*; Hou Xingzhe; Sun Xingzhe; Sun Wukong; Son Gokū; Intertextuality.

Date of submission: 14 April 2021

Date of acceptance: 18 December 2021

Date of publication: 20 December 2021

Introduction – Literary and geographical pilgrimages

A Pilgrimage can be considered a performance activity, essentially a social one, which permits individuals to practice their beliefs. This activity signifies a set of practices that generates a potential for self and collective change (Bajc, 2012: 1052). There are many reasons behind each pilgrimage experience, such as religious beliefs or curiosity. Pilgrimage can be authentic or fictitious, and the majority of them, both authentic and fiction, are based on religious motives. This is the case of the Italian poet

Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) who in his masterpiece *Divina Commedia* recounts his spiritual journey towards God through the three otherworldly realms; another case could be the literary cycle of King Arthur, with its pursuit of the Holy Grail by the knights, a pursuit seen as an allegory of human development and spiritual growth. Today, alongside this traditional concept of pilgrimage, we find the ‘media pilgrimage’, which indicates “both a real journey across space, and an acting out in space of the constructed ‘distance’ between ‘ordinary world’ and ‘media world’. To use the word ‘pilgrimage’, however, is not to claim any religious significance for such media-related journeys” (Couldry, 2005: 72).

An excellent example of a pilgrimage that begins with religious connotations and then shifts to becoming a ‘media event’ is undoubtedly that of the Chinese monk Tripitaka (602–664 a.D.). Approximately 1400 years have passed since the Buddhist monk Tripitaka took his first steps along the Silk Road to India to acquire the Buddhist scriptures and spread Buddhism in China. At the end of his pilgrimage, the Master Tripitaka certainly could not have imagined that his mission would from that point become the central theme of stories and fictions for centuries and centuries, nor could he have imagined becoming a worldwide icon who is compared with the explorer Marco Polo (1254–1324). As we will see, Tripitaka’s historical pilgrimage would be enriched with various fictional elements and characters, including the simian disciple Sun Wukong (孙悟空). Today, many people outside of Asia may not know Sun Wukong, but most probably know Son Gokū (孫悟空).¹ Perhaps, not everyone has realised that the characters and plot of the Japanese manga *Dragon Ball* took inspiration from the Chinese Ming period (1368–1644) novel ‘Journey to the West’ (*Xiyou Ji* or 西游记). Today the image of Sun Wukong and that of Son Gokū (his Japanese version in a 1980s’ manga) are not only heroes of two famous works, but they have also become essential characters in Chinese and Japanese mass culture. In fact, in 2016, the year of the monkey, the animal was often depicted with the icon of Sun Wukong and spread the slogan “be smarter than the Monkey itself, to succeed in 2016” (Marques, 2016: n.p.);

¹ I have added the Chinese characters to the names of Sun Wukong and Son Gokū to help readers understand that both are different pronunciations of the same name (one is Chinese, the other is Japanese) and that they are actually the exact same figure appearing in different texts.

for the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo (which, as we know, have been played in summer 2021), Son Gokū appears on licensed Olympic merchandising as one of the eight ambassadors of Japanese culture (Futbolete, 2017).

Through the introduction of concepts of transtextuality and transculturality, this study seeks to examine the significance of the 'meta-pilgrimage' concept relating to the pilgrimages in the works we will be dealing with, namely the 'literary pilgrimage' and the 'geographical pilgrimage', that is, the dissemination and reception of the works and their contents. Through a reinterpretation process of the work's contents which led to a worldwide transmission, we comprehend that the myth of Tripitaka and Sun Wukong is spreading, thus defining a 'worldwide pilgrimage'.

Historical context – Origins of the myth of the pilgrimage from China to India

The monk Sanzang (Xuanzang or, in Sanskrit, Tripitaka) was the most famous pilgrim of the Tang dynasty (618–907). According to the historical account as summarised in Wriggins and Mote (1996), Xuanzang was born under the Sui dynasty (581–618) in a family of senior Confucian officials and lived during Emperor Tang Taizong (626–649). His decision to take Buddhist orders was influenced by one of his three older brothers. After his conversion, he was dissatisfied with the Chinese translations of the *sutras*² he had been trained in, believing that their concepts were conflicting. Therefore, in the hope of grasping the direction of the Buddhist scriptures, he decided to engage in a significant undertaking: moving towards India to study and return to the capital Chang'an (today known as Xi'an) with the authentic scriptures in Sanskrit. His decision was also motivated by a dream, in which he crossed a river in the direction of Mount Meru, the sacred mountain of Buddhist mythology. In 629, he started a pilgrimage from the capital and through more than seventy countries, arrived in India after about one year, and remained there to study for about seventeen years, before finally returning to the capital. Due to his mission's success, he was immediately recognised as a hero, and then retired to the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda³, to devote himself to an immense work of translation through which he managed to translate

² In Buddhism, sutras are classic scriptures mainly recording the teachings of the Buddha.

³ It is a huge Buddhist pagoda built to hold Buddhist scriptures and statues that were brought from India to China located in Xi'an.

from Sanskrit into Chinese seventy-five of the six hundred and fifty-seven texts contained in the Buddhist Canon. He also wrote a report entitled 'Great Tang records on the western regions', in which he recorded in detail the habits, products, climate, geographical conditions, languages, and traditions of the places where he stayed for those seventeen years. Given the pilgrimage's positive outcome, Emperor Taizong himself began to promote the Buddhist doctrine (see again Wriggins and Mote, 1996).

With the monk's death, his personality was clothed with that of a legendary halo, and his adventures were adorned with fantastic and bizarre factors. British sinologist Glen Dudbridge (1938–2017) observed:

In the popular story-cycle of later centuries, Tripitaka stood out among the great names of his faith above all as a traveler of spectacular achievement. It was his journey that held the imagination, a prolonged excursion for readers and audiences into remote and semi-fabulous territory. (Dudbridge 1970: 12)

Amongst those fantastical elements that enriched the myth of the monk's pilgrimage stands out the attribution of an ape-like aspect of his adventure companion, who will take the leading role in the later Ming period work 'Journey to the West', a text published anonymously during the 16th century and later attributed to the literate Wu Cheng'en (ca. 1500–ca. 1582).⁴

Fictional pilgrimages from China to India and Japan – 'Poetic notes on the pilgrimage of Tripitaka of the Great Tang to acquire the sutras' and 'Journey to the West' Opera'

The 16th century work refers to a body of stories that, according to Zhu Hongbo, resulted from the romanticising of the historical pilgrimage of the Chinese monk. The first resulting fictional work of this corpus is 'Poetic notes on the pilgrimage of Tripitaka of the Great Tang to acquire the sutras' (*Da Tang Sanzang qujing shihua* or 大唐三藏取经诗话) (Zhu, 2017: 109), hereafter abbreviated as *Poetic notes*. Despite the short length of this text (it consists of only seventeen chapters, and the first one is missing), it represents a crucial

⁴ Note that Wu Cheng'en's authorship is still controversial. On this topic, see the Preface in Yu, 2012.

piece for the formation process not only of the 'Journey to the West' (from now on, *JtW*) but also of the manga inspired by it.

Focussing on the plot,⁵ the text records the first encounter between Tripitaka and the monkey disciple, here called Hou Xingzhe,⁶ and their tenacity in overcoming dangers and monsters accompanied by five other minor monks who have a very marginal role. The story focusses on the pilgrimage from China to India to acquire the sutras. Starting from an analysis of the Chinese title, we learn that the narrated facts are set during the Tang period, while the characters *qujing* 取经⁷ represent the nature of the quest. In order to focus on its elements, characters, and themes, we turn to the genres of this short story and we find that the text is in a popular style. It is written in vernacular, the reading is smooth, and it was probably used by monks to give lectures on religious matters to the public. The frame narrative, that is fetching sutras, allows us to identify its main theme, religious travel. Despite the text's focus on the narration of a pilgrimage made by the Master as well as the overall Buddhist nature of the work, which is immediately evident in the terminology, there is also references to the other two foremost Chinese religions, Confucianism and Taoism; it also has strong roots in Chinese mythology. Besides the encounter with Buddha, the story also plays a pioneering role in founding the rules of the genre of gods and demons (*shenmo* 神魔), just like Chinese literary critic Lu Xun (1881–1936) did, identifying it as “the embryonic form of gods and demons corpus of stories about the Tang monk's pilgrimage to acquire the Buddhist scriptures” (1981: 277).

The text we are analysing has come to us anonymously and is, according to many, from the Song period (960–1279), although in recent years the academic community has reached a consensus to recognise the period between the end of the Tang and the Five Dynasties (907-960) as the more plausible date of origin (Ren, 2017: 89). In the work, Tripitaka arrives in India in the 15th chapter; however, we must also note that his 'pilgrimage' also reaches Japan. How? The work was found in the Kōzan-ji Buddhist

⁵ For a plot summary, see Dudbridge, 1970: 189-93.

⁶ The Chinese characters for this name are 猴行者. The first means 'monkey', while the combination of the second and the third means 'itinerant monk' and is often translated as 'Monkey-disciple'.

⁷ In the *Oxford Dictionary* we find only two entries: one Buddhist that acts as a verb, and a figurative one. The first reads: “go on a pilgrimage to India to acquire Buddhist scriptures: 去西天~ go West to acquire Buddhist scriptures” (Manser, Zhu, Wang et al., 2010: 601).

temple, founded by the Buddhist monk Myōe (1173–1232) in 1206, on Toganōsan Mountain of Kyōto in the early 20th century. According to this, the text is also known as the ‘Kōzan-ji text’. Two editions of the work are known today, both found in the temple: the first became part of the book collection of the writer Tokutomi Sohō (1863–1957), the second came into the possession of the entrepreneur Kishichirō Ōkura (1882–1963) (Li, Cai 1997: 1-2). Thus, it is possible to say that the pilgrimage of Tripitaka and the monkey disciple, or rather the ‘pilgrimage of the work’, ends in Japan. Later on, it was the Chinese scholar Luo Zhenyu (1866–1940) who made a reproduction of both editions and was permitted to make the circulation of the work: from Japan it returned to China. It was only thanks to its discovery in Japan that it was possible to know the work and connect it to the earlier duet representations of Tripitaka and simian character found in China, mainly attributed to the empire of Western Xia (1038–1227; see figures 1 and 2).

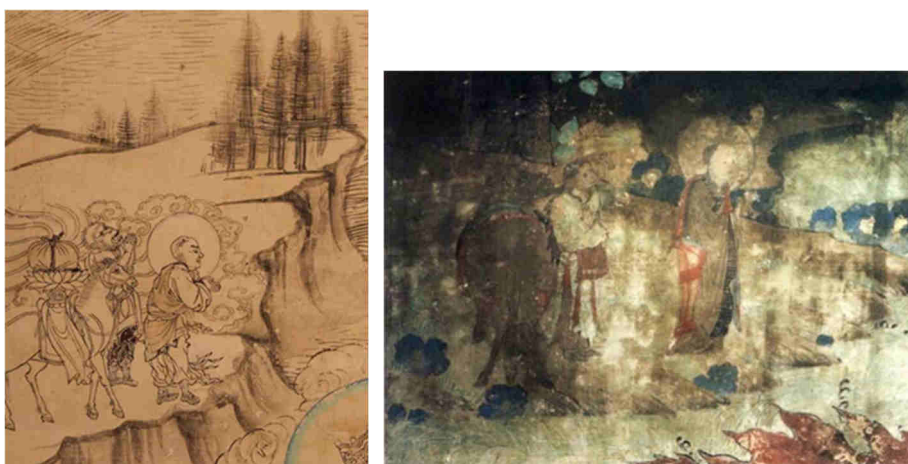


Fig. 1 & 2. (Left) Monk Tripitaka, monkey-disciple, and horse carrying the sutras on the left side of the fresco Yulin Caves, cave no. 3. **Source:** Tang, Xixia bowuguan, 2003.

(Right) Monk Tripitaka, monkey disciple, and horse on a section of the ‘Eastern Thousand Buddha Caves’, cave no. 2. **Source:** Tang, Xixia bowuguan, 2003.

Another work that resulted from the romanticising of the historical pilgrimage of Xuanzang is ‘Journey to the West’ Opera’ (*Xiyou Ji zaju* or 《西游记》杂剧; Zhu, 2017: 109, hereafter abbreviated as *Opera*). Also in this case, the story focusses on the pilgrimage from China to India to acquire the sutras.⁸ The work is a twenty-four-scene Yuan (1271–

⁸ For a plot summary, see Dudbridge, 1970: 193-200.

1368) drama, and it is acknowledged as the Yuan dynasty's longest opera. In the tenth scene, we can also read about the encounter between Tripitaka and the monkey-disciple, here called Sun Xingzhe⁹ or Sun Wukong or even (the) 'Great reaching-heaven sage'. In this case, the monkey-disciple's task is to accompany the monk in his quest to find the sutras and overcome dangers and monsters. On the one hand, the character seems more complex than Hou Xingzhe, and on the other hand, divergent from the Ming novel's monkey-disciple. The plot includes elements similar to the earlier *Poetic notes* and the later body of stories. In the *Opera*, the monk is also accompanied by Zu Bajie and Sha Heshang¹⁰ whom Sun Xingzhe managed to subjugate. The party arrives in India in the 21st scene; however, we must also note that this 'pilgrimage' as well reaches Japan. In fact, it was discovered in the Cabinet Library in Japan thanks to Professor On Shionoya (1878–1962), who first reprinted it in 1927–28 in the journal *Shibun* 9,1-10,3. Since then, the copy also circulated in China, becoming an object of study. Initially, it was thought to be the lost work of the same title written by the Yuan Dynasty's playwright Wu Changling (?-?), then the authorship passed to another Yuan author, the Mongol playwright Yang Jingxian (?-?) (Dudbridge, 1970: 76-7 and Li, 2013: 50).

A bigger fictional pilgrimage, from China to India and Japna: *JtW*

Belonging with the 'Four Classic Novels of Chinese Literature',¹¹ *JtW*'s authorship is also surrounded by a strong halo of mystery. So far, the oldest edition of *JtW* is the one hundred chapter-long 'Newly carved, illustrated journey to the West – A large print official edition', abbreviated to 'Shidetang'. It was originally thought that the author was the Taoist Qiu Chuji (1148–1227) of the Southern Song Empire (1127–1279), as it was confused with the travel account written by his disciple Li Zhichang (1193-1256), titled 'Journey to the West by the Taoist master Changchun'. The idea was later refuted. Although the publication of the *JtW* sparked a dispute over the authorship of the work

⁹ Just as in *Poetic notes*, the simian disciple possesses the name of Xingzhe. This time, this is preceded by the character Sun 孙, which correlates with a monkey, as explained by Patriarch Subudi in the later Ming novel, as this name will also appear in novel as one of Sun Wukong's names (Yu, 2012: 115).

¹⁰ In many English versions of the story Zhu Bajie 猪八戒 (also named Zhu Wuneng 猪悟能) is arbitrarily translated as 'Piggy' and Sha Heshang 沙和尚 (also named Sha Wujing 沙悟净) as 'Sandy'.

¹¹ Together with 'Romance of the Three Kingdoms' (*Sanguo Yanyi* 三国演义, 14th century), 'Water Margin' (*Shui Hu Zhuan* 水浒传, 14th century?), and 'Dream of the Red Chamber' (*Honglou Meng* 红楼梦, 1792).

since Hu Shi (1988) (1891–1962), the academic community has embraced Wu Cheng'en as the most likely author of the 'Shidetang' edition and seems to identify Wu Cheng'en as its compiler, and it is believed that the novel came out *post-mortem* in 1592. Unfortunately, to date, we have no further information on the author: even among the columns of the preface, we read the name of a certain Chen Yuanzhi (?-?) from Nanjing, in which he says: "On the 'Journey to the West', I do not know who composed it" (Wu, 1994: 2).¹²

JtW includes the genres of adventure and satire; its plot was not only the subject of reissues and performances,¹³ but also of various sequels.¹⁴ *JtW* shares *Poetic notes* and *Opera's* same narrative structure, that is, Tripitaka fetching the sutras. Just like in *Opera*, the monk is escorted by bizarre disciples (a dragon-horse, a pig, a demon, and a monkey), who would drive away demonic presences along the journey. Wu Cheng'en's narrative novelty lies in the use of a shifting narrator; instead of paying attention to the original character of Tripitaka, the emphasis is placed on his monkey assistant. Accordingly, the work does not open by recounting the monk's departure to India, but with the monkey's birth and growth. Only later does the work turn to Tripitaka and his encounter with the disciples-sinners, who will follow him to redemption for their sins and overcome eighty-one dangers. The importance of Sun Wukong lies in being a syncretic hero: he is the expression of the three major Chinese doctrines. He is a monkey who emerges from a stone egg and immediately joins a group of other wild monkeys, becoming their king. One day he decides to take the *tao* path and acquires some abilities, such as cloud-surfing and the ability to perform the '72 Earthly transformations'. He decides to take the title of 'Great Saint Equal to Heaven' and wreaks havoc in Heaven;¹⁵ eventually, he is subdued by Buddha in person and pressed under the weight of the Five Elements Mountain. He will be released by the monk

¹² In particular, see the introduction by Xu Shuofang (Wu, 1994); for a study on the different editions of the *JtW*, we recommend Cao, 2010.

¹³ The character of Sun Wukong is also traceable to the Beijing opera (*Jingju* or 京剧): one of the most important representations is the 'Havoc in Heaven', which tells the story of the Monkey King against the corrupt Jade Emperor. The character is recognisable by the use of a mask with monkey traits and a golden stick.

¹⁴ For example, see the 'Supplement to the Journey to the West' (*Xiyou Bu* or 西游补) by the novelist Dong Yue (1620–1686).

¹⁵ This episode inspired the production of a Chinese animated film in the 1960s that will be discussed later.

Tripitaka in order to serve his sentence only by accompanying him in his search for sutras. He wears an ochre dress, at the waist a tiger skin loincloth, on his feet cloud-walking boots, and on his head a magical circlet. He holds a golden-banded staff that can change size, fly, and attack opponents according to its master's will (figure 3).



Fig. 3. Sun Wukong while attacking with his staff in *JtW*-‘Shidetang’ edition.

Source: Wu, 1994: 447.

As mentioned above, the 100-chapter long *JtW* is the result of a creative process which rewrites and reshapes the works of others that concern the fictional pilgrimage of the Chinese monk; the 16th century novel is much more articulated and complex than the works mentioned so far.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, we find analyses by Chinese and Japanese scholars on the 100-chapter long *JtW* and especially on its simian character. The key notion in those studies was without any doubt ‘intertextuality’. This textual concept, first introduced by Julia Kristeva (1964), refers to any relationship between different texts and extends textual identity to include its origin and use of past works. In line with this theory, no text is spontaneous; every text is an interactive text, and something has happened between it and previous texts. This research field was later expanded by Gérard Genette (1992), who called the relationship between text and other texts different from itself ‘transtextuality’ or textual transcendence. For Genette, intertextuality represents “all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts”, it “covers all aspects of a particular text” (1992, 83-4). On the Chinese side, we remember Lu Xun, who in 1922 put forward the ‘theory of autochthonous origin’, according to which Sun

Wukong (and therefore Hou Xingzhe and Sun Xingzhe too) possesses characteristics that can be traced back to a river spirit present in the ‘Ancient classic of peaks and rivers’ (*Gu Yuedu jing* or 古岳读经) (1976: 49); the ‘theory of foreign origin’ formulated by Hu Shi that places Sun Wukong as an imitation of Hanumān, a simian god that appears in the Indian epic poem *Rāmāyaṇa* (Hu, 1988: 902-4); Cai Guoliang and Xiao Bing combine the two aforesaid theories, stating the hypothesis of hybridisation and thus defining the ‘theory of fusion’ (Cai, 1981; Xiao, 1982). Japanese scholars also have put forward the view that it originated from the Buddhist scriptures. Isobe Akira believes that Sun Wukong was also influenced by the icon of the wild ape in Fujian folk tales and by the Lord of Thunder’s image in ancient Chinese legends. This line of thinking was later accepted by Nakano Miyoko, who found new evidence in Fujian to support the idea that the province has many place names associated with Buddhist scripture stories and that monkey reliefs were found in several Southern Song temples in Quanzhou. Based on this, Nakano determined the Fujian province as Sun Wukong’s ‘native place’ (Nakano and Wang, 2002).

Another detail we need to stress is the fact that *JtW* was immediately accepted in Japan. Here, the legend of the pilgrimage of the monk Xuanzang in search for the scriptures began to spread during the Asuka period (592–710) and then, after the publication of the earliest edition ‘Shidetang’, its four sets circulated in Japan during the Edo period (1603–1867): the first copy in a library in Tokyo; the second one in Jigen-do Hall Nikkō Rinnoji Temple, in Nikkō; the third one in a library in Tenri; the fourth one in a library in Asano (Cao, 2010: 16).¹⁶ The first Japanese scholar who undertook *JtW*’s translation work was Nishida Korenori (?–1765). In 1758, he published his first collection that included ‘only’ the first twenty-six chapters translated with the Japanese title ‘Popular edition of the western journey’ (*Tsūzoku Saiyūki* or 通俗西遊記). This work of translation went on with the cooperation and alternation of other translators and illustrators and reached its completion in 1837 with the publication of *Ehon Saiyū zenden* (‘Illustrated edition of the history of the Journey to the West’, Vakhnenko, 2017: 8-12). This translation led to Sun Wukong’s Japanese rendering, namely Son Gokū, as well as to one of its earliest representations (figure 4).

¹⁶ The four cited texts are not the only ones found in Japan. Other reproductions of posthumous *JtW* reissues have also been found in Japan. For an overview of these findings, see the study by Cao Bingjian (2010).



Fig. 4. Son Gokū while fighting in the first edition of *Ehon Saiyū zenden*. **Source:** Nishida, Yajima, Utagawa, Katsushika *et al.* (1837).

After having provided this historical background, from the following section on the article mainly focusses on the transcultural ties between China and Japan and on the concept of media pilgrimage; previous and future references to India are intended to point out the historical pilgrimage route thoroughly.

Stories of animated pilgrimages from Japan to the World – Different shades of the same character

As discussed above, Wu Cheng'en's choice was to interact and develop relationships, whether obvious or concealed, with older works in order to give birth to a new novel which could offer to readers and writers a textual transcendence. In fact, through transtextuality investigations, since the beginning of the 20th century Chinese and Japanese scholars have been cooperating in examining the 16th century literary work and its main character Sun Wukong. Alongside this phenomenon, another factor coexists: early manga since the 1930s, and early Japanese animated works (since the 1960s) took inspiration from *JtW*.

China's first animated feature film with the icon of Monkey King is 'Princess Iron Fan' (*Tie shan gongzhu* or 铁扇公主, figure 5), which is also considered to be the first feature animation film in Asia. It was directed by Wan Laiming (1900-1997) and Wan Guchan (1900-1995), two of the four founders and pioneers of the Chinese animation industry; it was released in 1941. The film is the adapted story of *JtW*

chapters 59-60-61. The focus is on the battle between Monkey King and Princess Iron Fan, whose fan is needed to extinguish the flames of the mountains.



Fig. 5. The Monkey King fights Bull Demon King. Screenshots from 'Princess Iron Fan' (Modern Chinese Cultural Studies, 2020: timecode 1:03:08). **Source:** <https://youtu.be/ocUp840yj2c>.

'Havoc in Heaven' (*Danao tiangong* or 大闹天宫, figure 6), also translated as 'Uproar in Heaven', is a Chinese animated film directed by Wan Laiming and produced by Wan Guchan, Wan Chaochen (1906-1992), and Wan Dihuan (1907-?). The film was released in the early 1960s. The story is an adaptation of the earlier chapters of *JtW*, in which the Monkey King rebels against the Jade Emperor of heaven.



Fig. 6. The Monkey King engages Erlang Shen in a duel. Screenshots from 'Havoc in Heaven' (MonkeyKing FansFactory, 2015: timecode 1:34:04). **Source:** <https://youtu.be/Hu0XosgxCyU>.

Chronologically speaking, the first Japanese adaptation of *JtW* is *Saiyūki* (西遊記, fig. 7). The anime film was written by Uekusa Keinosuke (1910-1993), based on the 1952 manga *Boku no Son Gokū* ぼくの孫悟空 ('My Son Gokū', figure 8) by Tezuka Osamu (1928-1989).



Fig. 7 & 8. (Left) Son Gokū on his cloud from *Saiyūki*. **Source:** <https://events.umich.edu/event/27615>. **(Right)** Son Gokū fights Bull Demon King, cover of *Boku Son Gokū* vol. 2. **Source:** <https://www.animeclick.it/manga/25933/boku-no-sonGokū>.

Another of Sun Wukong's earliest Japanese representations is the anime series *Gokū no daibōken* ('The great adventure of Gokū', 1967, figure 9).



Fig. 9. Gokū on his cloud from the anime *Gokū no daibōken*. **Source:** Projectnerd.it/2018-07-the-monkey-approfondimento.

One more remake/adaptation of the novel is *Esu Efu Saiyūki Sutājingā* ('SF Journey to the West Starzinger', figure 10), an anime series written by Leiji Matsumoto (1938-) and broadcast from 1978 to 1979. The protagonist Jan Coog, originally a human being, turns into a cyborg to protect humanity. Just like Sun Wukong, he has a rebellious attitude: this is why he was imprisoned in a crystal ball and then released to serve Princess Aurora. He is tricked into wearing a golden crown, which turns out to be an instrument through which the princess can control him. His weapon is an extendable stick, the Astro-lance.



Fig. 10. Jan Coog holding his Astro-Pole from the anime *Starzinger*. **Source:** <https://digilander.libero.it/latvdiunavolta/starzinger.htm>.

Saiyūki (figure 11) is a manga series by Minekura Kazuya (1975-) distributed from 1997 to 2002. It is more like a remake of *JtW*. The protagonist Son Gokū is a cheerful and lively boy, always hungry, naive, and has great confidence in people despite his troubled history. He was locked up in Japan's Gogyō Mountain ('Mountain of the five elements') for a sin he had committed five hundred years before in the Tenkai and remained there until the priest/monk Genjō Sanzō freed him. As for Sun Wukong, he can turn to the Great Saint Equal to Heaven, his appearance becomes slightly more animalistic, his strength grows out of proportion, and he loses control of himself.



Fig. 11. Cover of the first manga volume of *Saiyūki*. **Source:** <http://gallery.minitokyo.net/view/409691>.

The character of Sun Wukong/Son Gokū is also referenced in several other anime that diverge from the main themes contained in *JtW*. One of these appears in *Naruto: Shippūden* by Kishimoto Masashi (1974-) with a character called Son Gokū (figure 12). He is one of the nine-tailed beasts who has a red-furred body-build of a gorilla,

elongated fangs, and two long horns curving upwards on its forehead like a crown. This creature was sealed within a person, Rōshi.



Fig. 12. Son Gokū and Rōshi in *Naruto: Shippūden*. **Source:** <https://animefuryz.blogspot.com/2020/04/top-10-strongest-jinchuriki-in-naruto.html>.

In episode no. 631 of the media franchise *Pokemon (Pokémon)* there is a ‘pocket monster’ which appears to be based on a monkey with gold elements in its design, Gōkazaru (aka Infernape, figure 13).



Fig. 13. Gōkazaru from the anime *Pokemon*. **Source:** https://pokemonfanon.fandom.com/wiki/Akira%27s_Infernape.

In China, Monkey King has long been the main cartoon character representing animation, so much so that Sean MacDonald (2016), borrowing Walt Disney’s famous statement “It was all started by a mouse”, coined the phrase: “It all started with a monkey”.

From Sun Wukong’s first representations in the Chinese media, we can point out that producers aimed to realise the authentic Sun Wukong displayed in Wu Cheng’en’s

JtW, that is to say a relatively static image. On the other hand, the implications of intertextuality and textual transcendence have permeated these different character adaptations in modern Japanese pop culture, creating different shades of the same image. Therefore, in this media process, we achieve different characters whose main features are somehow similar. Most of these adapted characters can count on superhuman strength, have a simian appearance or call to mind a monkey, are capable to fight using a rod, can fly on a cloud, possess a rebel personality, need to accomplish a journey after many tribulations and so on. Even though *JtW* is usually viewed as a Chinese literary work, most people are familiar with its world mostly through different adaptations. As a dynamic text, *JtW* “cannot stop (for example, on a library shelf); its constitutive movement is that of cutting across (in particular, it can cut across the work, several works)” (Barthes, 2009: 157) and therefore, “like a chameleon, *The Journey* succeeds in adapting to ever new and often contradictory contexts, unfolding its radical intertextuality across multiple media” (Wall, 2019: 2138).

Dragon Ball

The factors that contributed to the constant imitation of *JtW* in Japan can be assumed as units of cultural transmission (or as units of imitation) conveyed from China to Japan, but a fundamental change occurred along the way (Chan, 2020: 193). What we have seen so far are just a few examples. Several characters have played the role of Son Gokū, both main and secondary ones. Who would the ‘most powerful’ Son Gokū be? Unquestionably, the answer is the one in *Doragon Bōru* (*Dragon Ball*, hereafter abbreviated as *DB*).

Probably everyone has heard of *DB* before. This iconic *shōnen manga* (manga for male children and early teenagers) was launched in the early 1980s, but it is still considered one of the industry’s most popular manga. Created by Japanese *mangaka* (manga artist) Toriyama Akira (1955-) in 1984 (and until 1995 in its original run), it was later adapted to anime by Tōei Dōga and originally broadcast on Fuji TV from 1986 to 1989, lasting 153 episodes. The series tells the story of Son Gokū as the hero trains to become a powerful fighter. He is a foundling raised by the elderly Son Gohan, after the latter rescued him next to a spaceship near a forest at the foot of a mountain. As he grows older, Gokū begins to fight against Earth-related villains and monsters. From the canonical sequel *Doragon Bōru Zetto* (*Dragon Ball Z*, hereafter abbreviated as *DBZ*), the

hero and the audience learned that he was a Saiyan from planet Vegeta sent to the Earth with a plan to conquer. In the first episode, we read about the encounter of Son Gokū and Bulma, a brilliant girl who invented a dragon radar; this encounter sets in motion the theme of the quest for the seven ‘dragon balls’, spheres scattered throughout the planet Earth¹⁷ capable of making a dragon¹⁸ appear and grant a wish when they are gathered. The search for the spheres will involve encounters and clashes with other characters and demons; some of them will join the pursuit. In addition to the tail that comes out of a hole in his suit, the young Saiyan’s distinctive feature is his innate strength. He handles a length-changing staff skilfully, and after the meeting with Master Roshi, he moves by air through his flying nimbus (fig. 14).



Fig. 14. Gokū on his nimbus for the first time, from the manga *Dragon Ball* chapter 4.
Source: <https://dragonballread.com/manga/dragon-ball-chapter-4-online-read>.

DB is one of the most popular manga series of all time and enjoys a high readership today. It is not only considered one of the main reasons manga circulation reached its highest level between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s (Ibaraki, 2008; Michiko, 2007), but was also a major title at the time of the manga outbreak in Europe in the late 1980s, and it is part of mass culture as a cultural phenomenon; many films, video games, and other products are derived from it. The manga is sold in more than forty countries, and

¹⁷ The spheres in the non-canonical sequel *Doragon Bōru Ji Ti* (*Dragon Ball GT*, hereafter abbreviated as *DBGT*) will instead be scattered across planets other than planet Earth, while in the second canonical sequel *Doragon Bōru Sūpā* (*Dragon Ball Super*, hereafter abbreviated as *DBS*) spheres are scattered between universes six and seven. It seems that in each sequel, the quest changes in size.

¹⁸ Shenron in the case of the terrestrial dragon spheres, Porunga in Planet Namek, Red Shenron and Dark Shenron in *DBGT*, Super Shenron in *DBS*. So as the quest changes so does the dragon type.

the anime is broadcast in more than eighty countries. Many cartoonists and mangaka have cited *DB* as their source of inspiration for famous works today. In 2018, *DB* was the second best-selling manga in the world behind *Wan Pisu (One Piece)* (Peters, 2018). Therefore, Toriyama is considered one of the artists who succeeded in changing manga's history, as his work has greatly influenced later generations of mangaka.¹⁹ When they asked him "Why did the story of *Dragon Ball* begin? How was this fantastical story made?", his answer was:

Since *Dr Slump* had been set in a western [*sic*] scenery, I decided to change that impression and make my new work have a Chinese scenery. And if I was going to give it a Chinese feel, I thought I would make the story based on "Journey to the West". "Journey to the West" after all is absurd and has adventurous elements, so I guess I decided to make a slightly modernised "Journey to the West". I thought it would be easy if that story served as the basis, since all I would have to do would be to arrange things. (Toriyama, 1995: 13)

As pointed out by Price, "anime [...] is a delightfully inventive reference manual into the world of Japanese symbols, folklore, religion, history, social musings and aesthetic traditions. When audience members are not exclusively Japanese, anime unexpectedly becomes a vehicle for cross-cultural communication" (2001: 153). If we analyse the first part of *DB*, we can see that the core is Chinese culture, that is, the pilgrimage to the West; Toriyama then combined it with Hong Kong Kung-fu movies and elements of European and American cultures, including Hollywood movies and science fiction. Consequently, in the second part Toriyama uses non-Japanese stereotypes such as robots, cowboys and native Americans, combining them with elements of Japanese and Chinese cultures such as ninja and kung-fu warriors. This is why Toriyama's *JtW* is an excellent example of how

¹⁹ Toriyama admits to having been influenced, during his formation, by several manga and to having been a fan of special effects films and series with costumed superheroes, where characters change their bodies into more powerful warriors and use superpowers to defeat enemies. Western cinema also influenced his mind, and he loved watching movies like *The Terminator* (1984) and superhero films such as the iconic *Superman* (1978). Toriyama made his debut in 1978 with *Wandā Airando (Wonder Island)* and began to gain popularity in 1980 with *Dokutā Suranpu (Dr Slump)*. Unlike *Poetic notes, Opera*, and *JtW*, fortunately, we have a large amount of information on Toriyama's life. On this topic, reliable studies are conducted by the author of *The Dao of Dragon Ball* website and book series Derek Padula (in particular, 2014: 3-40) or also Mazzola (2014) which offer a careful reconstruction of the artist's life, career, and interests.

intertextuality allowed Japanese mangaka to build a world from original elements of Asian cultures, while still catering to many other cultural references, Asian and beyond Asia.

As a *pastiche*-like work, defining *DB* in terms of narrative genres is not that easy.²⁰ Although the element of play in the imitative translations of a masterwork from Chinese into Japanese can be seen as “the shift from a high-brow (the novel) to a low-brow medium (manga)” (Chan, 2020: 196), Toriyama has inadvertently incorporated five thousand years of Chinese culture into his story by using *JtW* as *DB*'s model. Compared with the 2500-page long work written in Chinese hundreds of years ago, *DB* is aimed at children and is easier to accept and understand. In his *JtW*, Toriyama seems to have emulated the Chinese writer's choice: as we can see, more than four hundred years ago, the alleged author Wu Cheng'en wrote *JtW* for ordinary people rather than for the elites. He could have written in a scholarly style since he was an educated person, but he chose to use the vernacular style. In a sense, it was also Dante Alighieri's choice: he wrote his *Divina Commedia* in the low and 'vulgar' Italian language and not in Latin as one might have expected for such a serious topic. Although in Toriyama's *JtW* the focus is away from religious²¹ and moral contents and toward humour,²² *DB* still possesses *JtW*'s flavour, but at the same time, it is still original and accessible. However many other folkloric references are present in it, connected to religion and folktales (Mínguez-López, 2014).

DB's franchise may now be more popular than ever. However, it is almost hard to estimate the age of franchising and how we are now letting people in their 30s to 40s enjoy its various forms of anime, manga, or video games, as well as children. This is visible in a video-trailer of one of the latest games based on the *DB* franchise, *Dragon Ball Z: Kakarot*. It is an action RPG (role-playing game) developed by Cyberconnect2 released in January 2020 by Bandai Namco Entertainment. The clip opens with a businessman in his 30s who

²⁰ Padula decided to break the mould and define *DB* as its own genre or, more unconventionally, a 'fusion' (2016: 276).

²¹ However, it should be noted that just like its narrative antecedents, *DB* also inherits the combination of gods and demons. In particular, we denote some references to religious personalities: in *DB* the figure of God appears; in *DBZ* Great King Enma seems to be based on Buddhist deity Yama, and Uub is a human reincarnation of Majin Bu; in *DBS* Toriyama provides an exhaustive pantheon and Son Gokū himself gets God *ki*.

²² As pointed out by Mínguez-López (2014), in *DB* religion is constantly being attenuated to create humorous scenes, but the most important thing is to make an impression that we can find amusing. One of the first examples is found in chapter 20: after the appearance of the solemn divine dragon, Oolong wishes for “a girl's pair of panties”.

remembers his love for the franchise. He is going back home from work when he comes across two boys chasing each other; one of them screams: "I'm a Super Saiyan!". He comes back home, unpacks his console video game *Dragon Ball Z: Kakarot*, and starts to play. The game reminds him of his childhood, the times he used to watch the opening theme of *DB*, every time he used to emulate Gokū's hairstyle or try to shoot a *Kamehameha* or talk about the last episode with his friends, that time he was shocked when he realised that Gokū had died, or when he used to run and buy the latest issue of *Weekly Shōnen Jump*. He used to control his *ki*, he used to try to use special powers, or the way he felt was as if he was getting stronger when using *Kaio-ken*. He then makes the player, Son Gokū, prepare a *Kamehameha*, and simultaneously he recites the same 'formula'. The clip ends with the statement: "We are all... Son Gokū!" (Multiplayer.it, 2019).

In a video-interview with Toyotaro (1978–), the mangaka chosen by Toriyama as his successor and illustrator of *DBS*, when asked, "Will we find the values of *DB* in *DBS*?", the artist replied that according to him, Toriyama did not create this work to convey values, he wanted to create an exciting, enjoyable, and funny story for everyone. Finding messages in this work is definitely something that comes from yourself; it was not Toriyama who wanted them. Obviously, friendship and family are mentioned in the work, but it was not what Toriyama wanted to propose; he just needed these elements to make the story interesting (Gexad, 2017: timecode 1:35-2:25). *DB* has inspired millions of people to strive to achieve their goals. A striking reference of this comes from Padula's (2015) contribution: since the 30th anniversary of the series, the author has collected the stories of eighty-one fans from twenty-four countries whose life stories prove that *DB* is a life-changing series and made the world a better place through its 'teachings'. Examples of these life-changing quotations are that *DB* "teaches me to believe in myself, to tap into my potential, and to endure" (Padula, 2015: 33), that it "teaches me that I am worth something. That I'm good; that I can be big, strong, and help others; that it's possible to do great things in life, so long as you endure" (37), that it "teaches me that I have to persevere and work hard at my dreams" (58), and thus forth. *DB* brings joy because the plot is charismatic; fans do not want *DB* to end, because it would mean the end of their childhood and the cultural roots they experienced with Son Gokū and his friends (Padula 2014: XIV); *DB* has become an influential element in our lives, just as the Italian *mangaka* Domenico Guastafierro (alias Cavernadiplatone) observes: "Dragon Ball has entered by force in everyday speaking, we often 'shoot a Kamehameha' while chatting" (Cavallaro, 2015: 127).

Comparing ‘the old’ and ‘the new’ – What do they share?

We would like here to reiterate that the names Sun Wukong 孙悟空 and Son Gokū 孫悟空 are just different pronunciations of the same name and that they are the exact same figure appearing in different texts. Since this study refers to the concept of intertextuality, we should not confine the understanding of intertextual in written texts alone but also in animation “as a nodal point of intersection for image, discourse, and history” (MacDonald, 2015: 206) and just like Bounthavy Suvilay (2021) did, attempt to “understand the evolution of fiction in the transmedia regime” (8).

Almost each chapter in the ‘Shidetang’ edition contains two-page illustrations that summarize what happens in the concerned chapter, for a total of 197 images. In his first appearance, Monkey King is represented as a normal monkey with a very small tail; his body seems slender and lacking in muscles (fig. 15).



Fig. 15. Sun Wukong’s first appearance in *JtW*’s ‘Shidetang’ edition. **Source:** Wu, 1994: 4.

As the story goes on, the narrative offers precious illustrations on the hero’s growth and formation. Visually speaking, *JtW*’s author would aim to give an ugly image of Sun Wukong. As for his facial features, he has a sharpened face, with deep-set eyes, nasal protrusion, small ears, and ‘thunder-god’ mouth. This last attribute can be seen mainly from the comments of frightened people and monsters within the chapters referring to him as ‘thunder-god’ (*leigong* 雷公)²³ because of his mouth’s shape and thundering

²³ In this regard, it should be noted that *JtW* belongs to the genre of gods and demons, but it should be observed that in Chinese culture there is no clear distinction between benign and malignant entities,

voice. It should also be said that the Ming novelist was also undoubtedly influenced by descriptions of pre-Ming sources that already bore the name of Hou Xingzhe. Among these, it is helpful to quote a line from a poem contained in a group of three entitled ‘Holding my Mirror’ (*Lanjing* 揽镜) by the Song Dynasty poet Liu Kezhuang (1187-1269), in which we read “Face as ugly as the monkey-disciple” (Mair, 1989: 691). He has humanoid appearance and, according to what he says in chapter 1, he has no *xing* 性, which means that he has no ‘nature’ or no ‘gender’.

The images in the work present more than sufficient representations of the figure of the Monkey King, but there are two major discrepancies. In chapter 14, Sun Wukong is tricked into putting the magical circlet on, however, in most representations it does not appear on his head (it always appears in the Japanese edition, figure 4). Another difference is related to his footwear: in some representations he wears boots, in others he wears traditional martial arts slippers (see fig. 16).



Fig. 16. Sun Wukong wearing martial arts slipper in *JtW*'s 'Shidetang' edition. **Source:** Wu, 1994: 1289.

After the good response from Toriyama's editor Torishima Kezuhiko on *Dr Slump* (Toriyama, 1995: 'Shenlong Times'), the mangaka started to sketch a boy as the protagonist for his new manga. Toriyama's first draft of Son Gokū's appearance was just very close to Sun Wukong (fig.

such as *shen*, *xian* 仙, *yao* 妖, *mo*, *gui* 鬼, *guai* 怪. In fact, at the beginning of the novel *Monkey King's* behaviour is described as having a *demonic nature*, although at the end of the story he ascends to Buddhahood, becoming the Victorious Fighting Buddha.

17), but due to his wife's criticisms he made a second draft: this time his manga's leading character was closer to his final look (figure 18) (Toriyama Akira Hozonkai, 1984: n.p.).

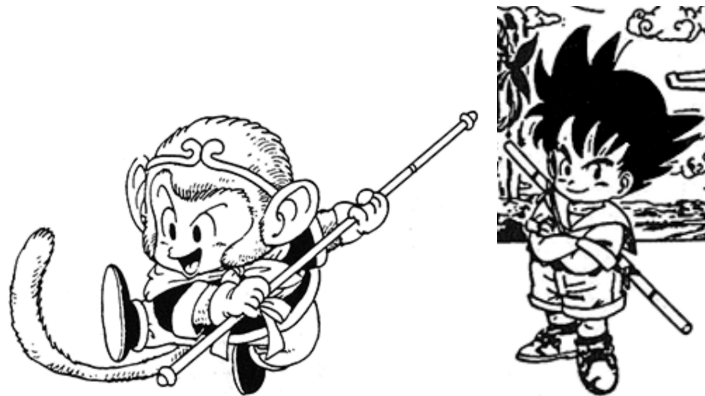


Fig. 17 & 18. (Left) Toriyama's first draft of Son Gokū (Toriyama Akira Hozonkai, 1984).
(Right) Toriyama's second draft of Son Gokū (Toriyama Akira Hozonkai, 1984).

As for his facial features, Son Gokū has big eyes, eyebrows, ears, and mouth. His hair is voluminous and pointed, diverging in different directions, and there are a few strands on his forehead. In chapter 1 of *DB*, he looks like a child with a sunny disposition, wearing a bluish suit, a belt, wristbands, and martial arts slippers. An eye-catching feature is the presence of a long tail.



Fig. 19. Son Gokū's first appearance, from the manga *Dragon Ball* chapter 1. **Source:** <https://ww3.dragonballread.com/manga/dragon-ball-chapter-1-online-read>.

When comparing 'the old' to 'the new' we can say that, like in many Japanese manga and anime, Song Gokū's eyes and ears are bigger than those of his Chinese counterparts; his appearance is still marked by a 'Chineseness' in his clothing: they are representative of the Chinese Ming and Qing dynasties, his footwear is martial arts slippers just like Sun Wukong's. Sun Wukong's brutal personality needs to be promptly controlled by monk

Tripitaka through the magical circlet; Son Gokū's personality is quite boyish and naive; however, we need to trace back to the time he was very aggressive till he fell off a cliff and hit his head, losing his memory, with the result that "his violent nature disappeared, and he became a good little boy" (*Dragon Ball* chapter 197). Sun Wukong has no sex, and can be identified as an androgynous figure; on the other hand, *DB* shows a male Son Gokū. Sun Wukong tends to be portrayed as a human being; Son Gokū tends to be portrayed as a semi-simian being. The latter has lost all monkey attributes, except for his tail and his Ōzaru form, which turns him into a giant monkey.

Conclusion

The literature review and the case studies have pointed to the existence of a recurrent 'meta-pilgrimage': a pilgrimage in another pilgrimage. The concept is centred on the pilgrimage itself as the object of the work, which can be traced in the fictional pilgrimages that follow the historical pilgrimage of Tripitaka. As shown during the historical pilgrimage, the monk Tripitaka makes a pilgrimage to India managing to bring a certain amount of sutras to be translated. This myth was exaggerated over the centuries with the addition of fantastic elements until it came to the first pilgrimage fiction, *Poetic notes*. Here, alongside Tripitaka, we have the presence of Hou Xingzhe who accompanies the Master from China to India to acquire the sutras. The work was found in a Kyōto temple, and thanks to Chinese scholar Luo Zhenyu the text returned to China. This is a case of 'meta-pilgrimage': the Chinese text 'pilgrims' to Japan and then 'makes a pilgrimage back' to China. Therefore, the *Poetic notes* had a 'literary stop' in India and a 'geographical stop' in Japan. The same happens for *Opera*: Sun Xingzhe escorted Tripitaka from China and acquired sutras in India. The work was found in Japanese territory, and it was only thanks to Japanese scholar On Shionoya that the text managed to reach China. Therefore, even in this case, we can see the presence of a meta-pilgrimage: the Chinese text pilgrims to Japan and then makes a pilgrimage back to China. The *Opera* had a literary stop in India and a geographical stop in Japan. Unfortunately, we do not know how and when *Poetic notes* and *Opera* arrived in Japan.

In the Ming 'Shidetang' edition, *JtW*'s earliest edition, the group guided by Tripitaka and Sun Wukong as the main character engages in a pilgrimage that will take them to India to acquire the Buddhist scriptures. The four reproductions of this edition were all found in Japan during the last century. However, the laborious work of translation

shows that the reproductions was already circulated in Japan during the Edo period, encouraging the novel's translation between the 18th and 19th centuries. Similarly to the *Poetic notes*, the 'pilgrimage' of the Ming novel too had a literary stop in India and a geographical stop in Japan: Sanzang and Sun Wukong arrived first in Japan, probably for diplomatic and economic reasons.²⁴

As for *DB*, the meta-pilgrimage is more complicated: the manga and the anime are a reinterpretation of the *JtW* and embody the pilgrimage of Son Gokū and Bulma; this represents the literary pilgrimage; as for the pilgrimage of the story, this coincides with the worldwide media distribution of the two works (the manga and the anime series and movies). Moreover, in *DB* the concept of meta-pilgrimage can also be traced to that of meta-narration (the story in the story), in which the young manga reader may imagine to be the real protagonist of the story s/he is reading, identifying her/himself with Son Gokū. As observed by Padula, "When Gokū pushes himself hard, endures suffering, and comes out the victor in a long battle, he gives you an ideal to strive for" (2014: 121). In this sense, we could assert that it is the fan who pursues a journey, more specifically, an inner spiritual journey, or, using Jean Leclercq's (1961: 51) words, a '*peregrinatio in stabilitate*'.

Case studies	Literary pilgrimages	Geographic pilgrimages
<i>Poetic notes on the pilgrimage of Tripitaka of the Great Tang to acquire the sutras</i>	China → India (sutras)	China → Japan
"Journey to the West" Opera	China → India (sutras)	China → Japan
<i>Journey to the West</i> ('Shidetang' edition)	China → India (sutras)	China → Japan
<i>Dragon Ball</i>	Japan → world (dragon balls)	Japan → world → all of us

Table 1. Literary and geographic pilgrimages of Sun Wukong, his predecessors, and Son Gokū.

²⁴ *JtW* circulated outside of Asia between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, thanks to the first translated sketches and the first paraphrases. However, the first version in English appreciated by the public came only as the abridged version published in 1942 by the sinologist Arthur David Waley (1889-1966) entitled *Monkey*.

In all four cases, we read about the religious quest: if the core of *Poetic notes* and *JtW* is the pilgrimage to acquire the scriptures that contain the Buddhist teachings capable of elevating the reader morally, in *DB* the attention is focussed on the quest to find the dragon balls, objects created by a divine entity that gives the possibility to evolve morally and in other ways the person who collects them, after pronouncing a formula to summon the dragon and expressing a wish. If we compare the ends, we can see that in *Poetic notes* Hou Xingzhe receives the title of ‘Great Saint from the Muscles of Steel and Iron Bones’ through the intercession of the Emperor Taizong in the last chapter; in *Opera*, there is no investiture ceremony; in *JtW*, Sun Wukong is nominated by Buddha ‘Victorious Fighting Buddha’; in *DB*, at the end of the 23rd Tenkaichi tournament, God offers Gokū his job, since he has the utmost confidence in Gokū. The latter replies: “Me...? Go ...? Is this a joke? No no no! I don’t want to. I’d die of boredom! I’m totally against it!” (*DB* chapter 194) and teases God. Gokū grabs Chichi’s arm and flies away on the flying nimbus. This attitude of Son Gokū may make us understand two aspects: 1) Toriyama perhaps wanted to make Gokū humbler than the old haughty Sun Wukong, and 2) maybe Gokū is not yet ready to receive a religious title, and as a result, other journeys will follow.

Due to the geographical pilgrimages, we could conjecture that pilgrimages in *Poetic notes*, *Opera*, and *JtW* have had a huge impact on Japanese culture and contributed to make Japan the epicentre of animated pilgrimages’ stories. How these Japanese imitations reveal, the cultural connection between the two Asian cultures is a fascinating issue and can lead to two brief observations. Firstly, Sino-Japanese relations must be regarded as the foundation for a ‘polytexting’ of Chinese narratives in the Japanese context, which should be a component in the interpretation of imitation strategies. Secondly, although it can be claimed that *JtW*’s internal features, such as its plot structure, enhance its ‘iterability’, it must be emphasised that such imitation is a deconstruction of a classic Chinese text (Chan 2020: 193–4). In the imitation of Japanese manga, we find the attempts of a fan subculture to “strive to stand out from the mainstream culture, employ different cultural products for their own purposes, conquer their own space” (Lehtonen 2000: 147).

One curious question we may have is, would *DB* have been possible without the ‘Shidetang’ edition from the 16th century? Would the elements contained in *Poetic notes* and *Opera* have been enough? Chronologically speaking, Japanese people first set

their hands on the integral translation of the *JtW* during the first half of the 19th century, while the *Poetic notes* and the *Opera* were found only at the beginning of the 20th century. If the Ming novel clearly exposes the birth and formation of Sun Wukong, all this is missing in the *Poetic Notes*. As for the *Opera*, it is one of the first sources to call the simian character 'Sun Wukong' and contains many elements existing in the Ming Dynasty literary work, particularly the characters of Zhu Bajie and Sha Heshang. Although in *Opera* there are many similarities with *JtW*, there are also some subtle and interesting differences. Moreover, it must be considered that both *Poetic Notes* and *Opera* mainly revolve around the monk Tripitaka; Wu Cheng'en's novel is the first work that opens with a attention to the Monkey King. Assuming that the Japanese scholars and literates had never translated the *JtW* in Japanese language nor had received its four Chinese copies, it is possible to hypothesise that *Poetic notes* and *Opera* may have thoroughly influenced Japanese literature and culture at that time, thus laying the foundations for a series of adapted works without focussing on the monkey character. On the matter in question, it is also possible that *DB* would have been achievable even without the 'Shidetang' edition of the 16th century, but with a very different Sun Wukong.

In conclusion, the elements of *JtW* appear in constant change and recombinations so that it cannot be regarded as a single, static work, nor can it be considered as a set of variants of an original text. Although the code (textual or visual) may be familiar, their combination is unique and the story cannot be reduced to one version. This is why Wall (2019) regards *JtW* as a "network, or story universe, and the variations as equal, multifaceted variations of *The Journey*, each adding to our understanding of *The Journey* universe" (p. 2121). If we talk about a regional pilgrimage limited to Asia, with the Japanese 'multi-textualisation' we move to a planetary representation of the myth. Consequently, with its global reception, we move on to a decomposition-analysis of fiction to understand authenticity and, once understood, we go back to a study of fiction. The result is complementary: Sun Wukong and Son Gokū are perceived as two sides of the same coin, and among *JtW*'s adaptations *DB* is the link of the chain that allowed a better knowledge of the *JtW* and monkey character in the world.

REFERENCES

- BAJC, VIDA (2012), For a Sociology of Pilgrimage. *Sociological Forum*, 27, no. 4, pp. 1052-1055.
- BARTHES, ROLAND (1977), From Work to Text. *Image-Music-Text*, translated by Stephan Heath, Hill and Wang, a division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, pp. 155-64.
- CAI, GUOLIANG (1981), *Sun Wukong de xuetong* 孙悟空的血统 [On Sun Wukong's lineage]. *Xuelin manlu*, vol. 2, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.
- CAO, BINGJIAN (2010), *Xiyou ji xiancun banben xitong xulu* 《西游记》现存版本系统叙录 [Systematic description of the existing editions of 'Journey to the West']. *Huaihai gong xueyuan xuebao (Shehui kexueban)*, vol. 8, 10, pp. 16-21.
- CAVALLARO, ANGELO (2015), *DRAGON BALL - Tutto quello che non sai: Dal super saiyan coi capelli neri alla leggenda del finale di Freezer; dal flop del manga alle vere origini della Kamehehameha e del Tenkaichi* [DRAGON BALL - Everything you don't know: From the super saiyan with black hair to the legend of Freeza's arc ending; from the flop of the manga to the true origins of Kamehehameha and Tenkaichi]. Buta World - Snout Comics.
- CHAN, LEO TAK-HUNG (2020), *Western Theory in East Asian Contexts: Translation and Transtextual Rewriting*, London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- COULDRY, NICK (2005), On the actual street in Crouch, D., Jackson, R., Thompson, F. *The media and the tourist imagination: converging cultures*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 60-75.
- DUDBRIDGE, GLEN (1970), *The Hsi-yu chi: A Study of Antecedents to the Sixteenth-Century Chinese Novel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- FENG, BAOSHAN (2012), *Sun Wukong yu Fojia shentong* 孙悟空与佛家神通 [Sun Wukong and the Buddhist magical powers]. *Ming Qing xiaoshuo yanjiu*, 105, 3, pp. 131-146.
- FUTBOLETE (2017), Tokyo 2020 Ambassadors [Video]. Youtube [online]. Available from https://youtu.be/xAFW_CXrQhI (accessed 15 November 2020).
- GENETTE, GÉRARD (1992), *The architext: an introduction*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- GEXAD (2017), Toyotaro (Autore di Dragon Ball Super) – INTERVISTA [Toyotaro (Dragon Ball Super's author) – INTERVIEW] [Video]. Youtube [online]. Available from <https://youtu.be/5i632E8Remg> (accessed 18 December 2020).
- HU, SHI (1988), *Xiyou ji kaozheng* 《〈西游记〉考证》 [A Textual Study of the 'Journey to the West']. *Hushi gudian wenxue yanjiu lun ji*, vol 2, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.
- IBARAKI, MASAHICO (2008), *The Reminiscence of My 25 Years with Shonen Jump* [online]. Available from <https://www.comipress.com/article/2008/03/31/3452> (accessed 11 December 2020).
- KRISTEVA, JULIA (1969), *Sèmeiòtikè: Recherches pour une sémanalyse* [Semeiotikè: Research towards a Semeanalysis]. Paris: Edit. du Seuil.
- LECLERCQ, JEAN (1961), Monachisme et Peregrination du XI au XII Siecle [Monasticism and Peregrination from the XI to the XII century]. *Studia Monrartica*, 3, pp. 33-52.
- LEHTONEN, MIKKO (2000), *Cultural analysis of texts*, London: Sage.
- LI, SHIREN — CAI, JINGHAO (1997), *Da Tang Sanzang qujing shihua jiaozhu* 《大唐三藏取经诗话》校注 [‘Poetic notes on the pilgrimage of Tripitaka of the Great Tang to acquire the sutras’: annotated edition], Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

- LI, ZHANPENG (2013), *Xiyou ji zaju de fa xian, zhengli ji yanjiu* 《西游记》杂剧的发现、整理及研究 [Discovery, sorting-out and studies on the 'Journey to the West' Opera]. *Neijiang shifan xueyuan xuebao*, no. 9, vol. 28, pp. 50-54.
- LU, XUN (1976), *Zhi Hu Shi (1922nian 8yue 21ri)* 致胡适 (1922年8月21日) [Delivered to Hu Shi in August 22, 1922], *Lu Xun shuxin ji* 鲁迅书信集 [Lu Xun's collection of letters], Beijing: Renmin wenzue, pp. 48-49.
- (1981), *Guanyu Tang Sanzang qujing shihua* 关于“唐三藏取经诗话”的版本 [On the 'Poetic notes on the pilgrimage of Tripitaka of the Tang to acquire the sutras'], *Lu Xun Quanji: Di 4 juan* 鲁迅全集: 第四卷 [Complete collection of Lu Xun's writings: Volume 4]. Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, pp. 275-277.
- MACDONALD, SEAN (2015), Animation as Intertextual Cinema: Nezha Naohai (Nezha Conquers the Dragon King), *Animation: an interdisciplinary journal*, vol. 10, no.3, pp. 205-221.
- (2016), *Animation in China: history, aesthetics, media*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- MAIR, VICTOR H. (1989), Suen Wu-kung=Hanumat?: The Progress of a Scholarly Debate, *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Sinology*, Taipei: Academia Sinica, pp. 659-752.
- MARQUES, RENATO (2016), 2016 the year of the red monkey, *Macau Daily Times* [online]. Available from <https://macaudailytimes.com.mo/2016-the-year-of-the-red-monkey.html> (accessed 20 November 2020).
- MAZZOLA, GIORGIO (2014), *Akira Toriyama. Il mangaka sorridente* [Akira Toriyama. The smiling mangaka]. Ass. Culturale Il Foglio.
- MICHIKO (2007), The Rise and Fall of Weekly Shonen Jump: A Look at the Circulation of Weekly Jump [online]. Available from <https://www.comipress.com/article/2007/05/06/1923> (accessed 14 December 2020).
- MÍNGUEZ-LÓPEZ, XAVIER (2014), Folktales and Other References in Toriyama's Dragon Ball, *Animation*. 9, pp. 27-46.
- MULTIPLAYER.IT (2019), Dragon Ball Z Kakarot: Trailer Live-Action Giapponese [Dragon Ball Z Kakarot: Japanese Trailer Live-Action] [Video]. Youtube [online]. Available from <https://youtu.be/D6MDjzqnK1Y> (accessed 18 December 2020).
- NAKANO, MIYOKO — WANG, XIUWEN (2002), *Xiyou ji de mimi* 《西游记》的秘密 [The Secrets of *Journey to the West*], Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.
- NISHIDA, KORENORI — YAJIMA, GOGAKU — UTAGAWA, TOYOHIRO — KATSUSHIKA, HOKUSAI, et al. (1837), *Ehon Saiyū zenden* 画本西遊全伝 [Illustrated Edition of the History of the Journey to the West], Naniwa [Osaka]: Okada Gungyokudō seihon: Maekawa Zenbē zō.
- PADULA, DEREK (2014), *Dragon Ball Culture Volume 1: Origin*, Derek Padula.
- (2015), *Dragon Soul: 30 Years of Dragon Ball Fandom*, Derek Padula.
- (2016), *Dragon Ball Culture Volume 3: Battle*, Derek Padula.
- PETERS, MEGAN (2018) Here's The 11 Top-Selling Manga Series Of All-Time [online]. Available from <https://comicbook.com/anime/news/best-selling-manga-ever/> (accessed 20 November 2020).
- PRICE, SHINOBU (2001), Cartoons from Another Planet: Japanese Animation as Cross-Cultural Communication. *The Journal of American Culture*, 24, pp. 153-169.
- REN, PENGCHENG (2017), *Da Tang Sanzang qujing shihua chengshu niandai kaozheng zongshu* 《大唐三藏取经诗话》成书年代考证综述 [Review on completion date of 'Poetic notes on the pilgrimage of Tripitaka of the Great Tang to acquire the sutras']. *Minxi zhiye jishu xueyuan xuebao*, vol. 19, 3, pp. 85-89.

- REN, YONGCHANG — MANSER, MARTIN H. — ZHU, YUAN, *et al.* (2010), *Oxford Chinese desk dictionary: Chinese-English*, Oxford: Commercial Press.
- SUVILAY, BOUNTHAVY (2021), *Dragon Ball: une histoire française* [Dragon Ball: a French story]. Liège: Presses universitaires de Liège.
- TANG, XIAOFANG — XIXIA BOWUGUAN (2003), *Xixia yishu* 西夏艺术 [Western Xia art], Yinchuan: Ningxia renmin chubanshe.
- TORIYAMA AKIRA HOZONKAI (1984), *Bird land press 15 - The Making of Dragon Ball* [online]. Available from <https://www.kanzenshoo.com/translations/bird-land-press-making-of-dragon-ball/> (accessed 20 December 2021).
- TORIYAMA, AKIRA (1984-1995), *Dragon Ball*. 42 Vol. Tokyo: Shūeisha.
- TORIYAMA, AKIRA (1995), *Dragon Ball Daizenshū 2: Story Guide* [online]. Available from <https://www.kanzenshoo.com/translations/daizenshoo-2-akira-toriyama-super-interview/> (accessed 20 November 2020).
- VAKHNENKO, YEVHENIY (2017), *Reception of Journey to the West in early modern Japan*, Master of Arts, University of British Columbia.
- WALL, BARBARA (2019), Dynamic texts as hotbeds for transmedia storytelling: A case study on the story universe of *The Journey to the West*. *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 13, 2116-2142.
- WRIGGINS, SALLY H. — W. MOTE, FREDERICK (1996), *Xuanzang: A Buddhist pilgrim on the silk road*, Colorado: Westview Press.
- WU, CHENG'EN (1994), *Xiyou ji: Shidetang ben* 西游记: 世德堂本 ['Journey to the West': Shidetang edition], Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.
- XIAO, BING (1982), *Wuzhiqi Hanuman Sun Wukong tongkao* 无支祁哈奴曼孙悟空通考 [Comprehensive examination on Wuzhiqi, Hanuman and Sun Wukong]. *Wenxue pinglun*, 5, pp. 66-82.
- YU, ANTHONY C. (2012), *The Journey to the West, Revised Edition, Volume 1*. University of Chicago Press.
- ZHU, HONGBO (2017), *Xiyou shi kao lu* 西游释考录 [Understanding the 'Journey to the West': interpretations and researches], Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Giovanni RUSCICA is a PhD student in ancient Chinese literature at Fudan University (*Fudan daxue* 复旦大学) of Shanghai. His field of study concerns monkeys and similar creatures in accounts of Chinese literature.

Fashionable pilgrims: Rental and second-hand kimono shops styling paths of new embodied communities

Lucile DRUET | Kansai Gaidai University, Japan

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/2021.10.DRU.PILGR](https://doi.org/10.32926/2021.10.DRU.PILGR)

ABSTRACT

Ever since the Meiji period, the kimono has been commodified — nationally and internationally — as the Japanese national dress, symbolising Japan as a land full of exquisite, exotic traditions. While kimono production is now in decline, its image is still thriving, actively promoted and marketed to attract tourists — domestic and international ones alike — in quest of an “authentic”, sometimes premium, Japan experience.

As a result, the kimono consumed by visitors in Japan, especially in the emblematic “traditional” Kyoto, becomes an object that can be placed at the nexus of content and fashion tourism as well as pilgrimage, with the rental kimono practices or second-hand kimono purchases employing similar liminal dynamics.

This article analyses the interactions the kimono entertains between design and marketing, experience and global consumerism, tourism and pilgrimage; mapping the different territories shared by kimono pilgrims and their communitas by first looking at kimono as contents and secondly, kimono as rental / second-hand object.

KEYWORDS

Kimono; Tradition; Content tourism; Fashion tourism; Pilgrimage; *Communitas*.

Date of submission: 16 May 2021

Date of acceptance: 2 December 2021

Date of publication: 20 December 2021

Introduction

As recent studies show, pilgrimage covers — concretely and metaphorically — many territories and connects with many different narratives, whether they achieve personal or more social goals. Many aspects of pilgrimage can be seen as engaging polarised elements that are useful when analysing the dynamics in tourism studies, more specifically bringing new perspectives to the categories of contents tourism (Seaton and Yamamura, 2005,

2017, 2020), cultural tourism (Mc Kercher and Du Cros, 2002), fan tourism (Sugawa-Shimada, 2015; Greene, 2016) and fashion tourism.¹

In other words, pilgrimage is not limited to sanctity and religious activities. It can be an effective framework for fostering new ideas for the above-mentioned fields and the kimono industry as well. As phrased by Ian Reader (1993: 5):

When talking of pilgrimage in the religious traditions [...] one is only touching upon some of the many manifestations of pilgrimage. [...] Indeed, a general examination of the word and concept of pilgrimage indicates that its scope runs far beyond the boundaries of visitors to shrines and holy sites connected with official religious traditions into areas far more concurrent with the secular world.

By its hybrid and versatile nature, pilgrimage applies to a wide spectrum of times, objects, itineraries and spaces, combining the sacred with the mundane, the serious with the recreational. The way *omiyage* changed from being souvenirs strictly tied to a shrine or a temple (お宮筒) to being just regarded “material memory” of a place (お土産) presents an interesting parallel, as with modernity, pilgrimage routes developed the practice of mixing “prayer with pleasure” (Cwierka and Yasuhara, 2020: 77). Pilgrimage, beyond this reification trajectory, also contains a liminal aspect:

Within the diversity of the pilgrimage experience, certain key elements recur so often that they shape how we understand the term: the destination and what makes it special; the route traveled, with its rigors, joys, and power to transform; the personal motivation for undertaking the journey; the end result, be it transformation, disappointment, or catharsis; the relationship between pilgrimage and sense of identity, both personal and communal [...] [thus pilgrims can be perceived] as stepping out of their base culture to join — albeit temporarily — a new society based on classless shared experience [...] In this view pilgrimage is a liminal experience, involving a leave-taking and a temporary otherness, followed by a re-entry into the base culture. (Davidson and Gitlitz, 2002: XVII-XVIII).

¹ Fashion tourism is a relatively new topic in that regard, especially fashion tourism in Japan. General definitions and contextualisation can be found in the following articles: Lewis, Clifford — Kerr, Gregory M. — Burgess, Lois (2013), A Critical Assessment of the Role of Fashion in Influencing the Travel Decision and Destination choice. *International Journal of Tourism Policy*, 5 (1/2), pp.4-18; Craik, Jennifer (2013), Fashion, Tourism and Global Culture. In: Black, Sandy, et al., *The Handbook of Fashion Studies*. London: Bloomsbury, pp. 353-370.

With these considerations about pilgrimage, content and fashion tourism in mind, renting a kimono and / or buying a second-hand kimono, specifically in Kyoto, appears as a practice at the nexus of such categories. It can also, potentially, bring new perspectives on pilgrimage scholarship, which often avoids talking about the implication of clothing, as well as new lines for fashion studies to think about the globalisation and localisation of clothes, especially when consumed by tourists.

Put differently, Japanese nationals, residents and international tourists dressing in kimono during their visit to or tour of Kyoto can be seen as pilgrims, with the kimono being either the goal or the means to complete a mediated Japanese experience, inviting considerations about embodiment, movement, wrapping² and class as it has become a typical activity for both the elite and the middle-class tourist.

The question this article will examine is: to what degree does the kimono rental / second-hand experience relate to pilgrimage? What level of awareness does a tourist have of pilgrimage when dressed in kimono and touring around Kyoto in it or when buying a second-hand kimono as a souvenir?

Due to COVID-19 restrictions on national and international travel, only visual material (from pamphlets and websites) and data gathering had been conducted. This article thus mainly employs methodology based on visual anthropology and critical discourse analysis (CDA)³ principles as well as analysis of empirical observations as a Kyoto resident living in the city for the past ten years. First, seeing what kimono implies in terms of symbolical contents and fashion implications. Secondly, analysing how the rental and second-hand shops are curating the kimono experience for such “pilgrims”.

1. Kimono then and now: historical and contemporary territories

1.1. Kimono branding Japan, Japan branding kimono

Since the Meiji era (1868-1912), the kimono has been employed as a commodity that disseminates the image of Japan as a sophisticated nation, not yet up to Western standards

² It has been noted that Japan has developed its arts and culture on a wrapping mindset: paper or cloth wrapping resonating with positive values such as diligence, purity, and service. See Hendry, Joy (1993), *Wrapping Culture: Politeness, Presentation and Power in Japan and Other Societies*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

³ A key concept in social sciences theory (now also applied in marketing) following what has been established and theorised by Michel Foucault and Jürgen Habermas. See: Foucault, Michel (1972), *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. New York: Pantheon Books; Habermas, Jürgen (1981,1985), *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Boston: Beacon Press.

of technology, but very well developed aesthetically.⁴ The kimono, analogous to an ambassador, is thus a visual advocate for a delicate, beautiful, and articulate culture, albeit simplified. From a foreign perspective, kimono was — and is still often — placed into the category of ethnic costume with no other meaning than signalling a faraway land, thus allowing all kinds of sartorial liberties.⁵

The kimono was, for instance, worn without an *obi* in a relaxed, carefree manner, because it was seen as a loose type of loungewear. Although described clearly by Lafcadio Hearn in his book *Glimpse of Unfamiliar Japan* (1894: 483), the kimono would often be worn in the West with the right panel crossed over the left one, the way Western female attire (especially buttoned shirts) is designed although to Japanese eyes this dressing disruption would be seen as shocking, a gesture bringing bad luck. This mishap shows how the kimono, once it “migrated West”, was rearranged by the sartorial customs of the country of adoption.

The kimono, by fitting into the category of the oriental and the exotic, also fell into the malleable ‘*objet*’ category that can be re-dimensioned to fit the desired effect of the collector, “interpreted from the collector’s rather than the creator’s frame of reference” (Guth, 2004: 167). As phrased by Terry Satsuki Milhaupt (2014: 158-159):

The kimono, whether as a souvenir or collectible object, was a referent to Japan as imagined by its owner, not as lived within a Japanese context. [...] The kimono’s owner could project onto this garment his or her longing for a Japan that was “traditional”, exotic, unchanging or whatever image suited his or her fancy, regardless of the kimono’s function and symbolism within Japan.

More concretely speaking, the kimono as an object in the West became widely collected by artists such as Georges Hendrik Breitner, William Merritt Chase, Gustav Klimt, Edouard Manet, Claude Monet, James Tissot, James McNeil Whistler (Wichmann, 1981: 16-21), and

⁴ The idea that Japan positioned itself as an aesthetic country, exporting its “traditional” arts, can be seen in many publications, such as: Irvine, Gregory (ed.) (2013), *Japonisme and the Rise of the Modern Art Movement: The Arts of the Meiji Period*. New York: Thames & Hudson; Morais, Liliana (2019), *Traditional Japanese Arts and Crafts Historical and Political Trajectories from the Meiji Period until Today*. *Journal of International and Advanced Japanese Studies*, 11, pp. 139-146.

⁵ Like the kaftan imported from the Middle East did a few decades earlier during the Orientalism movement. See more in the following exhibition catalogues: Fukai, Akiko (1996), *Japonism in Fashion*. Kyoto: Kyoto Costume Institute; Martin, Richard — Koda, Harold (1994), *Orientalism: Visions of the East in Western Dress*. New-York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Mary King Longfellow (Guth, 2004: 185). Wealthy collectors as well as upper-class ladies and actresses like Lotta Crabtree, Ruth St Denis, Elsie Whelen Goelet Clews, and Alice Roosevelt Longworth (Lynch and Strauss, 2015: 180) were kimono enthusiasts too, most likely inspired by the success of Sada Yacco's performances and Giacomo Puccini's *Japoniste* opera, *Madama Butterfly*. In this way, the kimono in the West became the trope for a passive, diligent woman while being a fun, relaxed garment, the representation of a certain ideal and the representation of the privileged class, with Americans using the kimono to emphasise women's domesticity in a more positive light while Europeans framed the kimono within the "*fin de siècle*" aesthetic (Stevens and Wada, 1996: 52).

Japanese paintings, *Ukiyo-e* prints, and photographs imported during these Japonisme times (from the 1870s until the 1930s) by displaying ladies *in situ* dressed in silk kimono, consolidated this now systematic association of kimono as symbol of prim and proper Japan, a country that is civilised, treating women equally (Sievers, 1983: 16-18). The *bijin* (attractive woman) terminology used to form the whole *bijinga* iconography, including events such as the photo contest organised by the newspaper *Jiji Shunpō*⁶, illustrate this trend. The use of geisha related imagery, in postcards, souvenir photographs, and ephemera made for national and international use (Wakita, 2013: 65-92), was amplified by "real" geisha bodies, for instance O-Kane, O-Sumi and O-Sato, who served at the tea house built by Kiyomizu Ryūzaburō for the Paris World Exhibition in 1867 (Lockyer, 2001: 67; Aso, 2013: 26). These multiple promulgations of the geisha figure perfected the idea that Japan is a beautiful, quaint, kimono clad country.

The *Britannia Pacificatrix* mural (Figure 1) celebrating the British Empire's position at the end of WWI⁷ further exemplifies this vision, giving more visual evidence that Japan was understood as the land of kimono. While the countries regarded as powerful (America, France, Italy, Russia and the four great British "dominions" at the time: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa) are allegorically represented, dressed with symbols of grandeur; the ones considered inferior are depicted as children in need of protection, in a

⁶ For more detailed definition of the term *bijin* (美人) and its commodification, see: Mizuta Lippit — Miya Elise (2013), 美人 / Bijin / Beauty. *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, pp. 1-14; Fraser, Karen (2012), Beauty Battle. Politics and Portraiture in Late Meiji Japan. In: Yuen Wong, Aida (ed.), *Visualizing Beauty. Gender and Ideology in Modern East Asia*, pp. 11-22.

⁷ Completed in 1921, it is now displayed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Office, London. See: https://worldhistoryconnected.press.uillinois.edu/11.1/forum_mirkovic.html (Accessed 15 April 2021).

diminishing, reductive view. As a result, the representation of Japan stands out: as it is symbolised by a rather realistically depicted Japanese young lady, in complete kimono garb. Her outfit also includes the *tabi* socks and *zori* sandals, while the other “nations” are either barefooted or in antique roman sandals.

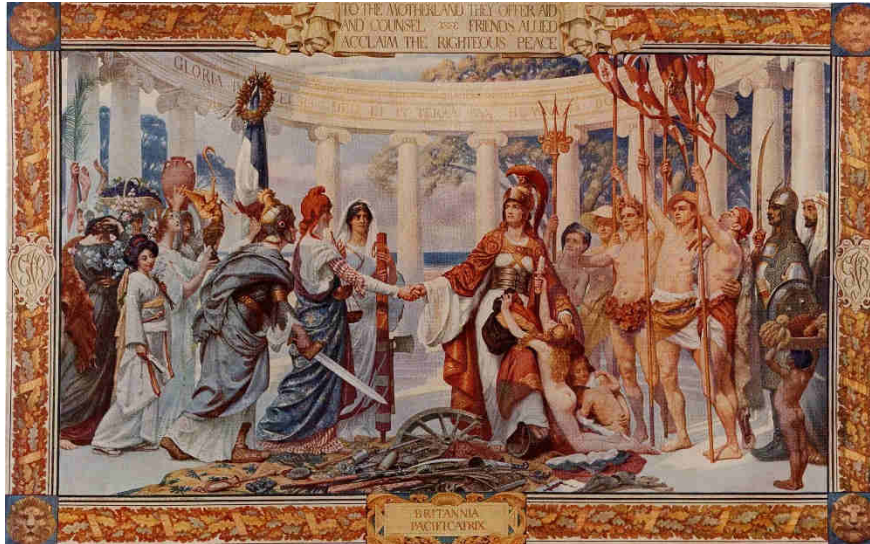


Fig. 1. Sigismund Goetze, *Britannia Pacificatrix* (mural painting - 1921).

A Inside national borders too, the kimono came to be representative of Japan as a powerful, modern nation, serving nationalist agendas promoted by the government and the army. For example, the 1895 victory of Japan over China (First Sino-Japanese war), and the 1905 victory of Japan over Russia (Russo-Japanese war) resulted in a halt in the adoption of Western fashion and a new push for kimono as national dress. In the late 1930s, the kimono became an even more effective tool to promote the military expansion campaigns and propaganda, its design and motifs tapping into an eclectic imagery: soldiers, generals, horses, dogs, tanks, zero fighter planes, and flags were in use in Mussolini’s Italy and Nazi Germany as well as the Hinomaru and the Manchukuo (Atkins, 2005; Inui, 2007).

But ever since the end of WWII, the kimono has been seen as an industry in decline: for instance, the kimono represented a market worth \$16 billion dollars (17,240 億円) in 1982 but only \$2.5 billion dollars (3,010 億円) in 2015.⁸ Other sources show that the

⁸ See table on page 6 in the joint report by 和装振興研究会 [Wasō shinkō kenkyūkai][National Dress Preservation Association] and the 経済産業省 製造産業局 [Keizaisangyōshō Seizōsangyōkyoku] [Ministry

domestic kimono production was 16,500,000 pieces in 1966 but only 40,000 pieces in 2016, a decrease of 97.5%.⁹ Domestic expenditures surveys (家計調査) confirm the decline, with \$53.2 million dollars (6022 百万円) spent on kimono (also called *wafuku*) in 2006 and about \$9.6 million dollars (1083 百万円) in 2020, a sharp 82% decrease in less than twenty years.¹⁰

Noting that the majority of frequent kimono wearers are well-established adults, generally between 50 and 70 years old¹¹ further confirms that the kimono in postwar Japan shifted from hegemony to rarity, from all kinds of people, both children and adults, to mostly married, wealthy women. These numbers highlight how kimono usage / frequency moved rapidly from every day to occasional to rare, now only connected to ceremonies, family rituals, the practice of traditional arts, or other formal occasions. Following a strict code of manners — the etiquette and set of rules emphasised by social traditions as well as the authoritative *kitsuke* schools¹² — the

of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI)] 「和装振興研究会：報告書」 [Wasō shinkō kenkyūkai: hōkokusho][National Dress Preservation Association: Report] (June 2015). Available from https://www.meti.go.jp/committee/kenkyukai/seizou/wasou_shinkou/pdf/report01_01_00.pdf (Accessed 29 November 2021). See also the table discussed in the online magazine Status, 着物需要の変化：「仲人」の衰退と「エコ」という理念 [Kimono juyō no henka: nakōdo no suitai to eko to iu rinen][Changes in the kimono industry: brokers' decline and the new "eco" philosophy] (October 2021). Available from <https://status-marketing.com/20211026-4230.html> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

⁹ See the 「友禅生産統計」 [Yūzen seisan tōkei] [Statistics on Yūzen production] report (April 2017). Available from <http://www.taizou.jp/blog/2017/04/27.php> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

¹⁰ See page 8 of the report 令和3年度第1回伝統産業生活化推進審議会 [Reiwa san nendo dai ikkai dentō sangyō seikatsu suishin bangikai][First Report of the Committee on Activities for Traditional Industries](August 2021), 「後半期5年間に向けて」 [kōhanki go nenkan ni mukete] [Laying Out the Next Five Years Segment]. Available from (Accessed 28 November 2021): <https://www.city.kyoto.lg.jp/sankan/cmsfiles/contents/0000073/73676/02R03shiryō.pdf>.

¹¹ See page 8 of the report by 経済産業省繊維課 [Keizaisangyōshō Sen'ika] [Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) Textile and Clothing Division] (January 2015), 「和装振興研究会～きもの 日本魅力を向上する～ 論点資料」 [Wasō shinkō kenkyūkai ~ kimono de nihon no miryoku wo kōjō suru~ ronten shiryō] [Documents from the Japanese Clothing Research Group: showing the appeal of Japan with kimono]. Available from (Accessed 28 November 2021): https://www.meti.go.jp/committee/kenkyukai/seizou/wasou_shinkou/pdf/001_03_00.pdf.

¹² Kitsuke schools are this way considered the guardians of kimono's elegant and formal "tradition", focusing on training and passing on the way (道) of wearing kimono to students who fell out of such knowledge by lack of mother / daughter generational transmission. The schools are also sought after because women interested in kimono think that studying through a school is the only proper way to learn it correctly as it legitimises their approach. But the main restraint might be the cost of such training, thus nowadays most of the schools strategise by first proposing free classes which can later be turned into more expensive certification courses, emphasising the degree of seriousness and dedication proper kimono wearing implies. See these examples: Nihon Wasō (日本和装) <https://www.Wasōu.com/course/> (Accessed 29 November 2021); Hakubi Kyōto Kimono Gakuin (ハクビ京都きもの学院) <http://www.hakubi.net> (Accessed 29 November 2021); Sekka Kimono Gakuin (雪花き

kimono is used in a limited time and space, conforming to an irreproachable image, one matching the idea of being — allegedly — the “most beautiful ethnic dress in the world [...] [holding] quasi-spiritual qualities” (Maynard, 2004: 83). The ‘*kimono no hi*’ celebrated every year on November 15th¹³ confirms the ambivalent paradox of the kimono and its culture nowadays: it is represented everywhere, esteemed and respected, yet technically, economically, emotionally more and more inaccessible.

In reaction to these traditions, designers are putting on the market kimonos that are seen as more fashionable, more casual, and less expensive. In terms of tailoring and design itself, designers either break the cylindrical silhouette by making the skirt shorter, opening the collar overlap or bring a refreshing taste with innovative fabrics, trendy motifs that are often dyed using faster processes or being inkjet printed (Cliffe, 2017; Valk, 2018a, 2018b; Hall, 2020). This is the case with haute couture designers such as Shito Hisayo, Jotaro Saito, Hiroko Takahashi, and the brand Yoshikimono. More middle class, but equally inventive, are the brands Modern Antenna, Rumi Rock, Kimono Hearts, and Gofukuyasan, reinterpreting colour combinations and cultural identification with outfits inspired by hard rock music, street fashion, and iconic art history references (Botticelli, Van Gogh, etc.). In an effort to make it relevant again to people accustomed to Western clothes — with their fast, cyclical pace and easy dressing procedures — new ways to accessorise and wear a kimono are advertised, as seen in the numerous Instagram accounts and magazines such as *Kimono Hime* (now renamed *Kimono Anne*) and *Nanaoh*.

Nowadays, dressing in kimono takes one into a doubled otherness, embracing the fact that this mode of dress is, on the one hand, a national emblem, a heritage (Dalby, 1993: 3;

もの学院) <https://sekkakimonogakuin.com> (Accessed 29 November 2021); Kimono Kikata Kyōshitsu Ichiru (きもの着方教室・いち溜) <https://ichiru.net> (Accessed 29 November 2021); Kyōto Kimono Gakuin (京都きもの学院) <http://www.kyoto-kimono-g.jp> (Accessed 29 November 2021); Naganuma Kimono Gakuin (長沼静きもの学院) <https://www.naganuma-kimono.co.jp> (Accessed 29 November 2021). See more in the following references: Goldstein-Gidoni, Ofra (1999), Kimono and the Construction of Gendered and Cultural Identities. *Ethnology, An International Journal of Cultural and Social Anthropology*, 38 (4), pp. 351-370; Assmann, Stephanie (2008), Between Tradition and Innovation: The Reinvention of the Kimono in Japanese Consumer Culture. *Fashion Theory. The Journal of Dress Body and Culture*, 12 (3), pp. 359-376; Yamanaka, Norio (2012), *The Book of Kimono*. New York: Kodansha International. First Edition 1982; Valk, Julie (2021), *Selling the Kimono. An Ethnography of Crisis, Creativity and Hope*. Abingdon, Oxon New York, NY: Routledge, p.32; pp. 59-61.

¹³ キモノの日 has been established in 1966. See: <https://www.kimononohi.org> (Accessed 29 November 2021).

Satsuki Milhaupt, 2014: 7), so monumental and immutable that some organisations advocate for the kimono to be registered on the UNESCO list;¹⁴ and, on the other hand, the kimono is resourceful, creative, and resonates with contemporary demands.

In other words, kimono invite people into a rich and fluid dialogue between timeless, eternal shapes (the wrapped silhouette, Y shaped collar and rectangular sleeves, the left panel “draped” over the right one), and more versatile use of symbols, patterns, colours, combinations, and accessories.

This duality has been noticed by numerous kimono scholars and Amanda Stinchecum (1984: 9) summarises it as follows:

Japan has maintained a single tradition in clothing over many centuries. The kimono, modern descendant of the *kosode*, persists as the national dress. Kimono are still worn at New Year’s, for tea ceremonies, and occasionally to shrines and temples. They lend their wearers an air of timeless, gracious formality. [...] The effect of timelessness in Japanese dress is a startling acknowledgement of the persistence of ancient taste in the culture. [...] Style and fashion, individual preference and the love of novelty, have found expression far less in the cut of Japanese garments than in the patterning and decoration of their fabrics.

The recent exhibitions — dedicated to both kimono as historical clothing and kimono as fashion — held in Paris, San Francisco, London and Tokyo¹⁵ demonstrated this polarised, doubled nature of the kimono at length: the Guimet museum and V&A museum kimono exhibitions share many similarities, encompassing kimono designs and outfits from the late 17th to the early 21st century, tying Edo period pattern fashion with haute couture / catwalk silhouette fashion. The San Francisco exhibition was more focused on showing the kimono’s influence on Western fashion, using examples which display the deconstructed, fragmented way kimono has changed how Western designers think and

¹⁴ Activities and campaign by Kimono Nippon きもの日本: https://www.wasou.or.jp/wasou/about/w_heritage.html (Accessed 28 November 2021); Wasōka 和装家, <https://omotenashi.or.jp> (Accessed 28 November 2021); and the video recently published by Nihonwasō 日本和装, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YIR3bc7HOEY> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

¹⁵ *Kimono. Au Bonheur des Dames*. Guimet Museum, Paris (February 22 to May 22, 2017); *Kimono Refashioned*. Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (February 8 to May 5, 2019); *Kimono: from Kyōto to Catwalk*. Victoria & Albert Museum, London (initially scheduled from February 29 to June 21, 2020. Closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it got rescheduled and open from August 27 to October 25, 2020); *Kimono: Fashioning Identities* Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo (initially scheduled from April 14 to June 7, 2020. Reported because of COVID-19 pandemic to June 30 - August 23, 2020).

build the shape, textures and contours of clothes while the one in Tokyo traced the DNA of kimono all the way back to the Heian period, in a linear, yet deep, manner.

In short, these exhibitions are valuable resources to understand how kimono fit and yet challenge the traditional register of “rapid change in shape” with which we define and date fashion in the West. Josephine Rout (2020b: 7) further anchors that idea when she formulates the following:

[Kimono] epitomizes Japanese sartorial identity [...] although the basic shape has not changed, the combination of materials, decorative techniques, patterns and way of wearing the garment varies drastically. [...] As the most important aspect of Japanese dress is the surface decoration, it is the scale and placement of pattern that changes, as do the ways in which they are applied. The beauty of many kimono is the combination of multiple decorative techniques, including weaving, dyeing, painting and embroidery. In many cases, it is the technique that allows us to date a kimono.

On another level, when wearing kimono, one is getting into more than just a dress / dressing¹⁶ affair: the materiality of the kimono leads one into a specific embodiment of Japanese culture linked to some degree to the respect of Japaneseness (Cliffe, 2017: 195), deeply connected to the history of Japan and one’s own perception of his/her/their silhouette. Put differently, wearing a kimono is wrapping oneself into an exotic beauty, clearly different from other countries (Yamanaka, 1982: 9; Goldstein Gidoni, 1999: 353-354) and, ultimately, the kimono can be seen as something that has been crystallised over time as a valuable cultural and social asset. As Itoh Motoshige phrased: “If the kimono were to disappear, society would lose its gracious gloss” (2016: 3).¹⁷

The kimono, thus advertised and sold to tourists, domestic and international, is deeply connected to the traditional, immutable image of the kimono, as imagined in the Meiji era. This type of kimono may be an “invented tradition”,¹⁸ a modern, fabricated way to stay

¹⁶ Here referring to the terminology and classification developed and analysed by Roland Barthes in his fashion essays, as seen in the edited volume titled *The Language of Fashion*, pp. 8-10.

¹⁷ Translation by the author.

¹⁸ As Eric Hobsbawm stated: “‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past. [...] [Inventing traditions] is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition.” (Hobsbawm, Eric — Ranger, Terence (1983), *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-4.). Further it was noted that:

in touch with an idealised past; it may have many shortcomings, but it has the power to create something appealing and dynamic, as a tradition that repeats itself or as a repeated tradition that is thus closely woven, intertwined, to the repetition of pilgrimage and more directly to the repetition of consumption. This “invited kimono” may also be seen pertaining to a certain “self-orientalism” dynamic which simplifies it too radically, but it is what prevails in the mind of the many consumers of kimono.

As mentioned above, the kimono represents traditional, exotic, quaint, exquisite Japan and tourist agencies and the general public are drawn to its Japaneseness and its clear-cut definition and identification procedures because Japaneseness and kimonos silhouettes sell well. A parallel here could be made with China and the use of *Qipao*, which is another “traditional” dress that brings to a polished, polite package orchestrated by the national tourist agency, controlling all the meaning and effects the clothing might have on the audience, repeating the same trope over and over again.¹⁹ The Australian fashion designers using indigenous patterns to create alternatives to current Western outfits is another source that can be put in parallel as they are, like the kimono nowadays, good examples that demonstrate, as analysed by Margaret Maynard (2000: 149), how

style is clearly an unstable, even fluid process [and] ethnicity, national imagery and perhaps indigenous imagery, too, can never be ‘essential’ but must be regarded as moving through cultures and throughout art forms and be seen as expandable and subjective notions, looking back to shared cultural and historical markers but always in process and never static.

What can be identified, underlying all this, it that the general tourist / pilgrim public also sees kimono as fashion, maybe not as deeply and articulately as fashion scholars do, especially the ones working to stop the Euro-centric vision of the definition and history of fashion,²⁰ but as something approachable, cheap, fun, and playful, as cosplay.

“Sometimes new traditions could be readily grafted on old ones, sometimes they could be devised by barring from the well-supplied warehouses of official ritual, symbolism and moral exhortation.” (p. 6).

¹⁹ See: Yan, Grace — Carla Santos (2009), ‘CHINA, FOREVER’: Tourism Discourse and Self-Orientalism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36 (2), pp. 293-315; Ng, Sandy (2018), Clothes Make the Woman: *Cheongsam* and Chinese Identity in Hong Kong. In: Pyun, Kyunghee — Wong, Aida Yuen. (eds), *Fashion, Identity and Power in Modern Asia*, pp. 357-378.

²⁰ There is a legion of books addressing that issue in recent years. See for example: Rath, Patricia — Petrizzi, Richard — Gill, Penny (2012), *Marketing Fashion: A Global Perspective*. New York: Fairchild Books; Jansen, Angela M. — Craik, Jennifer (2016), *Modern Fashion Traditions: Negotiating Tradition*

So, if there is a boom in kimono for tourists (rental and / or second-hand) it is because, on some level, the kimono is seen as an item one can easily shop for and integrate, sometimes for just one day, into one's dressing experience, changing temporarily into a mode of dress that is completely foreign, for the joy of feeling oneself deconstructed, elastic. As Cusack and Digance (2008: 228) described:

People think of themselves less as members of a particular family or holders of particular values, and more as weaves of certain logos and frequenters of certain restaurants, resorts, and other temples of consumption. This creates a more plastic sense of self, with identities being "more flexible, amenable to infinite reshaping according to mood, whim, desire and imagination.

In terms of images, the kimono is to be seen yet again as a "double agent" that can be used to articulate, on many levels, the "tradition vs modernity" discourse about Japan. On the global 21st century stage, the country is in fact presented consistently as between past and present, nature and future: the traditional side usually represented by a young lady in kimono and the modern side symbolised by skyscrapers like Tokyo Sky Tree tower,²¹ as seen in the poster released by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) (Figure 2).²² This type of duality is a long established imagery, tapping into the Meiji / Japonisme aesthetics, with airlines and Japan Travel Bureau (JTB) posters advertising national travel inside Japan and international travel to Japan with kimono, further exemplifying the idea that Japan equals peace, quiet, harmony, beauty; equals kimono.

and Modernity Through Fashion. London: Bloomsbury; Welters, Linda — Lillethun, Abby (2018), *Fashion History: A Global View*. London: Bloomsbury; Cheang, Sarah — De Greef, Erica — Yoko, Takagi (2021), *Rethinking Fashion Globalization*. London: Bloomsbury.

²¹ With a traditional kimono-clad figure counterbalancing modernity, one can also see how the traditional side of Japan is treated like a demure, quiet girl while the modern side is epitomised with innovative, sharp, masculine energy.

²² <https://bascule.co.jp/work/jnto/> (Accessed 15 April, 2021).



Fig. 2. JNTO, *Japan: where tradition meets the future* (poster and website banner - 2016).

The 2006 *Cool Japan* campaign (Figure 3) proposes a fusion of tradition and modernity, making it quite fashionable with the kimono donned in a unique, atypical manner by the AmiYumi pop stars of PUFFY. The kimono presented here has a shorter hem, emphasising the legs and glittery boots worn by the duo.²³ The belt accessories create a clashing appearance, between traditional class and punk rebellion. The kimono thus stands out as new, but overall, it stays connected to the traditional Japanese imagery, as seen in the use of Mount Fuji (through the blown-up reproductions of two of Hokusai's most famous *Ukiyo-e* prints), the display of an eggplant and a hawk (one held by Ami the other by Yumi) symbolising in a surreal yet traditional way the *hatsuyume* (初夢) custom (Milhaupt, 2014: 242). Another version, released in 2010, includes the anime figure Rei Ayanami (Figure 4), further blending fantasy and reality with a character from the famous science-fiction, robot *mecha* anime and manga series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* with a realistic, seasonally sensitive, and easy to wear *yukata*, further consolidating the trope of seeing ladies in kimono as a signal of an open, beckoning, welcoming Japan while confirming the kimono as “enchanted anachronism” (Milhaupt, 2014: 240).

²³ The duo had already posed in such fashion kimono in the Summer 2005 issue of *Kateigaho International* magazine. See specifically the article: “Summer kimono and Yukata, PUFFY-style” pp. 60-69.



Fig. 3 & 4. (Left) JNTO, *Cool Japan: PUFFY Ami Yumi* (poster - 2006); **(Right)** JNTO, *Cool Japan: Hakone* (poster - 2010).

1.2. Kyoto as the Idealised venue for kimono

While the reality of kimono production in Japan is varied and found in many locales around the country,²⁴ with textile specificities pertaining to local techniques and climate, it is Kyoto that, in the postwar years, became the city most associated with the image and practice of kimono. Historically and aesthetically speaking, Kyoto can be considered as the epicentre of the kimono culture, as shown by the number of kimono craft and business associations located in Kyoto (about 28%, 17 groups out of 60 nationwide).²⁵

The weaving and dyeing industry of the ancient capital has been praised for centuries and benefits from a positive, premium image, albeit in decline. In 1895, Kyoto counted

²⁴ See for example the map on page 6 in the 「第2回和装振興協議会事務局報告資料」 [*Dainikai Wasō Shinkō Kyōgikai Jimukyoku Hokoku Shiryō*] [*Report Document from the 2nd Council on Japanese Clothing*] (May 2016). Available from https://www.meti.go.jp/committee/kenkyukai/seizou/Wasou_kyogi/pdf/002_03_00.pdf (Accessed 15 April 2021).

²⁵ See the list published by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) 「和装業界の商慣行に関する指針に賛同を表明した団体・事業者」 [*Wasō gyōkai no sho kankō ni kansuru shishin ni sandō wo hyōmeishita dantai · jigyōsha*] [*List of registered Kimono selling businesses and groups*] (May 2018). Available from https://www.meti.go.jp/policy/mono_info_service/mono/fiber/Wasou/sando_list20180529.pdf (Accessed 7 April 2021).

more than 35,000 weavers (dispatched among 3,800 establishments) and 2,000 dyers (for 1,400 establishments) (Ichihara, 1895: 197); in 1974, only 6,000 weavers were still in activity (in 653 establishments) and 5,164 dyers (in 846 establishments) were still in business (Hall, 2020: 39). One of the newest reports further proves the decline, which averages between 50% to 67% decrease: in 2006, there were 1,529 weavers in activity (in 152 establishments). This figure dropped to 691 weavers in 2018 (for 75 establishments). In 2006, there were 2,295 dyers (in 272 establishments) in Kyoto and 818 in 2018 (in 88 establishments).²⁶

Kimono businesses are inseparable from the geography of Kyoto, with areas such as Nishijin (西陣), Muromachi (室町), Kyō-Tango (京丹後) that were known to resonate with the sound of the weaving looms.²⁷ Moreover, the specific dyeing and weaving techniques developed in Kyoto City convey this attachment to the ancient capital in their own denominations, thus giving terms such as *Nishijin-ori* (西陣織), *Kyō-Kanoko shibori* (京鹿の子絞), *Kyō-Yūzen* (京友禅) and *Kyō-Komon* (京小紋).

In particular, the brocade weaving *Nishijin-ori*, established in Kyoto for more than 550 years, is one of the most gorgeous examples, with motifs reflecting Kyoto scenery. Traditionally fashioning festival and *Nō* theatre costumes, Nishijin is now focusing on high-end *obi* design. Nishijin is locally famous and engages with international tourists via the activities (weaving workshops, small-scale exhibitions, kimono fashion show) held primarily at the Nishijin Textile Center.²⁸

The Shibori Museum²⁹ established its activities on the same idea as the Nishijin Textile Center, with an exhibition space and several workshop options. The visitor can choose between a scarf or a *furoshiki* kerchief, using different tie and dye techniques: *Itajime*, *Sekka* or *Kyō-Arashi Shibori*.

Kyō-Yūzen is another iconic kimono technique that is deeply rooted in the city, easily recognisable with its hand-painted, delicate motifs. Following the Nishijin example, recently

²⁶ See page 5 of the report 令和3年度第1回伝統産業生活化推進審議会 [Reiwa san nendo dai ikkai dentō sangyō seikatsu suishin bangikai][First Report of the Committee on Activities for Traditional Industries] (August 2021), 「後半期5年間に向けて」 [kōhanki go nenkan ni mukete] [Laying Out the Next Five Years Segment]. Available from <https://www.city.kyoto.lg.jp/sankan/cmsfiles/contents/0000073/73676/02R03shiryo.pdf> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

²⁷ With the decrease of looms in operation, this is less and less true.

²⁸ <https://nishijin.or.jp/eng/> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

²⁹ <https://en.shibori.jp> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

the studios tend to be more open about their process and advertise their craft more publicly, allowing for instance workshop visits and proposing hands-on experiences, in Japanese and basic English. Minami Shinichiro's studio (南進一郎),³⁰ Okayama Kōgei (岡山工芸),³¹ and Tomihiro Yūzen (富弘友禪)³² are the studios with the most experience in that regard, proposing workshops where one can try dyeing a small piece of silk cloth that could be fashioned as a bag. Among these Yūzen references, Chisō (千總) is probably the most famous, very actively promoting the technique and the pieces they have for sale via their gallery and shop, in addition to sale catalogues and an official website in Japanese and English. Most recently, Chisō had been in the spotlight with an exhibition at the Worcester Art Museum³³ and corresponding catalogue (Li *et al.*, 2020). Chisō even went digital with selected models available in the Nintendo video game, *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*.³⁴

These examples illustrate how specialists in Kyoto textile techniques multiply real and digital outlets where people can get a short demonstration of the fabrication of kimono. A metonymic approach where the part gives a taste of what the whole kimono represents.

But, as mentioned above, this kind of deluxe, high-end kimono is exactly the type that is reported as being in steep decline. As a result, the classy, deluxe Nishijin and Yūzen Kyoto made, “bespoke” kimono is going more and more into the path of innovation and transformation in terms of shape and form, in a tendency that could be called “deconstructed” kimono or, as Julie Valk analysed, as “the path to resilience”,³⁵ combining technical ingenuity and bricolage: the weaving / dyeing techniques continue to be used, with the same level of detail and quality but on a smaller scale, for different purposes than making a full-scale kimono. Seeing how Tomoko Fujii from Tomihiro Hand-dyeing Yuzen

³⁰ <https://yumebina.official.ec> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

³¹ <https://www.okayama-kougei.com/about-us/yuzen-trial/> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

³² Tomihiro participated in the Kyoto Design Week (2020) with an open studio event and on a regular basis proposes workshops (upon reservation). See more on their official website: http://tomihiro-yuzen.jp/koubou_taiken/ (Accessed 28 November 2021).

³³ <https://kimonocouture.worcesterart.org> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

³⁴ See the following articles: Kelly, Katy (2020), Authentic kimono fashions await you in Animal Crossing from Kyoto furisode tailor Chiso. Available from <https://soranews24.com/2020/07/03/stylish-kimono-fashions-await-you-in-animal-crossing-thanks-to-kyoto-furisode-tailor-chiso> 【 pics 】 / (Accessed 28 November 2021); Nguyen, Lisa (2021), Kimono Designer Chiso Releases New Designs And Dream Island For Animal Crossing: New Horizons. Available from <https://happygamer.com/kimono-designer-chiso-releases-new-designs-and-dream-island-for-animal-crossing-new-horizons-101582/> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

³⁵ Valk, Julie (2021), *Selling the Kimono. An Ethnography fo Crisis, Creativity and Hope*. Abingdon, Oxon New York, NY: Routledge, pp. 76-78.

Co., Ltd got into designing tumblers and coffee mugs featuring their unique Yūzen touch and expertise (in collaboration with Shigemi Inari from Toho Rubber corp.) or how Nishijin textile artisan Masao Hosoo got to design fabric for sofas (in collaboration with Thomas Lykke) and bags (in collaboration with Lucio Antonucci)³⁶ confirms that trend.

Thus kimono that has the most publicity and established image (and again reported as being on decline, on the verge of disappearing) stays relatively — if not completely — separated from the casual, tourist kimono that booms around Kyoto City. In fact, there is a clear divorce between the former, which “keeps dying” and keeps being “cornered” into new challenges and the latter, which keeps striving and bringing new sets of innovations. The tourist kimono is, in fact, going into innovation by inviting new ways of being worn: not for ceremonies but for fun, not silk kimono but polyester, for just the one-time experience of it, following — albeit involuntarily — the path of pilgrimage.

The *kagai* (花街) entertainment districts³⁷ — and the *maiko* and *geiko* communities they shelter — form another fascinating “only in Kyoto” feature that further anchors the idea that Kyoto, more than other cities in Japan, is the city of kimono. In these areas, we can see a kimono that is alive and used on an everyday basis, be it the subdued *komon* (小紋)³⁸ kimono the artists don when they go to their dance or music lessons in the morning or the outstanding *hikizuri* (引き摺り),³⁹ when they go to entertain at banquets, attend ceremonies, or perform at formal dance recitals. How their image is used further anchors the idea of Kyoto-based *maiko/geiko* are *de facto* kimono ambassadors, advertising the traditional aspect of Kyoto with a visual presence on maps, menus, *omiyage* sweets (Figure 5), green tea bottles, posters, novelty goods, and souvenirs. They can also be found on good manners and city preservation posters, emphasising for instance how Kyoto doesn’t need violence nor organised crime (Figure 6).

³⁶ See more details about these projects in: Murayama, Yūzō — Juliet W. Carpenter (2019), *Heritage Culture and Business, Kyoto Style: Craftsmanship in the Creative Economy*. Tokyo, Japan: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture, pp. 97-98, 105-108.

³⁷ *Kagai*, or “flower districts”, is an umbrella term that designates, in Kyoto, the five areas where Maiko and Geiko performers live and work. More precisely, *Kagai* in Kyoto means the district of Gion Kōbu (祇園甲部), Gion Higashi (祇園東), Miyagawachō (宮川町), Pontochō (先斗町) and Kamishichiken (上七軒).

³⁸ *Komon* designates a kimono with small patterns duplicated all over the surface of the garment.

³⁹ *Hikizuri* is a term that designates the specific dance kimono which is longer than the usual kimono, meant to be trailing on the floor when performing.



Fig. 5 & 6. (Left) Maiko iconography used on *omiyage* souvenirs (for instance here Matcha Green tea flavoured sweets) (product package - June 2020); **(Right)** Maiko iconic silhouette used in a *bōryokudan* organised crime prevention poster (poster - December 2019).

As proclaimed by Jan Bardsley, their presence is magical, “turning the esoteric capital into a welcoming touristic playground” (2021: 25). Beyond the glossy image, some *maiko* and *geiko* enjoy being advocates for local kimono businesses. For instance, with Satsuki (紗月) one gets to follow one of the most popular *geiko* in 2021,⁴⁰ as she actively promotes kimono culture, whether she is talking about her career and the kimono especially designed for her by Muneo Ueda (NHK, 2020),⁴¹ or talking about kimono dyeing studios she is visiting, such as Umezome (梅染) (Kimonoto, 2021).⁴² With these examples, it can be noted that the traditional side of kimono is being

⁴⁰ Now freshly retired, she was coming from Tsurui *okiya* house, part of the most traditional and wealthiest of the *kagai* districts, Gion Kōbu.

⁴¹ See the NHK documentary (2020), Geiko SATSUKI, A Beauty Through the Seasons. Available from <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/special/episode/202012270810/> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

⁴² See the video and interview done for the website *kimonoto* (2021) 梅染友禪・梅染師 山本晃さん～インタビュー編～「紗月がゆく！祇園・人気芸妓が訪ねる京の技」vol.1. [Umezome Yūzen Umezomeshi Yamamoto Akirasen Intabyu Ichihen / Satsuki ga yuku! Gion ninki geiko ga tazuneru kyō no gi] [Geiko Satsuki from Gion goes on a visit to Umezome dyeing studio. Interview (Part 1)] Available from <https://www.kimonoichiba.com/media/column/384/> (Accessed 15 April 2021).

enhanced, with an emphasis put on beauty, mystery, and rarity, fulfilling a certain scopophilic desire to see kimono and see ladies in kimono.

Attending one of the three main festivals — may it be *Jidai*, *Aoi*, or *Gion matsuri* — vividly complements the idea of Kyoto as kimono galore, the latter being the occasion for many people to dress in *yukata*, not just the float musicians but the parade audience as well. When coming to Kyoto, the kimono image and the kimono industry can be seen and felt in every direction, at a shallower or at a deeper level, depending on one's curiosity and taste. International guidebooks have picked up on that reality and keep advertising the city as a quiet and beautiful space, full of pilgrimage sites, with kimono on the front page (Figure 7).

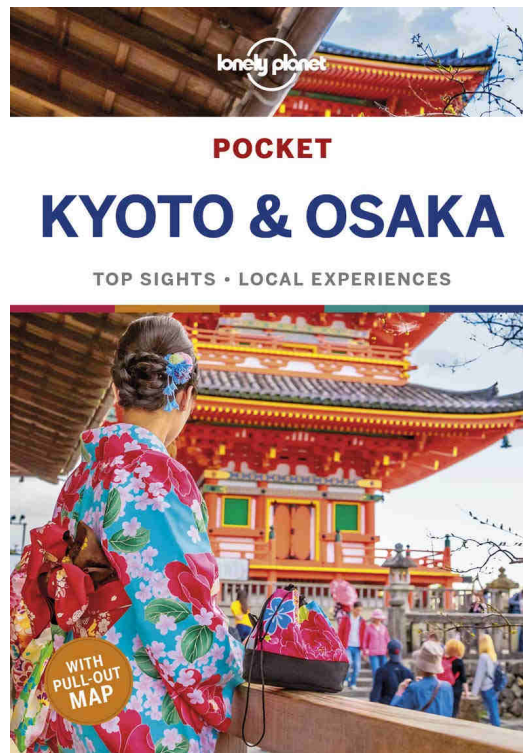


Fig. 7. Lonely Planet, *Pocket Kyoto & Osaka* (guidebook cover - 2019).

At the local level too, numerous companies capitalise on the image of Kyoto as a kimono wonderland. For example, since 2001, holding a *Kimono passport* booklet⁴³ gives any

⁴³ See these websites for a full description of the concept: <https://kimono-passport.jp> (Accessed 28 November 2021); <https://www.en-kyoto.yumeyakata.com/kimono-passport/> (Accessed 28 November 2021); <https://yumekyoto-kimono.com/en/gallery/> (Accessed 28 November 2021); <http://goinjapanesque.com/13307/> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

kimono wearer the opportunity to get discount coupons or receive special souvenirs when they go to participating shrines, temples, café, or museums. The passport is free; the only condition for receiving these trinkets is to be dressed in a kimono and present the booklet at the venue. This practice shares some similarities with pilgrimage, on the idea of going to specific locales to get an emblem or reward. The kimono in such case can be seen as part of an “open sesame” formula, giving regular or occasional kimono wearers the feeling of being exclusive and treated in a special way, similar to the *osettai* (お接待) hospitality services the Shikoku *o-henro-san* (お遍路さん) benefits pilgrims receive when touring the route of 88 temples.

A similar example is provided by the Keihan railway, as the company consistently “weaves” the station halls, walls and racks with posters and free newspapers starring Miss Sanjō Keiko (三条けい子)⁴⁴ a fictional young lady dressed in elegant kimono, suggesting visitors have a nice stroll, wishing them to find their own Kyoto in the process (Figure 8) or more recently, commenting on the cherry blossoms with a romantic note saying “happy feelings just blossomed” (うれしい気持ち、咲きました。) (Figure 9). JTB guidebooks published in Japanese present the same dynamic, as seen in the example titled Kyoto 着物散歩 (JTB Mook, 2017). Here, kimono dressing is emphasised as an essential part of a successful Kyoto visit, mentioning on the cover that with rental kimono shops it is an easy thing to do, as if wrapping the experience of being in Kyoto with an extra layered garment were adding extra meaning.

⁴⁴ Incarnated by Nakagawa Kana (中川可菜) since 2018. To see more posters, refer to the official website: <https://www.okeihan.net/okeihan/poster/> (Accessed 15 April 2021).



Fig. 8 & 9. (Left) Keihan Sanjō Station, “Find your own Kyoto” (*in situ* photograph - February 2020); **(Right)** Keihan, “Happy Spring has come” poster (2021). **Source:** <https://www.okeihan.net/okeihan/poster/> (Accessed 29 November 2021).

It can be said that Kyoto is developing a specific strategy of infusing tourism with kimono, turning the use of the garment into an exclusive form of mass welcoming. As seen in these examples, the multiple incentives to wear kimono, feel kimono, see kimono in Kyoto are representative of the ‘fashionable city’ point, as analysed by Lewis, Kerr and Burgess (2013: 12-15):

Given the increasing competition between destinations, understanding [the application] of fashion, could enable destination marketing organisations to gain an advantage by positioning their destination as a fashionable place. [...] Urry (1990) suggested that destinations are often not consumed because they are intrinsically superior but, because of the taste or status they communicate. Graburn (1983) also argued that changes in tourist styles are not random but represent aspects of class competition, prestige hierarchies and the succession of changing lifestyles.[...]. If a destination is perceived as being fashionable with one’s peer group, visiting that destination may communicate membership of a group or indicate an aspiration in being a member of a group. This has a similar effect to the trickle-down theory of fashion if the individual is interested in being a member of a higher socio-economic group (Simmel, [1904] 1957) or the sub-cultural leadership theory of fashion if the individual wants to identify with a particular group (Field, 1970).

In summary, Kyoto has over the years become the locale where the overall image and practice of kimono in Japan, as ceremonial dress and fun fashion, comes alive with the idea of appealing to the broadest audience possible: locals and tourists, experts and amateurs. A logic of “desacralisation” of the kimono, making it more accessible and livelier, because Kyoto is accessible and fun. Making the kimono (or sometimes just some aspects of it)

available as part of the visit of Kyoto can be seen as parallel to pilgrimage sites where local businesses strive by catering to the pilgrims, such as the Ise Shrine *okage mairi* (お蔭参り) pilgrimage that turned in the Edo period into a secular carnivalesque procession, mixing all kinds of people and garments (Bocking, 2001: 84).

2. The “real” kimono experience

In line with the different activities and incentives programming, promoting, and exemplifying the kimono as national dress and postwar fashion, as well as responding to the tourists’ demand for tradition and unique experiences, a whole market of rental and second-hand kimono developed over the past ten years.

Kyoto, as described above, being the epicentre of kimono culture and the city that one visits for the historical feel of its paved streets, *machiya* houses, shrines and temples, gets a double benefit from this dynamic, with the kimono market growing as the idea of visiting traditional pilgrimage sites in the most “authentic” way explodes.

As of January 2021, the city counts about forty different rental shops and twenty second-hand kimono shops. The practice of going first to a kimono outlet and then visiting a shrine or a temple is now well established with numerous websites making the rental kimono option easily accessible and understandable by breaking the process of dressing in kimono into bite-size units. The second-hand shops and markets are also well advertised on Kyoto tourist websites and monthly free journals such as *Kyoto Visitor's Guide* or *Enjoy Kyoto*.⁴⁵

Similar to the starting point of the Shikoku pilgrimage where the white vest (白衣), the sedge hat (菅笠), the walking staff (金剛杖), etc. can all be bought on the spot, tourists arriving in Kyoto can find shops with all in one place deals and get dressed from head to toe at once. Rental shops put the accent on that aspect with slogans and catchphrases such as 「手ぶらで OK♪」 “Come as you are”. Second-hand shops also tend to be very didactic, they have signs and free handouts that detail the basics of a proper kimono look, going through the basics (kimono and *obi*) to the *komono* (小物)

⁴⁵ Both titles are available at tourist information centres and hotels.

accessories (under-kimono, slip, under belt, *tabi* socks, *zori* sandals, fastening cords, padding, etc.).

2.1. Rental kimono

Rental shops developed very specific strategies where the novice can easily find their way, geographically and visually, with maps and flow charts explaining the rental service the shop provides. One of the early “global” kimono rental shops in this mindset was the now defunct “Kimono Rental Station”. First opened to match the *kōyō* (紅葉) autumn foliage season in 2007 and 2008 (October 2 to December 25, 2007 and October 20 to December 8, 2008), it later ran on a more regular basis, providing simple fittings for both male and female visitors (Firsching-Tovar, 2017:134-135). Operating inside the JR Kyoto station building was convenient, as the station is a central area for visitor foot traffic.

Other rental shops located around the strategic Kyoto station, such as Wargo,⁴⁶ are still popular, but the ones established in the historical Gion, Yasaka Jinja, Kiyomizudera, Fushimi Inari, and Arashiyama areas are now more prominent. Their success may be due to these convenient locations, which reduce the distance between the dressing room and the “pilgrimage” site, limiting the challenging pain of walking in kimono for the first time as well as avoiding taking too many buses or trains to reach the “goal” venue. Stepping, standing, and squeezing oneself into crowded public transportation can be a hindrance when being all dressed up in a kimono.

Rental kimono shops built up their kimono *taiken* (体験) experience through a combination of economic, practical, and aesthetic elements. In order to attract both Japanese and international tourists on a budget, the ads emphasise inexpensive rental fees, usually between 2,000 and 6,000 yen for regular sets. The whole dressing-up stage is designed to be easy and fast, with experienced employees who can dress anyone in a kimono within 15 minutes. The most time-consuming part involves the choice of which kimono to wear (the number of pieces available can be overwhelming) and how to set up one’s hair.

⁴⁶ <https://kyotokimono-rental.com> (Accessed 28 November 2021).



Fig. 10. Kyo-Temari “authentic kimono” advertisement (shop website banner). **Source:** <https://www.kyotemari.com/en/> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

Also, as demonstrated by Kyo-Temari (Figure 10), some shops lead their marketing strategy with the “authenticity” argument, playing on the idea that shops are reliable, professional and knowledgeable. In these semi-exclusive shops, one can find kimono that look like the typical mainstream, cheap, made in China / made in Vietnam, polyester, printed, tacky kimono, which (unfortunately for the purist) represents the majority of the kimono available for rental.

Besides these basic offerings, many shops emphasise unique options, turning the experience into something even more special. Making sets available for couples is, for example, something that has been advertised heavily, with the implied note that these are sets for heterosexual couples. Still, “same sex” couples can be seen in kimono, especially if they are girls, under the popular term *futago* (双子) or twin kimono coordinates, emphasising here the homosocial side of Japanese society as well as the cosplay practice in place at Disneyland and Universal Studios Japan amusement parks. In the same line, carnival animal masks can also be rented, another option that shows how reactive the shops are, eager to cater to every need, be they motivated by photogenic rules or more religious ones. Over the past few years, the *hijab* veil, made available in “Japanese” textiles, has been implemented as an option for kimono rental, demonstrating how shops are attempting to be culturally sensitive and more inclusive, catering to tourists of the Islam faith (especially the many visitors from Southeast Asia).

For people with a taste for *taishō roman* (大正浪漫) or a more retro-style touch, antique or vintage kimono are also available, although rarely older than 50 years. The other “limit” on such kimono is their size, as they generally do not fit people who are more than 165 cm tall or with a hip size of more than 100 cm. The “Decoco plan” proposed by Okamoto Kimono, the outfits presented by Irodori / Maison de Coco⁴⁷ or Kyolan (Figure 11),⁴⁸ employs a novel approach with new kimono, designed to look vintage but from a *Mori* girl / Western perspective, meaning kimono in pastel colors, adorned with lace or simply made with lace and necessarily combined with a white under-kimono to cut / play with the transparency.

Most significantly, rental shops curate and condition where people go once dressed in kimono, with a prominent emphasis on how short the distance is between the shop and specific temples or shrines that people are eager to visit. For example: shops located in the Higashiyama and Gion area recommend Yasaka Jinja Shrine, Kiyomizudera temple. For JR Kyoto station, or the shops along the Keihan train line, it would be Fushimi Inari shrine. In north-west Kyoto, Kinkakuji temple, and in the western Kyoto, Arashiyama and its iconic Tenryūji temple, the bamboo forest and the “kimono forest” next to the Randen train tracks at Arashiyama station (Figure 12)⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ See the following websites: <https://www.irodorikyoto.com> (Accessed 28 November 2021); <https://maisondecocokyoto.com/plan/#plan5> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

⁴⁸ The shop started advertising a new plan in May 2021 on their Twitter account, which earned about 3,000 “likes”: <https://twitter.com/kimonokyolan/status/1394836339263041538> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

⁴⁹ The Kimono Forest (キモノフォレスト) is composed of 600 acrylic poles with Yūzen fabrics and LED lights lodged inside, which are illuminated at night. The poles can be enjoyed on the east side of the Keifuku-Randen Arashiyama station, in an area coined the “Hokkori” (relaxing) zone, contrasting with the “Hannari” (graceful) area which is covered with 3,000 bamboo green trunks on the walls and ceiling of the west concourse. The fabrics were created by the Kyoto based Kametomi / Pagong (京都 亀田富染工場) studio, using a traditional Kata-Yūzen printing technique. The project, supervised by Morita Yasumichi (森田恭通), was completed in 2013.



Fig. 11 & 12. (Top) Kyolan rental shop's "lace kimono" plan (digital photograph - 2021). Source: <https://twitter.com/kimonokyolan/status/1394836339263041538/photo/1> (Accessed 28 November 2021). **(Bottom)** The kimono forest in Arashiyama (located inside the open air Randen Arashiyama station) (2015). Source: <https://notesofnomads.com/things-to-do-in-arashiyama/> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

Rental shops frequently employ temple and shrine trademark images; the shop Hanakomachi sets an example by giving a clear map of the most photogenic spots, and how far they are from the shop.⁵⁰ In this mix of sacred and secular places, the determining factor seems to be the visual or fashionable aspect of the place, specifically how great one would look when posing there.

⁵⁰ <https://kyoto-kimonorental.net/kanko/> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

Back to the Higashiyama Gion area, with one of the tiniest, but also most “Instagram worthy”⁵¹ spot, Yasaka Kōshindō (八坂庚申堂), saw a boom in visitors because of the colourful and cute *kukurizaru* (くくり猿), stuffed cloth figurines symbolising a monkey touching its feet, curled in a ball-like position, hanging around the central prayer hall.



Fig. 13. Yasaka Kōshindō before Covid-19, filled with visitors in rental kimono (*in situ* photograph - November 2017).

In this *in situ* picture of Yasaka Kōshindō (Figure 13), one can see how crowded and busy the area can get. With people coming and going quickly, some respectful and others completely oblivious of the religious character of the place, the overall atmosphere was at the same time serious and jovial, focused but also carefree, creating an atypical juxtaposition of gestures and attitudes.⁵²

⁵¹ The hashtag #yasakakoshindo, as of April 9, 2021, totalizes 4,292 posts. It is far behind #kiyomizudera (258,306 posts) and #kinkakuji (222,858) posts, but compared with places of the same scale, such as Ichihime Shrine, we see a stark difference, with the hashtag #ichihimeshrine topping at 329 posts. For a general overview of the term definition and usage, see: Arnold, Andrew (2018), *Instagram Worthy: How Social Media Has Reshaped Our Ideas On Attractive Design*. *Forbes*. Available from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewarnold/2018/03/29/instagram-worthy-how-social-media-has-reshaped-our-ideas-on-attractive-design/?sh=483c57534792> (Accessed 28 November 2021). For an at length study of Instagram, refer to: Leaver, Tama — Highfield, Tim — Abidin, Crystal (2020), *Instagram: Visual Social Media Cultures*. Cambridge, UK Medford, MA, USA: Polity.

⁵² A visit conducted in August 2020 showed that the travel restrictions related to COVID-19 pandemic considerably changed the atmosphere in this particular temple with virtually nobody around anymore. The one thing remaining, reminiscent of the busy “Instagram tourist in kimono” times, was a poster explaining how the visitor should first go to the main hall, pay a tribute or execute a small prayer and then, afterwards, take pictures.

As Jennifer Craik (1993: 17) states, we assist here in an ‘orchestration’ that brings place, *habitus* decorative behaviour, and fashion together:

dress and body are ‘tailor-made’ for their environment [...] Through different body styles, one wearer is distinguished from another, one group from other wearers. Fashion techniques are also the perfect device for playing on the rules of social intercourse by visually displaying calculated transgressions.

Reviewing the different plans the rental shops are proposing, one can see that the photographic aspect of the experience is carefully advertised and encouraged, with a wide range of prices, from the simple shoot in the shop’s garden or photo studio to the deluxe three hours tour with 200 photographs guaranteed. Such plans usually include the most photogenic spots in the vicinity, with a professional, English-speaking photographer.⁵³ These plans show that their main purpose is to satisfy a double scopophilia, merging sightseeing and seeing oneself presented in kimono. Renting kimono and taking pictures is a way to mark the experience with memorabilia, reminiscent of the “Greetings from...” postcards as well as partaking of the aesthetic of anniversary or wedding pictures.⁵⁴ A parallel can also be seen with the Heian period traveller’s costumes that can be rented at the entry points villages and stations of the Kumano Kodō (熊野古道) pilgrimage route.⁵⁵ In this particular case, the visitors enjoy the outfit in an ephemeral, formatted manner: during a short stroll around the easy section of the trail, just enough to get pretty “I have been there” pictures. The time travel (タイムスリップ) feeling is not as strong with regular kimono rentals

⁵³ See for instance the plans advertised on the rental shops websites, such as: Kimono rental Rose, <https://www.rentalkimonorose.com/en/> (Accessed 28 November 2021); Yume Yakata, <https://www.en-kyoto.yumeyakata.com/location/> (Accessed 28 November 2021); Yume Kyoto (Gion), <https://yumekyoto-kimono.com/plan/special/> (Accessed 28 November 2021); Kimono rental Wargo, <https://kyotokimono-rental.com/en/photo-session> (Accessed 28 November 2021); Shoken silk Kimono rental Kyo Temari, <https://www.kyotemari.com/en/plan/photo.php> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

⁵⁴ Tourists turn into models of the day, getting into different poses, sometimes even holding “love” or “wedding” message garlands during their photoshoot.

⁵⁵ See for example the plans advertised on the following websites: <https://www.kumano-travel.com/en/tours-activities/traditional-costume-experience-with-kumashiroya/586> (Accessed 28 November 2021); <https://www.tb-kumano.jp/en/activities/heian-kimono/> (Accessed 28 November 2021); <https://japan-camper.com/2016/09/21/kumano-kodo-pilgrimage-hike-with-traditional-costume/> (Accessed 28 November 2021); <https://www.veltra.com/jp/japan/wakayama/a/123951> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

in Kyoto but the power of the pictures taken is equal, effectively prolonging / permuting the *senjafuda* (千社札) tradition with a “tourist gaze 3.0”:

Gazes organize the encounters of visitors with the ‘other’, providing some sense of competence, pleasure and structure to those experiences. The gaze demarcates an array of pleasurable qualities to be generated within particular times and spaces. It is the gaze that orders and regulates the relationships between the various sensuous experiences while away, identifying what is visually out-of-ordinary, what are relevant differences and what is ‘other’ [...] Many tourist buildings, objects, technologies and practices [...] are structured around visualism. [...] While the visual sense is not the only sense, it is the organizing sense, it organizes the places, role and effect of the other senses. [...] The distinctiveness of the visual is crucial for giving all sorts of practices and performances a special or unique character [...] The most mundane of activities, such as shopping, strolling, having a drink, or swimming or river rafting appear extraordinary and become ‘touristic’ when conducted against a striking or unusual visual backcloth. (Urry and Larsen, 2011: 14 and 195)

2.2. Second-hand and vintage kimono

Shopping for a second-hand kimono can be understood as another natural prolongation of kimono rental and “pilgrimage” experience, with first the idea of second-hand prices making the kimono more easily accessible and secondly (as it will be shown below) with the idea of engaging the body of the tourist-pilgrim more fully and in a more active and performative manner.

According to the Yano Research Institute 2019-2020 survey report, “recycled” / second-hand kimono account for about 12.9% in the retail market,⁵⁶ an increase of about 3.5% compared to 2012, when the segment represented about 9.5% of the whole market.⁵⁷ The sales of used garments is proportionally speaking not strong compared to the other segments and yet it is the trend that consolidates the kimono market and audience in the long run with “slow fashion” kimono.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ https://www.yanoresearch.com/en/press-release/show/press_id/2441 (Accessed 28 November 2021).

⁵⁷ Yano Research Institute (2013), *Kimono Market in Japan: Key Research Findings 2012*. Available from <https://www.yanoresearch.com/press/pdf/1061.pdf> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

⁵⁸ This forms a stark contrast with the kimono sold as new that are made in Vietnam or China, cheap, disposable cotton or polyester garments, pertaining to the “fast fashion” logic. See more on the idea of fast fashion and kimono in the following article: Hall, Jenny (2018) *Digital Kimono: Fast Fashion, Slow Fashion?*. *Fashion Theory. The Journal of Dress Body and Culture* 22 (3), pp. 283-307.

Among the second-hand shops in Kyoto, the most popular venues in the past ten years are flea markets. The most important and most established ones are *Kōbō-san* market held every 21st of the month and *Tenjin-san* held every 25th of the month. Both are held in religious places — Tōji Temple and Kitano Tenmangu Shrine — and these markets welcome the visitors in search for a kimono with about 15-20 stalls (among a total of about 200) dedicated to second-hand and / or vintage kimono pieces. These famous pilgrimage sites set an involuntary pilgrimage flavour with the overlap of sacred sites (a Buddhist temple, a Shinto shrine) and a mundane space (a flea market).

At Kitano Tenmangu Shrine, the second-hand kimono displayed on tables or hangers (Figures 14 and 15) cost as little as 500 yen. Short *haori* (羽織) jackets are often highlighted and are popular because of their practicality: it bears the most recognisable part of a kimono (sleeves, colourful motifs) but is easier to wear. A *haori* doesn't require an *obi* or any kind of wrapping, folding components to be worn properly. In many regards similar to a cardigan, it is also easy to pair with Western clothes which makes it even more appealing, especially for the market visitors willing to dress in it after returning to their own country and going back to “normal” everyday life.



Fig. 13 & 14. (Left) Cheap, second-hand kimonos on tables, display at the Kitano flea market (*in situ* photograph - October 2018). **(Right)** Second-hand kimonos on hangers, display at the Kitano flea market (*in situ* photograph - October 2018).

The most popular stall at this market is the one that proposes *tsumehōdai* or “all you can fit in one bag” (詰め放題) deals. Regardless of the type of kimono or *obi* one might select, a large-sized bag is priced at 5,000 yen and a small one at 2,000 yen while a single kimono or *obi* is 1,000 yen a piece. Therefore it is a real bargain, as the L-size bag

can hold about 10 pieces. Visiting consumers end up buying in bulk, sometimes filling two or three L-size bags at once. Such kimono might be worn for real or for fun, although some have imperfections such as stained or discolourations.

On the other side of the spectrum, there are stalls focused on quality and antique / vintage pieces, recognisable by the higher price range, the colours, and the plastic or paper *tatōshi* (多当紙) wrapping (Figure 16) that marks the kimono and *obi* as higher-end (pure silk) and well-maintained (no stains).

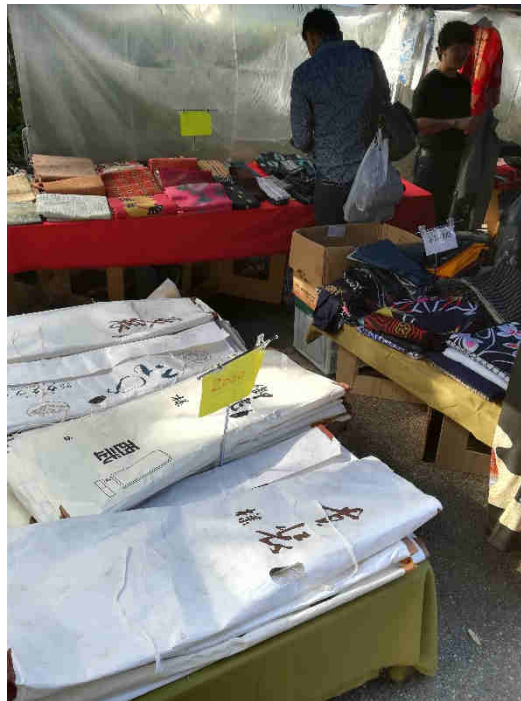


Fig. 16. More high-end second-hand kimonos wrapped in *tatōshi* envelopes, display at the Kitano flea market (*in situ* photograph - October 2018).

In the downtown area of Kyoto one can find many regular second-hand kimono shops cleverly placed in the main *shōtengai* shopping arcades, sprawling between Shijō and Sanjō on the North-South axis and Teramachi and Shinkyōgoku on the East-West axis or grouped around the historical kimono business street of Muromachi (close to the Shijō Karasuma intersection).⁵⁹ Among those that are still operating despite COVID-19

⁵⁹ Due to Covid-19, the author counted that about 30% of second-hand stores have closed permanently, including the long established and popular chain Tansu-ya (たんす屋). Although it has been reported that now, it is thriving again, reviving the business online and in new temporary, pop-up stores or event locations. See: <https://business.nikkei.com/atcl/seminar/19nv/120500136/073000206/> (Accessed 28 November 2021); <https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000000009.000075602.html>

restrictions (as of January 2021) there is Harajuku Chicago. The kimono selection is located on the second floor of the store (the first floor is for Western vintage clothes), where one can choose among a large number of reasonably priced *haori* jackets, *yukata*, gowns made from 'reformed' kimono, *hakama*, *obi*, *zori*, bags, and kimono, arranged by gender, colour and degree of formality. They also have small leaflets in English with abbreviated (and sometimes confusing) explanations about *kitsuke*. Signs and posters in the store guide the visitor, informing them about *obi* and kimono combinations, for instance *nagoya-obi* (名古屋帯) can go with regular *komon* (小紋) kimono, while *fukuro-obi* (袋帯) goes with formal kimono and *furisode* (振袖). As Julie Valk also noted in her own fieldwork,⁶⁰ the browsability factor in such stores is another aspect that makes them so attractive and less scary than more traditional kimono stores.

Iwai (井和井) is a smaller store that caters to tourists and locals by proposing high-end souvenirs (paper, incense, incense burners, clutch bags, wallets, hair accessories, *furoshiki*, and ceramics) but at the back of the store, unique antique kimono, *haori*, *obi*, and accessories are displayed for sale. The atmosphere and the pricing represents a more exclusive and maybe more authentic kind of store that attracts a slightly different category of people, either willing to have a kimono not necessarily to wear but as a nice piece of wall decoration, or wealthy kimono enthusiasts or collectors. Compared to Chicago, the labels with English are kept to a minimum, amputating some of the valuable meaning that the Japanese labels convey such as the type of silk used and the size.

The second-hand kimono market follows the same dynamic as the rental shops in terms of cost and overall didactical approach to dressing in kimono. But a difference that can be noted is in the "purchase" act: rental kimono accents the service, the image, the gaze, sometimes over-simplifying what a kimono means and turning it into a mass produced, impersonal costume, while the second-hand kimono is based on the idea of finding a kimono (or *haori* jacket) that fits one's body, personality, and taste, a kimono one can later alter and combine with more possibilities than the rental one could ever

(Accessed 28 November 2021); <https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000000019.000075602.html> (Accessed 28 November 2021).

⁶⁰ See in particular her chapter "Second-hand retail and new business models" in Valk, Julie (2021), *Selling the Kimono. An Ethnography of Crisis, Creativity and Hope*. Abingdon, Oxon New York, NY: Routledge, pp. 135-157.

offer. The second-hand kimono thus prompts a longer attachment to the object while the rental kimono stays relatively on the surface.

Stating this puts the practice of second-hand kimono at the crux of pilgrimage and fashion tourism practices, which tend, nowadays, to have more inclusive, engaging, sensory, and embodied ways of doing things. As explained by Bærenholdt, Haldrup and Larsen (2008: 178-180):

[Since 1990's] The 'performance turn' departs from classical mainstream tourism theories by displacing studies of symbolic meanings and discourses with embodied, collaborative and technologized doings and enactments. It highlights the body and the corporeality and expressiveness of performance by stressing the significance of embodied encounters with other bodies, technologies and material places. [...] Performances are socially negotiated not only between actors but also with a present or imagined audience in mind. Performances require audiences: real or imagined, now or later. [...] Not only are experiences of the world always mediated through the body and its active engagement with and sensing of material environment throughout the auditory, visual, olfactory and tactile perception systems, but material affordances (as well as the social and cultural) enforce particular embodied choreographies and scripts on us to be enacted.

In another publication in the same vein, the tourists are also described as active agents, curators of their own experience:

when tourists do 'sight-see' they are not completely passive; most are busy making, for instance, photographs. The performance in turn acknowledges that in the act of consuming tourists turn themselves into producers; they create, tell, exhibit and circulate tales and photographs that produce, reproduce and violate place myths that tourism organizations have designed and promoted. (Haldrup and Larsen, 2009: 5)

Elizabeth Kramer observed the same phenomenon,⁶¹ which further consolidates the practice of buying / collecting kimono as something transformative in itself and part of a bigger life altering experience as well.

The practice of browsing, selecting, and trying on a kimono before buying it and making it one's own also puts a focus on the garment itself as it becomes more concrete, part of a collection of souvenirs the tourist-pilgrim will bring home and cherish as capsules and

⁶¹ Kramer, Elizabeth (2020), *Kimono Rental, Tourism and Sartorial Expression*. In: Jackson, Anna (ed.), *Kimono: From Kyoto to Catwalk*, pp. 227-229.

markers of their experience, similar to the paraphernalia the Shikoku *henro* pilgrims also get to bring back home. The white jacket (白衣) with calligraphy and temples seals (signalling the end / completion of the journey) is a particularly good example that can be put in parallel with such “souvenir” kimono.

The kimono henceforth takes on a new layer of meaning, more fully transformative than the rented ones, more prone to influence the identity of the tourist-pilgrim who consumes it, for a longer period of time. As phrased by Hugh Wilkins (2013: 40-41):

The gathering of souvenirs is, therefore, a means of making tangible an experience, either for consumption by others, or as means of prolonging the experience for one's own consumption. [...] [and] consumers tend to buy products that reflect actual or aspirational self-perception, partly at least because the products communicate to others details about lifestyles. [...] They are especially high in symbolic content, with them providing an opportunity for self-expression and social positioning.

With second-hand kimono shopping also comes the idea of the kimono as garment, as object, which will take on a pilgrimage of its own, leaving Japan and reaching “Western” shores where it will be contextualised and used in a variety of Japan-related or just fashionable settings. A double tendency that has been noted by Josephine Rout, who mentions some of the most daring stylists and how they “work” with kimono.⁶² It has also been analysed by Takagi and Thoelen (2021: 24-27) in their research on “Kimono de Jack” wearers in Europe and in the US, who note that kimono are often experienced as a fashionable, malleable surface to play with, especially outside of Japan:

wearers show their personal creative adaptations in the wearing of their kimono, even though most of them are well aware of the establishment rules to which kimono wearing is supposed to abide. [...] The rule breaking nature of the groups, inherent to the concept of highjacking urban space with kimono appearances, allows room for freer interpretations of how kimono should and could be worn. [...] [they] realize that they are able to break the rules more freely exactly because they are not in Japan.

With second-hand kimono shopping there seems to be a third way being opened, which is the one that ties authenticity and rectitude of the form (shape and style) with

⁶² Rout, Josephine (2020a) “From Edo to Instagram: Kimono Fashion.” in Jackson, Anna. *Kimono: From Kyoto to Catwalk*, pp. 307-311.

authenticity of the place (Kyoto, temples, shrines, traditional activities), which will then be exported and, in that peregrination, transport the memory of the pilgrimage outside of Japan for new disseminations.

To fully complete these interpretations, further qualitative and quantitative research, for instance questionnaires with first-hand informants, is still needed. For example, asking why they became interested in kimono, why they chose to rent or buy second-hand, whether they feel like they were able to touch upon the “real” kimono or not, whether they feel closer to Japanese culture thanks to the kimono or not, and ultimately whether they feel like they achieved some kind of pilgrimage when going around in kimono or searching for a kimono could be potential questions to help clarify the kimono consumers’ intentions.

Conclusion

What can be concluded with the material at hand is that these two types of kimono practitioners are following most of the criteria of a pilgrimage but without being conscious of it. They change into specific clothing, the clothing changes something about them, they take predetermined paths, they go to specific venues, shrines and temples, some of them inscribed in official pilgrimage routes⁶³ and acts with codified gestures. Their motivations come from and are formed around gazing and embodying but also come from an existential *communitas* (Turner and Turner, 1978; Wheeler, 1999; Di Giovine, 2011). Yet, looking at the Instagram / Facebook posts (or observing directly the scenes they create on the scene), they do not seem to be paying attention to the other kimono-clad fellows. In other words, they embrace pilgrimage by embracing kimono as national dress, as Kyoto souvenir, as elegant Japaneseness, as heritage, and by going around in a transformative sight-seeing experience, although involuntarily or unconsciously.

The walking component, common in all forms of pilgrimage, is another important point which anchors the pilgrim in a clear *gestus*. Renting and walking in kimono or buying a kimono in Kyoto as a souvenir can in fact be seen as an action that anchors the “pilgrimage” in a multi-sensory event (Hall, 2020), deeply connected to one’s body in terms of size, silhouette, modesty, smell, and touch. In terms of pain too, as a kimono,

⁶³ For example, Kiyomizudera is part of the Saigoku Kannon pilgrimage.

especially worn for the first time can be challenging: the feeling of being too tight, movement being restrained, the *zori* or *geta* sandals hurting the feet with blisters, and other discomforts. Having to master all the kimono codes and *obi* ties are in this way overwhelming, but these difficulties give the experience more specificity and value (Greene, 2016: 337).

In the same category, but on another level, donning a kimono can be understood as a fast material pilgrim-tourist experience: rented kimonos are given back at the end of the day; there is no storage, no altering, no burning, and no parting ritual from the clothing (Davidson and Gitlitz, 2002:114-116), and second-hand kimonos tend to be bought on the idea that they are easy to wear (opting for a *haori* or seeing the kimono as a gown).

A second point is that such kimono, rented or sold as second-hand clothing, are controlled by the shops. While the shops cater to the needs of the tourist-pilgrims, they are also curating their experience in terms of destination (visits to a shrine or temple) and in terms of transmission (minimum level of information about kimono history and culture, no real sense of seasonality or formality, no explanation about the symbolic meaning of flowers, motifs, etc.). So the focus remains on fun and casual modes of consumption and yet we have a certain degree of liminality: people dressing in rental or second-hand kimono sense the difference between their regular clothes and the kimono.⁶⁴

Despite these shortcomings and its juxtaposed, collaged nature, these kinds of kimono pilgrimages help revitalise the kimono culture overall, albeit in a fluid, reified and fragmentary way, or, as coined by Bauman, in a “liquid modernity” fashion (2000).

The pending questions are: Is the interest for kimono coming from the idea of embodied experience or just from the commodified image? Just for Instagram or Facebook “likes”? Is it in the idea of matching the ever so photogenic Kyoto that people feel like a kimono would give them the right photogenic appearance? One can also come to the conclusion that the kimono advertised and marketed by tourist agencies and media is growing more and more detached, different from the ones encountered by the tourists during their rental or shopping experience. Also, while the industry moves towards a consolidation of kimono as tradition and fashion, with designers and

⁶⁴ This liminality is emphasised even more by the limit exposed by the *wafuku* (和服) / *yōfuku* (洋服) terminology, which distinguishes clearly the Japanese mode of dress from the Western ones.

boutiques, what can be seen in the tourist-pilgrim adventure with kimono is again something partial, biased, somewhat incomplete, dialed down to make it easy but so much so that the knowledge gets “lost in translation”.

Overall, this specific kimono “pilgrim” practice is giving new, nuanced meanings to the idea of pilgrimage with a detachment from the spirituality of the place and the journey, yet a spiritual aspect is present. There is also a distance between what a kimono really is, how the kimono is advertised by tourist agencies, the JNTO, etc., and yet there is a proximity to the kimono, as the shape / silhouette is respected. Similar to the Shikoku pilgrimage again where people nowadays take the trip for different reasons than people in the Edo period but nevertheless, they follow the *kata* (形) predicated form (Reader, 1993: 107-136).

In this intricate and ambiguous manner (Greene, 2016: 335), this new type of practice is inviting us to look further at the question of quality, authenticity, movement (Collins-Kreiner, 2010), pace, and poise in embodied experiences of space, in both pilgrimage and fashion studies.

REFERENCES

- ARNOLD, ANDREW (2018), Instagram Worthy: How Social Media Has Reshaped Our Ideas On Attractive Design. *Forbes*. Available from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewarnold/2018/03/29/instagram-worthy-how-social-media-has-reshaped-our-ideas-on-attractive-design/?sh=483c57534792> (Accessed 28 November 2021).
- ASSMANN, STEPHANIE (2008), Between Tradition and Innovation: The Reinvention of the Kimono in Japanese Consumer Culture. *Fashion Theory. The Journal of Dress Body and Culture*, 12 (3), pp. 359-376.
- ATKINS, JACQUELINE (2005), *Wearing Propaganda: Textiles on the Home Front in Japan, Britain, and the United States, 1931-1945*. New Haven Conn. London: Published for the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture, New York by Yale University Press.
- ASO, NORIKO (2013), *Public Properties: Museums in Imperial Japan*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- BÆRENHOLDT, JØRGEN OLE — HALDRUP, MICHAEL — LARSEN, JONAS (2008), Performing Cultural Attractions. In: Sundbo, Jon — Per, Dramwer (eds), *Creating Experiences in the Experience Economy*, pp. 176-202.
- BARDSLEY, JAN (2021), *Maiko Masquerade. Crafting Geisha Girlhood in Japan*. Oakland, California: University of California Press.
- BARTHES, ROLAND (Trans. Andy Stafford) (2004), *The Language of Fashion*. London: Bloomsbury. First edition in 1957, 1969.
- BAUMAN, ZYGMUNT (2000), *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- BOCKING, BRIAN (2001), *The Oracles of the Three Shrines: Windows on Japanese religion*. Richmond: Curzon.

- CAVE, JENNY — JOLLIFFE, LEE — BAUM, TOM (eds) (2013), *Tourism and Souvenirs. Global Perspectives from the Margins*. Bristol, UK Tonawanda, NY: Channel View Publications.
- CLIFFE, SHEILA (2017), *The Social Life of Kimono*. London, New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.
- COLLINS-KREINER, NOGA (2010), Geographers and Pilgrimages: Changing Concepts in Pilgrimage Tourism Research. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 101 (4), pp.437-448.
- CRAIK, JENNIFER (1993), *The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion*. London, New York: Routledge.
- (2013), Fashion, Tourism and Global Culture. In: Black, Sandy (ed.), *The Handbook of Fashion Studies*. London: Bloomsbury, pp. 353-370.
- CUSACK, CAROLE — DIGANCE, JUSTINE (2008) 'Shopping for a self': Pilgrimage, Identity-Formation, and Retail Therapy. In: Graham St John (ed.) *Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance*, pp. 227-241.
- CWIERTKA, KATARZYNA J. — YASUHARA, MIHO (2020), *Branding Japanese Food: From Meibutsu to Washoku*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- DALBY, LIZA (2001), *Kimono. Fashioning Culture*. London: Vintage. First edition 1993.
- DAVIDSON, LINDA KAY — GITLITZ, DAVID M. (2002), *Pilgrimage: From the Ganges to Graceland: an Encyclopedia, Vol.1*. Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO.
- DI GIOVINE, MICHAEL (2011), Pilgrimage: Communitas and contestation, unity and difference - An introduction. *Tourism: An International, Interdisciplinary Journal*, 59 (3), pp. 247-269.
- FIRSCHING-TOVAR, OLY MAYELA (2017), *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: The Kimono Revival in Japan as a Strategy of Self-Orientalization*. PhD, Technische Universität Dortmund. Supervised by: Mentges, Gabriele, Trede, Melanie.
- FOUCAULT, MICHEL (1972), *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- FRASER, KAREN (2012), Beauty Battle. Politics and Portraiture in Late Meiji Japan. In: Wong, Aida Yuen (ed.), *Visualizing Beauty. Gender and Ideology in Modern East Asia*, pp. 11-22.
- FUKAI, AKIKO (1996), *Japonism in Fashion*. Kyoto: Kyoto Costume Institute.
- GOLDSTEIN-GIDONI, OFRA (1999), Kimono and the Construction of Gendered and Cultural Identities. *Ethnology, An International Journal of Cultural and Social Anthropology*, 38 (4), pp. 351-370.
- (2005), The production and consumption of 'Japanese Culture' in the global cultural market. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5, pp. 155-179.
- GREENE, BARBARA (2016), Furusato and Emotional Pilgrimage: Ge Ge Ge no Kitaro and Sakaiminato. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 43 (2), pp. 333-356.
- GUTH, CHRISTINE (2004), *Longfellow's tattoos: tourism, collecting, and Japan*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- HABERMAS, JÜRGEN (1981, 1985), *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- HALDRUP, MICHAEL — LARSEN, JONAS (2009), *Tourism, Performance and the Everyday. Consuming the Orient*. London, New York: Routledge.
- HALL, JENNY (2018), Digital Kimono: Fast Fashion, Slow Fashion? *Fashion Theory. The Journal of Dress Body and Culture* 22 (3), pp. 283-307.
- (2020), *Japan Beyond the Kimono*. London, New York, NY: Bloomsbury Visual Arts.
- HENDRY, JOY (1993), *Wrapping Culture: Politeness, Presentation and Power in Japan and Other Societies*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- HOBSBAWM, ERIC — RANGER, TERENCE (1983), *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ICHIHARA, MORIHIRO (1895), *The Official Guide-book to Kyōto and the Allied Prefectures*. Meishinsha: Nara.

- IRVINE, GREGORY (ed.) (2013), *Japonisme and the Rise of the Modern Art Movement: The Arts of the Meiji Period*. New York: Thames & Hudson.
- INUI, YOSHIKO (2007), *Zusetsu Kimonogara ni miru sensō* [Looking at the war through kimono illustrations]. Tokyo: Inpakuto Shuppankai.
- ITOH, MOTOSHIGE (2016), [Kimono bunka to nihon] [The Kimono Culture and Japan]. Tokyo: Nihon Keizai Shinbun shuppansha.
- JACKSON, ANNA (ed.) (2020), *Kimono: From Kyoto to Catwalk*, London, New York: V&A Publishing.
- KATEGAHO INTERNATIONAL EDITION (Summer 2005 issue), Summer kimono and Yukata, PUFFY-style". Tokyo: Sekai Bunka Publishing Inc. pp. 60-69.
- MINISTRY OF ECONOMY, TRADE AND INDUSTRY (METI) (May 2016), *Dainikai Wasō Shinkō Kyōgikai Jimukyoku Hokoku Shiryō* [Report document from the 2nd Council on Japanese National Dress]. Available from https://www.meti.go.jp/committee/kenkyukai/seizou/Wasou_kyogi/pdf/002_03_00.pdf (Accessed 15 April 2021)
- MINISTRY OF ECONOMY, TRADE AND INDUSTRY (METI) (May 2018), *Wasō gyōkai no sho kankō ni kansuru shishin ni sandō wo hyōmeishita dantai · jigyōsha* [List of registered Kimono selling businesses and groups]. Available from https://www.meti.go.jp/policy/mono_info_service/mono/fiber/Wasou/sando_list20180529.pdf (Accessed 7 April 2021).
- MINISTRY OF ECONOMY, TRADE AND INDUSTRY (METI) – Textile and Clothing Division (January 2015), *Wasō shinkō kenkyukai ~ kimono de nihon no miryoku wo kōjō suru~ ronten shiryō* [Documents from the Japanese Clothing Research Group: showing the appeal of Japan with kimono]. Available from: https://www.meti.go.jp/committee/kenkyukai/seizou/wasou_shinkou/pdf/001_03_00.pdf (Accessed 28 November 2021).
- KELLY, KATY (2020), Authentic kimono fashions await you in Animal Crossing from Kyoto furisode tailor Chiso. Available from <https://soranews24.com/2020/07/03/stylish-kimono-fashions-await-you-in-animal-crossing-thanks-to-kyoto-furisode-tailor-chiso> 【pics】 / (Accessed 28 November 2021).
- KRAMER, ELIZABETH (2020), Kimono Rental, Tourism and Sartorial Expression. In: Jackson, Anna (ed.), *Kimono: From Kyoto to Catwalk*, pp. 227-229.
- LI, VIVIAN Y., et al. (2020), *Kimono Couture: The Beauty of Chiso*. Lewes, UK Minneapolis, MN: Giles, an imprint of D. Giles Limited, Consortium Book Sales & Distribution.
- LEAVER, TAMA — HIGHFIELD, TIM — ABIDIN, CRYSTAL (2020), *Instagram: Visual Social Media Cultures*. Cambridge, UK Medford, MA, USA: Polity.
- LEWIS, CLIFFORD — KERR, GREGORY M. — BURGESS, LOIS (2013), A Critical Assessment of the Role of Fashion in Influencing the Travel Decision and Destination choice. *International Journal of Tourism Policy*, 5 (1/2), pp. 4-18.
- LOCKYER, ANGUS (2001), Japan at the Exhibition, 1867-1877: From Representation to Practice. *Senri Ethnological Series*, 54, pp. 67-76.
- LYNCH, ANNETTE — STRAUSS, MITCHELL (2015), *Ethnic Dress in the United States: a Cultural Encyclopedia*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.
- MARTIN, RICHARD — KODA, HAROLD (1994), *Orientalism: Visions of the East in Western Dress*. New-York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

- MC KERCHER, BOB — DU CROS, HILARY (2002), *Cultural Tourism: The Partnership between Tourism and Cultural Heritage Management*. New York: Haworth Hospitality Press.
- MAYNARD, MARGARET (2000), Grassroots Style: Re-Evaluating Australian Fashion and Aboriginal Art in the 1970's and 1980's. *Journal of Design History*, 13 (2), pp. 137-150.
- (2004), *Dress and Globalisation*. Manchester and New-York: Manchester University Press.
- MILHAUPT, TERRY SATSUKI (2014), *Kimono. A Modern History*. London: Reaktion Books.
- MIZUTA LIPPIT MIYA ELISE (2013), 美人/ Bijin / Beauty. *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, pp. 1-14.
- MORAIS, LILIANA (2019), Traditional Japanese Arts and Crafts Historical and Political Trajectories from the Meiji Period until Today. *Journal of International and Advanced Japanese Studies*, 11, pp. 139-146.
- MURAYAMA, YŪZŌ — JULIET W. CARPENTER (trans.) (2019), *Heritage Culture and Business, Kyoto style: Craftsmanship in the Creative Economy*. Tokyo, Japan: Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture.
- NG, SANDY (2018), Clothes Make the Woman: *Cheongsam* and Chinese Identity in Hong Kong. In: Pyun, Kyunghhee — Wong, Aida Yuen (eds), *Fashion, Identity and Power in Modern Asia*, pp. 357-378.
- NGUYEN, LISA (2021), Kimono Designer Chiso Releases New Designs And Dream Island For Animal Crossing: New Horizons. Available from <https://happygamer.com/kimono-designer-chiso-releases-new-designs-and-dream-island-for-animal-crossing-new-horizons-101582/> (Accessed 28 November 2021).
- RAGALYE, RACHAEL (2012), *(Cos)playing Culture: Reimagining the Kimono in Modern-Day Kyoto*. Bachelor's thesis, Faculty of Mount Holyoke College. Supervised by: Morgan, Lynn, Roth, Joshua, Zamperini, Paola.
- READER, IAN — WALTER, TONY (eds) (1993), *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press.
- COMMITTEE ON ACTIVITIES FOR TRADITIONAL INDUSTRIES (2021), *Reiwa san nendo dai ikkai dentō sangyō seikatsu suishin bangikai [First Report of the Committee on Activities for Traditional Industries]* (August 2021). *Kōhanki go nenkan ni mukete [Laying Out the Next Five Years Segment]*. Available from <https://www.city.kyoto.lg.jp/sankan/cmsfiles/contents/0000073/73676/02R03shiryō.pdf> (Accessed 28 October 2021).
- ROUT, JOSEPHINE (2020a), From Edo to Instagram: Kimono Fashion. In: Jackson, Anna. (ed.) *Kimono: From Kyoto to Catwalk*, pp. 307-311.
- (2020b), *Japanese Dress in Detail*. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd Victoria and Albert Museum.
- SEATON, PHILIP — YAMAMURA, TAKAYOSHI (2005), Japanese Popular Culture and Contents Tourism. *Japan Forum*, 27 (1), pp. 1-11.
- (2020), *Contents Tourism and Pop Culture Fandom: Transnational Tourist Experiences*. Bristol, UK Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Channel View Publications.
- SEATON, PHILIP — YAMAMURA, TAKAYOSHI — SUGAWA, AKIKO (2017), *Contents Tourism in Japan: Pilgrimages to 'sacred Sites' of Popular Culture*. Amherst, New York: Cambria Press.
- SIEVERS, SHARON L. (1983), *Flowers in Salt: The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan*. California: Stanford University Press.
- Status* magazine (October 2021), *Kimono juyō no henka: nakōdo no suitai to eko to iu rinen [Changes in the kimono industry: brokers' decline and the new "eco" philosophy]*. Available from <https://status-marketing.com/20211026-4230.html> (Accessed 28 November 2021).
- STEVENS, REBECCA A. — WADA, YOSHIKO I. (1996), *The Kimono Inspiration: Art and Art-to-wear in America*. Washington, D.C. San Francisco: The Textile Museum Pomegranate Artbooks.

- STINCHECUM, AMANDA MAYER (1984), *Kosode. 16th-19th Century Textiles from the Nomura Collection*. New York: Japan Society Kodansha International.
- SUNDBO, JON — PER, DRAMER (eds) (2008), *Creating Experiences in the Experience Economy*. Cheltenham, UK Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.
- TAKAGI, YOKO — THOELEN, SASKIA (2021), Kimono Migrating Across Borders: Wasō Culture Outside of Japan. In: Cheang, Sarah — De Greef, Erica — Takagi, Yoko (eds), *Rethinking Fashion Globalization*. London: Bloomsbury, pp. 19-35.
- TURNER, VICTOR AND TURNER, EDITH (1978), *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*. New-York: Columbia University Press.
- URRY, JOHN — LARSEN, JONAS (2011), *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*. London: SAGE Publications.
- VALK, JULIE (2018a), *Survival or success? The Kimono retail industry in contemporary Japan*. PhD, University of Oxford. Supervised by: Daniels, Inge; Goodman, Roger; Ewart, Elizabeth.
- (2018b), From Duty to Fashion: The Changing Role of the Kimono in the Twenty-First Century. *Fashion Theory*, 22 (3), pp. 309-340.
- (2021), *Selling the Kimono. An Ethnography of Crisis, Creativity and Hope*. Abingdon, Oxon New York, NY: Routledge.
- WAKITA, MIO (2013), *Staging Desires: Japanese Femininity in Lusaka Kimbei's Nineteenth-Century Souvenir Photography*. Berlin: Reimer.
- NATIONAL DRESS PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION — MINISTRY OF ECONOMY, TRADE AND INDUSTRY (METI) (2015) *Wasō shinkō kenkyūkai: hōkokusho [National Dress Preservation Association: Report]* (June 2015). Available from https://www.meti.go.jp/committee/kenkyukai/seizou/wasou_shinkou/pdf/report01_01_00.pdf (Accessed 29 November 2021).
- WHEELER, BONNIE (1999), Models of Pilgrimage: From Communitas to Confluence. *Journal of Ritual Studies*, 13 (2) pp. 26-41.
- WICHMANN, SIEGFRIED (1981), *Japonisme. The Japanese influence on Western art since 1858*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- YANO RESEARCH INSTITUTE (2013), *Kimono Market in Japan: Key Research Findings 2012*. Available from <https://www.yanoresearch.com/press/pdf/1061.pdf> (Accessed 28 November 2021).
- WILKINS, HUGH (2013), Souvenirs and Self-identity. In: Cave, Jenny — Jolliffe, Lee — Tom Baum (eds), *Tourism and Souvenirs. Glocal Perspectives from the Margins*. Bristol: Channel View Publications, pp. 40-48.
- YAMANAKA, NORIO (2012), *The Book of Kimono*. New York: Kodansha International, first edition 1982.
- YAN, GRACE — CARLA SANTOS (2009), 'CHINA, FOREVER': Tourism Discourse and Self-Orientalism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36 (2), pp. 293-315.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LUCILE DRUET is assistant professor of Japanese Art at Kansai Gaidai University, Osaka. Her research and teaching include literature, painting traditions, dance, theatrical performances and film as well as Japanese costumes and fashion trends with a focus on kimono. She is particularly interested in the intersection of dress and dressing, clothing and embodiment, currently developing projects on how kimono is practised in real life (specifically in Kyōto) and elaborated in works of fiction and poetry (Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, Ariyoshi Sawako, Hayashi Mariko, Yosano Akiko).

Cute at an older age: A case study of *Otona-Kawaii*

Shiri LIEBER-MILO | Osaka University, Japan

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/2021.10.LIE.OTONA](https://doi.org/10.32926/2021.10.LIE.OTONA)

ABSTRACT

The word kawaii, meaning 'cute and sweet' in English, has been part of the Japanese culture for centuries. While the word and trend were historically associated with young women and children, there has recently been an attempt to expand the definition of kawaii outside of its traditional borders to other age and gender groups by creating uniquely synthesised words and trends. The newly coined term otona-kawaii ['adult-cute'] refers to mature women who passed their teen years and continue to dress cute and behave innocent and adorable. In this paper, a focus will be taken upon the new concept of otona-kawaii, and how it is defined and evaluated by the Japanese people.

Results of a recent survey conducted among male and female respondents between the ages of 18 to 29, showed that many of them were in favour of the idea of behaving cute at an older age. It was also found that women were more familiar with the term otona-kawaii and had a more positive approach towards it than men. The results of the study suggest that kawaii can be extended beyond infants and may apply to other age populations, such as mature women.

The aim of this study is to bridge the gap between kawaii and maturity by providing some empirical evidence and information, bringing to a deeper understanding of the concept of kawaii, contributing to the scholarship of the kawaii culture in Japan.

KEYWORDS

Adult; Cute; Japan; *Kawaii*; *Otona*; Survey.

Date of submission: 16 March 2021

Date of acceptance: 25 November 2021

Date of publication: 20 December 2021

Introduction

The concept of *kawaii* has been employed by the Japanese aesthetic culture since ancient times to describe something adorable, endearing, and attractive, such as small objects, infants, and young animals (Nittono, 2016). Although the word is often translated as 'cute and adorable' in English, *kawaii* has several additional meanings such as pitifulness and ludicrous, which can be seen at first glance as contradictory to each other (Nittono, 2016: 81). The word itself originated from the word *kawahayushi*, a coined word of 'face' [*kao*] and 'flushing' [*hayui*], which was used to describe a sense of shame, and sometimes a sense of pity, sympathy, or affection towards weaker members of the society, such as women and children (Nittono, 2016: 81).

As a trend, the modern concept of kawaii culture has its roots in young teenage girls [*shōjo*] who are considered to be the ones who shaped kawaii and enabled it to achieve its current success. These young women are typically unmarried girls who act and dress in a girlish, cute way, and behave in a childish manner (Yomota, 2006; Monden, 2015: pp. 4-5). During the 1970s, this association between these young women and kawaii evolved and strengthened through a schoolgirl handwriting fashion that was often called 'fake-child writing' [*burikko-ji*], a writing style characterised by its round-shaped letters along with English lettering and cartoon pictures (Kinsella, 1995: pp. 222-3). Over the years, the popularity of *burikko-ji* had expanded to wider areas and channels. Today, this cursive handwriting is used extensively in the publishing media that focuses on a younger audience, such as in manga, magazines, and advertisements. According to Kinsella (1995: pp. 250-2), the rise of the *shōjo* subculture has materialised not only as a fashion statement, but also as rebellion against traditional stereotypical gender roles that perceived women as mainly responsible for bearing children and managing the household.

Thanks to these young girls, this trend has not faded since the 1970s and is still a dominant social and cultural element, as well as a powerful source of revenue in the Japanese economy, with many Japanese companies and media tools, such as Studio Ghibli, Sanrio and manga companies, focusing their line of products on women who are eagerly willing to spend large amounts of money on kawaii goods.

The term and concept of kawaii has been directly associated with young females and children's world culture since the 2000s, but there has recently been an effort by the vast media to expand the definition of kawaii beyond its conventional borders by bridging the gap between other age and gender groups. This attempt is expressed in the creation of newly synthesised locutions that represent a new type of cuteness, which does not necessarily refer to young children and women, but also to other age groups, such as adult women (Yomota, 2006).

The new idiom and trend of *otona-kawaii* [adult-cute] represents a new phase in the evolution of kawaii, which expands its horizon from young women in their teens to mature women who are in their 20s, 30s, 40s, even 50s and 60s. According to Asano-Cavanagh (2017: pp. 225-6), the trend arose from mature women who wished to stay young and attractive, started to adopt the kawaii behaviour of innocence and 'youthfulness' into their age group of older women.

While the exact origin of *otona-kawaii* is unclear, Yomota (2006: 142-3) claims that one of the first forms of print media to bring *kawaii* to the awareness of mature women past the age of 20, was *JJ* magazine's November 2004 issue. According to *JJ* (as cited in Yomota, 2006: 142-3) an *otona-kawaii* is a person who continues to have a high interest in *kawaii* products, occasionally consumes its related products, and behaves innocent and adorable, even at an older age.

Followed by *JJ*, other women-oriented fashion magazines, such as *An-An*, *CanCam*, and *Cutie* attempt to adjust the *shōjo* world of cuteness to older women and often express their positive approach towards *kawaii* in some of their articles, in which women who retain *kawaii* fashion and style experience a sense of freedom, are content, and feel good about themselves (Yomota, 2006). By displaying slogans such as 'If you buy *kawaii* products...you will most likely become *kawaii* [*kawaii mono o kaeba, kawaiku naru deshōu*]' (Yomota, 2006: 136), women's magazines encourage their female audience, young and mature alike, to wear cute fashion and to attain and maintain their cuteness, even at an older age.

But these fashion magazines do not only exhibit *kawaii* fashion and encourage women to use its related products but also, to some extent, 'educate' their female readers about the thin line between the proper and improper practice of *kawaii*, and encourage them to have a suitable *kawaii* look and behaviour. These fashion magazines suggest that, if women follow their advice and explanations correctly, and, of course, use the products they advertise, they will be able to become a proper *otona-kawaii*, in a way that is both appreciated and cherished by many in their Japanese society (Lieber-Milo, 2017: p. 78).

Due to the rising trend, more and more Japanese companies have adjusted their brand to target mature women consumers. For example, Sanrio, a toy manufacturer, has developed a fresh line of cute products that include adult-oriented goods such as personal electronics and jewellery. The success of these adult-targeted products was reflected by the fact that, by 2000, Hello Kitty's target customer was women between the ages of eighteen and forty (Yano, 2013; May, 2019).

The power of cuteness

Numerous studies have shown that seeing cute, baby-like physical traits like young infants and animals, causes a positive reaction in the observer, with the consumption

of its related products serving as a useful tool in handling social interaction and stressful situations (see Sherman *et al.*, 2012; Kringelbach *et al.*, 2016; Nittono, 2016; Nittono, 2019; Lieber-Milo, 2021).

Beyond infantile characteristics, recent studies have shown that kawaii is irrespective of age, and other forms of physical characteristics may elicit a ‘cuteness response’; a coined term introduced by Sherman and Haidt (2011: pp. 245-6). For example, in their study, Ihara and Nittono (2011) found that a grown-up person’s smile may give an impression of kawaii and produce a positive reaction in almost any observer. In other words, regardless of her age, a mature woman’s smile may elicit a cuteness response in others.

While these characteristics of cuteness may convey weakness at first glance, May (2019) claims that cuteness is not as helpless as it may seem, and one of the reasons for its strength is its ‘seductive’ qualities that draw attention, causing others to be unable to resist the person who behaving in a kawaii manner. As such, being cute towards other members of society might be a useful tactic for obtaining favours, attention, making the person who uses his cuteness as leverage, a strong individual (Botz-Bornstein, 2016: 300; May, 2019).

Moreover, cuteness may serve as a temporary getaway from the harsh world of ‘adulthood’ to a better world of nostalgic, childlike self (Nguyen, 2012: 154; Lieber-Milo, 2021). As kawaii was originally the domain of youth, by defining themselves as kawaii and consuming its related products at an older age, adults are in many ways reminded of their childhood, and are “transported through a gateway” back to an idealised childhood (Anan, 2016; Nguyen, 2012: 154). In other words, since kawaii consists of various virtues that are correlated to childhood, by adoring kawaii and consuming its related goods at an older age, some of the childhood virtues are revived through ‘otona-kawaii’.

Therefore, one might say that the concepts of kawaii and otona-kawaii are associated with Peter-Pan Syndrome (PPS), an emotional condition in which a person manifests an emotional regression and a desire to become a young child once again. Although similar connotations exist between the two, Lieber-Milo (2021: 12) claims that individuals who retain cuteness at an older age, only choose to temporarily go back to the pink bubble of childhood and can “return” to the “real world” of adulthood at any time.

In contrast to the positive attitude revolving kawaii, in a survey conducted by Lieber-Milo (2017) it was found that some Japanese, especially male, described kawaii from a more critical and negative perspective. According to these, a woman who takes on a kawaii persona is both childish and spoiled in a way that renders her completely dependent on the mercy of other individuals, and thus, is neither appreciated nor looks natural in the eyes of the observer (Monden, 2015). In addition, some survey respondents suggested that when a person behaves in a kawaii manner, a “gap” or disconnection is created between the inner and outer self (Lieber-milo, 2017: p. 130). In this respect, an individual who outwardly behaves in a sweet, natural and innocent manner would be feeling completely different inwardly. According to this interpretation, women hide their true selves and wear a mask of artificial cuteness to comply with perceived societal expectations (Winnicott, 1965).

While negative aspects such as childishness do exist within kawaii, the positive virtues overcome its negative side, in which a woman who behaves in a kawaii manner conveys innocence, honesty, purity, smiles frequently and is friendly to anyone.

The present study aims to show how the newly coined term *otona-kawaii* is defined and projected by Japanese people, as well as clarifying their general attitudes towards the idea of continuing to behave, dress and ‘consume’ cuteness, even at an older age.

To do this, a survey was conducted by the researcher on 692 female respondents between the ages of 18 and 29 ($M=23.79$), and 67 male respondents between the ages of 18 and 24 ($M=20.5$).

The results of the survey show how the Japanese people define the new concept of *otona-kawaii* and their attitude towards the idea of behaving kawaii at an older age. It also reveals that *otona-kawaii* is a well-known and loved concept among Japanese women and demonstrates the positive attitude towards ‘being’ kawaii at an older age, whether in fashion choices, appearance or behaviour.

Methodology

A questionnaire was distributed by the researcher by hand and online in two phases over a period of five months. The questionnaire included a range of questions to examine the respondent’s knowledge of, approach to, and attitude towards kawaii and *otona-kawaii*. The research protocol was approved by the Research Ethics Committee, Graduate school of Language and Culture, Osaka University. The part of the survey that

is not reported in this paper was published in 2017, 2019, and 2021. The complete dataset is available online at: <https://osf.io/gcvzk>.

To gather all the necessary data, a different sampling approach was taken by each study. In the first stage, a hand-written and an online survey was distributed by the researcher to 342 randomly chosen female university students between the ages of 18 and 23, and 75 male university students between the ages of 18 and 24 from three selected universities in the Kansai region of western Japan: Kyoto University, Osaka University and Doshisha University. These universities were selected due to their nationwide rating (two national universities and one private), as they attract a variety of students from all over Japan, not only Kansai, thus offering a broader and a deeper perspective to the analysis.

In the second stage, an online survey was delivered to 350 adult women between the ages of 23 to 29, who had graduated from higher educational institutions and live, in the Kansai region of western Japan. The same criteria was applied as to the first survey.

Before respondents were given the surveys, a consent form page was presented to inform prospective candidates about the aim of the study, their voluntary participation, and a privacy policy stipulating that none of their personally identifiable information would be retained. All respondents to the second survey, and some of the first survey respondents, received a small monetary compensation for their cooperation.

Results

In this study, I will focus on the last questions of the survey regarding the concept of *kawaii* at an older age, and the Japanese term *otona-kawaii*. Minor adjustments were made to the online survey to comply with the electronic version of the questionnaire. This included a modification to the structure of the question (b).

The following two questions were asked:

- (a)** Do you think it's good to behave *kawaii* ('nice and sweet') even at an older age? [4-point scale, 1= *Strongly Disagree* to 4=*Strongly Agree*]?
- (b)** Are you familiar with the word *otona-kawaii* [Yes or No]? (1) If the answer is yes, how would you define the word *otona-kawaii* [Free description]? (written survey).
- (b)** Are you familiar with the word *otona-kawaii*? If the answer is yes, how would you define the word *otona-kawaii* [Free description]? (online survey).

Out of 767 survey respondents, 717 people (75 men between eighteen and twenty-four years old, $M=20.5$, and 642 women between eighteen and twenty-nine years old, $M=23.7$ years old) responded to the first question (a) regarding their attitude towards the concept of behaving *kawaii* at an older age.

As originally part of young women *shōjo* culture, it was assumed that a high number of survey participants might have a negative attitude towards the idea of behaving in a *kawaii* manner at an older age. Surprisingly, the results of the question “Do you think it’s good to behave *kawaii* (nice and sweet) even at an older age?” showed that the majority of male and female survey participants have a positive attitude towards *otona-kawaii*.

Figure 1 below shows the histograms of the responses. The general attitude was rather positive in both gender groups, although female respondents provided a slightly higher evaluation than male respondents. There is no significant difference between young women’s response ($Mdn = 2$, Mean rank = 339.73, $n = 292$) and that of adult women ($Mdn = 3$, Mean rank = 352.11, $n = 350$), $U = 57537$, $p = .357$ ($z = -.922$), $r = -.035$, in relation to the idea of behaving *kawaii* at an older age.

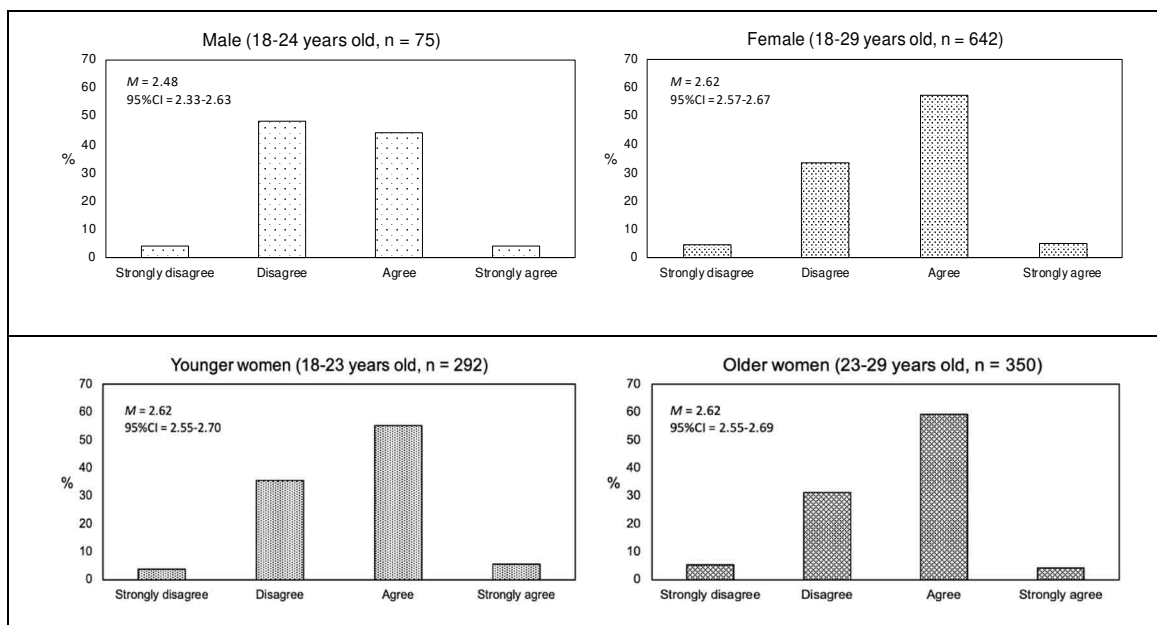


Fig. 1. Gender and age differences response to the question, ‘Do you think it’s good to behave *kawaii* (‘nice and sweet’) even at an older age?’

Following the first question, the results of the open-ended question, ‘Please describe in your own words how you define *otona-kawaii*’ produced a wide spectrum of views regarding the term and the concept of *otona-kawaii*. It suggests a high difference in the

gender groups and shows that the term is well-known among Japanese women. Out of the 692 female respondents who answered question “a”, $n= 325$ (47 per cent) were able to voice their own opinions and perspectives about the word *otona-kawaii*. On the other hand, only $n=5$ (6.5 per cent) of the male respondents were familiar with the word and gave their perception on the term.

The *kawaii* images given by responses were assessed numerically and divided into five categories through a discussion among five women between the ages of 20-60 who did not serve as participants: gender [*seibetsu*], appearance [*gaikan*], positive qualities [*pojitiba na tokusei*], negative qualities [*negatibu na tokusei*], and neither positive nor negative [*pojitiba demo negatibu de mo arimasen*]. The affinity diagram in **Table 1** and the numeral data in **Table 2** give a clear impression of how respondents perceive the new *otona-kawaii* trend.

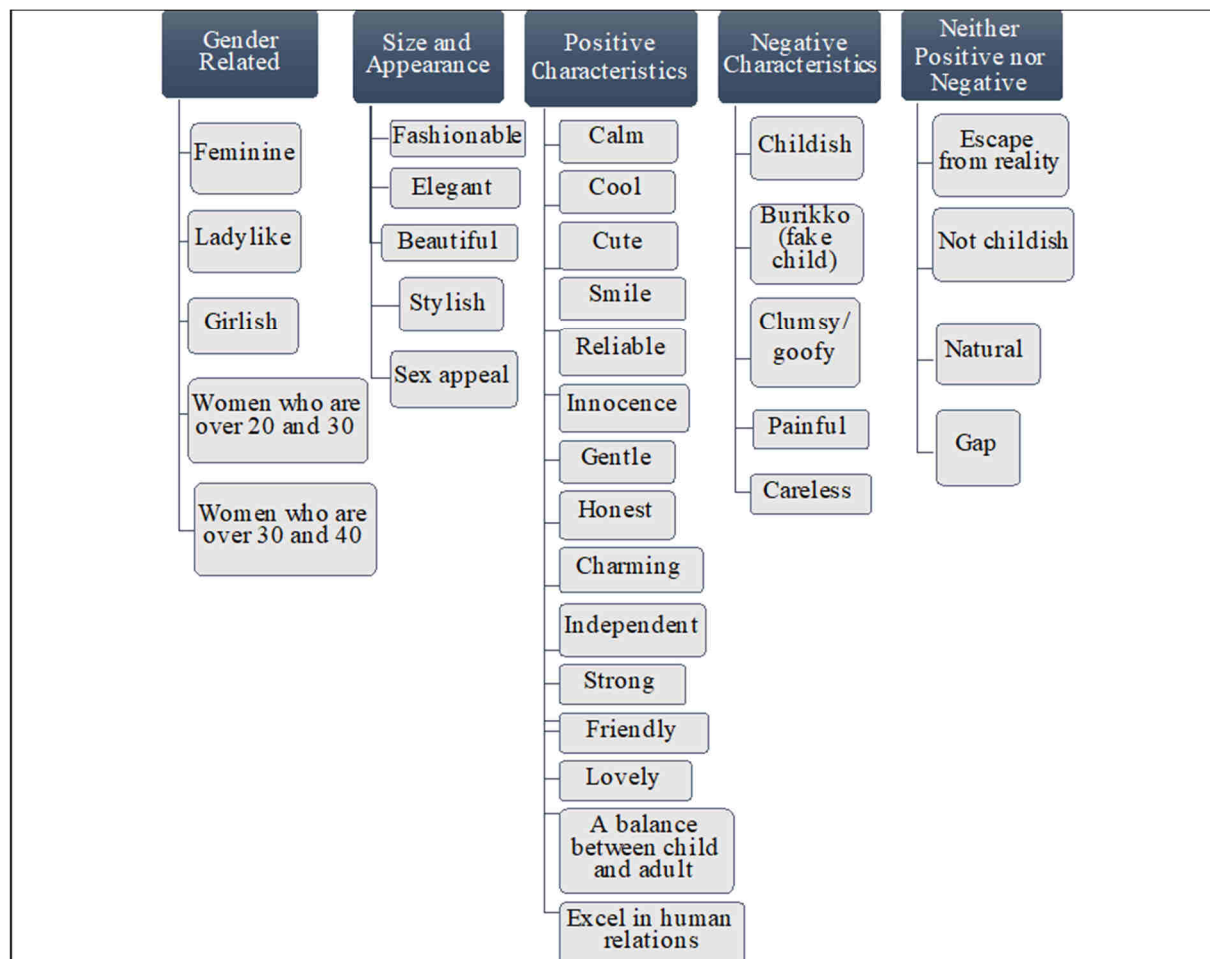


Table 1. Responses of 325 females and 5 males to the question “Please describe in your own words how you define *otona-kawaii*” (affinity diagram).

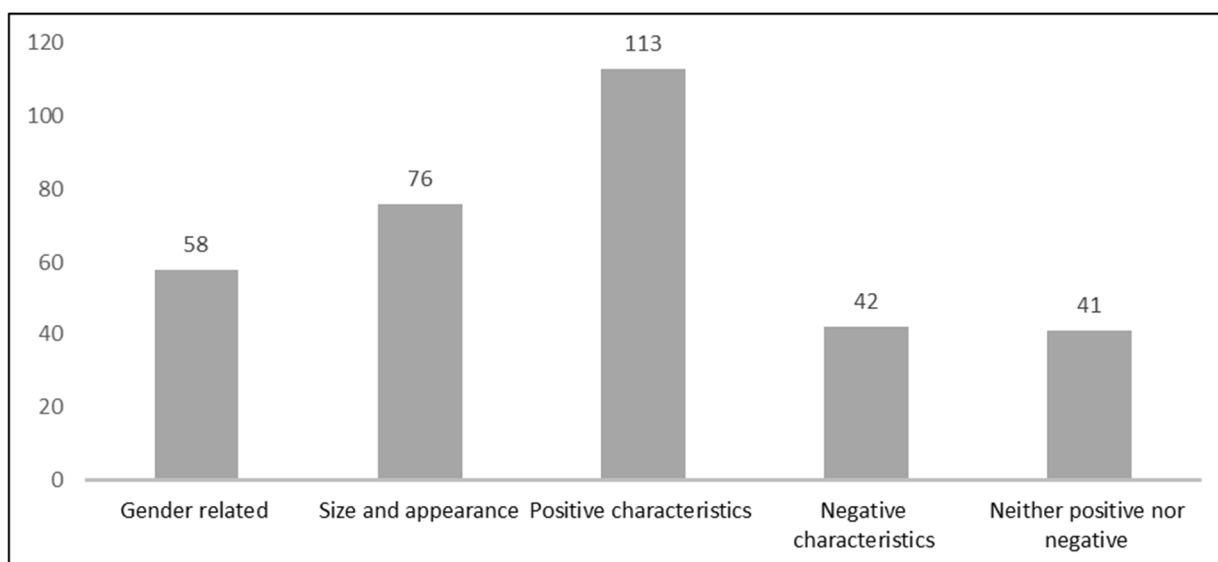


Table 2. Responses of 325 females and 5 males to the question “Please describe in your own words how you define otona-kawaii” (in numbers).

These definitions and illustrations in the open-ended question section show how female and male respondents portray a person who acts kawaii at an older age. According to respondents, otona-kawaii represents women past their twenties, thirties, or forties who, to some extent, still behave in a girlish, childish manner. While sometimes acting girlish, they generally convey a feminine and ladylike bearing when it comes to looks and behaviour. Their fashion choices are one of the reasons that make them attractive in the eyes of the opposite sex. In support of their views on *otona-kawaii* women, some female respondents suggested various names of models and actresses, such as Kyoko Fukada, Ryoko Shinohara, Haruka Ayase, Hiromi Nagasaku, and Aoi Miyazaki, who were already in their thirties and forties, but still project a youthful kawaii appearance and behaviour.

Out of the $n=330$ respondents who gave their interpretation of the new term, a high level of them have a positive attitude and approach towards this issue. According to some respondents, an otona-kawaii persona acts in an innocent, honest, and charming manner. All of these qualities are neither childish, nor immature, but rather a balance between childhood and adulthood. This balance is what makes otona-kawaii a reliable and cherished persona to those around them.

Below are some examples that were given by survey respondents:

“Women who are different from teenagers or those in their twenties that have a gorgeous image.”
 [*Tin'eijā-tachi ya 20-dai ni hito-tachi to wa kotonari, gōjasuna fun'iki o motta jousei-tachi.*]

(Japanese woman, 27 years old)

“A person who combines femininity and cuteness.”

[*Joseirashi-sa to kawai-sa o kanesoneta hito.*]

(Japanese woman, 29 years old)

“Women in their late thirties who wear cute clothes and accessories that don’t look “painful” on them.”

[*Itaitashiku mienai kawaii fuku ya akusesarī o mi ni tsuketa 30-dai kōhan no josei-tachi.*]

(Japanese woman, 25 years old)

“They have a cute image no matter how old they are.”

[*Nan-sai ni natte mo kawairashī imēji.*]

(Japanese woman, 29 years old)

“There is a sense of *kawaii* and beautiful image.”

[*Kawaiku, kireina imēji ga aru.*]

(Japanese woman, 23 years old)

“A person who has a balance between maturity and childishness.”

[*Seijuku shita otomotto-sa to, mijukuna kodomotto-sa no ryōhō o baransuyoku motte iru hito.*]

(Japanese woman, 21 years old)

“A woman who is polite, has common sense and is lovely.”

[*Reigi tadashiku, futsū no kankaku o mochi, airashi-sa o motsu josei.*]

(Japanese woman, 28 years old)

“A person who has the strength to use her weaknesses as a weapon.”

[*Yowa-sa o buki ni tsukau tsuyo-sa o motta hito.*]

(Japanese woman, 27 years old)

“An adult who keeps her natural cuteness.”

[*Shizen ni kawai-sa o tamotte iru otona.*]

(Japanese woman, 28 years old)

“I sense that they are adults when they use proper words. Their fashion and hairstyles are suitable for their age, not too flashy. When being clumsy and excited, they tend to have a big reaction and a pure smiling face, I feel they are cute. I feel that women with these two qualities are *otona-kawaii*.”

[*Watashi wa kanojotachi ga tadashī kotoba o tsukau toki, kanojotachi o otomotto to omou. Kanojotachi no fukusō ya heasutairu wa toshi sōō no mono de, kesshite hadena monodewanai. Kanojotachi ga ōgesa ni han'nō shi tari, junsuina egao o shi tari shinagara dojina koto o shi tari, hashai dari suru toki, watashi wa kanojotachi o kawai to kanjiru. Watashi wa futatsu no seishitsu o mochiawaseta josei ga, otomotto kawaii hitoda to omou.*]

(Japanese woman, 27 years old)

On the other hand, some respondents ($n = 42$, 12.7 per cent) were more critical of the new term and trend. According to them, a person who continues to behave in a

kawaii manner at an older age is exerting enormous effort to stay young in a way that looks unnatural and is even 'painful' to the eyes.

"A person who looks like an adult on the outside, but on the inside is a child."
[*Gaiken wa otona no yōnimieru ga, naimen ga sōdenainaraba, sono hito wa kodomode aru.*]
(Japanese male, 23 years old)

"Eighty per cent childish, twenty per cent kawaii."
[*8-Wari wa kodomoppoku, 2-wari wa kawaii.*]
(Japanese woman, 21 years old)

"Women in their thirties who wear 'painful' fashion that includes ribbons and skirts."
[*Ribon ya sukāto o fukumu 'itaitashi' fashon o shiteiru 30-dai no josei-tachi.*]
(Japanese woman, 26 years old)

Lastly, there were controversial opinions regarding several kawaii qualities being either positive or negative, depending on the context. For example, the 'gap' can be viewed as an escape from social responsibilities and obligations, and on the other hand, it can be viewed positively. In the same light, a woman who behaves in a 'sweet and natural' manner (e.g., smiling, being nice at all times) can be perceived positively, but also, can be portrayed as 'unnatural' and even dishonest because it leaves the impression that she behaves kawaii only to attain her personal goals.

The analysis shows that the term *otona-kawaii* has a wide spectrum of meanings and that it is better known among women. In terms of appearance, an *otona-kawaii* persona is both stylish and beautiful, innocent looking and has great charisma. I also found that respondents portrayed *otona-kawaii* as being part of women's culture, where a woman can be both ladylike and girlish at the same time. While negative opinions concerning *otona-kawaii* do exist, the positive attitudes overcome the negative ones. For the supporters of this concept, an *otona-kawaii* person is innocent, gentle, honest, reliable, as well as calm and friendly (see table 1 above).

Discussion

The coined word and concept *otona-kawaii* signals the rise of a new phenomenon that symbolises the continuation of kawaii beyond its original designation. The new *otona-kawaii* term and trend, as reflected by its name, represent a more 'mature' version of the

style, in which an adult woman who dresses and behaves in a *kawaii* manner is perceived as being stylish, elegant, and even radiating sex-appeal to those around her.

The results of the survey exhibit how the Japanese people define the newly coined term *otona-kawaii* and their attitude towards the idea of behaving and dressing in a *kawaii* manner at an older age. I found that respondents generally agree to and accept the idea of behaving and dressing cute at an older age. While most of the respondents gave a positive response to the idea of grown-up *kawaii*, in the open-ended question section they acknowledged the thin line between the proper practice of *kawaii* and the dangers of becoming excessively *kawaii* [*burikko*], especially at an older age.

The rather extreme behaviour of *burikko* ['fake child'] presents a different aspect of *kawaii* and refers to women who simulate a particular style of personal appearance and behaviour that may seem strange to others. The expression of *burikko* conduct includes baby talk, childlike clothing, and infantile behaviour that may look unnatural and 'fake' and thus is criticised by many in their surrounding (Monden, 2015: p. 50). Hence, if a person adopts the *kawaii* style and behaviour improperly, such as in the case of *burikko*, their efforts will not only be unappreciated, but they will also be victims of social criticism.

One of the most famous *burikko* idols¹ is Kiriko Takemura, who is well known under her stage name, Kyary Pamyu Pamyu. As a *burikko* idol, Kyary dresses like a child, loves sweets and junk food, wears outfits that normally belong to children, and acts in a sweet and innocent way, like a child with a message of endless happiness and freedom (Aoyagi, 2005). Kyary's character is often described as strange and remarkable at the same time. In this manner, Kyary took the *kawaii* culture of cuteness and twisted its meaning by elevating it to a new level that is both cute and strange (Iseri, 2015).

Another relatively new compound adjective, which is associated with *burikko*, called *ita-kawaii* [painful-cute], refers to a style frequently adopted by youngsters as a criticism towards those who force themselves to become *kawaii* in a way that looks painfully inappropriate for their age (Asano-Cavanagh, 2017: 15,228-9). Although Asano-Cavanagh (2013) maintains that it is not clear when and how this newly combined term

¹ Idol [*Idoru*]: Refers to highly produced and promoted singers, models and media personalities, who appear in almost any media channel, from television to print publication (Aoyagi, 2005: 2).

of *kawaii* and *itai* [painful] started to circulate, it became frequently used by youngsters as criticism of those who act and dress *kawaii* in an inappropriate manner.

The 2012 *An-An* issue introduces four kinds of ita-*kawaii* women, each of whom, to some extent, only pretend to be *kawaii*:

The 'Flirty' type [*Kobi-kei*]: women who only act in a *burikko* manner to charm others, especially members of the opposite sex.

The 'Older' type [*Oba-kei*]: older women who still talk and behave in a childlike manner and possess childish products such as ribbons, pink clothes and so on.

The 'Mysterious' type [*Fushigi-kei*]: women who create an aura of mystery so that people have a misperception of their behaviour.

The 'Unnatural' type [*Wazatora-kei*]: describing women who are only superficially *kawaii* to attract and elicit attraction from those around them. (Itakura, 2012: 54-5).

By introducing the various kinds of ita-*kawaii*, *An-An* does not merely present *kawaii* style and behaviour, but also teaches their female readers the balance between *kawaii* and the extreme sides of *burikko* and ita-*kawaii*. Through illustrating both sides of the coin, *An-An*'s readers can better understand the benefits and risks of being *kawaii* and learn how to apply it appropriately.

While itai people assume that their version of *kawaii* is stylish and 'cool', in reality, their fashion and behavioural choices are viewed as bad taste that looks fake [*burikko*] and painful [*itai*] to the eyes, causing uncomfortable feelings in the people who surround them (Asano-Cavanagh, 2013; 2017). Therefore, only if a woman, young or mature alike, adopts an appropriately, socially accepted, *kawaii* style, she will be appreciated and admired by others in her society.

Although it has an inappropriate side, the virtues of *otona-kawaii* prevail over its negative aspect, in which a woman who behaves in a *kawaii* manner, conveys sincerity, honesty, reliability and is innocent in an adorable way. Furthermore, a woman who behaves and dresses cute and appropriate for her age may use the 'seductive' qualities of cuteness (see May, 2019) to draw attention and assistance from others.

Over and above, the results of the survey also show the existence of a gender difference, that is, women seem more familiar and have a more positive approach towards the word and the concept of *otona-kawaii* than men. In particular, it was found

that none of the survey respondents, women and men alike, specified “men” as *otona-kawaii*, but rather distinguished it as part of women’s culture. To elucidate the high level of positive responses regarding *otona-kawaii* among women, one explanation could be the relationship between cuteness and women. Various studies have shown that women are found to be more sensitive, reactive, and positive to cute things than men (see Nittono, 2009; Sherman *et al.*, 2012; Kringelbach *et al.*, 2016; Nittono, 2019; Nittono *et al.*, 2021). Another explanation lies in the special characteristics of the Japanese society, in which *kawaii* is taking a dominant part in its history and culture. In Japan, *kawaii* is historically associated with the young female culture (Nittono, 2016: pp. 80-1) and even today, women are more attracted by and exposed to *kawaii*, whether via fashion magazines, commercials, than the opposite sex (Lieber-Milo, 2017).

In conclusion, the new term *otona-kawaii* signals the rise of a new phenomenon that challenges the “orthodox perception” that was held until recently, in which the *kawaii* culture of cuteness was thought to belong solitarily to young women in their teens and children. The idea of ‘adult-cute’ strengthens prior studies (see Borgi *et al.*, 2014; Nittono, 2016), indicating that cuteness goes beyond its ‘original settings’ from the past, and is no longer limited to the youngsters, but can now apply to other age groups as well, such as grown women in their 20s and even 60s.

Declaration of interest statement

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

Funding

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or non-profit sectors.

Supplementary Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

REFERENCES

- ANAN, NOBUKO (2016), *Contemporary Japanese women’s theatre and visual arts: Performing girls’ aesthetics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- AOYAGI, HIROSHI (2005), *Islands of eight million smiles: Idol, performance and symbolic production in contemporary Japan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center.
- ASANO-CAVANAGH, YUKO (2013), Understanding Japanese culture through a semantic analysis of *kawaii* ‘cute’, *itai* ‘pitiful’ and *ita-kawaii* ‘pitifully trying to be cute’. In: John, Henderson — Marie-Eve Ritz — Celeste Rodríguez Louro (eds), *Proceedings of the 2012 Conference of the Australian Linguistic Society*, pp. 1-21. www.als.asn.au

- (2017), Kawaii discourse: The semantics of a Japanese culture keyword and its social elaboration. In: Carsten, Levisen — Sophia Waters (eds), *Culture keywords in discourse*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 211-234.
- BORGI, MARTA — IRENE, COGLIATI-DEZZA — VICTORIA, BRELSFORD, *et al.* (2014), Baby schema in human and animal faces induces cuteness perception and gaze allocation in children. *Frontiers in psychology*, 5, 411. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00411>
- BOTZ-BORNSTEIN, THORSTEN (2016), Kawaii, kenosis, Verwindung: A reading of kawaii through Vattimo's philosophy of 'weak thought'. *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture*, 2(1), pp. 111-123. https://doi.org/10.1386/eapc.2.1.111_1
- IHARA NAMIHA — NITTONO, HIROSHI (2011), Osana-sa no teido ni yoru kawai no katagori bunrui [Categorization of Kawaii by the Level of Infantility], Human Science Research, *Journal of Graduate School of Integrated Arts and Sciences*, Hiroshima University, 6, pp. 13-17.
- ISERI, MAKIKO (2015), Flexible femininities? Queering kawaii in Japanese girls' culture. In: Claire, Nally — Angela Smith (eds), *Twenty-first century feminism: Forming and performing femininity*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 140-163.
- ITAKURA, MIKIKO (2012, May 16), Kawaii-itai no kyōkaisen o hantei [Determining the boundary line of cute-painful]. *An-An Magazine*, 1806, pp. 49-56.
- KINSELLA, SHARON (1995), Cuties in Japan. In: Lise, Skov — Brian Moeran (eds), *Women, media and consumption in Japan*. Honolulu, Richmond: University of Hawaii Press, pp. 220-254.
- KRINGELBACH, MORTEN L. — STARK, ELOISE A. — ALEXANDER, CATHERINE, *et al.* (2016), On cuteness: Unlocking the parental brain and beyond. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 20(7), pp. 545-558. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2016.05.003>.
- LIEBER-MILO, SHIRI (2017), *The Macro and Micro Aspects and Effects of Kawaii*. PhD. Osaka University. Supervised by: Iwai Shigeki.
- (2021), Pink purchasing: Interrogating the soft power of Japan's kawaii consumption. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 0(0), pp. 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14695405211013849>.
- NGUYEN, AN (2012), *Maiden's fashion as eternal becomings: Victorian maidens and sugar sweet cuties donning Japanese street fashion in Japan and North America*. The University of Western Ontario, Canada. Supervised by Darnell Regna.
- (2016), Eternal maidens: Kawaii aesthetics and otome sensibility in Lolita fashion. *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture*, 2(1), pp. 15-31. https://doi.org/10.1386/eapc.2.1.15_1.
- MAY, SIMON (2019), *The power of cute*. Princeton University Press.
- MONDEN, MASAFUMI (2015), *Japanese fashion cultures: Dress and gender in contemporary Japan*. London, New York, NY: Bloomsbury.
- NITTONO, HIROSHI (2009), *A behavioral science approach to 'kawaii'* (In Japanese with English abstract). Paper presented at the Graduate School of Integrated Arts and Sciences, Hiroshima University, Hiroshima, 4, pp. 19-35. <http://doi.org/10.15027/29016>.
- (2016, April), The two-layer model of Kawaii: A behavioral science framework for understanding kawaii and cuteness. *East Asian Journal of Popular Culture Special Issue "Cute Studies"*, 2(1), pp. 79-95. https://doi.org/10.1386/eapc.2.1.79_1.
- (2019), *Kawaii no chikara- Jikken de saguru sono shinri* [The power of kawaii: A view from experimental psychology]. Kagaku Dojin.

- NITTONO, HIROSHI — LIEBER-MILO, SHIRI — DALE JOSHUA P. (2021), Cross-Cultural comparisons of the cute and related concepts in Japan, the United States, and Israel. *SAGE Open*, 11(1), pp. 1- 16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020988730>.
- SHERMAN, GARY D. — HAIDT, JONATHAN (2011), Cuteness and disgust: The humanizing and dehumanizing effects of emotion. *Emotion Review*, 3, pp. 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073911402396>
- SHERMAN, GARY D. — HAIDT JONATHAN — IYER RAVI, *et al.* (2012), Individual differences in the physical embodiment of care: Prosaically oriented women respond to cuteness by becoming more physically careful. *Emotion*, 13(1), pp. 151-158. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0029259>
- WINNICOTT, DONALD W. (1965), Ego distortion in terms of true and false self. In: Donald W. Winnicott (ed.), *The maturational process and the facilitating environment: Studies in the theory of emotional development*. New York, NY: International Universities Press, Inc, pp. 140-152.
- YANO, CHRISTINE R. (2013), *Pink globalization: Hello Kitty's trek across the Pacific*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- YOMOTA, INUHIKO (2006), *Kawaii ron* [Theory of kawaii]. Tokyo: Chikuma Shinsho.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shiro LIEBER-MILO received her PhD degree in Japanese Language and Culture studies from Osaka University in 2017. After receiving the Japanese government scholarship of Monbukagakusho (MEXT), she moved to Japan to continue her research on the Japanese culture. From 2018-2020, she was a special appointed researcher at the Graduate school of Human Sciences. Currently, she is an associate researcher at Sammy Ofer School of Communications, Reichman University. Her on-going research explores the positive aspects and effects of cute/kawaii consumption and the global trends in appreciating cuteness.

Undermining the gendered genre: Kabuki in manga

Olga ANTONONOKA | Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/2021.10.ANT.UNDER](https://doi.org/10.32926/2021.10.ANT.UNDER)

ABSTRACT

According to Jaqueline Berndt, Thomas LaMarre, and other critics, manga is a highly participatory media form. Narratives with vibrant characters and creative inconsistencies in the plotline encourage the reader to recontextualise the text, create new contents and unfold activities which go beyond reading (such as fan art and CosPlay). Recent popularity of manga about Japanese traditional arts – for example, Kabuki – further expanded the potential interaction with manga and other popular media to include (re)discovering traditional Japanese culture. Examples, such as Kabukumon by Tanaka Akio and David Miyahara (Morning 2008-2011), or Kunisaki Izumo no jijō by Hirakawa Aya (Weekly Shōnen Sunday 2010-2014) and a variety of other manga, anime and light novels exemplify this tendency. Consequently, influential franchises, such as Naruto and One Piece boast adaptations as Super Kabuki stage-plays. Furthermore, Jessica Bauwens-Sugimoto observes how thematic and stylistic overreaching in contemporary manga further distort the notions of the gendered genre that lays at the foundation of the manga industry. In this case, Kabuki theatre as a theme employs a variety of gender fluid characters and situations. For this purpose, Kabuki manga utilise cross-genre narrative and stylistic tropes, from overtly parodying borrowed tropes, to homage, and covert inclusions. On the example of Kabuki-manga I will explore a larger trend in manga to employ elements of female genres in male narratives, thus expanding the target readership. My paper explores specific mechanism that facilitates reading manga cross-genre, I also inquire what novel critical potential thematic and stylistic exchange between audiences may entail.

KEYWORDS

Manga Studies; Bishōnen; Kabuki Onnagata; Gender; Parody.

Date of submission: 2 May 2021

Date of acceptance: 6 December 2021

Date of publication: 20 December 2021

Introduction

There is a tendency to compare system of signs that constitutes comics to a language. Manga is no exception. Indeed, a typical example of a story manga incorporates reiterated character designs and sets, text of the dialogues that more or less anchors the meaning, as well as such recurring elements as: genre-specific panel layout, speech bubbles, graphically embellished onomatopoeia, speed lines and icons (sweat drops, pinched nerves etc), or metaphorical flowers and internal monologues. The narrative is fragmented into these elements, which are reiterated and cite each other, creating an illusion of continuity from a combination of individual pictorial signs and text. Manga necessitates a level of “literacy” to seamlessly consume these works. However, in “Ghostly:

‘Asian Graphic Narratives,’ *Nonnonba*, and Manga” (2013), Jaqueline Berndt sees beyond analysing the interrelation of signs that constitute manga as syntax. Instead, Berndt focuses on the language-like potential of manga to facilitate variety of connections between different readers around the same title, and the resulting creative output:

[...] Naming manga a ‘visual language’ points beyond the issue of decoding sweat beads or nose bleeds. It refers, above all, to the existence of specific communities that value less a single work’s aesthetic or ideological qualities than its facilitating relationships and support of reader participation, from empathy and immersion to fan art/fiction and CosPlay. (Berndt, 2013: 365).

Readers from different age and income groups, educational background, or social class find themselves addressed by the same work and come to share a variety of interpretations of the title. These diverse readers establish taste-communities around their shared title or specific interpretations thereof. And as recent scholarship attests, it is not uncommon for the readers to consume the genres that were not catering to them as their core audience.

It needs to be mentioned that Japanese manga has evolved in the form of genres based on the target audience’s age and gender: *shōjo* (girl), *shōnen* (boy), *josei* (young adult female), and *seinen* (young adult male). This comes from manga weekly and monthly magazines being the primary sites of the titles’ initial serialisation. The practice which is maintained today as well. Gendered genres may encompass any type of thematic genre, however, there is a consensus that gendered genres are distinguishable by their visual aesthetics as well as recurring character settings, the tone, and emphasis on specific types of character relationships. Periodical magazines aimed at specific readership allow for even stylistically hybrid works to be identified as belonging to respective gendered genre.

Cross-Genre Readings

Azuma Hiroki discusses a specific mode of creation and consumption of generic narratives that he attributes to the latter half of the 1990s, when Japanese franchises — media-mixes— began to privilege multiple versions of the narrative that may continue and expand or reimagine and contradict previous instalments. The multiplication of possible alternative developments that media-mix propagates, results in a franchise that facilitates

and virtually encompasses the derivative works. In *Dōbutsuka suru posutomodan: otaku kara mita nihon shakai* (2001) Azuma suggests that contemporary popular texts offer deliberate inconsistencies. To the consumer, who is knowledgeable in generic conventions these gaps in the narrative provide an impetus for interactive engagement, and facilitate multiple readings. Contemporary titles even offer deliberate openings that imply among others such frequently mentioned cross-genre readings as *yaoi*¹ interpretations of popular mainstream media.

From a formalist perspective in his essay “Weird Signs: Comics as Means of Parody” (2001) Frahm draws attention to the specific formalist traits of spatial arrangement of sign systems of text and pictorial images in comics, and refutes notion of unity and sequence, touted by McCloud as an axiom of comics reading: “the reading of comics is precisely *not* about reconstructing unity (of whatever) but rather to appreciate the heterogeneous signs of script and image in their peculiar, material quality which cannot be made into a unity” (Frahm, 2001: 177). Frahm sees closure as only one of many possible readings, offering specific avenues for structural analysis of the comics-text as facilitating multiple readings (Frahm, 2001: 179). Frahm’s analysis reverberates in the way Thomas LaMarre engages with different levels of meaning construction in manga through the emphasis on the linework in his influential article “Manga Bomb: Between The Lines of Barefoot Gen” (2010).

Following Frahm’s analysis, my methodology for this article is informed by Judith Butler’s theory of performativity, and specifically the notion of parody². I will explore how the character is constructed to fluctuate between humorous effect that stems from juxtaposition of *shōjo* and *shōnen* tropes, and facilitating literacy of the female genre.

¹ derivative works that reimagine male characters as having romantic and sexual relationships.

² In her seminal work “Gender Trouble” Judith Butler famously associates drag with parody. She states: “[...] gender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin” (Butler 1990: 138). By which she refers to drag, which is a combination of the performer’s sexed body, their innate gender identity, and the embodiment of gender identity that is contradicting inconsistently performer’s sexed body or their gender identity. And as such may constitute exactly the embodiment of the drag gender identity. This fluctuating relationship between the triad of sexed body, embodied gender, and gender identity draws attention to the fallacy of the notion of gender as stemming from something innate and natural. Allegedly we fashion our bodies to outwardly represent our internal gender, which may or may not coordinate with our sexed bodies. However, the notion of this internal gender is a “fantasy of a fantasy”, built via negotiation of the dominant discourse of patriarchy rather than from some kind of innate sense of self (related to our sexed bodies) (Butler 1990: 138).

The parody cites a recognisable text yet imbues it with different meaning for more or less comedic effect. On the one hand parodic effect depends on the knowledge of the source materials. However, if the same element can have multiple meanings, the element's meaning within initial context may be questioned as well.

I will focus both on the narrative as well as on the formalist convention that facilitate meaning as negotiable, contextual and relative. According to Frahm (2009), in comics, text reiterates information that is given in images, sometimes clarifying, sometimes supplementing, and the images do the same to the text. Consequently, to Frahm, each of these sign systems signifies each other, and reveals the absence of "original". Frahm refers to comics as structural parody that parodies precisely the relation between the sign and what it signifies³.

As a result, one may acknowledge that the meaning of any sign is relational and contextual. The parody in this case is therefore of something existing beyond or before the signs and the heterogeneity of signs among themselves rather than the signs as signifiers that reference an actual signified. Signs at most reveal the discourse within which their paradigmatic relationships become coherent.

As such, the rudimentary structural level of comics appears to support the tendency of the industry to open the text to commercially lucrative multimodal readings. Which may be facilitated as Barthes and Fish would suggest by the reader's context, spurred by seeking the correct reading or by playing consciously with possible meanings.

However, there is an obvious hierarchy in which popular titles are consumed by extended audiences across genres. Scholarship agrees that the most widely accessed genres are *shōnen* and *seinen*, which are also habitually analysed as manga proper. In other words, these "masculine" genres had been widely read by "female" readers.

³ In the case of comics, the structural parody reveals the contingency of the relationship between sign and reality. By what means? The constellation of signs of different kinds in comics does not only show that typographical and graphical signs are related. In their heterogeneous materiality the signs in constellation are already self-referential. We may even say that the signs, because of their being self-referential, imitate each other in their claim to signify a thing beyond the signs (an "original"; Butler 1990: 138). The structural parody of comics thus shows us a constellation of script and image in their material difference, being juxtaposed and integrated at the same time. It parodies precisely that claim for a truth beyond the signs, and directs our attention to the constellation of signs itself. Because comics offer us a system of signs in its own right which seems to integrate the heterogeneous script and image, the structural parody calls into question this apparent unity (Frahm, 2000: 180).

LaMarre (2009), Fujimoto (2015), and Bauwens-Sugimoto (2016, 2018) point out aspects of cross-genre reading through the perspective of the female genre readers, who are allegedly courted by the male genres.

Conversely, the discussions of male readers of *shōjo* genres also exemplifies similar recontextualization paradigm. Especially male fans of *shōjo*-inspired *lolicon* genre, offer an insight into the mechanism of out-of-context readings. One of the most recent and competent *otaku* analysis *Otaku and the Struggle for Imagination in Japan* (2019) by Galbraith describes in detail how with the popularity of The Magnificent 49ers in the late 70s among male critics and readers, a growing number of male fans of *shōjo* manga emerged. However, these fans in the next few years, began to formulate their specific reading of *shōjo* genre within the communities and share their interest via self-published fanzines — *dōjinshi*. These derivative works evolved into a new parodic and erotically charged genre of *lolicon*, which idolised young girl protagonists strongly reminiscent of *shōjo*. Overwhelming popularity of *lolicon* in turn opened the gates for these young female characters into *shōnen* and *seinen* narratives. However, despite being derived from *shōjo* genre, it does not appear that the *shōjo* in *lolicon* titles are appealing (or are made less offensive) to the female reader in 1980s⁴.

Thomas LaMarre (2009) and Jessica Bauwens-Sugimoto (2016) agree that consideration of the female reader in masculine genre became evident since the early 2000s. Moreover, during this period, the number of female authors of the *seinen* and *shōnen* manga grew.

As Bauwens-Sugimoto notes in “Queering Black Jack: A Look At How Manga Adapts to Changing Reading Demographics”: “at least half, and sometimes more than half, of the readers of ‘manga for boys’ do not identify as male” (Bauwens-Sugimoto 2016: 112)⁵. Industry recognised the consumerist power of these non-male fans and began to specifically accommodate these readers by including *shōjo* and BL manga-like

⁴ Although more academic consideration may be necessary to confirm this.

⁵ Instead of trying to win back their target audience, many editors and artists are interested in making sure their works please the readers they demonstrably have. A possible reason for this is that even the largest *shōnen* manga magazine, Weekly *Shōnen Jump*, while still selling over two million copies a week, has trouble achieving sales anywhere near the level of its heyday in the early 1990s, when the print-run was six million copies a week. Catering to the needs of their current readers and customers, more and more male artists are incorporating elements that appeal to female readers (Bauwens-Sugimoto, 2016: 112).

aesthetics and narrative tropes, as well as reimagining the existing lolicon-based female character into approximations of *shōjo*.

While apparent diversity of readership may undermine the notion of a gendered genre, manga is still serialised in magazines, referencing specific group of readers. Moreover, there is a marked disbalance between readers, who identify as female consuming “masculine” genres and “male” readers reading genres aimed at the allegedly “female” audience. As such we may theorise that, reading both so-called “gender appropriate” genres and reading across-genre, becomes a part of individual gender performance⁶. At the same time, in the age of such generic ambiguity, maintaining gendering of the genres has a potential to offer male readers an opportunity to consume materials that reference *shōjo* and *josei* genre tropes. Arguably, a type of content that otherwise would not be sought out by a reader, uninterested specifically in cross-genre reading.

Centrality of Character

The central element of any generic narrative is the character. Azuma Hiroki suggests that postmodern consumer prioritises engaging with an attractive character and participating in creation of derivative works over the individual stories and worlds (Azuma, 2009: 49). The character/characters are likewise at the crux of the media-mix⁷.

It is thus unsurprising that the character finds him or herself at the centre of the discussion when cross-genre readings of manga are concerned. Be it analysis of *fujoshi*⁸ reimagining male friendships in masculine genres into romantic scenarios, or male lolicon fans consuming *shōjo* characters in pursuit of *moe*-triggers.

The genre-specific characters in manga and anime are referred to as the “soulful bodies” by Thomas LaMarre in his seminal work *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation* (2009). Such a character embodies generic tropes within his or her design. LaMarre looks at these designs twofold: on the one hand, the character design is a

⁶ The whole spectrum of gender identification of the reader involved in these practices needs to be addressed more thoroughly from gender studies perspective. To make the argument concise, I will use the terms “male” and “female”, mimicking the terminology of the gendered genres.

⁷ Steinberg in his article “Condensing the Media Mix: Multiple Possible World in the Tatami Galaxy” (2012) likewise analyses how Japanese franchise building privileges the character rather than the world.

⁸ Fans of *boys' love* genre.

compilation of traits that by citing previous generic works, reveal the character's personality, narrative role, and possible scenarios. On the other hand, the character design constantly embodies characters' emotions. For example, when a character shrinks into a super-deformed *chibi* form, the reader is provided an insight into this character's amplified emotion.⁹

[...] bodies on which supposedly inner states, spiritual, emotional, or psychological tensions and conflicts are directly described, appearing on the surface in character design, implying potential movement of the body and of the soul. (LaMarre, 2009: 228).

The soul, that is, movements of feeling and thinking, is inscribed on the surface, explicating itself in advance of any narrative explication. (LaMarre, 2009: 230).

In recent scholarship, inclusion of *shōjo*-manga derived characters (*shōjo* and *bishōnen*) in masculine genres is theorised as one of the key elements that proves that *shōnen* and *seinen* genres are actively inviting female manga readers. In *The Anime Machine* (2009) LaMarre exemplifies the discussion of what he terms the “female address” with analysis of *lolicon*-like manga and anime *Chobits*. The creators of *Chobits* — CLAMP — are a group of female artists who became famous for their *shōjo* manga and then expanded into *shōnen* and *seinen* genres. In 2000-2002 they created a *seinen* title for *Weekly Young Magazine* (Kōdansha). This periodical primarily targets young adult men. However, LaMarre explores how female readers are evidently considered via a set of narrative and visual tropes¹⁰ (LaMarre, 2009: 218, 222). Central to his discussion is the character Chii — an android-shaped personal computer.

This brilliant set-up allows CLAMP to pose the question of what a woman is. While it may seem that the answer lies between the legs of the gynoid persocom (that is,

⁹ Variety of techniques introduce characters' perspectives, inviting reader's emotional involvement through eye-close-ups, shot-reverse-shot sequences, extreme comical deformations that visualise characters affects and emotions, as well as internal monologues, and (especially characteristic of *shōjo* manga) symbolic visualisations of character's emotions that extend their body with costumes, symbols, decorations and other elements.

¹⁰ For CLAMP, the so-called “absence of the sexual relation” has a pragmatic valence. When asked about the anime adaptation of the manga, Ohkawa Nanase says that the idea was to make an anime that wouldn't embarrass girls. In other words, although the manga is clearly addressed to young men at one level, CLAMP addresses girls at another level, whence the relative modesty in portraying bodies and genitals—no money shots, as it were. The combination of a *seinen* mode of address with *shōjo* sensibility results in sexual situations without actual sexual relations—sex without sex (LaMarre, 2009: 222).

the truth lies in female anatomy), *Chobits* does not allow for such a simple answer. Instead, it shows “woman” as an effect of socially structured relations. Which to say, the persocom is a woman insofar as Hideki treats her as one. The question “computer or woman?” turns into a question about the construction of “woman.” Will Motosuwa treat it/her as a computer or as woman? (LaMarre, 2009: 218, 223).

Chii is arguably a *lolicon* character (adolescent body with a mind of a child), yet at the same time she strongly references a *shōjo*-manga protagonist in the way she looks, is dressed in an array of elaborate costumes. The costumes, according to LaMarre, are referencing *shōjo* genre. And in *shōjo* genre the costume not only reveals character type, but also extends the character’s interiority, communicating both personality and emotions. The way the frills and lace envelope Chii’s android body evokes *shōjo* character and her fine, complex emotions. The soul is implied by the outward manifestation of combinations of signs. In this case clothes are strongly associated with personality traits.

The costume also fragments and conceals the android body. The parts which are glimpsed beneath the costume, lead the viewer of anime or reader of manga to reconstruct a feminine “whole” that is implied. However, the body beneath is narratively a machine that approximates a shape of human female. Ultimately, Chii’s femininity depends on the elements of *shōjo* manga that are generated around her android body. The costume conceals the “reality” of her being a computer, and, being an intrinsic part of her “soulful body”, visually communicate an array of *shōjo*-like emotions. Moreover, narratively, she yearns for her one true love, which is not conveyed to Hideki, but only to the reader/viewer. LaMarre suggests that Chii becomes a *shōjo* character, through emphasis on these emotive costumes, and her fragmented nudity that reveals only the parts of her that imply her female body rather than reveal her mechanical make-up. *Shōjo*-like aspect of *Chobits* is further amplified by her non-patriarchal and subversively sexless relationship with the doting, yet immature male protagonist Hideki. For the reader a combination of recognisable costumes, that extend Chii’s sweet and sentimental interiority, in combination with the ambiguous power-relationship with Hideki, successfully opens this title to reading from *shōjo*-manga perspective despite all the risqué jokes.

After the *shōjo*-protagonist, an attractive male protagonist “*bishōnen*” is another staple of *shōjo* genre. *Bishōnen* can be defined by his soulful body — his personality and his emotions — represented through the same generic tropes as the female

protagonist. He is an identification anchor, elicits empathy similarly to a female protagonist, but also serves as an object of another character's or the reader's desire. These male protagonists are frequently accessorised with complex emotive costumes, flowers, decorations, sparkles, emotional close-ups, and internal monologues that visually and narratively reveal their interiority¹¹.

Bauwens-Sugimoto in "Queering Black Jack: A Look At How Manga Adapts to Changing Reading Demographics" analyses male characters as catering to the female gaze in Sakamoto Shinichi's *Innocent* (*Weekly Young Jump* 2013-2015) and *Young Black Jack* by Ōkuma Yūgo (*Young Champion* 2011-2019). Similarly to LaMarre, Bauwens-Sugimoto emphasises their physical beauty and lavish costumes, as well as occasional nudity that in both titles is used to amplify the vulnerability of the protagonists. Specifically, she observes how depictions of male protagonists, nude and vulnerable, in scenes of emotional anguish, or physical assault, positions them as an object of the gaze and eroticises these episodes in the way that specifically references boys' love (Bauwens-Sugimoto, 2016: 121).

Onnagata as Bishōnen

In many *shōjo* manga *bishōnen* are protagonists, and in the *shōjo*-derived genre of boys' love, they are playing both romantic leads. The eponymous "beauty" of *bishōnen* can be implied, through the way he is depicted as an object to the gaze of another character and simultaneously as an object for the gaze of the reader.

Bauwens-Sugimoto addresses *bishōnen* as a **visually** identifiable character type in combination with fluid agency as inherent of *shōjo* manga and as such recognisable within her examples of *seinen* manga. Correspondingly, LaMarre notes in his analysis of *Chobits* an unstable, fluid power dynamic between android Chii and the male protagonist Hideki.

Following LaMarre's argument, I suggest that *bishōnen* as a soulful body incorporates female genre to a degree that entering the diegesis his presence brings a potential to read

¹¹ Here a note needs to be made. Not all contemporary *shōjo* manga are excessively flowery. However, a strong emphasis on the aesthetic value of the linework and other visual elements remains unchanging. Famously laconic in their panel layouts and use of visual metaphors Ono Natsume, Yosinaga Fumi, Est Em all design their works to be extending their character's interiority and imply the dynamic of the portrayed relationship.

the narrative as a type of women's manga. Labelling these titles as masculine preserves the well-established hierarchy between "universal" masculine and auxiliary feminine contents. However, when *bishōnen* enters male genres, he influences and expands the definition of "masculine contents", resulting in men acquiring new literacy, and end up reading *shōjo* manga, labelled "masculine".

In order to explore this argument, I will exemplify my hypothesis with an analysis of a novel type of gender non-conforming character in *shōnen* and *seinen* manga — a recurring cross-dressing *bishōnen*. I specifically limit my inquiry to manga about kabuki. I will elaborate with a help of a case study, how *onnagata* — male performer of female roles in kabuki — can be frequently recognised as a *bishōnen* and how he is integrated and function as a part of *shōnen* manga.

Onnagata is a character who is bound to naturally occur in narratives set around kabuki. As *onnagata* stage performance entails a gender-bending element, *onnagata* are frequently depicted borrowing elements of *bishōnen*'s soulful body, especially the emotive, evocative costume that is coherent as an element of a *shōjo*-derived soulful body. This character is also habitually exposed to an objectifying gaze of another character, the audience, or is offered to the reader's gaze. His objectification can be integrated in a variety of ways from becoming a butt of a joke to a gender-conscious dramatic twist.

Traditional arts and crafts as narrative setting gained in popularity since early 2000s in manga, light novels, anime, and other popular media. Consequently, kabuki as a setting is readily found in all genres of manga, and quite a few notable works feature *onnagata* as protagonists or one of the main characters¹². Most *onnagata*-characters in these titles are depicted, referencing recognisable aspects of the *bishōnen*¹³.

¹² This coincided with Kabuki theatre itself opening to collaborations with manga and anime. In 2010 *Somemoyō chūgi no goshuin* a kabuki play about a same-sex romance, based on an Edo period play, was advertised as boys' love kabuki. Super Kabuki troupe, renown for updated, modernised kabuki plays since 1980s, staged *One Piece* (2015), and Shinsaku Kabuki troupe released *Naruto* (2018) and *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* (2020). These new plays are performed by trained Kabuki actors from prominent families with the traditional male-only cast.

¹³ In particular, the following recent titles can be considered kabuki narratives: the *shōjo* manga *Pintokona* by Ako Shimaki (*Cheese!*, 2009-ongoing); *Irokaneru* by veteran *shōjo* manga artist Masumi Kawaso (*Hana to Yume*, 2011–2014); *Kabuki Iza* by female newcomer Sawa Sakura, with a style heavily reminiscent of *shōjo* manga (*Comic Beam*, 2012–2014); with respect to *seinen* titles *Kabukumon* by

I focus on the *onnagata*'s depiction as *shōjo*-manga derived character type *bishōnen*, and analyse the character tropes that open *onnagata*-character to interpretation within the context of the female genres. In this article I will focus on the use of cross-dressing for comedic effect.

As a case study, I will analyse *bishōnen* in *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* by Hirakawa Aya (*Weekly Shōnen Sunday* 2009-2014). *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* parodies the recognisable major genre tropes and clichés. On the one hand, this title exemplifies recent tendency to include *shōjo* and *boys' love* manga tropes into *shōnen* and *seinen*. However, the female genre tropes are parodied alongside tropes from *lolicon*. Moreover, in some jokes the character design specifically may seem to reference more risqué niche genres' such as *shōta* or *otoko no ko*. However, taking into consideration that this title is published in a *shōnen* manga magazine, it seems unlikely that niche pornographic genres are expected to be recognised as readily as *shōjo* or *lolicon*, which in its milder form is not uncommon aesthetic in *shōnen* titles¹⁴.

It gives rudimentary *shōjo* manga tropes new meanings that provoke humorous reaction. As such *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* demonstrates to what extent a *shōnen* manga anticipates recognition of female genre tropes. Simultaneously, this title offers an insight into the mechanism of gradual introduction of the new generic literacy by elaborating on and expanding the scope of reappropriated *shōjo* and *boys' love* tropes.

Kabuki theatre is a traditional Japanese theatrical artform that goes back to early Edo period (1603-1868). Kabuki in Edo period was an eclectic popular lower-class entertainment, concerned with sensual pleasures, violence, and physicality. After Meiji era however it was gradually censored and shaped into a classical art form known for its rigidity (Mezur, 2005: 135)¹⁵. After a brief period of women performing kabuki, by

veteran artist Akio Tanaka and script-writer David Miyahara (*Morning*, 2008–2011); *Juntarō* by bestselling author Motoka Murakami (*Big Comic*, 2011); *Onmyōji* by Munku Mutsuki (*Monthly Comic Ryu*, since 2012); and finally a *shōnen* title, *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* by Aya Hirakawa (*Weekly Shōnen Sunday*, 2010–2014) among others.

¹⁴ As a matter of fact, *Weekly Shōnen Sunday* was the magazine which serialised Takahashi Rumiko's famous manga *Urusei Yatsura* (1978-1987), which had great influence on the *lolicon* aesthetics.

¹⁵ Contemporary Kabuki performances are all based on *kata* – symbolic codified acting tropes for each play, that include movements on stage, lines, and ways to perform them, costumes and make up, and virtually exclude possibility of ad lib.

mid-17th century after a string of *bakufu* decrees, only men were allowed on stage, resulting in male actors — *onnagata* — taking over female roles.

Kathrine Mezur postulates in her book that *onnagata* performances do not reference femininity, rather they combine “feminine” acts with historical *onnagata* acts. In Edo period *onnagata* wore female clothes offstage, behaved like proxy “women”, but also served as male prostitutes (*kagama*) to their male and female patrons. Which did not preclude them from having their own wives and children. As such *onnagata* combines a notion of feminine allure with desirability and objectification of *kagama*.

The performing body of an *onnagata* is fragmented into areas that create a link both to the fiction of femininity and to the materiality of the male sexed body of an actor. The costume mediates *onnagata*’s performance. Similarly to *shōjo* manga, *onnagata*’s costume communicates character type (princess, courtesan, wife, etc), it also can extend the character’s interiority through manipulation of its symbolically charged parts, such as sleeves, hems, neckline and so forth. Finally, it conceals and segments *onnagata*’s body. An actor’s face, the nape of his neck, his hands and feet are the only visible parts. Kimono helps to create multiple reading of the performer’s body. The elements of feminine allure imply *onnagata* as an objectified woman — the role they play on stage. At the same time, the same parts, such as larger hands, feet, Adam’s apple betray the male body beneath.

The idea of the body beneath is virtually inseparable from how an *onnagata* is perceived by spectators. Spectators interact in their imaginations with the *onnagata*’s surface articulation and his body beneath. A spectator’s perception of the body beneath is shaped by individual, cultural, racial, class, and sexual differences. [...] They may experience desire and attraction, loathing and revulsion, or any number of feelings, all of which are charged with personal and cultural taboos. [...] Without the viewer’s awareness that *onnagata* are constructing and enacting a female-likeness with a male body beneath, there is no kabuki *onnagata* (Mezur, 2005: 9).

The same set of elements is read differently, as it is filtered through the context of the spectator — *onnagata* performance acquires meanings between *onnagata* and the audience.

The ambiguity of a kimono, in combination with erotically charged non-covered body parts became a trope in manga about kabuki. They are used to elicit such multiple reaction to *onnagata*’s role and body beneath, in another character as well as in the

reader. The fragmentation of a character's body through costume is further amplified with the fragmentation of panels and pages.

Onnagata as a manga character tends to incorporate another popular contemporary stereotype — an *onnagata* as an expert in traditional culture. Contemporary *onnagata* regularly appear in *women's* life-style magazines, they are called on as experts on traditional arts, craft, and elegant pastimes, moreover, they are prompted to comment on desirable femininity, frequently reinforcing patriarchal stereotypes. As a result, these off-stage images of *onnagata* are also marketed towards women as non-threatening objectified masculinity¹⁶.

It appears that *onnagata* offers an alternative masculinity for the women to consume, rather than for the men to imitate. To the generation of “good wives, wise mothers”, *onnagata* are unthreatening and open to objectification. What happens when such an *onnagata* becomes a protagonist of a *shōnen* manga?

Case-Study *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō*

My case study — *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* is a debut serialised work by a female manga artist Hirakawa Aya¹⁷ (*Weekly Shōnen Sunday*, 2010–2014). The title parodies *onnagata*, and at the same time parodies the tropes of female genres. In order to do both, Hirakawa intersperses *shōnen* tropes with *shōjo* visual and narrative elements. Typically, the humour is derived from the *onnagata* characters appearing as women to someone, who

¹⁶ For example, one of the most recognizable contemporary *onnagata*, habitually referenced by manga artists, is Bando Tamasaburō V. Tamasaburō is portrayed in TV-programs, magazine interviews and other media outlets, as a connoisseur of traditional arts and crafts, expert on expensive kimono fashion, fabrics and accessories, make-up, and a variety of activities that the heroines he performs would most likely be interested in. There is definite overlap in the elegant images he brings to life on stage and the off-stage persona that is produced in a variety of popular media. His sexuality, family or relationships are omitted from his interviews, instead his single-minded dedication to rehearsing and training for the role are discussed and perpetuate the narrative that he only lives for the stage. His image combines a superhuman body, that is concealed with layers of kimono, with perfect performance of beauty, grace, elegance, and objectified vulnerability, which roughly approximates “femininity”. Tamasaburō's on and off-stage persona appears to be mostly marketed to the affluent middle-aged women, who assert their agency over these images, in essence objectifying him. Tamasaburō's anniversary edition photobook *Tokubetsu aizōban: Godaime Bandō Tamasaburō* [Special Edition: Bandō Tamasaburō V] (2008) included a piece of a kimono he wore on-stage, an imprint of his stage make-up on a *tenugui*-towel, and an autograph, all arguably very personal and erotically charged attachments. This luxury edition is sometimes available for 500.000 yen through his web-page on demand: <http://www.tamasaburo.co.jp/goods/index.html>

¹⁷ Hirakawa Aya's next project with *Weekly Shōnen Sunday* “Tenshi to Akuto!!” (2014-2018) also deals with some gender bending, with male protagonist working as a female-voice voice-actor.

doesn't know they are crossdressing, and elicit a romantic or a sexual response before revealing they are men. Alternatively, the onlooker may be fooled despite knowing, and the joke is based on the inability to differentiate between performance and reality. Essentially, it reinforces the heteronormative paradigm, not to mention that the images of femininity that *onnagata* produce are predominantly those of utmost passivity. However, at the same time, the tone of the jokes becomes increasingly risqué in terms of representation of the same-sex male desire as the narrative progresses. And at the same time representations of LGBTQ characters grow more and more sympathetic, with final volumes including some overt same-sex love confessions and ruminations on the topic of same-sex love.

Already from the earlier volumes, it is clear that in order to grasp the gist of the jokes, the reader is anticipated to have a certain capacity to recognise such *shōjo* manga citations as leaves, floating in the strategically timed gusts of wind, a variety of flower-metaphors, sparkles, and other symbolically charged embellishments, as well as enjoy the humour derived from such juxtaposition. This provides an opportunity to analyse the changes in visual aesthetics, narrative emphasis on emotion rather than action, and alternative image of male protagonist that extend definition of masculine content, while remaining overtly labelled “masculine”. As such “masculine” label sanctions the consumption of the hybrid contents evident in *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* by male-identified reader.

The character design of *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* looks basic mangaesque with large heads, thin bodies, huge saucer-eyes, and colourful hair¹⁸. Protagonist Izumo is a misogynistic sixteen-year-old. As a child he was a promising young *onnagata*, but eight years prior quit kabuki, anxious that it was impacting his manliness. He reluctantly returns to the stage to save his family honour—the manliest reason ever—despite his disdain for having to cross-dress and pretend to be a woman. Narrative development is typically *shōnen*-like, Izumo polishes his skills by taking on stronger and stronger adversaries and finds loyal allies. However, this story undermines the *shōnen* manga tropes by making Izumo better than anyone at kabuki and cross-dressing rather than

¹⁸ On the covers and illustrations.

martial arts or sports. He is at the centre of *bishōnen*-filled narrative that introduces several major LGBTQ characters.

Clean linework and coherent panel layout in combination with plenitude of speed-lines, dynamic movement, onomatopoeia, and attractive and colourful character-designs balances between *shōnen* style and *shōjo* citations. Predominantly the lines are flowing and bouncing, the squabbles between the characters never become life-threatening, and the jocular violence does not hurt them. In short, the linework is similar to what Thomas LaMarre refers to as “plastic lines” (2010). Disney-like soft outlines that visually interact with the outside forces. Characters deform on the impact, and bounce back, unharmed. As such, plastic line channels the character’s life force, implying him as immortal throughout the narrative or in the specific episodes¹⁹.

While plasticity is characteristic of jocular scenes in *shōnen* manga, where characters clash without actually being injured, in a multitude of episodes the flowing “plastic” lines in *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō*, acquire a distinctive *shōjo* aesthetic. Panels become bigger and irregular shape, they are populated with emotive close-ups, and decorations. The kabuki costumes are used to visually extend and emphasise character’s emotion. These depictions are a staple of all stage-performances and emotional exchanges between characters, especially as the various relationships between the characters develop into close friendships, familial bonds, and even same sex loves.

The binary of Izumo’s bratty and combative masculine self, Izumo’s gentler emotional side, and Izumo’s crossdressing are implied with very comprehensible distinct linework. Using what Oshiyama Michiko (2008: 165-170) refers to as feminine and masculine visual traits.

¹⁹ These lines also impact the reader on a more immediate visceral level, prompting direct reaction to the form above recognition of the content. Which is opposed to structural, realistic and angular line, that conveys character’s mortality and fragility as well as emphasizes the cognitive recognition rather than visceral reaction.

Masculinity	Femininity
<p>Face: Narrow eyes, less emphasised eyelashes, longer face, high nose, bigger mouth, emphasised brows.</p> <p>Hair: Shorter hair, dark or subdued coloured hair (brown, dark blond, blue-blond on illustrations), appears dark on the monochrome drawing, limited highlights.</p> <p>Body: Bigger body frame in relation to other characters, wide shoulders, broad frame, musculature.</p> <p>Clothes: Masculine clothes, suits, uniforms, emphasised masculinity of the body-shape.</p>	<p>Face: Wide eyes, round eyes (innocent), long eyes corners turned up (promiscuity), long eyelashes, round face, small nose, small mouth, thin brows.</p> <p>Hair: Conventionally light hair (blond) or colourful hair, longer hair, curly hair, a lot of highlights showing the glossiness of the hair, elaborate hairstyles.</p> <p>Body: Smaller body frame in relation to other characters, narrow shoulders, narrow body, no muscle.</p> <p>Clothes: Feminine dress elements, flowing fabrics, frills, lace, patterns, emphasises the smallness of the frame.</p>

In episodes, where Izumo behaves in a “masculine” way, his face has straight brows slightly drawn at the nose, and frequently a mischievous one-sided smile. His hair spikes up as well. It is especially evident in fighting, arguing *shōnen*-like sequences. Izumo’s “feminine” self has round and raised brows, shinier eyes with longer lashes; he has a soft smile, and his expressions are demure and aesthetic in emotional or artistic *shōjo*-like sequences.

I begin with an analysis of the distinct *shōjo*-like sequences. As a part of the narrative, they visually build up the gravity of the situation, but usually — end with a joke and a punchline: “I am a man!!!” With the protagonist switching into his *chibi*-mode and wreaking havoc. As such heteronormativity is restored at the very end and appears to justify the prolonged segments of gender-queer content.

Shōjo-manga like sequences are associated with *onnagata* cross-dressing on-stage episodes, which in this manga serve dual purpose. On the one hand they establish Izumo’s artistic dominance over whoever challenges him, on the other hand they indirectly resolve relationships conflicts between characters. These scenes are always depicted with elements of *shōjo* manga. Moreover, by volume 10, all of them are highlighted through *shōjo* manga tropes.

These tropes include: irregular panelling and splash pages with costuming details, reiteration of emotional facial close-ups, mostly accompanied with internal monologues, metaphorical flowers, gusts of wind and other decorations that extend, accessorise, and otherwise supplement visualisation of character's interiority.

The scene generally opens with a panel/panels decorated with flowers, stars, and sparkles and is comprised of shot-reverse shots that portray character's perspective and convey their feelings via internal monologues. They also include: movements with focus on the body parts (close ups and/or slow motion) that allow sensory empathy with characters.

Izumo's first *onnagata* sequence is similarly structured. In order to pay a debt to another *onnagata* who helps him out when he is bullied, Izumo reluctantly agrees to replace his saviour on stage as Yūgiri, a famous courtesan role from *Kuruwa Bunsho*. A double spread slows down the action. First, we see a full body *onnagata* figure in elaborate costume, with his face hidden behind a wad of paper (Hirakawa, 2009: Vol. 1, 40-41). He slowly takes the paper away to reveal on the next splash page a gloriously beautiful Izumo with sparkles, flowers and slowly falling petals. The panel layout so far is not as complex as some impressionistic *shōjo* titles. However, already at this juncture the splash pages are used for a decorative emotionally charged full body portrait that details the costume. The clothes in combination with large close up of the face demonstrate the elegance and ease with which Izumo assumes the courtesan's role (Hirakawa, 2009: Vol. 1, 42-43).

Izumo's face is pensive, as the role dictates; on the next page he looks up and smiles gently. In the lower tier small panels show the audience's thrilled reaction — from that exceptional face some veteran spectators recognise him as the talented child-actor he was before his hiatus (Hirakawa, 2009: Vol. 1, 42-43).

The metaphorical petals and leaves continue to blow through the next double spread. The first narrow tier explains the plot of the play — in this scene Yūgiri can finally reunite with her one true love. A small panel zooms in on the opening of the sleeve; the sleeve is reiterated and placed in the spotlight in the large panel that shows Izumo's gentle facial expression, the scoop of the *eriashi* (erotically charged kimono neckline at the back), and his fingers peeking out from the embroidered sleeve in an elegant gesture. This mini-slow-motion accentuates and extends the movement, from

the right page, continuing the motion to the left page. Finally, Izumo and his co-actor strike the *mie*-tableau pose (Hirakawa, 2009: Vol. 1, 44-45).

Panels are slanted, indicating the rising emotions. All *shōjo*-manga like elements appear to indicate that this beautiful inspired Izumo is immersed in an artistic reverie, however his inner monologue reveals that he is just relieved to be done with the play. Such parodic inconsistency of text and image creates unexpected humorous effect. The reader is led to believe in Izumo's sincerity via associating the recurring visual tropes with their meaning in *shōjo*-manga. However, the text brings the reader back into the framework of *shōnen* manga, that specifically parodies the excessive emotionality of female genres. Following Frahm's argument, the reader is reminded of the precarious interrelationship of text and image. Our complacency as closure driven readers is geared to be used against us.

However, the title immediately follows up, not yet breaking with the *shōjo*-like sequence. As Izumo's attention is arrested by the applause; a close-up of his startled and thrilled face invites the reader to empathise with this time genuine emotion. Turning the page reveals a splash page of both actors with their back to the reader and a panorama of a standing ovation in the theatre. Izumo's eyes are zoomed in upon, showing him stunned with his success and recalling in a two-panel flashback the elated feeling he would get when he was a child actor. The fragmented slow-motion-like panel layout with emphasis on the emotional movement and linework is again referencing *shōjo* manga. On the next page we see the last panel of what I suggest can be read as a markedly *shōjo* sequence, as Izumo smiles genuinely and happily. In this episode the eyes are used as mirrors of the soul, as both Izumo's artistic inspiration and his joy at being on stage communicate with the reader and other characters. This time the mood is broken by a comically relieved face of Izumo's co-actor, but Izumo himself remains in sync with the soulful body implied by his costume and *shōjo*-like focus on his face (Hirakawa, 2009: 44-47). As such here drag in manga and manga as drag works on different levels simultaneously. The scene begins with soulful body being juxtaposed with the innate "gender" of the character. Granted "gender" here is almost synonymous with elegant, elated and sincere emotion that Izumo is supposed to portray. However, as the scene progresses the same soulful body finds itself in tune with character's interiority, and alternatively is juxtaposed (by the other character's comical relief) with the "gender" of the genre itself. As the *shōnen*-ness of the episode is restored. As such

the *shōjo* tropes are used two-fold, to trick the reader and elicit laughter, and then to transform into homage, all within the same sequence. Visually the transition is imperceptible, it is the anchoring text that offers some distinction, drawing attention to the way the signs interact and contradict each other, as such bringing to the fore two systems of signs interacting within the underlying discourse of patriarchy.

Next, I would like to offer an example of the emotionally charged sequence that depicts not only Izumo's splendour on stage, but rather his caring nature. It utilises a mix of *shōnen* manga like comedy, interspersed with highly emotionally charged panels that demurely borrow from *shōjo* manga, yet eschew explicit citation, thus maintaining visual consistency of the scene. In the following sequence, Izumo stages an intervention during a performance that aims to resolve the conflict of two brothers from prominent kabuki family Sugawara — Matsuki and Umeki. Sugawara Brothers hate each other, due to a misunderstanding, yet end up in the same production, playing rivals on stage, vying for the love of Izumo's character Yatsunashi in *Kagotsurube*. Respectively, Umeki is Einōjō, Yatsunashi's true love, while Matsuki is Jirōzaemon — the villain. Yatsunashi becomes involved in the love triangle and is supposed to get killed. Coming to the scene when the killing should take place, the sequence starts with Izumo grabbing the sleeve of Umeki-Einōjō, and in a close-up of his beautifully made-up face, with a cheeky smile demands in a masculine non-kabuki speech that Umeki stays on stage despite his part being over. Then Izumo returns to kabuki-like speech, and replacing the names of Umeki and Matsuki with Einōjō and Jirōzaemon passionately explains to Matsuki and Umeki the convoluted misunderstanding that resulted in their feud. Izumo is coming closer and closer to Matsuki's face, clearly implying some degree of sexual tension. The reverse shot from Matsuki's perspective depicts the extreme close up-of Izumo's face. Izumo is blushing, with brows raised in sincere emotion, he is also crying. There are no excessive flowers in the panel, though Izumo slips into his feminine persona: his eyes are glittering with tears, eyelashes are longer, and he raises his brows. His lips are shaded, and he is blushing. The brothers notice he is crying. And Izumo goes into a comical paroxysm of embarrassment, claiming that he has something in his eye. Again, the visual tension created by gradually amplifying Izumo's beauty and emotion in the eyes of his co-actors (and the reader) is disrupted with the text of the dialogue.

The next page brings the reader back into an emotional exchange of gazes between the brothers. Umeki and Matsuki's eyes in close ups communicate emotion, as all

characters indiscriminately are portrayed through these tropes when their interiority is revealed to the reader (Hirakawa, 2010: v.3, 124-125, 126-127).

A whole page is devoted to Umeki and Matsuki exchanging glances in a series of close-ups that vacillate between *shōnen* icons such as sweat drops and dramatic emotional closeup reminiscent of *shōjo*, until Umeki finally proclaims in a large portrait-like panel: “This was the only way I could do it...” as he walks off along *hanamichi* to an ovation (Hirakawa, 2010: v.3, 124-125, 126-127). The slow-motion emotion-centric scenario, visual tropes, linework, and panelling all interact, eliciting empathy with the characters and their personal drama. *Shōjo* mode of depiction vacillates between laughing off the deeper emotions as something feminine. Yet at the same time these emotional scenes resolve conflicts and communicate genuine interiority of the characters. The reader is invited to move between all these visual and textual clues, multiplying possible readings and effectively playing with the inconsistency and heterogeneity of signs both between the cited genres and between text and pictorial image. Such scenarios are constantly reiterated in *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* — Izumo finds out that someone he knows is suffering some personal trauma and uses his cross-dressing and his *onnagata* skills to relieve this suffering.

While this scene borrows from *shōjo* in a more demure way, comparatively to the Yugiri scene referenced above, it reveals how the *shōjo* visuals are gradually integrated into not only jokes, but the main body of the narrative, and as the manga progresses, these tropes become more overt and consistent. In fact the later volumes are markedly differing from the manga’s beginning in its overall panel layout and visual decorations. The emotion, sensuality, and tactile experience of costume is more defined. The *shōjo*-like evocativeness of the costumed body is amplified with beautiful poses and sequences of movement, close-ups, and slow motions. Such visual excess may also be attributed to the artist’s growing confidence in portrayals of complicated *kata* and anatomy in the on-stage sequences. The visceral sensuality of the movement in combination with plastic lines that extend bodies with decorative elements such as wind, flowers, stars, and other elements open characters for all levels of participation from the reader. These depictions are further enforced with emotional internal monologues offering these scenes as introspection into characters as their bodies gracefully take on exalted poses, making the emotional drama driving force of the narrative.

Furthermore, *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* offers nuance that distinguishes between Izumo's *shōjo* femininity in scenes where he is caring and kind, and explicit *moe*-like objectification when he is sexually harassed by other men.

"*Moe-mode*" portrays isolated instances of complete objectification, not always does it correlate with Izumo's wearing female attire, rather it focuses on all occasions where his beauty arrests someone's attention. In these sequences Izumo is displayed, yet he is never looking back. The most basic formula of these scenes is a shot-reverse shot. When Izumo's aroused-looking face or clueless passive expression is depicted in a close-up, but the reverse shot explicates that these are emotion projected onto him by the onlooker.

Constantly harassed for his good looks, Izumo conflates objectification and femininity. Thus, his argument against objectification — "I am a man!" — naively assumes that men/masculinity cannot be objectified. Izumo's male body and the strict code of honour are the two axis of "masculinity", reiterated liberally after almost every joke. Usually, the code of honour is used when Izumo reinterprets queer situations to feel comfortable with (*onnagata* is a superhero, maid café pays good salary); the male body is evoked when Izumo objects to someone else objectifying him.

Moe-derived tropes represent the type of "femininity" that Izumo fears, "woman" as a soulless object that reflects male desire. Such superficial objectification is framed by the scenarios of voyeuristic consumption: maid café, miss school pageant, father spying on Izumo taking a bubble-bath. As a rule, these scenarios depict onlookers who are not concerned with Izumo's real feelings.

These *lolicon* and *boys' love* reminiscent "*moe*" jokes gradually amplify and include more and more *boys' love* elements, building on similarities in depiction of sexualised vulnerability typical of both genres. *Lolicon*-derived cross-dressing images are gradually replaced with increasing number of tropes from *boys' love*, (with character design sometimes visually similar to *shotacon*²⁰ due to Izumo's youthful looks and short stature). These humorous episodes become lengthier.

By volume 15 there is a three-page long sequence that combines visual tropes of passivity and childishness typical of classic *uke* character (Hirakawa 2013: vol. 15, pp.

²⁰ An erotic manga sub-genre with underage male character in sexual situations, despite its roots in *boys' love*, contemporary *shotacon* is frequently aimed at a male readership.

122-123-124). Izumo's father Yakumo is a frequent butt of incestuous jokes, unable to overcome his own son's innate erotic appeal. For this reason, Izumo vehemently opposes performing a love-scene with him. Meanwhile, the father goes into a paroxysm of excitement as he imagines how their rehearsal would develop into a tryst. Lower panel portrays Izumo as an infantile receptive partner — *uke* — sitting on his father's lap, wearing short pants that accentuate his bottom.

Perpetuating rape-fantasy like scenarios of 1990s and early 2000s *boys' love*, Izumo is reluctant, but father pushes his affections onto him. In a smaller panel Yakumo is depicted leaning over Izumo, between his legs, and an ambiguous shading appears to imply Izumo is naked from the waist down. Next is a large panel from Yakumo's on-top perspective, it depicts Izumo on his back with his legs held up and parted by Yakumo's hands. Izumo is sweaty, his shirt is hiked up, and from that angle it looks like he is not wearing any pants. His flushed face is the focal point of the panel, teary-eyed, his mouth is open in protest, and his soft flowing longer hair sticks to his sweaty face, a strand going into his mouth. In other words, the image is unequivocally sexual, and may even be deemed too risqué for a manga published in a *shōnen* magazine. Of course, the scene cuts off at this titillating point. Lower panel is Yakumo jumping up as he is too excited by his own imagination. Turning the page, the drama is resolved with some plastic violence, as Izumo slams the table onto his father's head (Hirakawa 2013: 124).

While the earlier volumes depend more on visual cues familiar to the male reader, focusing on Izumo's cute face and costumes recognisable as a reference to *lolicon* and *moe* aesthetics (Hirakawa 2011: v. 3, 28-29), gradually the author adds and elaborates on the tropes from *boys' love* and *shōjo* genres, "teaching" the reader to recognise the reference, and explore the parodic potential further. This way, the *shōnen*-like violent resolutions to the *boys' love* jokes are maintained throughout, reinforcing the parodic formula. As with the *shōjo*-manga parody-homage sequences, in *moe*-joke episodes the visuals manipulate the reader's perception of the scene until its comical heteronormative resolution. Moreover, it may merge into an actual earnest discussion of LGBTQ, same-sex love, and other complex topics. The parody paves way for an earnest conversation. The parodying of tropes facilitates their recognisability and allows for the homage-like sequences to be comprehensible. Clearly, *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* offers a lot to the female reader, who is in on the joke as well. Simultaneously, the manga teaches its core audience to read female genre tropes and redefines the

masculine genres and masculine contents. The multimodal potential of parody to reveal the inconsistency between signifier and the signified, is clearly exploited to the maximum. It is present on the level of conflict between textual signs and pictorial signs, and is extended onto the juxtaposition of parodic and direct meaning of the parodied generic tropes.

Parodic elements of *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* demonstrate the rising level of female trope awareness of the reader and the growth of this demand. However, the understated elements of *shōjo* manga, which are cited in episodes where they retain the function similar to their role in *shōjo* narrative, push the boundaries of critical potential of *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō*. A crucial aspect of the narrative, the on-stage emotional showdowns between the cast of characters with complex and frequently queer personalities that is mediated through Izumo's *onnagata* skill.

Izumo's conflicted personality gradually develops from innocent, misogynist, anxious boy to a person who accepts all facets of gender and adopts a variety of gender-queer behaviours consciously. He ponders the role of his art, and being an object, as he discusses it with *onnagata*-mentor in volume 17 (Hirakawa, 2014: vol. 17, pp. 106-107). Izumo asks if his mentor also falls in love on stage with his co-actors. To which the man replies that it is not uncommon and necessary onstage. Although he takes a jab at another actor — Sae, who cannot separate Izumo's acting from real life Izumo. In the same volume this topic comes up again, as Izumo gradually learns to accept Sae's misguided, yet earnest love for him, and even sees a possibility of eventually responding to Sae's feelings.

All instances of gender and sexuality that this title brings up add to Izumo's definition of being a man and being an *onnagata*. A vivid meta-example of this self-awareness is when Izumo discusses with his fellow actors (and Sae) same-sex love portrayed in *Somemoyō chūgi no goshūin* — a play they perform in volume 13 (Hirakawa, 2013: vol. 13, pp. 120-129). Responding to the question of what he thinks about *shūdo*, Izumo replies that he cannot understand the actual falling in love with another man. However, he can identify with the way two characters have a deeper bond of obligation and risk their own lives for each other. He finds that very “manly” and very “cool” (Hirakawa, 2013: vol. 13, pp. 122-123).

Kunisaki Izumo no jijō explicitly questions gender, social roles of masculine and feminine and definition of agency. It has *bishōnen* characters, who learn the value of

genderfluidity and gain their agencies through relinquishing the phallic paradigm of superiority and competitiveness as loci of agency.

Conclusion

To sum up, eventually, what separates *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* from female genre? I suggest, it is safe to say that one of the main differences is the name of the magazine in which the series was published. While I cannot claim if it was particularly popular with the male readers, as we already know, roughly half of the readers of *shōnen* do not identify as male. I suggest it is a very good example of male readers being introduced to the citations of female manga tropes.

The structure of *Izumo* agency is multimodal, it is inclusive of classic components of *bishōnen*, however the emphasised centrality of *Izumo*'s sexed body and masculine personality skilfully mediates readers' possible anxiety towards gender-queer themes. Multiple points of references, from *bishōnen* and *shōjo* to *shōnen* and action provide different points of engagement for the reader. Is it read as *shōnen* manga about kabuki, a *shōjo*-manga parody, or is it read as homage to *shōjo* manga?

Eventually, one may wonder if *Kunisaki Izumo no jijō* in fact is not first and foremost a parody of *shōnen* manga, and gendered genre as an outdated relic of patriarchal hegemony that birthed them. It takes the genre "shōnen" and fills it with *shōjo* tropes, that it allegedly parodies. It ridicules the binary that is still perpetuated through the physical division of genres by publication sites. It revels in the hybridity of recent genres as well as celebrates the hybridity of the readership. It offers all these multiple interpretations, layered non-discriminately, and offers to play with gender by consuming these "gendered genres".

REFERENCES

- AZUMA, HIROKI (2001), *Dōbutsuka suru posutomodan: otaku kara mita nihon shakai*. Tokyo: Kōdansha Gendai Shinsho; (2009), *Otaku: Japan's database animals*. Transl. Jonathan E. Abel & Kono Shion. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- BANDŌ, TAMASABURŌ (2009), *Waraku: Bandō Tamasaburō – subete wa butai no bi no tameni*. Tokyo: Shogakukan.
- BAUWENS-SUGIMOTO, JESSICA (2016), Queering Black Jack: A Look At How Manga Adapts to Changing Reading Demographics. In: Berndt, J. — Linder, G. (eds), *Orientaliska Studier: Proceedings from the 2016 NAJAKS Conference at Stockholm University*. Stockholm: Linder, pp. 111-140.

- BERNDT, JAQUELINE (2013a), Ghostly: 'Asian Graphic Narratives,' *Nonnonba*, and Manga. In: Stein, D. — Thon, J.N. (eds), *From Comics Strips to Graphic Novels*. Berlin: DeGruyter, pp. 363-385.
- (2013b), The Intercultural Challenge of the 'Mangaesque': Reorienting Manga Studies after 3/11. In: Berndt, J. — Kümmerling-Meibauer, B. (eds), *Manga's Cultural Crossroads*. London: Routledge, pp. 65-84.
- (2016a), Introduction: Manga Beyond Critique?, *Kritika Kultira*. Manila: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Pr, pp.163-178.
- (2016b), Manga, Which Manga? Publication Formats, Genres, Users. In: Targowsky, A. — Abe, J. — Kato, H. (eds), *Japanese Civilisation in the 21st Century*. New York: Nova Publishers, 121-134.
- BUTLER, JUDITH (1997), *The Psychic Life of Power*. Stanford University Press, California.
- (2004), *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge.
- (2005), *Giving an Account of Oneself*. New York: Fordham Univ. Pr.
- (2006), *Gender Trouble*. London: Routledge.
- FRAHM, OLE (2000), Weird Signs: Comics as Means of Parody. In: Magnussen, A. — Christiansen, H. (eds), *Comics & Culture: Analytical and Theoretical Approaches to Comics*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, pp. 177-192.
- FUJIMOTO, YUKARI (2004), Transgender: Female Hermaphrodites and Male Androgynes. *US-Japan Women's Journal*, Saitama, Josai Univ. Pr., No. 27, pp. 76-117.
- (2008), *Watashi no ibashō doko ni aru no*. Tokyo: Asahi bunsho.
- (2015), The Evolution of BL as "Playing with Genders": Viewing the Genesis and Development of BL from a Contemporary Perception. In: McLelland, M. — Nagaike, K. — Sunaguma, K. (eds), *Boys' Love Manga and Beyond: History, Culture, and Community in Japan*. Jackson: Mississippi Univ. Pr., pp. 76-92.
- GALBRAITH, PATRICK W. (2015), *Moe Talk: Affective Communication among Female Fans of Yaoi in Japan*. In: McLelland, M. — Nagaike, K. — Sunaguma, K. (eds), *Boys' Love Manga and Beyond: History, Culture, and Community in Japan*. Jackson: Mississippi Univ. Pr., pp. 153-168.
- GROENSTEEN, THIERRY (2000), Why are Comics Still in Search of Cultural Legitimization? In: Magnussen, A. — Christiansen, H. (eds), *Comics & Culture: Analytical and Theoretical Approaches to Comics*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, pp. 29-41.
- (2013), *Comics and Narration*, transl. Miller, A. Mississippi: Mississippi Univ. Pr.
- ISHIDA, MINORI (2007), *Hisoyakana kyōiku: yaoi, bōizurabu zenshi*. Kyoto: Rakuhoku Shuppan.
- ITŌ, GŌ (2005), *Tezuka izu deddo: Hirakareta manga hyōgenron e*. Tokyo: NTT Shuppan.
- (2012), Manga no futatsu no kao. *Nihon 2.0 Shisō Chizu vol. 3*. Tokyo: Genron Co. Ltd, 436-483.
- KACSUK, ZOLTAN (2016), "From "Game-Like Realism" to the "Imagination-Oriented Aesthetic": Reconsidering Bourdieu's Contribution to Fan Studies in the Light of Japanese Manga and Otaku Theory". *Kritika Kultura*, pp. 274-292.
- LAMARRE, THOMAS (2009), *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*. Minnesota: Univ. of Minnesota Pr.
- (2010), Manga Bomb: Between the Lines of Barefoot Gen. In: Berndt, J. (ed.), *Comics Worlds and the World of Comics: Towards Scholarship on a Global Scale* (Global Manga Studies, vol. 1). Kyoto: Kyoto Seika University, International Manga Research Centre, pp. 262-307.
- LEITER, SAMUEL L. (2012), From Gay to *Gei*: The *Onnagata* and the Creation of *Kabuki's* female Characters. In: Leiter, S. (ed.), *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*. New York: M.E. Sharp, 211-230.

- MEZUR, KATHRINE (2005), *Beautiful Boys, Outlaw Bodies: Devising Kabuki Female-Likeness*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- MIZOGUCHI, AKIKO (2015), *BL shinkaron: bōizurabu ga shakai wo ugokasu*. Tokyo: Ohta Shuppan.
- NAGAIKE, KAZUMI (2012), *Fantasies of Cross-Dressing: Japanese Women Write Male-Male Erotica*. Leiden: Brill.
- ŌGI, FUSAMI (2001), Beyond *Shoujo*, Blending Gender: Subverting the Homogendered World in *Shoujo Manga* (Japanese Comics for Girls). *International Journal of Comic Art*, vol 3.2., pp. 151-161.
- (2004), *Shōjo manga to seiyō – shōjo manga ni okeru “nihon” no fūzai to seiyōteki imēji no hanran ni tsuite. Honyaku no keniki: bunka shokuminchi aidentitī*, Tsukuba Univ. Pr., pp. 525-554.
- OSHIYAMA, MICHIKO (2007), *Shōjo manga jendā hyōshōron – “dansō no shōjo” no zōkei to aidentitī*. Tōkyō: Seiryūsha.
- OTOMO, RIO (2015), Politics of Utopia: Fantasy, Pornography, and Boys’ Love. In: McLelland, M. — Nagaike, K. — Sunaguma, K. (eds), *Boys’ Love Manga and Beyond: History, Culture, and Community in Japan*. Jackson: Mississippi Univ. Pr., pp. 141-152.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Olga ANTONONOKA is currently an assistant professor at Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan. She holds a PhD in Manga Studies from Kyoto Seika University, Japan. Her PhD project, “Manga-drag: Female Address, Male Cross-Dressing Character, and Media Performativity”, focuses on performance, gender and manga as a performative medium through analysis of representation of kabuki theatre in manga. She also holds an MA in Japanese Studies from the University of Latvia and an MA in Manga Studies from Kyoto Seika University, Japan. Her MA project, “Bishōnen in Boys’ Love Manga: Transcending the Phallus”, addressed the performative androgyny of the boys’ love protagonist.

SECTION II:

TRAVELLING (THROUGH) IMAGES

AROUND THE WORLD

In the steps of the Prophets: The dissemination and reinterpretation of David Roberts' Holy Land sketches through the Shows of London

Jeremy BROOKER | Independent Researcher, UK

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/2021.10.BRO.JEREM](https://doi.org/10.32926/2021.10.BRO.JEREM)

ABSTRACT

The body of drawings and sketches created by the Scottish painter David Roberts (1796-1864) during his expedition to the Holy Lands in 1838-9 marked the high point of his professional career. This paper will look at the period after his return to Britain in July 1839, particularly to 1842. It will suggest that although Roberts was no doubt influenced by his Scottish Presbyterian upbringing, religious faith was not as central to his trip as has often been supposed. It was instead through the business acumen of his publisher F.G. Moon that this body of work came to be regarded not merely as an aesthetic achievement but as a cause célèbre. A skilful and coordinated marketing campaign elevated these drawings to the status of a pilgrimage; a contemplative journey through the sites of biblical antiquity. Through detailed analysis of contemporaneous accounts it will show how one of the costliest publications of the era was disseminated, passing from prestigious galleries and the libraries of a wealthy elite through a continuum of public art exhibitions and popular media including panoramas, dioramas and the newly-emerging field of dissolving views. This will provide a rare case study into the interconnectedness of London's exhibition culture in the 1840s.

KEYWORDS

David Roberts; Holy Land; Panorama; Diorama; Dissolving Views; Royal Polytechnic Institution; Royal Academy.

Date of submission: 18 May 2021

Date of acceptance: 6 December 2021

Date of publication: 20 December 2021

The enamoured Montacute hung over her with pious rapture, as they examined together Mr. Roberts's Syrian drawings, and she alike charmed and astonished him by her familiarity with every locality and each detail.

Benjamin Disraeli, *Tancred, or the New Crusade* (1849, Chapter XXI)

In August 1838 the Scottish artist David Roberts (1796-1864) set out on an epic journey which would take him from the ancient monuments of Egypt and Nubia to the Sinai, Jordan and Lebanon. He returned 11 months later with 272 drawings, a collection of costumes and other artefacts, a panoramic drawing of Cairo, a set of Journals recording his experiences and three sketchbooks brimming with architectural studies and impressions of the people he had encountered. As his friend and biographer James

Ballantine noted, this would be ‘the great central episode of his artistic life’ (Ballantine, 1866: 231). An extensive literature has grown up around this body of work presenting it in the context of wider debates around Orientalism and Protestant religious art, or as a form of travelogue related to his own biography.

This study is mainly concerned with a brief but career-defining period in Roberts’ life between his arrival back in England in July 1839 and the publication of the first volume of his magnum opus *The Holy Land, Syria, Idumea and Arabia* in 1842. Its purpose is to explore Roberts’ carefully managed transition from successful painter to one of the most revered artists of his day, and to consider the role of London’s exhibition economy in this process.

The suggestion will be that in order to monetise their work Roberts and his publisher set about deliberately transforming a set of picturesque views into a *cause célèbre* and publishing sensation. This was a financial gamble with high stakes. The book they envisaged would be hugely costly and time consuming to produce, and without serious backing could easily have failed. It should be recalled that Roberts had spent his own life savings on the trip, which was only completed through generous loans from friends (Ballantine, 1866: 113).

Of course, to explore this in commercial terms is not to diminish the complexity of Roberts’ motivations. As Amanda Burritt points out ‘A broad range of artistic, economic, religious and personal factors motivated Roberts to embark of his Near East journey,’ and all these factors contributed to their ultimate success (Burritt, 2020: 45). The Holy Land drawings came at a particular point in his career, when he was on the cusp of success. We also know that he had a strongly religious upbringing in the Scottish Presbyterian church which, according to his friend and biographer James Ballantine, had left him with a burning ambition to undertake such a trip (Ballantine, 1866).

What is striking, though, is the difference in tone from commentators writing in 1839 and in 1842. A review in the *Morning Chronicle* from September 1839 declared:

[H]e has brought home with him the ponderous temples and colossal statues that adorned the banks of the Nile and the rocks of Arabia Petraea. The pyramids of Egypt are now in Mornington-place. Mr. Roberts... will supply Europe —we may almost say for the first time —with portraits at once correct and picturesque of

their architectural and sculptured wonders.¹

True, the passage goes on to say that 'Cairo merits its epithet of grand, and Jerusalem that of holy' but the emphasis here is clearly on the picturesque archaeological ruins of Egypt and the Roman province Arabia Petraea; a geographical identification which excluded Palestine altogether. There is certainly no suggestion that religious sites associated with biblical events were a primary concern.

By 1842, the nature of Roberts' achievements was being couched in very different terms. At a dinner held in his home town of Edinburgh in October, he was praised by Lord Cockburn for 'having completed the finest pilgrimage of art which has perhaps ever been performed by a single man'.² Ballantine even wrote a song for the occasion, *Scotland's Painter Davie*, clearly suggesting that the Bible had been the primary motivation behind Roberts' work (Burritt, 2020: 46). As he later expressed it, Roberts was the 'pioneer who opened up that sacred country to our ken' (Ballantine, 1866). According to Amanda Burritt, lithographs were being bought by Protestant Christians for devotional use and were 'seen by many to provide evidence of the literal truthfulness of scripture... seen by many devout Christians as factual depictions of holy places whose stories embodied deep religious truths' (Burritt, 2020: 90, 109).

In his pioneering study *The Shows of London*, Richard Altick dismissed the rigid distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture, instead presenting all 'displays of pictures, objects, or living creatures' as part of a continuum which encompassed the humblest booth at Bartholomew Fair, the fashionable 'exhibitions' at Daguerre's Diorama in Regents Park and the august showrooms of the Royal Institution and Royal Academy (Altick, 1978: 2).

This is not to suggest all these attractions were regarded as of equal status and for an artist with serious aspirations, negotiating this terrain could be hazardous. Roberts' older contemporary John Martin, whose gigantic paintings made him one of the most successful and popular artists of the age, was treated with some disdain by many commentators as a kind of showman. His taste for the spectacular had led art critic John Ruskin to accuse him of 'mere vulgar sensationalism'. Martin believed that

¹ *Morning Advertiser* 4 September 1839 3c.

² Address by Lord Cockburn, Edinburgh 1842 (Guiterman, 1986: 69).

representations such as panoramas or dioramas gave ammunition to critics who already dismissed his work as 'virtual theatre, rather than fine art' (Coltrin, 2011: 8). He even resorted to the law courts in an unsuccessful attempt to block a dioramic adaptation of his *Balshazzar's Feast* painting at the British Diorama in 1833 (Lambourne, 1999: 159-60).

Roberts had no such qualms and was already deeply embedded in London's exhibition culture. He was a respected artist who showed his work in prestigious galleries but had also found considerable success painting theatrical scenery and giant paintings for dioramas and panoramas. Indeed, his whole career to this point can be seen as a delicate balance between his ambitions to be accepted as a 'serious' painter and the demands of the show economy.

An early defining moment in Roberts' career occurred when he was still a precocious youth. At the age of ten his exceptional draughtsmanship brought him to the attention of John Graham, Master of the Trustees at the Academy in Edinburgh; a school founded in 1760 specifically to provide instruction to those engaged in manufacturing design. By the time of Roberts' introduction, the emphasis of the Academy had shifted towards fine art, and Graham's advice was kindly but blunt. Given the impecunious circumstances of Roberts' family, he recommended learning a trade through an apprenticeship with a painter of domestic interiors and perhaps returning to more formal training at some later time (Ballantine, 1866: 3).

This proved sound advice. Roberts' few years as a house painter coincided with a fashion for elaborate interiors in Gothic-revival style, allowing him to develop the skills to create faux marble and other illusory effects while observing the tastes and predilections of wealthy clients (Guiterman, 1986: 12). This formative experience established an important precedent, encouraging Roberts to see the creation of visual spectacle not merely as an end in itself but as the means through which he might realise his 'higher' artistic ambitions.

From house painting Roberts made a *segue* into theatrical scenery, first with a touring circus and within a few years at Drury Lane and Covent Garden in London. He was again fortunate, arriving at a time when elaborate stage effects were in great demand (Guiterman, 1986: 27). He formed a successful partnership and rivalry with William Clarkson Stanfield which, though sometimes acrimonious, brought both men widespread recognition.

As an adjunct to this work Roberts also created peristrepthic panoramas for the theatre and exhibition hall (Huhtamo, 2012). In 1825 he painted a 'series of scenes for a moving panorama, illustrating the bombardment of Algiers' with Stanfield, which went on to tour through Great Britain and the continent (Ballantine, 1866: 25; Altick, 1978: 39-40). He was also responsible for two panoramas created for pantomimes at Covent Garden in the years 1827 and 1828 (Ballantine, 1866: 30). Perhaps the highpoint of this work came in 1828 when Roberts and Stanfield created four dioramic paintings for the newly-opened British Diorama; a 'fashionable lounge' intended to attract 'high society clientele' situated in the Royal Bazaar, Oxford Street (Altick, 1978: 167-8). Each painting was 27ft high and 38ft in width (c. 8m x 12m), and these were replaced a year later with a second group of four paintings by the same artists. Unfortunately, the artificial light used to animate one of the scenes led to a fire and the entire structure, including the eight giant paintings, was destroyed. Nevertheless, Roberts had seen at first hand the possibilities for an entertainment built on these illusory and spectacular principles.

In parallel with his formidable schedule of theatrical work, Roberts was also beginning to exhibit his paintings. He gained an astute understanding of the art market and the importance of showing his work in significant venues, and embarked on a disciplined and carefully choreographed rise to prominence (Burritt, 2020: 106). His paintings were shown first in Edinburgh, and by 1824 in London at the newly-formed Society of British Arts. From 1825 he was also a regular exhibitor at the British Institution and in 1826 had his first work shown at the Royal Academy. His breakthrough came in 1829 with *The Departure of the Israelites from Egypt*, a vast canvas on an Eastern theme in the manner of John Martin which was clearly a deliberate attempt to repeat the success enjoyed by Francis Danby when *The Delivery of Israel out of Egypt* (1825) was exhibited at the Royal Academy (Coltrin, 2011). Within a few years Roberts was able to devote himself entirely to painting and withdrew from scene-painting as a profession.

Roberts' improving social status can be seen through the addresses he occupied, culminating in a grand residence in Fitzroy Street on his return from the East, where he remained for the rest of his life (Guiterman, 1986: 92-5). He numbered many wealthy businessmen and landowners among his clients, and his work was represented in the most important private art collections including those of the

Marquis of Stafford and William Beckford and, after his return, Frank Hall Standish and the Royal Collection. John Rushout, 2nd Baron Northwick, bought at least two major paintings including *The Israelites Leaving Egypt*, and twice received Roberts as a guest at Northwick Park in Gloucestershire. The London businessman and ship-owner Elhanan Bicknell was another leading collector of contemporary art who took an interest in Roberts' work, his second son marrying Roberts' only daughter in June 1841.

Roberts was also well respected by his peers, enjoying friendships with William (J.M.W.) Turner, David Wilkie and other prominent artists of the day. He was an early member of the Society of British Arts, rising to the positions of vice-president in 1830 and president 1831. However, this was a far less prestigious association than the Royal Academy and Roberts resigned his membership in 1835 as his own reputation grew.

As if two distinct careers were not enough, Roberts was also following a third calling as an inveterate traveller and creator of on-the-spot topographical sketches. Again, we can see a strategic approach as his trips increased in duration and ambition, coming to occupy increasing amounts of his time. The first was a relatively modest trip to the north French coast in 1824 which took him inland to Rouen where he made sketches of Notre-Dame cathedral. He spent part of almost every succeeding year making similar trips through France, Belgium, Germany and Scotland culminating in an extended trip through France, Spain and Morocco which lasted over a year from August 1832 to October 1833 (Guiterman, 1986: 92-3).

The resulting sketches were often used as the basis for oil paintings and several on French and Spanish subjects were exhibited at the Royal Academy and British Institution. With characteristic rigour, Roberts was also developing his knowledge and expertise in the field of print reproduction. His first direct experience of this as a potential source of income was probably in connection with *The Israelites Leaving Egypt* which was sold as an engraving by Moon, Boys and Co. in 1829 and also circulated as a woodcut on the cover of *The Saturday Magazine* on 28 July 1832 (Coltrin, 2011: 9) and the *Magasin Pittoresque* in Paris (1833). In 1831 Roberts also tried his hand at etching, producing views of the picturesque ruins of Falkirk Palace and a number of Scottish monastic sites. Around the same time his drawings were appearing as engravings in *Pilgrims of the Rhine* (1832), the *Waverley novels* (1832) and *Illustrations Landscape, Historical and Antiquarian to the Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott, Bart*, (1834).

A significant development was the production of the first in a series of *Jenning's Landscape Annuals: or, The Tourist in Spain* issued in 1835 for which Roberts made 21 drawings and nine vignettes (Sims, 1984: 63). The following year he could write to his friend David Ramsay Hay about the 1836 *Annual* congratulating himself for securing 'the highest price any artist, with the exception of Turner, has ever received for drawings of a similar nature' (Sims, 1984: 108). Similar volumes appeared in 1837 and 1838, the series only ending when Roberts set off on his Eastern expedition. In 1836 Roberts entered into a further agreement, this time with the publishers Hodgson and Graves, for 37 drawings suitable as lithographs for *Picturesque Sketches of Spain*.

Roberts can be seen learning his craft through these publications– discovering the processes for producing highest quality of reproductions, while also negotiating the pitfalls of his business dealings. For the second volume of the *Landscape Annuals* he was able to insist on the 'choice of my own engravers' (Sims, 1984: 108). When he moved on to the more unfamiliar area of lithography he was so disappointed with the results that he felt compelled to work on the lithographic stones himself (Sims, 1984: 112). In his Journal he acknowledged (in his own idiosyncratic spelling and syntax) that he had 'intirely gone over the drawings myself... erasing the Old and substituting new'. The work took seven months rather than the two he had anticipated but if he expected any gratitude from the publishers, he was to be further disappointed. Roberts had demanded £375 for his work but was forced to accept just £300. Meanwhile the books retailed at four guineas apiece and 1,200 copies were sold in two months, with the original drawings fetching an additional £300. Roberts had been put out when Jennings had previously sold his original drawings for £40 each, double what he was paid to make them, but this treatment seemed even worse. It was 'without exception the most ungrateful and base I have ever in my life met with' (Sims, 1984: 113).

Compared with French and British scholars who had preceded him, Roberts arrived in the Holy Land with little specialist knowledge of the region. His own formal education had ended early and beyond his readings of the Bible he does not appear to have engaged much with contemporary theological controversies. He went armed with a basic library comprising works by Denon and Belzoni, and a popular guidebook *Travels along the Mediterranean* (1822) with plans and engravings extending to the second cataract of the Nile, Jerusalem, Damascus and Baalbec, but he was essentially an innocent, perhaps even a naïve, traveller (Mancoff, 1999: 39).

Roberts' Spanish expedition gives a strong insight into his thinking when selecting subjects. His original intention had been to visit Italy, but he changed his destination because 'nothing has been done that gives any idea of the magnificent remains of Moorish architecture' (Mancoff, 1999: 22). This was an area little frequented by tourists and besides his friend David Wilkie relatively few artists had ventured there. It also promised 'picturesque' subjects. This was a term widely used by Roberts to refer not just to the exotic but more specifically to the aesthetic qualities of scenes; vistas which would provide worthy subjects for paintings (Burrill, 2020: 69-70). It should be added that Roberts had seen the transformation of Wilkie's painting while in Spain, introducing 'depth, drama, and exoticism' to his work (Mancoff, 1999: 22).

In his decision to eschew the most familiar sights of Italy in favour of Spain, we can sense an astute understanding of the marketplace with its demand for novelty. There is a desire for artistic challenges and perhaps also a degree of professional rivalry, measuring his abilities against those of other artists. There is perhaps also a taste for adventure. The 'sketchers' were often presented as somewhat heroic figures risking life and limb to bring their 'lithographic fac-similes' to an eager public. A newspaper account from February 1839 informed its readers that 'No tidings have reached us as yet of Stanfield from Sicily or Greece, or of David Roberts from Egypt; but we hear that Mr. John Lewis safe in Rome, after escaping from a shipwreck, without loss of life or sketches.'³

Responding to the demand for 'Landscapes, topographical renderings, religious scenes and oriental and classical subjects' in the European art market, Roberts' choice of the Holy Land was astute (Burrill, 2020: 65). Egypt was just opening up as a potential travel destination under the modernising and autocratic control of the Pasha Muhammad Ali, with the promise of European-style accommodation, improved travel facilities and a greater guarantee of personal safety. For wealthy travellers in the 1820s, a trip up the Nile and into Syria was becoming a recognised extension to the 'grand tour' (Mancoff, 1999: 35). The establishment of the 'overland mail' in 1837 through the agency of Thomas Waghorn had also caught the public imagination, creating a more direct route and faster communications with British possessions in

³ *Derbyshire Courier* 2 February 1839 4e.

India. There was perhaps also a degree of nationalistic pride in Egypt as the site of Napoleon's defeat in 1801.

An extensive scholarly literature connected with Egyptology had followed Denon's *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt* (English translation 1802) and the monumental *Description de l'Égypte* (compiled 1809-29), drawing on material compiled during Napoleon's Egyptian campaign. However, the public imagination was fired by the excavations of Belzoni and John Gardner Wilkinson and the deciphering of the Rosetta stone by the philologist Champollion (Guiterman, 1986: 72-3). Egyptian-style ornamentation adorned buildings like London's Egyptian Hall (1812) and inspired panoramas, dioramas and other popular entertainments.

In parallel with this market for Egyptian sketches, there was an established demand for 'authentic' sketches depicting biblical sites. These were often beautifully illustrated with detailed engravings, but few were by professional artists, and none could compete with the popular appeal of Roberts' exquisite, coloured lithographs. For Roberts, illustrated works like John Carne's *Syria, The Holy Land, Asia Minor, &c. Illustrated* (1836-1838) would have suggested the value of such views 'drawn from nature' and he was one of a number of London-based artists who re-worked sketches by other hands for *Landscape Illustrations of the Bible* (1836). The Introduction to that publication promised 'nearly one hundred of the most remarkable places mentioned in the Bible, as they actually exist' explaining that 'While other works of comparatively small value have employed the pencils of the first artists... little comparatively has been done towards illustrating the most important of all books — the Holy Scriptures' (Horne, 1836).

The thinking behind such publications was in part aesthetic ('exhibiting the highest improvements in the art of engraving') but also moral, the 'ruined and desolate state' of these biblical sites seeming to 'exemplify, to the most minute particular, everything that was foretold concerning them in the height of their prosperity' (Horne, 1836). As both Eithan Bar-Yosef and Amanda Burritt point out, the medieval Catholic concept of pilgrimage as a physical expedition to visit hallowed shrines was reinterpreted by many British Protestants in the nineteenth century as a metaphorical inner spiritual journey (Burritt, 2020: 47, 52). As such, accurate views of biblical sites (ostensibly unchanged since ancient times) provided a legitimate locus for religious contemplation, helping to articulate questions about the literal truth of the Bible and the nature of the lands where Jesus walked (Burritt, 2020: 109).

In a Protestant culture where ‘established pictorial traditions held no sway and belief centred exclusively on the biblical text’, painters were faced with the complex task of translating the Bible for the age (Giebelhausen, 2006: 1). For many artists the very purpose of Protestant religious art was a desire to foster an understanding of the Bible ‘aimed to make the gospel narratives comprehensible and relevant to a wide audience’ (Giebelhausen, 2006: 4). This could operate in both the private and public spheres. Roberts’ *Departure of the Israelites* (1829) was circulated in print form, but also became the subject of one of his giant dioramic paintings at the Royal Bazaar, Oxford Street where it was praised as ‘The first illustration of Scriptural History ever painted on so grand a scale.’⁴ Similarly, Frederick Catherwood spent six weeks disguised in Egyptian dress while drawing the Dome of the Rock and other scenes, later used as source material for Robert Burford’s *Panorama of Jerusalem* in 1836. According to Burritt, this was visited by ‘more than 140,000 people’ in its first season (Burritt, 2020: 55).

What little we know about Roberts’ religious attitudes is gleaned from his writings. There is a daily Journal (written, no doubt, with an eye to posterity) and there are letters; principally those he sent to his teenage daughter Christine. Given the purpose of these two primary sources, and the reticence we might expect given his religious upbringing in the Scottish Presbyterian church, it is perhaps understandable that he might be less than forthcoming about his deeper religious feelings (Burritt, 2020).

Burritt produces a highly nuanced account which acknowledges the significance of his childhood faith but questions whether this was his primary motivation in visiting the Holy Land. There are moments in his Journals where he seems to express an explicitly spiritual response. Gazing across the Suez, he speaks of the ‘moral grandeur’ derived from ‘the mighty events which took place there’ (Ballantine, 1866: 41). When leaving Petra, he describes looking back ‘at the deserted city, so sad a memorial to divine judgement’ (Mancoff, 1999: 93).

Although these observations appear to accept the veracity of biblical events, it is not easy to tell whether these were his personal views or whether he was merely ‘record [ing] what he was told, assuming his scepticism to be implicit’ (Burritt, 2020: 95). He had earlier claimed that the subject of the *Departure of Israelites* was chosen because

⁴ Unsourced press report quoted in (Mancoff, 1999: 36-7).

of the technical challenges offered by ‘that grand although simple style of architecture’ rather than its religious significance, and didn’t scruple to change proportions or add dramatic lighting effects to increase the theatrical impact of his Holy Land compositions (Mancoff, 1999: 21). Burritt concludes that although he ‘frequently recalls the Bible stories he learnt as a child’, the ‘Visual and written evidence supports the interpretation that Roberts saw everything from the perspective of an artist and as a potential picture’ (Burritt, 2020: 104).

-X-X-

Roberts’ Eastern travels marked the high point of his career as a painter, the culmination of a carefully cultivated progress as he worked his way through the social strata of the London art world and left him poised for the ultimate accolade as Royal Academician. With characteristic thoroughness he had paved the way for this achievement. He was an occasional exhibitor at the Royal Academy from 1826 and in 1837 gifted a copy of *Picturesque Sketches in Spain* to its President, Sir Martin Archer Shee, and was rewarded during his absence in the Holy Land with his election as an Associate in 1838. Roberts was now part of a pool of artists from which full Academicians could be elected.

Roberts understood the benefits of publicity and whilst he was confident his new work would appeal to wealthy and influential patrons, there was also a sense of urgency if he was to benefit from the public attention his trip had created. The months after his arrival in London in late July 1839 were busy ones with a trip to Edinburgh to visit his parents, a move into new premises more suited to the reception of distinguished guests and the ongoing search for a publisher. Yet amidst all this activity he found time to produce no fewer than five canvases in time for the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, which opened in May 1840.

As usual, the 72nd Royal Academy Summer exhibition received its fair share of criticism, and it was noted that the Queen and her party spent little more than an hour viewing the entire 1,250 exhibits. Turner was singled out for particular opprobrium,

his 'gorgeous extravagancies... increasing in absurdity year by year.'⁵ There were also the customary complaints about the way the exhibition was hung. Roberts was particularly unfortunate in this respect, his *Remains of the portico of the lesser temple at Baalbec* 'placed, because it is nearly the best picture of the thousand, in a locale that is commonly awarded to the obscure.'⁶

What could be in no doubt was the triumphant success enjoyed by Roberts. There was praise for his skill in rendering marble and other natural materials (a legacy perhaps of his time as a house painter), his command of picturesque effect, and the intrinsic value of his subject matter. 'Mr. Roberts, in visiting those scenes which time and fame have hallowed, has caught the true spirit of their classical grandeur.'⁷ 'Roberts is this year almost all excellence. One among several of his fine and truly classical paintings [*Remains of the portico of the lesser temple at Baalbec*] is unsurpassed by any other work in the exhibition.'⁸ Roberts joined the exclusive ranks of Royal Academicians in 1841 and a year later received the accolade of joining the hanging committee. Roberts also maintained his links with the British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts, a rather grand and somewhat elitist private organisation much frequented by the nobility. His rise to prominence as an artist was complete.

During this same hectic period Roberts also began cultivating a public persona, sitting for a portrait by his friend Robert Scott Lauder. Ostensibly this is a portrait showing Roberts wearing 'clothes worn in Palestine'. However, as Burritt has shown his Bedouin costume is a confection, including elements of traditional Turkish dress and a *qilij*, a weapon issued to Egyptian soldiers (Burritt, 2020: 74). This is make-believe, but serves a deliberate purpose in creating an impression of Roberts as an intrepid explorer rather than a mere tourist.

As John Rodenbeck has shown, Westerners wearing Turkish or Arab clothes were generally concerned for their own safety or conforming to local restrictions (Rodenbeck, 2001) and Roberts only wore local dress when entering sensitive religious sites (Tromans, 2008: 104-5). He portrays himself conventionally attired in *Interview with Mehemet Ali in his*

⁵ *Morning Post* 5 May 1840 5f.

⁶ *Morning Post* 7 May 1840 6a.

⁷ *Morning Post* 7 May 1840 6a.

⁸ *Morning Post* 5 May 1840 5f.

Palace at Alexandria 1839 in the company with British Consul General in Alexandria, Colonel Patrick Campbell and other European officials. However, in *View From Under the Portico of Dayr-El-Medineh, Thebes* he includes an anachronistic self-portrait, painting among the ruins in native dress. This creates the illusion that his work was somehow clandestine or even dangerous, and that he stands apart from the 'Cockney tourists and Yankee travellers' vandalising monuments or defacing them with graffiti (Ballantine 1866, 48). In truth Roberts was a highly privileged traveller under the personal protection of the Pasha, accompanied by armed guards and offered exclusive access to otherwise forbidden sites.

Alongside these activities, Roberts was at working to find a publisher. He had opened negotiations with the Finden brothers' publishing house even before leaving for the Holy Land, but they balked at the £10,000 price tag. By February 1840 he was signing a contract with F.G. Moon, granting him £3000 for the rights to reproduce his drawings. Building on his previous experiences the work was to be reproduced to the most exacting standards using colour lithography, a costly process which required a separate stone for each added tint and perfect registration. In the more expensive version, every plate would then be painted by hand. In the more expensive version, every plate would then be painted by hand. There was grandeur and perhaps theatricality in the venture, and Roberts was closely involved from first to last. Every sketch was re-drawn by Roberts who worked closely with the lithographer Louis Haghe until the publication was finally completed in 1849, ten years after he had first set out on his expedition. This time Roberts kept control of his work, selling only the reproduction rights. In 1844 he completed 122 of the drawings, 72 of which he sold to Lord Francis Egerton for £1400.

This was a highly risky venture and success was not guaranteed so in parallel with the Royal Academy show Moon set about the vital task of attracting patrons for the book. Within a fortnight of the Queen's visit to see the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1840 Moon was at Buckingham Palace showing her Roberts' drawings, and by the end of the month his private visits had included Adelaide, the Queen Dowager at Marlborough House and the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace.⁹

⁹ *Sun* (London) 15 May 1840 3g; *Morning Post* 23 May 1840 6e; *Evening Mail* 1 June 1840 4e.

Having secured this illustrious support, Moon turned to the next part of his strategy—a very exclusive exhibition in central London. Some 300 ‘finished drawings’ were privately exhibited ‘to persons of distinction’ from 11-13 June at Mr. Rainy’s Gallery at 14 Regent Street. This was a very grand building, designed by the architect John Nash as part of his own residence to house his copies of Raphael paintings. As if to illustrate the interconnectedness of London’s exhibition spaces, Rainy had taken this over after Nash’s death as a business premises and exhibition space, operating until 1850 when it adopted a new role as the Gallery of Illustration, showing dioramic paintings.

Moon realised that finding the support he needed would take more than just picturesque ruins. Attracting the most distinguished patronage of the age would require subject matter of the most elevating kind; something which put the work above purely aesthetic considerations. With this in mind, he decided not to present the drawings as a travelogue representing the route of Roberts’ journey but instead to put the emphasis firmly on the biblical sites.

Fortunately for Moon, this interpretation had been inadvertently fostered by Roberts himself. While he was in Cairo, he had met the French explorer and chief engineer of Egypt’s public works Louis Maurice Adolphe Linant de Bellefonds, who urged him not to miss the opportunity to visit Petra. He subsequently received an offer to join a party led by his new friends John Pell and John Kinnear who proposed a different route from that planned by Roberts, taking in the ruins of Petra and the Monastery of St. Catherine (Mancoff, 1999: 79). These chance encounters prompted Roberts to change his original itinerary, taking the more circuitous route out of Egypt once followed by Moses rather than the more direct journey to Jerusalem via El Arish and Gaza as he first intended (Roberts, 1989: I-9). Following the route of the Exodus was an afterthought, but served Moon’s purposes well. By reinforcing the impression that Roberts intended his work as a contemplation of places sanctified by the Bible, he lifted the whole enterprise above mere voyeuristic curiosity to become almost as an act of religious observance.

The publishing schedule would naturally reflect this change of emphasis. The lithographs were to be issued in fifty parts, each containing six drawings. The Holy Land, Palestine, and Edom would appear first, the initial 20 issues forming two volumes, each with 60 engravings. This would be followed by another two volumes of equal size relating to Ancient Egypt and Nubia, with one final volume of 60 engravings

describing Modern Egypt.¹⁰ In the event, this plan was further modified. The views of Holy Land would form three volumes rather than two, as would the views of Egypt, but the plan to celebrate modern Egypt was abandoned. It is also significant that the first volume issued to subscribers was not devoted to Mount Sinai, as the Prospectus had promised (Moon, 1840: B2) but at the Damascus Gate. Like a theatrical proscenium this would 'open' up to reveal the wonders of Jerusalem. Any notion of this as a travelogue following a recognisable route through the Holy Lands was abandoned, and the starting point was instead a symbolic one, the very birthplace of Christianity.

The text accompanying the exhibition catalogue, and later the text to accompany the lithographs, was written by the Reverend George Croly, 'Rector of St. Stephen's, Walbrook, London'. Again, Moon made his intentions clear. Rather than basing the accompanying text on the colourful diary entries created by Roberts, this would be of the most elevating and improving nature combining historical notes with biblical references. Croly was an Anglican priest, historian and poet said to possess 'a sort of rude and indeed angry eloquence that would have stood him in better stead at the bar than in the pulpit.'¹¹ There is evidence that Roberts was not entirely happy with this choice. Croly introduced a strong tone of evangelical preaching in marked contrast to Roberts' more measured mode of expression, and in places even contradicted Roberts' personal observations (Burritt, 2020: 93-4; Mancoff, 1999: 94). Roberts sarcastically described his contribution as being 'least equal to all that was expected of him' while his daughter Christine found his company 'even worse than expected' (Mancoff, 1999: 117).

The decision to downplay the Egyptian part of the journey was made explicit, with none of these images included among the 72 on show in the Exhibition. In his Introduction, Moon explained that this will be 'a series of drawings... especially with a view to illustrate the localities and landscape of Holy Scripture' (Moon, 1840). We might contrast this emphasis with the paintings Roberts had exhibited at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition just a few weeks earlier. Here, he had chosen five subjects; only one of which was central to the Christian story. There was the temple of Baalbek, a favourite subject for Roberts, and three scenes along the Nile at Thebes,

¹⁰ *Caledonian Mercury* 28 December 1840, 3a.

¹¹ S. C. Hall *A Book of Memories of Great Men and Women of the Age, From Personal Acquaintance* pp. 232, 233 quoted in *Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900* entry Croly, George.

Edfou and Cairo. Though much admired, the religious subject chosen for the *Interior of the Greek Church of the Holy Nativity at Bethlehem* was very much the exception. The critical commentary made little of Roberts' work as part of spiritual or philosophical undertaking. 'Mr. Roberts, in visiting those scenes which time and fame have hallowed, has caught the true spirit of their classical grandeur.'¹² 'No architectural paintings lie or stand or recede like his, and here too the management of contending lights and clashing distances, with detail and effect combined, and the admirable arrangement of groups of figures, make a magnificent whole.'¹³

We might conclude from this that Moon rather than Roberts determined the layout of the exhibition in Rainy's Gallery and the ordering of the published lithographs, knowing that the connection with the Holy Land rather than the glories of ancient Egypt would be the main selling point. Moon also let it be known that this was a noble undertaking, certainly above such sordid concerns as making money for the publisher. According to one newspaper report, 'in giving publicity to these most valuable sketches in the only form suited to their just and proper representation, he has honourably connected his name with a work which, if well done, will be of lasting benefit to history and art.' Referring to Roberts' receipt of a Royal Academy diploma, it was observed that 'These, his sketches, will live forever', even when 'time and the sand' have obliterated the original structures.¹⁴

The exhibition in Regent Street was another triumph, attracting a Who's Who of 'illustrious individuals, all well-known patrons of art.'¹⁵ The Duke of Wellington, the Duke of Marlborough and a plethora of Lords, Ladies, Earls and Countesses attended along with 'Most of the members of the Royal Academy' including the President, Sir David Wilkie, and Sir Francis Chantrey. Indeed, it was probably the success of this exhibition which prompted Wilkie to set off on his own ill-fated trip to the Holy Land in August 1840, resulting in his death and burial at sea.

After the exhibition, Moon transferred the drawings to his own premises in Threadneedle Street, where they remained available for inspection. Thereafter they

¹² *Morning Post* 7 May 1840 6a.

¹³ *The Atlas* 16 May 1840.

¹⁴ *Morning Post* 9 June 1840 5f.

¹⁵ *Loc cit.*

were taken to a number of other cities. In August Sir Robert Peel saw them in an exhibition at another 'Mr. Davey's Room', this time in Broad Street, Bristol, and immediately 'added his distinguished name to the numerous list of subscribers'.¹⁶ According to newspaper reports the drawings were now divided into five sections, of which four were of sites with biblical associations. Visitors were taken from the 'Wilderness of Sinai', through 'Idumea, or Edom' and 'the Holy Land', and on to the 'Temple of Baalbec', the most distant place Roberts was able to visit. Only in section 5 could they enjoy 'a variety of subjects from ancient and modern "Egypt and Nubia"'.¹⁷ The main emphasis remained the religious significance of the collection. These drawings were now described as an 'invaluable records from the lands of Scripture and the cradle of history, the scene of the first and second revelation.'¹⁸ The views in and around Jerusalem became central, 'The third, and most important portion of the exhibition'; allowing the viewer to witness 'the very plains trodden by the patriarchs—the very cities in which the prophets and apostles preached—the very mountains and waters hallowed by the presence of the Great Sovereign and inspirer of them all.'¹⁹

The most prominent of these provincial exhibitions was held in Roberts' hometown of Edinburgh in December 1840. There was understandable local pride in the news that a series of drawings by 'our highly-gifted and distinguished townsman' would be on show and the organiser, a local publisher, was compelled to take larger premises for the occasion. From press commentary it is clear that the emphasis was again on 'the localities and landscape of the Holy Scriptures', the collection providing 'existing proof of sacred history, and of the fulfilment of those prophecies which foretold their ruin and perpetual desolation'. A detailed account in the *Caledonian Mercury* described many highlights of the exhibition but noticeably ends its description with the nine drawings of Baalbek, with no mention of the Egyptian subjects. Whether they were even included in the exhibition is unclear, but their significance was at the very least downplayed.²⁰

¹⁶ *Bristol Mercury* 8 August 1840 8b.

¹⁷ *Morning Post* 9 June 1840 5f.

¹⁸ *The Atlas* 13 June 1840 13c-14a.

¹⁹ *Morning Post* 9 June 1840 5f.

²⁰ *Caledonian Mercury* 28 December 1840, 3a; 5 December 1840, 3cd.

The publicity campaign was now in earnest, and even Roberts' entries for the 1841 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition became in effect a promotional opportunity for the forthcoming publication. Of the eight paintings each artist was permitted to enter Roberts exhibited just three, all of which would be re-worked as lithographs for wider distribution. Only *The Temple of Dendera* (1841) was from an Egyptian subject, listed in the prospectus as the *Temple of Dandour* (Moon, 1840: 39) and later appearing in Volume 4 *Egypt and Nubia as Portico of the temple of Dendera*. The other two paintings on display were *Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives* and the *Gateway to the Great Temple at Baalbec* which Roberts presented to the Royal Academy as his Diploma work, the final stage in his acceptance as an Academician. Drawings of these same subjects appeared among the 72 shown at Moon's promotional exhibition, later published as lithographs in Volumes 1 and 2 of *The Holy Land, Syria, Idumea and Arabia*.

Each of Roberts' entries in the 1841 Exhibition was accompanied with a passage of text drawn from diverse sources. For the most part these differ from those supplied by Croly, although a passage from the *Lamentations of Jeremiah* also appears in the Royal Academy and the exhibition Catalogue (Moon, 1840). We can probably assume these were chosen by Roberts rather than Croly, and they mark a distinct change of style from his earlier writing; a clear attempt to introduce an air of contemplative introspection in keeping with the mood Moon was trying to engender. Aside from a brief descriptive passage accompanying his view of Jerusalem these are evocative and poetic texts from the Scottish explorer James Bruce's *Travels To Discover The Source Of The Nile* (1790), Thomas Moore's Oriental romance *Lalla Rookh* (1817) and the Bible.

The Regents Park Diorama

The Royal Academy show had opened in May 1840 and by June the book had secured illustrious support through private showings and a successful private exhibition in London. By August the drawings had left the capital for a series of further exhibitions. Meanwhile, Moon kept interest in the project alive by sanctioning the use of one of the sketches in another, very different form.

Daguerre's Diorama (1823) was a well-established London attraction housed in a purpose-built structure in a fashionable part of town. Patrons were led along shadowy passages and dimly lit stairways until they found themselves sitting in a circular chamber in complete darkness. By careful control of natural light, a large painting was

revealed which combined opaque sections with translucent areas which could be lit from behind. The whole auditorium then rotated, allowing the audience to see a second dioramic painting. The application of these arrangements was highly sophisticated, and the whole designed to create a convincing illusory effect. This was greatly enhanced after 1834 by the so-called 'double-effect' by which the translucent parts of the canvas were themselves painted, allowing transformation scenes like those already enjoyed in theatrical pantomimes (Altick, 1978: 163-72).

The chance to create a dioramic painting after Roberts' celebrated drawings came at an opportune moment in the institution's history. The original French Diorama had been destroyed by fire in 1839 and the manager of the London branch, Charles-Marie Bouton, was summoned back to Paris. His replacement was Charles Renoux, and this would be his first commission in London; an opportunity to show off his mastery of the 'double-effect' diorama.

The subject chosen for his debut was *The Shrine of the Nativity at Bethlehem*, 'painted by M. Renoux, from a Sketch made on the spot by David Roberts, A.R.A., in 1839'.²¹ In a narrative sense this seems to follow on from *The Greek Church of the Holy Nativity at Bethlehem* shown at the Royal Academy in 1840, in which the grandeur of the church is contrasted with the entrance to the vault of the nativity 'sternly solemn in its aspect', leaving the observer 'stayed at its threshold in pause-filled awe.'²² This was a fitting subject to encapsulate the whole project as Moon had now conceived it; a representation of the literal birthplace of Christianity.

This same review suggests the qualities in Roberts' paintings which might have attracted Renoux:

...behind the highest cross a beautiful light breaks through as if from Heaven, upon the picture, and falls and lingers where the painter wills. The pilgrims in the foreground complete the fullness of the subject, and make up its measure of strength and grace.²³

²¹ *Morning Post* 9 September 1840 1c.

²² *Morning Post* 7 May 1840 6a.

²³ *Morning Post* 7 May 1840 6a.

The emphasis is on lighting effects and the pilgrims in the foreground who serve to create illusory depth, animating the architectural space like figures in a theatrical set.

We might compare this with similar descriptions of the newly painted Diorama, which comprised three distinct scenes. It began with a simple representation of the shrine as it then existed followed by a change of lighting which revealed a scene of monks celebrating evening mass in the church above. The most spectacular scene, however, was saved until last.

Unnoticed lamps light as stars, figures of monks and friars before unseen, take the eye and wing the imagination to the scene perhaps at that moment taking place in reality, and the whole resembles the illusions of Arabian Night's tale, or the vivid mockery of a dream... [T]he effects of the light from the lamps striking upwards on the ropes by which they are suspended, the glow and corresponding shade on the crimson canopy and drapery of the manger, and the chiaroscuro of the receding portions of the Chapel, are perfect.²⁴

Renoux was much praised for both art and artistry, demonstrating not only 'the nicest discrimination and most perfect knowledge in matters of art', but also a mastery of 'the mechanical contrivances required to produce such a graduated effect.'²⁵ He 'has produced a work of art bordering so closely upon reality... that a visitor might almost persuade himself he was gazing on the identical spot where our Saviour was born.'²⁶

This was a call to religious contemplation, the emotional and psychological impact reinforced by distant bells as darkness approached, and the 'deep tones of an organ'.²⁷ Where reviews might more routinely have confined their comments to the illusory qualities of a new Diorama, newspaper commentary spoke of this almost as a spiritual experience. 'The whole scene... [was] of a very solemn and imposing description.'²⁸ This was a 'solemn scene', which 'together with the associations to which the advent of the Redeemer gives rise, produce a sublime effect.'²⁹ 'The very hush of the spectators proves the effect produced... The *religio loci* upon them.'³⁰

²⁴ *John Bull* 12 September 1840, 9b.

²⁵ *Weekly Dispatch* (London) 13 September 1840 8c.

²⁶ *Reading Mercury* 26 September 1840, 4c.

²⁷ *Weekly Dispatch* (London) 13 September 1840 8c.

²⁸ *Sun* (London) 3 March 1842, 7b.

²⁹ *Sun* (London) September 1840 3c.

³⁰ *John Bull* 12 September 1840, 9b.

If the religious emphasis belonged to Moon's strategising rather than Roberts' aesthetic preferences, the decision to permit a dioramic adaptation of one of his drawings would have met little resistance from Roberts. The Diorama was a highly respectable place of entertainment, and it was a medium with which he was already familiar.

The Dissolving Views

At Easter 1842 Moon sanctioned another entertainment based on the Holy Land drawings, this time of an altogether novel kind as subjects for the Dissolving Views at the Polytechnic Institution. Again, this was a strategic decision, the launch of the series of views coinciding with the publication of the first of the 20 parts of *The Holy Land* in March.³¹ At the same time, the Diorama was re-opening for the season with a revival of Renoux's *Shrine of the Nativity, at Bethlehem*.³² These were mutually beneficial arrangements. The Diorama and the Polytechnic drew audiences attracted by topical interest in the publication, while Moon kept the Roberts drawings in the public eye at a crucial stage of his marketing campaign.

Just as the commissioning of the *Shrine of the Nativity* diorama had arrived at a propitious moment, coinciding with the arrival of Renoux, this latest application of the drawings was also serendipitous. Although the principle of dissolving views was long established, the medium was effectively invented at the Polytechnic Institution at Easter 1841 (Brooker, 2013: 52-4). A specially constructed lantern with two optical systems, each with its own oxy-hydrogen light source, allowed images to dissolve, one into the other, creating strange and sometimes baffling transitions. One image 'became' another in an entirely unfamiliar way, quite unlike the revolving auditorium of the Diorama or the shutter mechanism which masked the transitions between images at the British Diorama.

The dissolving views created an immediate sensation, and the Polytechnic embarked on a rapid process of development. Astute observers saw the comparison with the Diorama from the outset, and this was precisely what the proprietors were hoping. 'In this exhibition, we are disposed to imagine, some of the secrets of the

³¹ *Morning Chronicle* 3 March 1842, 1e.

³² *Sun* (London) 3 March 1842, 7b.

changing light and shade of the Diorama are repeated; and in a manner, we must say, likely to make the show of Regent Street a formidable rival to the show in the Regent's Park.'³³ '[T]he novelty consists in imperceptibly creating a picture on the canvas, while another picture, the predecessor of the new comer, as imperceptibly disappears from the view of the spectator; and this, be it remembered, on the same surface and without the slightest assistance from transparencies.'³⁴

The subject matter became increasingly ambitious. The first series of slides comprised 18 sequences including a battle at sea, the Royal Exchange transforming from its original grandeur to its ruinous state after a fire in 1838 and finally to the proposed new building which would rise in its place, and a representation of the passing seasons. '[H]ouses and trees covered with snow; an almost imperceptible change takes place, and the same objects are seen under the influence of spring; these in their turn give way to the heat and light of summer, which finally "dissolve" into the mellowed hues of autumn.'³⁵

These kinds of heterogeneous sequences had long typified magic lantern performance, albeit now shown with far greater sophistication. The turning point appears to have come at Christmas 1841 when the Polytechnic introduced a series of dissolving views based on engravings from Julia Pardoe's *The Beauties of the Bosphorus* (1838) and Thomas Allom's *Constantinople and the Scenery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor* (1839). The challenge of transferring these fine engravings to glass in a manner which could withstand the scrutiny of large-scale magnification on a projection screen pushed the medium to its limits.

Recognising these limitations, the Polytechnic made a bold decision. In March 1842, just a year after their commencement, the dissolving view projectors and the entire existing stock of slides was abandoned. Henceforth they would use new lanterns with improved lighting and optical systems and crucially also much bigger slides. This gave the artists a larger surface on which to work, allowing higher levels of detail and precision (Brooker, 2013: 57).

³³ *Athenaeum* 1841 p.560a.

³⁴ *Morning Advertiser* - Tuesday 20 April 1841 2e.

³⁵ *Dover Telegraph and Cinque Ports General Advertiser* 17 April 1841 3b.

The subject chosen for the 'enlarged and improved' dissolving views was an entirely new sequence by the slide artist Charles Smith, 'from the work now in course of publication by Mr. Moon, entitled "The Holy Land".'³⁶ Without the aid of photography these had to be hand painted directly onto the glass and because of the painstaking and laborious methods involved it was announced that these would be added piecemeal over a period of times.

The Dissolving Views had already brought the Polytechnic great popular success. In December 1841 there were reports of 3,500 visitors in a single day, 'one of the principal attractions being the new dissolving views, which were exhibited nine or ten times during the morning and evening.'³⁷ '[T]he theatre in which the exhibition takes place has been literally crammed, both during the mornings and in the evenings.'³⁸ With the advent of the 'improved' dissolving views this popularity reached new heights and in December 1842 'the number of visitors exceeded by 1000 the number on any previous occasion. Several hundred persons were refused admission in the course of the day.'³⁹ On Boxing Day it was said that no fewer than 5,000 people attended.⁴⁰ If the Dissolving Views brought popular success, they also attracted distinguished visitors including the Duke of Wellington and Count Alexander Mensdorf, first cousin of the Queen, with his four sons.⁴¹

With the launch of the *Holy Land* slides the Polytechnic Dissolving Views became a serious rival to the Diorama. The Polytechnic theatre could seat 500, far more than the 200 at the Diorama, and could be shown any number of times with minimal preparation between showings. The sequence could be added to or changed at will, creating an informal travelogue. Slides were also far cheaper to produce and easier to store. The challenge was complete in 1848, when a new purpose built theatre was added to the existing Polytechnic building to seat 1500 people, specifically designed to show dissolving views. Fittingly, the *Holy Land* slides were revived for the occasion;

³⁶ *Morning Post* 30 March 1842, 3c.

³⁷ *Morning Post* 28 December 1841, 3e.

³⁸ *The Era* - Sunday 11 July 1841, 5b.

³⁹ *Cheltenham Chronicle* 29 December 1842, 2c.

⁴⁰ *Leeds Mercury* - Saturday 31 December 1842, 5a.

⁴¹ *Morning Post* 3 May 1841, 3b *Morning Post* 3 June 1842 5c.

now shown, like the original Diorama, in an idealised space especially suited to their technical requirements.

Although the sequence would eventually comprise 19 subjects, no complete record of *Holy Land* slides has been found. From press reports we know there was a version of the *Shrine of the Nativity* (as also featured at the Diorama), the *Chapel of St. Helena*, and the *Interior of the Greek Church*; the very subject Roberts had used at the Royal Academy in 1840.⁴² A published account by Johann-Conrad Fischer in the summer of 1845 also mentions exterior and interior views of St Catherine's Monastery, and the salt desert around Sinai (Fischer, 1846).

It is unclear how these slides were presented in performance. A review in the *Times* mentions a 'much admired change from darkness to light' in connection with the *Shrine of the Nativity*, which appears to echo the lighting effects seen at the Diorama. Otherwise, there is no mention of effects even though these were already an established feature of the Polytechnic's dissolving views. We also know that music played a part, with 'Each scene... introduced by appropriate music', adapted from existing sources by Dr. Wallis, the musical director⁴³ (Brooker, 2005).

It is also unclear whether these were shown as a kind of travelogue or treated more as a pool of images. To judge from Fischer's account, there was in general little logic behind the sequencing of views, with various topographical subjects presented in juxtaposition (Fischer, 1846: 67-9; Brooker, 2013: 55). However, a review from 1848 mentions 'The series of views in the Holy Land from the sketches of David Roberts, which still supply the subjects of the Dissolving Views properly so called. They form a very beautiful panorama from Edom to Baalbec.'⁴⁴ This appears to suggest they were shown as a coherent sequence, forming a distinct category as 'Dissolving views properly so called' in distinction with the rest of the programme. This accords with a letter written by Roberts' daughter, now Christine Bicknell, on 10 May 1848. 'We went to the Polytechnic to see the dissolving views from my father's *Holy Land* in their new theatre. They were very well done' (Jones, 1990: 62). This clearly suggests that the slides were treated as a self-contained sequence, perhaps representing Roberts' actual journey.

⁴² *Sun (London)* 10 August 1842, 1d.

⁴³ *Morning Post* 24 December 1841, 3c.

⁴⁴ *Tablet* 11 November 1848, 14a.

The Burford Panorama

Once the first three volumes of Holy Land lithograph were complete, Moon turned his attention to the Egyptian drawings. This portion of the work had been somewhat delayed 'until Mr. Roberts and Mr. Louis Haghe could commence their portions of this important undertaking with the certainty of its progress to completion without interruption' (Burford, 1847). Roberts was hard at work in 1846 producing the finished drawings, and in November 1847 the first part of *Egypt and Nubia* was published. Though uniform with the earlier editions this was a somewhat different publication, and another writer was now entrusted to write the accompanying texts (Sims, 1984: 220-1).

The remaining volumes would be written by William Brockendon, a skilled artist as well as a writer. Though Roberts was critical of his lack of originality (Mancoff, 1999: 117), the tone was far more approachable and although there were many references to authoritative sources, these are offset with colourful descriptions and anecdotes from Robert's diaries. This allows the artist to emerge as more of a personality than in the earlier volumes.

There are also noticeable incursions from the modern world. At Aboo Simbel, Roberts complains about the 'contemptible relic-hunters, who have also been led by their vanity to smear their vulgar names on the very foreheads of the Egyptian deities.' There are also depictions of Roberts' travelling companions clambering up the colossal statues at Thebes and he includes a group of tourists lolling in front of the portico of Deir-el-Median. There is even a depiction of Roberts' meeting with the Pasha, Mohammed Ali and his entourage.

To mark the publication of *Egypt and Nubia* Roberts' work was utilised for yet another popular attraction, this time at the Panorama just off Leicester Square. This purpose built structure had been in continuous operation since 1794 initially under its inventor, Henry Barker and from 1826 under the sole proprietorship of Robert Burford (Altick 1978, 137). The building was a realisation of Barker's 1787 patent for an illusory space where viewers could experience a 360⁰ painted vista, as if observing the natural world from some elevated position. Imitators soon appeared and the word 'Panorama' entered the lexicon but few if any copied the full circle of Barker's original conception, most opting for curved or even flat surfaces. This novelty, coupled with an adroit choice of subject matter, made this one of the great survivors among the London

shows. The Panorama would finally close its doors in 1863, two years after Burford's death, after a continuous existence of almost 70 years.

Burford was a talented painter who occasionally exhibited at the Royal Academy, and was a personal friend of Roberts. In a diary entry written in Cairo on 29 January 1839, Roberts records the genesis of the sketch from which the Panorama would be made. 'Mr. Pell promises to be ready in eight days, and I shall fill up the time here in making a panorama of Cairo for my friend Burford.' He completed the task in four days, 'four and a half sheets— not bad for the time; the subject is excellent'⁴⁵ (Ballantine, 1866: 113).

This sketch was not part of the agreement with Moon and was never intended to be part of the *Holy Land* publication and he could have handed it over to Burford at any time. Money was clearly not a major consideration. Roberts charged just £50 for his work, and we must assume that Roberts deliberately withheld it until this moment when it would help launch the new series of publications.

The *View of Grand Cairo* was painted by Burford and his regular collaborator Henry Selous. Selous was a well-known illustrator and artist in his own right; a former student of John Martin who showed 60 paintings at the Royal Academy during his lifetime. The Burford panoramas were painted in eight sections at a studio in Kentish Town and assembled on-site, where they were tensioned between two rails, each 283ft [86m] in circumference (Altick, 1978: 139). Roberts was closely involved in the work, even loaning costumes from his own 'extensive and splendid collection of dresses' (Burford, 1847). Unlike the Diorama or the Dissolving Views this was a form of self-guided travelogue in which the observer could search out buildings, natural features of the landscape and even named individuals from a published guidebook.

Though this exhibition may have been beneficial to Moon he was not explicitly involved in the project, which feels more like a puff piece for Roberts than a tool to sell books. A copy of the programme which accompanied the exhibition of the panorama has survived, in which hagiographic descriptions of the forthcoming publication appear not only in the portion allotted to advertisements but as a preface. 'The interest and value of the forthcoming graphic Illustrations of Ancient Egypt and Nubia cannot fail to be acknowledged when the ability of the Artists—pre-eminent in their power to

⁴⁵ This pencil and watercolour sketch is reproduced in (Tromans 2008, 102-3).

produce such a work' are considered. These encomiums sit awkwardly alongside advertisements for an invisible ventilating peruke, a purveyor of carpets and domestic furnishing in nearby Leicester Square, an invisible support to correct deformities of the spine and more prosaic items such as water closets, hair oil and cigars (Burford, 1847).

This clumsy and blatant commercialism raised a few eyebrows, and certainly lacked Moon's deft touch for keeping the financial aspects of the publication at arm's length. 'The prefatory notice... that Mr. Burford has appended to the description, seems to us a want of good taste, so warm a eulogium upon the artist employed to take the present view, and upon an unpublished work.'⁴⁶

The Panorama was not hugely successful and closed early in 1848. The show depended on good natural light and there were complaints about the weather.⁴⁷ Roberts felt that Burford had let him down, and suggested that had he charged a higher fee the proprietor might have tried harder (Sims, 1984: 250). It is also possible the fault lay with Roberts, in his attempts to reconcile the romance of Egyptian antiquity with the more mundane reality of a modern city. 'The city is not presented in the dress which poetry and romance have hung upon it. A mass of ruins, rather than a crowded metropolis, seems to be pictured.'⁴⁸

The Overland Route to India

Roberts' Holy Land drawings travelled from his notebooks and through the various strata of the London show economy as part of a carefully orchestrated marketing campaign. The success of this campaign is indisputable. Moon and Roberts managed to create a mystique around these drawings which elevated them into a *cause célèbre*; not merely a sightseeing tour of exotic places but a mystical experience which took the viewer to the very sites described in the Bible.

Of course, the journey did not end there, and other places encountered Roberts' work in a variety of forms. The exhibition of drawings which started in such grand style

⁴⁶ *Bell's New Weekly Messenger* 14 March 1847, 5e.

⁴⁷ *Morning Post* 12 March 1847, 5e.

⁴⁸ *Morning Post* 12 March 1847, 5e.

continued, passing through the Music Hall, Leeds in 1842 and other provincial towns.⁴⁹ There were also other, perhaps less ‘official’ adaptations trading on Roberts’ fame and reputation in heterogeneous presentations which almost invariably added the suffix ‘R.A.’ to his name and emphasised the authenticity of the views.

In September 1841 we find Moses Gompertz at a Masonic Lodge in York with his *Grand Moving Diorama through Turkey and Syria*, culminating in spectacular fashion with the bombardment of St. Jean D’Acre in 1840. Also included in the programme were three dioramas representing the heroism of Grave Darling, the death of Nelson and (in block capitals) the *Holy Shrine of the Nativity at Bethlehem*, ‘Where Jesus was born in the days of Herod the King— Matt. ii. 1.’ Gompertz promised his visitors an ‘extraordinary’ picture, ‘acknowledged to surpass all similar Productions of the kind.’⁵⁰ It was presented with ‘solemn vocal music’⁵¹ and, like the original in Regent’s Park, comprised ‘three distinct effects’.⁵² ‘The diversity of shade, together with the brightness of the silver lamps in the chapel, is emulated very successfully. The latter is a very superior production, and cannot fail to arrest the attention of a discerning public.’⁵³ This proved a popular attraction, maintaining its place in Gompertz’s repertoire through the 1850s,⁵⁴ and was subsequently adopted by the famous touring company run by the Poole family (Huhtamo, 2012: 236-7; Powell, 1996).

In July 1848, a *Grand Moving Panorama* ‘conducted’ by Mr. W. S. Kelly at a hotel in Lincolnshire rather incongruously included two of Roberts’ paintings in its representation of Napoleon’s funeral and the sights of Paris.⁵⁵ In September of that same year Mr. Marshall appeared at the town hall in Cheltenham with ‘Four Views of Jerusalem and Vicinity, Painted from sketches taken on the spot by David Roberts, Esq., R.A.’ alongside three dioramic views of the stable of Bethlehem, ten views of Mexico and a diorama of *The Late Dreadful Attack On The Palais Royal—Late Revolution In Paris*.⁵⁶ In

⁴⁹ *Leeds Intelligencer* 5 March 1842, 5d ‘It will be the recollection of our readers, that the original sketches were exhibited at the Music Hall a few months since... and that they elicited, universally, the strongest expressions of admiration’.

⁵⁰ *York Herald* 11 September 1841, 2d.

⁵¹ *Cheltenham Looker-On* 29 July 1843.

⁵² *Morning Post* - Thursday 15 December 1842 3d.

⁵³ *Liverpool Mail* 15 January 1842 2d.

⁵⁴ *Kentish Gazette* 28 December 1852.

⁵⁵ *Lincolnshire Chronicle* 28 July 1848 4b.

⁵⁶ *Cheltenham Journal and Gloucestershire Fashionable Weekly Gazette* 4 September 1848 2d.

October Mr. Mackenzie 'of London' announced 'The Holy Land, from illustrations by David Roberts, R.A.', together with some 'beautiful Cosmorama, taken from Jerusalem and other parts of the Holy Land', at his Royal Gallery of Wax Models in Exeter.⁵⁷

Roberts' drawings again came into service at Easter 1850 as part of a moving panorama representing *The Overland Route to India* (Altick, 1978: 207). With an extraordinary circularity, this was shown at the New Gallery of Illustration, 14 Regent Street; the very hall where Roberts' sketches were first shown ten years earlier. The arrival of Banvard's giant panorama of scenes on the Mississippi River had created a new enthusiasm for these giant moving canvases which unrolled past the seated audience as if vicariously experiencing the various phases of the journey at first hand. Often referred to as *The Overland Mail to India*, it represented the route from Southampton via Gibraltar, Cairo and Suez to Ceylon and Calcutta pioneered by Waghorn and latterly administered on behalf of the government by the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, P&O. Altick seems to suggest that part of the canvas was painted by Roberts, but this appears unlikely and the prospectus acknowledges only the 'kindness of David Roberts, Esq., R.A.' in supplying his 'Sketches in Egypt'⁵⁸ (Gallery of Illustration, 1850).

Various artists provided drawings for different parts of the journey, with Roberts' sketches representing the route through Egypt. The music (comprising 'National Airs' of various countries) was arranged by the Irish violinist and composer Michael Rophino Lacy and included Egyptian and Arabian melodies,⁵⁹ with an engaging commentary from journalist, author and raconteur J.H. Stocqueler.⁶⁰ Roberts' portions of the journey were represented not only among the 32 wood-engravings which illustrate the exhibition prospectus but, in an engraving, published in the *Illustrated London News*.⁶¹

⁵⁷ *Western Times* 7 October 1848 4b.

⁵⁸ Altick suggests the programme included some stationary views, though this appears to be incorrect. Several parts were shown in this form for the press night, but the complete moving panorama was assembled in time for the public opening. See *Sun* (London) 30 March 1850, 3b; *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* 31 March 1850, 2e.

⁵⁹ *Lady's Own Paper* 13 April 1850, 197-8.

⁶⁰ *Sun* (London) 30 March 1850, 3b.

⁶¹ *Illustrated London News* 30 March 1850, 220-1.

Conclusion

I have suggested that the emphasis on biblical sites in the lithographic publications which recorded Roberts' great expedition was due in large part to the astute publisher Moon who made this, rather than Egyptian antiquities, the primary focus. The layout and content of the promotional exhibition, the publication sequence, the selection of subjects sanctioned for use in public entertainments, and above all the choice of Croly to write the accompanying text came to define this as a primarily religious undertaking. That this strategy was successful can be gauged by the list of eminent subscribers from all walks of life keen to put their names to the project. These included many crowned heads and emperors, and a fair number of churchmen including the Supreme Governor of the Church of England Queen Victoria, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and at least 27 other Reverend gentlemen.

Amanda Burritt has suggested that Roberts' religious upbringing might only be one factor in his decision to visit the Holy Land. To judge from his subsequent paintings, it was Egypt and the ruins of Baalbek which held his imagination, and attracted his patrons, from the period of the Royal Academy exhibition in 1840 until the end of his life. Although Roberts continued to travel and received many prestigious commissions, he confided in a letter to Christine in 1843: 'Whether the impressions made on my mind by Egypt are never to be effaced, or whether places I have visited here are not interesting, I have felt little inclination to do anything' (Mancoff, 1999: 117). It would also appear that he was somewhat ambivalent about the attention he received, perhaps knowing that the praise for this as a noble religious undertaking was misplaced. At the reception in Edinburgh where he was eulogised for his 'pilgrimage of art' he chose to downplay his own role, suggesting that any competent artist could have done as much with such subject matter and politely refused an invitation to be similarly fêted in Glasgow (Mancoff, 1999: 115).

We can perhaps see the difference between Moon's and Roberts' visions play out in the relative failure of the Burford panorama. Part of Roberts' intention was to portray the modern Egypt under the benign influence of Mohammed Ali, 'One of the most extraordinary persons that figure in Mahomedan history' under whose care 'Egypt is approaching a state of civilization long unknown.' The opening sentence of the exhibition booklet accompanying the Panorama describes Cairo as 'the metropolis of Modern Egypt,' and alongside the antiquities we see glimpses of European-style

gardens and modern infrastructure to support tourism, and hear of the development of a European-style school system offering access to military, naval, and medical colleges alongside manufactories and the equitable rule of law. These incursions from the modern world reminded visitors that Egypt, like Britain, was subject to both social and technological change.

This is an altogether different message from that promoted by Moon, and perhaps suggests why the proposed final volume on modern Egypt was never produced. Roberts had arrived in Egypt as a tourist, an outsider, expressing typical unsympathetic views about local people and customs. As his journey progressed, he came to admire the people he met and was in general respectful in his encounters and impressed by the progress being made. Yet for many British Christians back home the appeal of the Holy Land was precisely that it appeared ‘unchanged and unchanging’; a “time capsule’ of the ancient and biblical world’ where scenes described in the Bible could still be witnessed (Burrirt, 2020: 71). Burrirt sees an often unconscious tension between a metaphorical and a geographical Holy Land– ‘belief in a religion which was Near Eastern in origin, a reverence for the Holy Land as a place where the historical Jesus lived, theology of a heavenly Jerusalem and a view of the contemporary reality of the region as totally alien and sometimes decadent and degraded’ (Burrirt, 2020: 47).

Elsewhere, Burrirt describes the production of lithographed folios as a ‘cost effective’ way to reach the ‘widest audience’ (Burrirt, 2020: 106). But is this really true? The 606 listed subscribers could choose between two distinct editions– a ‘standard’ version and a ‘deluxe’ version ‘laboriously hand coloured to give the impression of a watercolour rather than a print’ (Price, 2021). Even the cheaper edition would cost subscribers in excess of £43, and though sources are not consistent the more expensive one appears to have cost between £87 and an eye-watering £150 for the set. There are no records to say how many of each edition was produced, but it is estimated that the combined number probably did not exceed 1,000 copies (Price, 2021). This was one of the costliest publications of the era and it stands to reason that the number of people who saw it must have been small. Even if we factor in pirated editions and a cheaper version with fewer illustrations sanctioned by Moon in 1843, the numbers who had access to these images in printed form must have been relatively modest (Mancoff, 1999: 114).

Far greater numbers would have seen the series of promotional exhibitions organised by Moon or the paintings on similar themes exhibited at the Royal Academy.

However, these numbers were dwarfed by those visiting the Diorama where (as we have seen) a successful painting could be experienced by upwards of 140,000 people, while the Polytechnic could boast as many as 3,500, and in exceptional circumstances 5000 visitors in a single day. All this, it should be remembered, even before the first batch of lithographs was dispatched to subscribers. If we add the numbers who attended popular touring exhibitions like those of Gompertz it is clear that provincial audiences were also catered for and though it might be objected that these exhibitions would show only a tiny number of images the reputation of Roberts and his Holy Land drawings was hugely magnified through this process.

This paper might therefore be regarded as a detailed case study into the interconnectedness of London's, and to extent Britain's, exhibition economy. Roberts' work encompassed the whole range from exclusive private audiences for distinguished individuals and invitation-only exhibitions to regional touring panorama shows.

All this might be seen as evidence of the 'dissemination of knowledge' which was such a guiding principle for many in the 1840s. Wealthy industrialists, churchmen and radicals all promoted this ideal as a vital precondition for economic prosperity and societal change. Roberts was himself an exemplar for the attractive notion that low-born individuals could aspire to greatness by virtue of talent and hard work, and the distribution of his drawings through a variety of popular media allowed at least the possibility of access to this most exclusive of publications for all but the poorest and most remotely situated.

Alternatively, we might see this as evidence of the commoditisation of knowledge during the same period as ingenious individuals found ways to monetise its distribution. Chromolithography would in time bring colour not only into middle class homes through children's books and fine art publications but into the streets through posters and other advertising material. Dissolving views marked the beginnings of large-screen entertainment catering to mass audiences. The *Illustrated London News*, founded in 1842, ushered in a new age in illustrated print publications. Though Brockendon's claim that 'Thebes has become to the English traveller what Rome formerly was, and a visit to the Nile is not an adventure but an excursion' might be somewhat disingenuous, this period also saw the beginnings of popular tourism with the first Thomas Cook excursion in 1841 and the early activities of P&O. None of these developments were without precedent but all were effectively reinvented at precisely

this time, and all played their part in the dissemination and reception of Roberts' work. As always, his timing was impeccable. Fate so often seemed to be on his side at each phase of his career, and in retrospect we can see these sketches poised at a moment of change. Lurking behind the scenes was the new miracle of photography, a force which would revolutionise all aspects of image making and change notions of accuracy and truthful representation forever more.

REFERENCES

- ALTICK, RICHARD D. (1978), *The Shows of London*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press.
- BALLANTINE, JAMES (1866), *The life of David Roberts, RA.: compiled from his journals and other sources*. Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black.
- BROOKER, JEREMY (2005), Paganini's Ghost: Musical resources of the Royal Polytechnic Institution (1838-1881). In: Mervyn Heard — Ine van Dooren — Richard Crangle (eds), *Realms of Light: Uses and perceptions of the Magic Lantern from the 17th to the 21st Century*. Ripon: Magic Lantern Society, pp. 146-154.
- (2013), *The Temple of Minerva. Magic and the Magic Lantern at the Royal Polytechnic Institution, London 1837-1901*. Ripon: Magic Lantern Society.
- BURFORD, ROBERT (1847), *Description of a view of the city of Cairo, and the surrounding country: now exhibiting at the Panorama, Leicester Square; painted by the proprietor, Robert Burford, assisted by Mr. H.C. Selous, from drawings by D. Roberts*. London: R. Burford.
- BURRITT, AMANDA M. (2020), *Visualising Britain's Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature.
- COLTRIN, CHRIS (2011), Picturing Political Deliverance: Three Paintings of the Exodus by John Martin, Francis Danby, and David Roberts. *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 10/1, Spring.
- FISCHER, JOHANN-CONRAD (1846), *Notizen auf der Reise über Paris nach London, Leeds, Low-Moor, Sheffield und zurück im Sommer 1845*. Schaffhausen.
- GALLERY OF ILLUSTRATION (1850), *The Route Of The Overland Mail To India, from Southampton to Calcutta*. London: Atchley & Co.
- GIEBELHAUSEN, MICHAELA (2006), *Painting the Bible: Representation and Belief in Mid-Victorian Britain*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- GUITERMAN, HELEN — BRIONY LLEWELLYN (eds) (1986). *David Roberts*. London: Phaidon Press and Barbican Art Gallery.
- HORNE, REV. THOMAS HARTWELL (1836), *Landscape Illustrations of the Bible: Consisting of Views of the Most Remarkable Places Mentioned in the Old and New Testament*. London: John Murray.
- HUHTAMO, ERKKI (2012), *Illusions in Motion: Media Archaeology of the Moving Panorama and Related Spectacles*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- JONES, JOHN (1990), "David Roberts, a Victorian Traveller and Painter." In: Dennis Crompton — David Henry — Stephen Herbert (eds), *Magic Images; the Art of Hand-Painted and Photographic Lantern Slides*. London: Magic Lantern Society.

- LAMBOURNE, LIONEL (1999), *Victorian Painting*. London: Phaidon Press.
- MANCOFF, DEBRA N. (1999), *David Roberts: Travels in Egypt and the Holy Lands*. San Francisco: Pomegranate.
- MOON, F.G. (1840), *The Holy Land, Egypt, Arabia, and Syria, by D. Roberts... The Historical and Descriptive Notices by the Rev. George Croly, Etc. [A Catalogue of an Exhibition of Lithographs, Executed by Louis Haghe After Drawings by D. Roberts, and Prospectus of the Work]*. London: F.G.Moon.
- POWELL, JOHN HUDSON (1996), New light on Poole's Myrioramas. *New Magic Lantern Journal* 8/1, pp. 12-15.
- PRICE, DAVID WALKER (2021), *David Roberts Gallery*. <http://www.davidrobertslithographs.com> (accessed November 12, 2021).
- ROBERTS, DAVID (1989). *The Holy Land. 123 Coloured Facsimile Lithographs and the Journal from his visit to the Holy Land*. London: Studio editions.
- RODENBECK, JOHN (2001). Dressing Native. In: Paul Starkey — Janet Starkey (eds), *Unfolding the Orient: travellers in Egypt and the Near East*. Reading: Ithaca Press.
- SIMS, KATHERINE (1984), *David Roberts R.A. 1796-1864*. London: Quartet Books.
- TROMANS, NICHOLAS (ed.) (2008). *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting*. London: Tate Publishing.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeremy BROOKER is an independent researcher into various aspects of magic lantern performance practice. His particular areas of interest are the use of music and live action in conjunction with screen-based images, science as spectacle, stage illusion and optical magic. He has undertaken a number of site specific studies, notably on nineteenth-century institutions the Royal Polytechnic Institution, the Adelaide Gallery, the Royal Panopticon, the Royal Institution, and the Academy of Music in Philadelphia. Jeremy Brooker is a founding member and current Chairman of the Magic Lantern Society. He formerly held the post of Research Officer, and was the first editor of its flagship quarterly publication *The Magic Lantern*. He is a regular participant in international conferences related to his fields of interest.

Bodies in motion and image recomposition in the early 20th Century

Angela LONGO | Tokyo University of the Arts, Japan

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/2021.10.LON.BODIE](https://doi.org/10.32926/2021.10.LON.BODIE)

ABSTRACT

The question of the appearance of the body surges in a play of overwhelming forces, and its register in artworks assumes different shapes as their representation spreads towards other mediums. Firstly, following Aby Warburg's thought, this article will analyse the process of the survival of bodies as potential motion in images. Warburg proposed an Iconological approach where the analysis of potential movement in the image yielded a formula for its analytic recomposition. Furthermore, he captured the transition at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the body representation moved to media that allowed movement reproduction, such as animation and cinema. The bodies' survival or capture contained an animist belief that gained propulsion with the first apparatuses and optical toys that allowed movement and live-action recording. This movement allowed for the production of a simulacrum of the living body and the power to recompose it in space. Therefore, this article will focus on the evolution of body representation and its survival to understand how images from the early twentieth century shaped and traveled around the world.

KEYWORDS

Body; Representation; Composition; Iconology; Aby Warburg; Animation.

Date of submission: 14 April 2021

Date of acceptance: 13 December 2021

Date of publication: 20 December 2021

1. Montage and *Pathos* – The challenge to the field of Art History at the turn of the twentieth century

The image is not a closed static field of knowledge; it is a centrifugal field encompassing anthropological and historical temporalities. The image movements are not necessarily the same as their historical time since the temporality of the image, their survivals, and reappearances produce what Georges Didi-Huberman called *knowledge-montage* (2017). This mode of thinking inserts a dynamism of forms, an organic-morphological dynamic within the image, creating a form of knowledge that appears and reappears in different times. Didi-Huberman's concept builds on Aby Warburg's (1866-1929) Iconological approach, where the analysis of potential movement in the image yielded the formula for its analytic recomposition. It is necessary to understand the emergence of *montage* and

pathos as analytical concepts to stimulate the connections between the potential internal movement of images and their subsequent technical manipulation of temporality.

First, the turn to the twentieth century proposed numerous challenges to the field of Art History. Authors such as Vasari and Winckelmann had sedimented the idea of succession, the analogy of art, and its perceived glory in the essence of beauty in the Greek and later Roman periods. In this manner of thought, the history of art was considered a history of its development and decline based on philosophical idealism. To challenge this view, instead of seeing determined and delimited forms in the work of Antiquity, Warburg saw moving forces, that is, polarities acting in the image. Warburg perceived that the Antiquity motifs persisted in Renaissance works.

For example, in *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1924-1929), Panel 39, Warburg showed that the antique motif of the nymph in motion reappeared in the paintings of *Birth of Venus* and *Spring* by Sandro Botticelli. Warburg perceived the tension between the modern observer and the Renaissance heritage, which meant that it was necessary to analyse the persistent return of forms and their survival (*nachleben*) to reveal the process of anthropological sedimentation in artworks. This process could be partially or largely destroyed by time, but it could also survive in the stylistic changes of artworks. In this sense, Warburg's reformulation of the problem of style considers the image as an energy-bearing entity that goes beyond its epoch, stretching its existence in different temporalities and sedimenting its different meanings.

This methodological shift is not present only in Warburg's thought; interestingly, the idea of art as *knowledge-montage* became a methodological and theoretical practice in the academic and artistic movements of the twentieth century. For example, Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) conceived the Epic Theatre to represent and encourage the audience to question the constructive aspects of reality. This form of theatre would encourage the audience to adopt a critical perspective, making it possible to recognise social forms of exploitation and the possibilities of social justice. In cinema, Soviet film brought an approach embedded in formalism, relying upon edition or *montage*, in the works of Dziga Vertov (1896-1954), Lev Kuleshov (1899-1970), and Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948). In the theoretical field, Georges Bataille edited the Parisian surrealist art magazine, *Documents* (1929-1930), with a wide range of photographs and writings about Picasso, Dali, Giacometti, and other avant-garde artists. In the unfinished *Arcades Project* (1927-1940), Walter Benjamin explored a collection of writings about the city

life of Paris in the nineteenth century, especially concerning the arcades, that is, the architectural precursor of the modern mall and a relic of a past social organisation.

Consequently, it became apparent in the first half of the twentieth century that the image would assume anachronic forms and mediums and act as a force, a form of becoming or knowledge in itself, to borrow Nietzsche's expression. "For knowledge – through re-montage – always engages a reflection on the de-montage of time in the tragic history of society" (Didi-Huberman, 2011:2). Thus, in the tragedy of the World Wars and the rapid technical transformation, art forms will engage powerfully with the social *pathos* at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Inspired by Burckhardt and Nietzsche, Warburg studied how Italian Quattrocento and Flemish painters represented bodies animated by an inner force, a potential movement that contained an animist belief in the bodies, what Warburg called *dynamograms*. Warburg, dissertation *Sandro Botticelli's Birth of Venus and Spring: An Examination of Concepts of Antiquity in the Early Renaissance* (1893), analysed the treatment of the visual themes that emerged at the end of the fifteenth century, tracing its connection to elements borrowed from Antiquity in both visual terms and literature manner. Angelo Poliziano's poem *Stanze per la Giostra* broadly follows the Homeric Hymn in which Venus arises from the sea, describing it with a delineation of details and accessories. As Philippe-Alain Michaud expressed: "In *La Giostra*, Poliziano adapted the quick movements of figures drawn from direct observation to a literary model provided by the epic poetry of Antiquity" (Michaud, 2004:68).

Indeed, Warburg analysed how the depiction of movement imbued in the poem provided artistic means to the Renaissance artist to produce the illusion of motion. First, his questioning of potential motion remains concentrated on the figure's features and external factors that seemed to modify the body, such as the wind and the fabric's movement. However, from 1902 onwards, for Warburg, the question of movement became internalised in the image. In this regard, the Appolinean *ethos* is thought of with the Dionysian *ethos*, rooted in the Greek world, reappearing in the Quattrocento as a two-fold image of the ancient pagan world.

Finally, Warburg looked to the anthropological dimension of Art through the concept of *pathosformel*, the symptomatology of the image. Warburg understands the symptom or the symptomatology as the *movement in the bodies*, and by excavating their traces in the image, it is possible to uncover their temporalities and survival. In

Atlas Mnemosyne, the images were arranged in large panels of black cloth, following their migration in the history of representation, with anachronisms and analogies explored through different mediums: art reproductions, maps, newspaper clippings, and photographs. Each panel marked a cartographic mapping of a specific theme that Warburg researched during his life, imagined as an animated sequence within a network of intervals or photographic frames. Fundamentally, Warburg produced a *knowledge-montage* concentrated in a dynamism of movement, an attraction-repulsion between the objects and the anthropological levels from which these objects emerged. In doing so, he helped pave the way to new modes of investigating images, specifically images bound by the emergence of cinematic time.

2. Bodies in Motion – Decomposing and capturing movements

In 1926-1927, Warburg gave a course at the University of Hamburg about Burckhardt and Nietzsche, presenting them as *seismographs*. The seismograph is an apparatus responsible for registering subterranean and invisible movements developed due to new recording techniques. Étienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904) in *La Methode Graphique* (1878) presented graphical methods for displaying and interpreting quantitative data from physiological measurement, besides being involved in the field of chronophotography. He also developed the chronophotographic gun, the ancestor of the movie camera, which could shoot twelve images per second. Marey chronophotography methods circumscribed a relation between transmitting and recording the movement continuously, making the transmission a physical prolongation of movement in real-time. Marey later resorted to what he called partial photographs (Figure 1), or the geometric method. This technique permitted capturing time and its effect on the body as it moved, paving the way for many studies on body movement.



Fig. 1. Étienne-Jules Marey, *Jumping from a springboard: geometric markers* (France, 1886).
© Cinémathèque française (Chik, 2012).

The comparison of Burckhardt and Nietzsche by Warburg meant that they were subjects of an implied time receiving its mnemonic waves, registering and embodying tensions between Apollo and Dionysus respectively, in its symptoms and resistances within their system of thought. Interestingly, Warburg's comparison with the seismograph brings forward a double meaning, the capacity to register the *pathos* of an era, and shows the technical transformations in image capture and production at the time. Notably, Burckhardt measured the complexity of times and thought of the Renaissance as a transitional period, a mixture of ancient and modern superstitions rather than a closed period of artistic creation. Didi-Huberman notes that before Warburg's notion of survival, Burckhardt presented the idea of "[...] vital remains (*lebensfähige rest*)" (2017: 46). Additionally, Nietzsche (1999) had an enormous influence on Warburg's thought about time, precisely *motion in time* and its relationships of *forces* between the Apolline and Dionysiac.

Furthermore, this play of forces is intertwined to displace the dialectical process of the opposites; the eternal return would return as difference – as a double phantom – inserting the possibility of liberation inside the dialectical process. This power would be the potency or plasticity of becoming. As Catherine Malabou exemplifies: "The production of the spectral double would be the Nietzschean reply — a non-dialectical one — to the dialectical resolution" (Malabou, 2010: 22). Warburg's concept of survival

(*nachleben*) and the conception of time in Nietzsche are correlated and present the oscillations that describe the displacements in the image. Warburg was interested in the materialised memory of an experience passed to posterity by artefacts and artworks, meaning that they would constitute a social memory. As such, the historian-seismograph does not merely capture visible moments but also transmits the invisible moments, the discontinuities of time, its anachronism, and survival. Moreover, the image may be said to beat or pulsate, and since it is neither wholly living nor dead, it becomes a haunting spectrum in its survival.

Additionally, Physicist Ernst Mach recorded sound graphically with his method of *schlieren* photography to visualised shock waves, presenting the results at the University of Vienna in 1887. Finally, Étienne-Jules Marey's assistant Lucien Bull (1876-1972) contributed with chronophotography and his dedication to high-speed cinematograph photographs. In 1904, he invented the Stereoscopic Spark Drum Camera to capture large-scale stereoscopic images of creatures in flight. His invention did not operate on a shutter; instead, inside his camera, a drum was driven by an electric motor that could record up to 2000fps. Lucien Bull's motivation for his stereoscopic pursuit was "[...] because it makes animated projections more alive" (Bull, 1997: 165). These examples show that the bodies' survival or capture contained an animist belief that gained propulsion with the first apparatuses and optical toys that allowed movement and live-action recording. Before that, in 1839, the daguerreotype seemed to capture the pictorial reality; however, the disappearance of figures in the image composition was the direct result of the non-disappearance of transitory states. As Michaud (2004) argues, photography an appearance of mobility by pushing movement out of the medium since the result is a static frame. By 1889, celluloid supply and the dry emulsion with wet collodion made transparency and the decomposition of movement possible, which paved the way to develop animation and films.

2.1. Mediated Body on Film

In 1893, the first film production studio, Edison's Black Maria, started functioning to make film strips with Kinetoscope. In the following year, W.K.L. Dickson produced *Film Experimenting with Sound*, and the idea of creating a complete simulacrum of the living started to gain its form. In addition, theatre performances heavily inspired the first attempts to record human beings. Already, in the analysis of portraits, Warburg

noted that what mattered was not only the mimetic capability but the fact that the image would become an intermediate state between the living and the dead, that is, its Effigy. Furthermore, the capacity to record and reproduce movement and sound impacted the image as an intermediate state between the living and the dead since now it was possible to record a person or any living creature with many details for posterity. Additional examples are the studies regarding motion in *Animals in Motion* (1898) by Eadweard Muybridge and Edison's image and sound projection idea of unifying and preserving a complete simulacrum of the living.

Warburg explored the relation between theatre and performance and analysed the *Intermedi* spectacles, which are dramatic spectacles inspired in Antiquity by Giovanni de 'Bardi (1589). Bernardo Buontalenti was the costume designer and machinist who redesigned the stage using machinery to produce unusual special effects by manipulating perspective and framing a proscenium to the original decoration. "Each pair of machines is driven by a single device – undoubtedly located under the stage – which allows them to move simultaneously" (Bino, 2003: 261). Eisenstein identifies the proscenium as one of the first manifestations of the cinematographic space, creating a different link between the spectator and the stage. In the analysis of the *Intermedi* spectacles, Warburg also argued that an iconographic tradition could not be fully understood apart from the dialogue that images have with other forms of representation. "It need not be reduced to the simple transposition of literary and visual elements but should open itself up to the idea of the transformation of bodies into images and images into bodies" (Michaud, 2004: 148). Notably, the theatrical action in which the mythological figures represented in the paintings suddenly would become embodied on the stage in characters that are flesh and blood characters.

Human movement and dance analysis became highly influential in early film productions, helping develop visual formats in different countries. One important example is the connection between Loïe Fuller, Japanese dance/theatre promotion, and the film form. Loïe Fuller (1862-1928) developed the *Serpentine Dance*, giving movement to a graphic pattern – the serpentine line – widely discussed in the aesthetics of visual arts. The emergence of Japanese theatre in Europe started with the performances of Kawakami Otojirō (1864-1911), starring his wife, Sada Yacco (1871-1946), at the *Exposition Universelle* of 1900 in Paris. Following their success, Fuller would later partner with Otojirō to make a one-year tour from London, crossing Europe

in 1901. The Japanese plays also featured Fuller serpentine dance between the scenes or at the show's end, which Scholz-Cionca (2016: 53) refers to as "*Japonisme*", relying on juxtaposition and contrasts. Similarly, *明治の日本* (*Meiji no Nihon*, 1877-1899), a film anthology made by Constant Girel, Gabriel Veyre, and Shibata Tsunekichi (1850-1929), explored the encounter with dancers, shamisen players, and *Kabuki* theatre actors. The movie *紅葉狩* (*Momijigari*, *Maple Leaf Viewing*, 1899), shot by Shibata Tsunekichi, also explores kabuki actors performing a scene from *Momijigari*.

This pattern of mixing mediated bodies, from performing arts to film, was one trademark of the early twentieth century. One more example is the silent short movie *Annabelle Butterfly Dance* (Figure 2) that was produced by the Edison Manufacturing Company, featuring the popular serpentine dance performed by Annabelle Moore. The short movie frames bring this double fold of transforming bodies into images and images into bodies through the filmed performance. In contrast, the film materiality and the hand-coloured version bring forward a body of their own.



Fig. 2. *Annabelle Butterfly Dance* (USA, 1897). © Library of Congress.

In 1923, Warburg delivered a lecture about the Pueblo Indians' serpent ritual at the Bellevue clinic in Kreuzlingen sanatorium, where he was since 1921 due to his traumatic experience in the First World War. In this lecture, Warburg recounted his travels to America in 1894, to the Hopi villages in New Mexico and Arizona, where he watched the ritual dances of the Pueblo Indians. Since Warburg could not witness the serpent ritual of the Walpi and Oraibi, his lecture content was based on descriptions published by Jesse Walter Fewkes and Henry R. Voths. For Warburg, the serpent rituals showed the connection between images, symbology, and their anthropological function. Since the discovery of the *Laocoön* statue in 1506, the thematic of incorporating the man into the animal has been reproduced and stylised in a gestural and physiognomic tragic sublimity, producing a survival of the past in its *pathos*. "It is very clear that the proximity of the human and the animal constitutes an essential motif of the *Laocoön*, but this is also true of the American Indian ritual studied by Warburg" (Didi-Huberman, 2017:140).

The *Lacoon and His Sons* motif has spread in different cultures and reappeared in other contexts, such as in the interpretation made by Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831-1889) for the book of *Kyōsai Gadan* (Figure 3) which consisted of anatomic studies created to teach his students. "However, the *Kyōsai Gadan* also freely draws on sources from nearly all schools of Japanese painting for this purpose, from medieval times to the nineteenth century, in addition to Chinese and Western examples" (Jordan, 2003:96). The publication of painting manuals was a common practice in the 1880s; however, *Kyōsai Gadan* was unusual because it contained the painting manual, Kyōsai autobiography, and even included English texts explaining painting and colours.

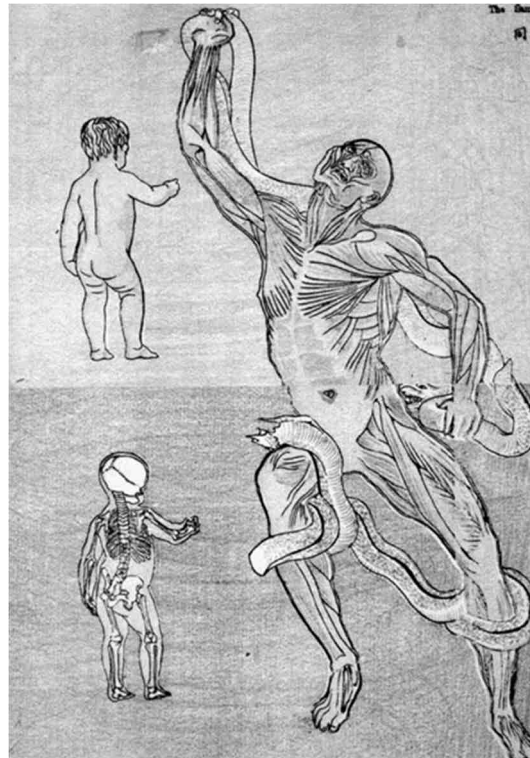


Fig. 3. Drawing based on *Lacoon and His Sons*, Kyōsai Gadan, vol.1, (Japan, 1887). © Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831-1889), Kawanabe Kyōsai Memorial Museum (Jordan, B. G., 2003: 97).

In Japan during the Meiji Era (1868-1912), the government policy was to increase industrial modernisation, including improving technical excellence in the arts. So, in a sense, Kyōsai embraced his historical period, but he also strived for artistic excellence in his teachings. Interestingly, the serpent and the human body composition are added to the manual to pass on to his students. “These simulacra are interconnected, however loosely, circulating the object's obdurate persistent self, providing partial glimpses of the sculpture in tacit knowledge that something solid exists *out there* worthy of continuing attention” (Brilliant, 2000: 96). In this sense, the interval between the artworks and their motifs can survive and assume different representational forms and ways of connection. Particularly the graphic elements of this example anticipate the manga boom that would come at the beginning of the twentieth century in Japan.

It was after his return from the Kreuzlingen that Warburg started working on the *Mnemosyne Atlas*. Michaud (2004) also noted that when Warburg took a photograph of a girl with a water bearer in *Laguna*, he recognised the common motif of the Western tradition that painters such as Domenico Ghirlandaio and Botticelli had depicted as the allegory of fecundity. The conception of image attraction and repulsion, that the

unlikely anachronic comparison of the Native American rituals and sixteenth-century Florentine culture dynamic appears as a juxtaposed analogy of Warburg's work. The panel's themes of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* were diverse, exploring various subjects, from classic cosmology to the afterlife of classical values in Renaissance, quattrocento art, Baroque, and its final inversions, advertisement, and transubstantiation of themes.

In the centre of panel 79 Warburg includes photographs of a Eucharist parade following the signing of the Lateran Treaty in 1929, an event that formalized the Church's resignation of political power in return for the state's institution of Catholicism. In the bottom lower right side of the plate, Warburg placed a newspaper photograph of a train crash in which a priest offers last rites to a dying victim. (Angel, 2011: 267)

The result of *Mnemosyne Atlas* depended exclusively on photographs and the interval placed among them throughout the panels. Specifically, on the last panel, number 79, there are photographs and newspaper clips, a sort of recapitulation of his earlier work dedicated to the cultural output of superstition. Also, in panel 79, close to the image of *Chair of St. Peter* (1647-1653) from Gian Lorenzo Bernini, there is an image of Japanese *Harakiri* (*Seppuku*), and next to it another image depicting Japanese corporal punishment. Reasonably close to the Roman and Japanese images, a newspaper clipping showed the Locarno Treaty (1925) signing that secured the end of the First World War. In a sense, the political and religious aspects of the Eucharistic parade and the bodily punishments in Japanese depictions become a symbolic phenomenon to be witnessed by the masses. The connection between the masses and institutionalised violence explores the fears that led Warburg to madness due to his experience in the First World War.

Eerily, it also predicts the survival of war predicaments that would come to be in the Second World War. "Like Burckhardt and Nietzsche – and like Freud, too – Warburg saw no way to understand civilization other than through its illnesses, its symptoms, and its dark continents" (Didi-Huberman, 2017: 90). The last panel shows how Warburg sought to capture the *pathos* of a civilisation in its momentous turmoil or decay, paying attention to its transitory states. In this sense, Warburg was also a seismograph of his time, capturing how bodies turned into images and how images turned into bodies at the beginning of the twentieth century.

3. From Stillness to Animated Images

Moving image formats have transformed body representation possibilities and the perception of time with different techniques (such as acceleration, slow-motion, reversal and loops, stop-motion, among others), with their variations of *montage* between image and sound. By producing a simulacrum of the body and giving power to the inanimate to become alive, the relation between *pathos* and *montage* constitutes one of the most important movements in the early twentieth century. What makes movement possible from stillness to animated images is the interval between images. In a sense, the wonder triggered by the in-between frames in animation comes from a fundamental *manipulation of time*, the production of the instant. “In media technology, time itself becomes one of several variables that can be manipulated” (Krämer, 2006: 96). From the different styles of the moving image, animation reveals the single frame and the reanimation of the static image fundamentally. Time manipulation and the recomposition of images produce *pathos* or affection targeted to the audience, particularly in the similarities and differences that had arisen between European, American, and Japanese conceptions of moving images, specifically in the establishment of animation as a genre.

Philippe Gauthier analysed when animated cartoons started to be recognised as a film genre. Gauthier followed André Gaudreault’s proposition that the early days of cinema were dominated by kine-attractography – trick films and experimental films – followed by the paradigm of institutional cinema. In this sense, in the beginning, animation and trick films shared a common space until the eventual differentiation of animation as a genre within the cinema institution. Although, before 1908, optical toys and animated strips were pervasive – Emile Reynaud’s projected a moving strip of images using the Praxinoscope in 1892, three years before Lumière’s premiere; and *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces* by Stuart Blackton’s was released in 1906 – additionally trick films and effects were used in a variety of movies, such as *Le Manoir du diable* (*The House of the Devil*, 1896), by Georges Méliès and later in John Bray’s first film, *Artist’s Dream* (1913).

The proximity was also spatial since there was a regular exhibition of trick films/animation among live-action films but also: “[...] because they shared a certain fascination with movement and a pronounced taste for mix-ups, surprise, and shock, but also especially because they were based on relatively similar technical procedures”

(Gauthier, 2011:165). The similarity between the technical procedures such as stop-camera and frame-by-frame compositions allowed sudden appearances and disappearances while the actors remained frozen, and the manipulation of objects to give the impression of life and produce trick effects. These tricks films astonished audiences, but within time, their novelty faded and then evolved to be later recognised as animation.

George Méliès placed great importance on the novelty of cinema, responding to the revelation of filmmaking techniques in the public press, especially to the series of articles written by Gustave Babin published in *L'Illustration* in 1908. "You destroy the fruits of your labour since you have destroyed the illusion that was your whole goal in composing the trick [...]. Nothing is more difficult than the perfect and artistic execution of a well-tricked view" (Méliès, 2010:57). By the late 1920s, the trick film concept gave away the establishment of animation as a genre. In that year, Edwin George Lutz published *Animated Cartoons*, talking in length about the animated form. However, during the first half of the twentieth century, the definition of animation became stagnated. Since animation could do things live-action could not, it came to be assumed that it should do only these things. Thus, in a generalised sense, animation was marginalised under the umbrella of cinema, and with the advent of television, it was categorised as a children's genre.

The optical toys and the moving image composition had a specific development in Japan. Specifically, the *Utsushi-e*, or magic lantern, was brought by Tejima Seiichi, who returned to Japan in 1874 after studying in the United States. Several magic lantern attractions occurred under the rubric *Eiga tenrenkai* (Projection-Image Exhibition). Edison's kinoscope made its debut in Japan in 1896, and Lumières' cinematographer in 1897. However, it was not until the 1910s that moving pictures and magic lanterns gained widespread popularity. The magic lantern shows and early cinema in Japan worked in terms of attraction and spectacles, or *misemono*, literally *making images seen*. Of course, animations from the United States and France were considerable influences in the first half of the twentieth century; however, in Japan, different trajectories ended up producing divergent ways of making moving images. "In other words, in the time of early cinema and even into the era of silent film in Japan, the magic lantern and the movie projector remained side by side, situated vis-à-vis one another, not definitively separable into distinct domains of performance, address, or exhibition" (Lamarre, 2011: 130).

The magic lantern and even silent film conception pre-date the history of puppet theatre and mechanised dolls, such as *Bunraku* or *Ningyō jōruri*. This art establishes itself between the real and the unreal. The dramatic *pathos* appears in the oscillation of moments in which the dolls seem to come to life and in others in which the illusion is interrupted. Thus, we perceive the abilities of the puppeteer. Additionally, similarly to Méliès, Makino Shōzō also used trick films techniques such as cut-out and multiple exposures in his films depicting *Ninjutsu*, or martial arts. Tsuburaya Eiji is said to have acquired trick photography technology that is the basis of Makino Shōzō movies under Edamasa Yoshirō, inheriting an appreciation for camera realism.

In its early forms, animation circulated in popular niches, such as the *Manga Taikai* (Animation and Manga Program) shows featuring various foreign and Japanese animations and films. There was also *10 sen manga gekijo* (Manga Theatre for 10 cents), which showed animations at low prices. The first generation of animators in Japan included three pioneers – Shimokawa Ōten (1892-1973), Kōuchi Junichi (1886-1970), both cartoonists, and Kitayama Seitarō (1888-1945), a painter who collaborated with art magazines of the time. In 1917, Kitayama Seitarō produced the animation *さるかに合戦* (*Battle of a Monkey and a Crab*), Kōuchi Junichi produced *なかむら刀* (*The Dull Sword*), and Shimokawa Ōten produced *芋川棕三玄関番の巻* (*Imokawa Mukuzo, the janitor*). All three worked in early film studios; Shimokawa at the *Tennenshoku Katsudō Shashin Studio*, abbreviated as Tenkatsu, Kōuchi at the *Kobayashi Shōkai Studio*, and Kitayama at the *Nikkatsu Mukojima Photography Office*, which he would later leave to work on his animation studio around 1921.

The first animations by Shimokawa Ōten (1892-1973) and by Yamamoto Sanae were produced technically by using chalk on a blackboard, capturing the drawings, erasing them, and then repeating the process until they obtained the necessary frames. Later, Shimokawa Ōten moved to paper, availing distinct backgrounds on which he drew the characters and which gave greater control over the use of lines with the aid of lighting from an improvised light-box (Shimokawa, 1934; Litten, 2017). Kitayama and Kōuchi also experimented with paper animation and cut-out animation. Tsugata Nobuyuki (2013) noted that from these three pioneers, Kitayama stood out for his ability to establish a mass-production system that ensured greater flow and circulation. “In contrast, Kitayama produced animated shorts with an average output of ten animations per year. In 1921, he established the Kitayama Film Studio, the first

Japanese studio specializing in animation” (Tsugata, 2013:26). The second generation of animators consisted of Yamamoto Sanae (1898-1981), Ōfuji Noburō (1900-1961), and Murata Yasuji (1896-1966). Yamamoto Sanae apprenticed at Kitayama’s studio before directing *兎と亀* (*The Hare and the Tortoise*, 1924), and also collaborated with Murata Yasuji, who had his debut with *猿蟹合戦* (*Yasuji Murata’s Monkey and the Crabs*, 1927), using cut-out animation.

The collage and cut-out techniques used in the early animations consisted of filming the movements of the cut-outs on a frame-by-frame background that allowed flattened movements of the characters in the various directions of the frame. Because the characters moved in a flattened manner, the audience had the impression of two dimensions even with continuous attempts to manipulate the background to produce an apparent depth. Ōfuji Noburō was one of the animators who explored and expanded the techniques of cut-out and collage, such as the animation *お関所* (*At the Border Checkpoint*, 1930). He was initially apprenticed to Kōuchi Junichi and made his debut with the animation *馬具田代と盗賊* (*Burglars of Baghdad Castle*, 1926), a parody of the American film *The Thief of Baghdad* (1924), using the *chiyogami* technique. Animation in *chiyogami* is considered a trademark of the animator. Its process involves cutting *chiyogami* paper into various shapes and then composing them to produce a figure and reproduce its movement through stop-motion animation. Driven by critics of his style and a desire to pursue visual experimentation, Ōfuji tested the formats of American production to combine Japanese and American techniques. This context of combining aesthetic styles created different modes of composing images in Japanese animation.

3.1. Liveliness in Japanese Animation

In Japanese animation, numerous experimentations done with image composition with different timings, such as Limited Animation, Full Limited Animation, Hyper Limited Animation, among other types, were extensively analysed by Thomas Lamarre (2009). However, while the animation body has materiality and, at the same immateriality, they do not necessarily have to contain a direct referent. In this sense, the animation contains a potential for an agency in the order of the simulacrum since it breaks with the classic hierarchy between original and copy. It possesses a *plastic force*, using Nietzsche’s term, or a *plasmatic* characteristic, as proposed by Sergei Eisenstein. The rejection of the restriction of form makes the animated body irreducible to the

dialectical process. It produces a charged *pathos* of movement that is the hallmark of the early twentieth century.

In animation production, the primary actions occur in the keyframes made by key animators. In-between animators usually make the secondary actions and subsequent movement. Finally, they complete the frames and produce minor movements, such as the effect of breeze, rhythmic patterns, and elements that create liveliness to the scenes and characters. According to Chow (2013), following Rudolf Arnheim's (1974: 400) thought, the concept of liveliness is about the complexity in the observed behaviour, ranging from simple movements to the complexity of an intentional being. However, the complexity of intentional movement creates liveliness rather than the idea of mind or soul inhabiting the animated body. In animation, liveliness would then correspond to primary and secondary liveliness, focusing on a particular progressive action and giving complex movement cues to the whole. "Japanese popular animation (called anime in the Western context) seems to present a balance of the two types of liveliness, both featured prominently from scene to scene" (Chow, 2013:58).

The balance between the two types of liveliness is observable in how timing and composition organised the image layers in different animation styles. For example, Limited Animation often leads to an average of 8 fps, making the primary action necessary and reserving secondary liveliness to the montage. On the other hand, the limited conditions give space for creative ways to give liveliness. Examples are be found in early animations such as 鉄腕アトム (*Astro Boy*, 1963-1964), マジンガーZ (*Mazinger Z*, 1972-1074), 新世紀エヴァンゲリオン (*Neon Genesis Evangelion*, 1995-1996). Limited Animation was also used interchangeably with Full Animation, giving birth to Full Limited animation. Different degrees of emphasis, movement cues, and affective perception were played using timing interchangeably between 8fps and 12fps or more. Examples are *Evangelion*, 攻殻機動隊 (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995), among other animations.

Additionally, secondary liveliness has become even more critical with 3D CGI compositions. One example is the animation *Dragon Quest: Your Story* (2019), based on the series of video games *Dragon Quest*. In the animation, the dynamics of 3D compositing are balanced with camera movement that uses 2D animation solutions and camera angles to escape the hardening and awkwardness that 3D compositing can generate. Secondary liveliness is used to promote animation with better expressive quality and modality cues to attribute evocative and expressive qualities to the

characters and, consequently, to the narrative. There has been extensive research into the qualities of the gesture and irregularities of movement and representation to create liveliness in CGI environments. Specifically, Angela Tinwell (2014) has written extensively about the uncanny valley challenge in contemporary media.

In a sense, liveliness is related to a perception of intention, an organic-morphological dynamic within the image. Warburg *Dynamogram* is about discerning forms throughout history, specifically the forms of time which I would argue develops a quest towards the animated form. "This reading may doubtless be generalized even further: we might consider the dynamogram to be a constantly renewed hypothesis of the existence of a *form of forms within time*" (Didi-Huberman, 2017:109). Warburg's methodology is an interdisciplinary project, where Art History, Social Sciences, and Psychology interconnect to the art objects temporality. The dynamic of polarities and the residual survival of the image showed that the movement of the image is internal. However, in the case of the art forms that worked profoundly with movement at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as animation, the interchange between interval and movement became a symptom, a *pathos* intertwined with time.

Warburgian iconology seeks to produce something like a *dialectical image of the relationships between images*. It works by disassembly [démontage] of the figurative continuum, by "shots" [fusées], of disjointed details, and by the reassembly [remontage] of this material in original visual rhythms. Warburg was famous, even before the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, for his lectures, in which, after a brief introduction, he shouted "Darkness!" (*Dunkel*) as a director shouts "Action!" He commented on the images from his seat in the darkened room, in the jerky rhythm of the successive images. Then he shouted "Light!" (*Licht*), concluded, and the session was finished. (Didi-Huberman, 2017: 326)

The knowledge-montage analysis becomes possible by a reawakening in oneself a series of experienced images and perceiving the relationship between the images. Images and representation modes can travel through time and are not limited to their geographical location. In a sense, an animated mode of thought aims to produce knowledge, meaning, and comprehend the internal life of images. The dynamism of forms reveals something about audience perception, mainly how humans organise their visual perception throughout the body, perceiving and re-enacting it. That is why Arnheim said that the dynamism perceived in the static images reveals something more profound. "We are dealing with the psychological counterpart of the physiological

processes that result in the organization of perceptual stimuli” (Arnheim, 1974: 438). Warburg understood that the visual images and the human psyche and body are deeply connected to the anthropological elements of historicity. In this sense, the perceived motion also relates to our experience of embodiment and how images have been challenging what a body can be or do. The key to these connections is the production and experience of *pathos*, which ultimately interconnects images and bodies.

4. Final considerations

The early twentieth century anticipated the coming dynamics in the space of visual images since the visual presence came to be understood as visual action, an internal movement of expression that became a bridge of knowledge, *pathos*, and bodily recomposition. Specifically, in the animated form, “[...] people make meaning of interactive dynamic presentation of images through sensory perception and motor action” (Chow, 2013: 85). Warburg was a forerunner of this scenario. Yet, although many studies have been made about his works, there are scarce connections between his conceptual work on potential movement, *pathos*, and anthropological context towards the animated image.

I believe it is a missed connection between Art History and New Media studies towards understanding the potentiality of animation and animated-based forms and the challenges they present in contemporary visual forms. However, with this in mind, perhaps these connections are correlated to a more profound stance, that is, where *pathos* and liveliness connect. That is why the technological struggles to appease the creation of digital bodies had to lure back the *gesture* and create graphic textures that connect images to the presence of a human body, actual or constructed. There are multiple ways to create images within the contemporary technological possibilities. Animation or images with animated base techniques intertwined cross the boundary between the original and imaginative even more strongly, mobilising the creation of *pathos* within the moving image and in the viewer’s embodied understanding and sensation of *pathos*.

This article not only breaths from Warburg but also tries to follow his methodology towards animation, specifically in the idea of *pathos*/liveliness and use of composition in Japanese animation. In a similar manner to panel 79 in Mnemosyne Atlas, using both old and new art mediums, the transnational connections between artworks presented

in this article crafts ways that cultural forms and practices have travelled between anthropological scenarios. Finally, if body composition and capture play an essential role in creating aesthetic models in the early twentieth century, the digital body has not become the perfect simulacrum of living in contemporary times. Instead, it made it more evident that the represented body cannot be detached and can only exist as a continuum between images and us.

REFERENCES

- ANGEL, SARA (2011), The Mnemosyne Atlas and the Meaning of Panel 79 in Aby Warburg's Oeuvre as a Distributed Object. *Leonardo* 44.3, pp. 266-267.
- BINO, CARLA (2003), Macchine e teatro. Il cantiere di Bernardo Buontalenti agli Uffizi. [Machines and theatre. Bernardo Buontalenti's building site in Uffizi], *Nuncius*. 18 (1), pp. 249-268.
- BULL, LUCIEN (1997), La cinématographie en relief [Tiré de Lucien Bull, La Cinématographie, Paris, Armand Colin, 1928]. 1895, *Revue D'histoire Du Cinéma, Numéro Hors-Série, Le Relief Au Cinéma*, pp.165–170. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.3406/1895.1997.1228> (accessed 17 november 2021)
- BRILLIANT, RICHARD (2000), *My Laocoön: Alternative Claims in the Interpretation of Artworks*. Berkeley/London: University of California Press.
- CHIK, CAROLINE (2012). La chronophotographie, ou le Mouvement décomposé. [Chronophotography, or the decomposed movement.] In: *L'image paradoxale: Fixité et Mouvement* [online]. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, p.6. Available from: <http://books.openedition.org/septentrion/46724> (accessed 2 november 2021)
- DIDI-HUBERMAN, GEORGES (2011), Sampling Chaos: Aby Warburg and the Photographic Atlas of the Great War. *Études photographiques*, 27, pp.1-22. Available from: <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesphotographiques/3463> (accessed 5 november 2021)
- (2017), *The Surviving Image: Phantoms of Time and Time of Phantoms: Aby Warburg's History of Art*. PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- GAUTHIER, PHILIPPE (2011), A Trick Question: Are Early Animated Drawings a Film Genre or a Special Effect? *Animation: an interdisciplinary journal*, 6.2, pp. 163-175.
- JORDAN, B.G. (2002), Kawanabe Kyōsai's Theory and Pedagogy: The Preeminence of Shasei. In: Jordan, B. G. — Weston, V., *Copying the Master and Stealing His Secrets: Talent and Training in Japanese Painting*. Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, p. 97.
- KRÄMER, SYBILLE (2006), The Cultural Techniques of Time Axis Manipulation: On Friedrich Kittler's Conception of Media. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23(7–8), pp.93–109. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276406069885> (accessed 2 november 2021).
- LAMARRE, THOMAS (2009), *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- (2011), Magic Lantern, Dark Precursor of Animation. *Animation*. 6(2), pp. 127-148.

- LITTEN, FREDERICK S. (2017), *Animated Film in Japan until 1919: western animation and the beginnings of anime*. Norderstedt: Books on Demand.
- MALABOU, CATHERINE (2010), The Eternal Return and the Phantom of Difference. *Parrhesia: A Journal of Critical Philosophy*, 10, pp. 21-29.
- MELIES, GEORGE (1908), Les coulisses de cinématographie: Doit-on le dire? *Photo-Cinéma-Revue*, April, 2-3. Quoted In: Solomon, Matthew (2010), *Disappearing Tricks: Silent Film, Houdini, and the New Magic of the Twentieth Century*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
- MICHAUD, PHILIPPE-ALAIN (2004), *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*. New York: Zone Books.
- NATALI, MAURIZIA (2006), The course of the empire: sublime landscapes in the American cinema. In: Lefebvre, Martin (ed.), *Landscape and Film*. New York: Routledge, pp. 62-91.
- NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH W. (1999). *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- SHIMOKAWA, ŌTEN (1934), Nihon saisho no manga eiga seisaku no omoide. *Eiga hyōron*, no. 7, 1934.
- TSUGATA, NOBUYUKI (2013), A Bipolar Approach to Understanding the History of Japanese Animation. In: Yokota Masao — Tze-Yue G. Hu (ed.), *Japanese Animation East Asian Perspectives*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, pp. 25-33.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Angela LONGO is a PhD candidate at the Graduate School of Global Arts, Department of Arts Studies and Curatorial Practices, at Tokyo University of the Arts with funding from the Japan Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science, and Technology (MEXT). She earned her Master Degree researching Japanese Animation from Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) in Brazil. She has bachelors degrees in Visual Arts from UFRGS, and in the course of Artistic Studies at the University of Coimbra, Portugal with funding from the Ministry of Education of Brazil.

Immersed, yet distant: Notes for an aesthetic theory of immersive travel films

Nicolas BILCHI | Roma Tre University, Italy

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/2021.10.BIL.IMMER](https://doi.org/10.32926/2021.10.BIL.IMMER)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to highlight a few stylistic and aesthetic principles, common to the genre of the travel film (both documentary and fictional), as employed by immersive media and devices from the twentieth century – such as the Hale’s Tours of the World, Todd-AO, and Cinerama – up to today’s digital systems like Virtual Reality and 4D Cinema. I will discuss how the different experiences of simulated travels, proffered by those media, are all related to a broader aesthetic tendency in creating what I label as enveloping tactile images. Such images are programmed to surround the viewer from every side, thus increasing their spectacular dimension, but at the same time they strive to temper and weaken the haptic solicitations aroused in the viewer by the immersive apparatus itself. In this sense I propose that the spectator of immersive travelogue films is ‘immersed, yet distant’: she is tangled in the illusion of traversing an enveloping visual space, but the position she occupies is nonetheless a metaphysical one, not different from that of Renaissance perspective, because even if she can see everything, the possibility to interact with the images is denied, in order to preserve the realistic illusion. By analysing the stylistic techniques employed to foster the viewer’s condition of non-interactive immersion in the enveloping world presented by the medium, I will consequently address the topic of the conflict that such immersive aesthetics establish with traditional forms of audiovisual storytelling.

KEYWORDS

Travelogue films; Enveloping images; Hapticity; Ecology of perception; Immersion; Agency; Cinerama; Panoramas.

Date of submission: 6 February 2021

Date of acceptance: 6 December 2021

Date of publication: 20 December 2021

Introduction

In an issue dedicated to the topic of the representations of voyages around the world provided by audiovisual media since the nineteenth century until today, travelogue films and their partial resurfacing in documentary-like sequences of fictional travel films, constitute a subject that ought to be extensively addressed. Therefore, this article will focus on those cinematic technologies and formats which historically have strived to produce simulations of immersive experiences of travels, both in documentary and fictional forms. It will analyse the stylistic and aesthetic principles common to these – in other respects highly heterogeneous – media, and will discuss the specific kind of spectatorial engagement provided by them. Relying on psychology of perception and theories of hapticity, the article

will demonstrate that such form of engagement is based on a paradoxical condition of perceptive immersion of the body in the image-space not matched by a tantamount level of interactivity. This is due to the need to avoid that actual actions exerted by the viewer on the images would shutter the realistic illusion of the experience.

On these premises, it is important to clarify that the distinction between documentary travelogue films and fictional travel film is of little relevance for the scope of this article, which is primarily concerned with immersive devices and the spectatorial experience of travel they convey. Besides, if travelogue films can be defined as ‘nonfiction motion pictures that represent *place* as their primary subject’ (Peterson, 2013: 54), I argue that this prominence accorded to documentary (re)presentation of real places can have a pivotal function also in shots or sequences of fiction films addressing the theme of the travel. Following the approach behind Gurevitch’s claim that stereoscopy should be understood not as a medium but rather as ‘a technique applied to many media across the century and a half since it was discovered [in 1851]’ (2013: 397), I likewise propose to consider the travelogue genre as a set of conventions resurfacing in various audiovisual media and formats.

Travelogues, which have a long history dating back to Victorian educational travel lectures, appeared soon in early cinema, no later than in 1897, especially in the form of the so-called phantom rides¹ and of ethnographic documentaries. In spite of their initial popularity, they suffered an inexorable decline in parallel with the rise of Hollywood narrative cinema (Peterson, 2013: 133). But it would be incorrect to assume that this led to the definitive demise of travelogues, for actually they have survived up to our contemporary mediascape, often absorbed as part of the structure of fiction films. Moreover, travelogues have lived periods of cyclical sudden resurfacing, albeit in technologically and thematically hybrid forms, in apparatuses such as Todd-AO, Cinerama, and today Virtual Reality and 4D Cinema (and precisely some of these forms will be the subject of my discussion).

Why does this happen? I argue that a legitimate answer may be that the aforementioned technologies are constitutively driven to provide a spectatorial

¹ Phantom rides were films shot from a moving vehicle – usually a train – in order to exalt the kinetic energy of its ride through landscapes and places.

experience which is more attractional than narrative in a traditional sense. The former term can be intended here as synonymous with that of spectacle as discussed, for example, by King: 'spectacle offers a range of pleasures associated with the enjoyment of 'larger than life' representations, more luminous or intense than in daily reality' (King, 2000: 4). The charm of travelogue films likewise lies in an attractional logic, because their spectator had to be fascinated by the thrilling perception of the fast motion of phantom rides no less than by the spectacular exploitation of landscapes and places characterising ethnographic documentaries. The realism of the latter must not be mistaken for a neutral and objective recording of reality; on the contrary, it aims at producing an effect of 'astonishment' (Gunning, 2009: 114) resting on the promise that cinema can make accessible aspects of the world which could hardly be experienced directly by the viewers. By imposing an aesthetic of the 'picturesque' (Peterson, 2013: 175), the travelogue genre 'captures and contains, mocks and reduces' (Gunning, 2006: 40); i.e. it turns reality into a spectacle, and precisely the exotic spectacle of faraway places and people available for visual consumption.

Likewise, the wide array of image-based immersive technologies born throughout the twentieth century and the first arc of the twenty-first century (*Hale's Tours of the World*, Todd-AO, Cinerama, Virtual Reality systems, and 4D Cinema, to name only the most known) has always been more prone to amaze the spectator by intensifying the stimulation of her sensorium than to produce complex and extensive narratives. Although, as argued by King, spectacle and narrative often tend to coexist, mutually reinforcing each other (2000: 1-15), in the case of immersive media one can recognise a general predominance of attractional stimulation of the senses over storytelling, whose function is reduced to conveying a feeble diegetic framing for the spectacle². The spectacular display of landscapes and people typical of the travelogue well matches the physical, non-narrative experience sought by immersive formats; so that the former has been absorbed by the latter and reconfigured according to their ontology. It is not possible here to analyse in detail all the immersive technologies mentioned, therefore I shall take into account *The Hale's Tours of the World* of early cinema, and contemporary

² Actually, such preference for audiovisual spectacle to the detriment of storytelling is not a free aesthetic choice, but rather the consequence of a series of technical constraints which make it almost impossible for immersive media to tell stories as effectively as cinema can do. I will discuss this point in detail later.

4D Cinema, in order to highlight the aesthetic and stylistic common ground reuniting, under the same ontological foundation and expressive goals, media apparently so diverse from a temporal and technical perspective. Plus, I will refer to two media which can be considered as ancestors of cinematic immersive formats, namely *tableau vivant* and panoramas; an analysis of their aesthetics can offer useful insights for my reflection on immersive representations of travels. Finally, I will hint at the problem of narrative in immersive formats with a synthetic discussion of Cinerama, using as a case study the film *How the West Was Won* (1962).

Instead, I have excluded from my discussion travelogues and travel films projected on a conventional bidimensional screen. The reason for that is that the form of spectatorial engagement promoted by traditional theatrical screening is radically inconsistent with that of its immersive counterparts (although both share the same raw theme, the travel itself). The most insurmountable difference lies in the fact that travel films projected on screen emphasise their identity as animated images to look at, while their immersive versions tend to deny that very iconic nature. According to Pinotti, the latter become ‘an-iconic’, that is, images challenging the conventional boundaries of the screen and striving to merge their spatio-temporal domain with that of the viewer (2018). Given such premises, in the following pages I hope to answer two important questions: what precise kind of experience is promoted by the immersive designs of simulated travels? And, overall, what position do these media force the viewer to assume in relation to the representational space of the film?

Enveloping tactile images

At this point, before developing the main points of my discussion, a synthetic description of the technologies I am using as case studies may be useful to the reader, clarifying the theoretical stance I am about to develop. I borrow the analysis of *Hale’s Tours* from Rabinovitz:

Hale’s Tours was composed of one, two, or even three theatre cars that each seated seventy-two “passengers.” Using rear screen projection in many cases so that the projector was not seen, the movies shown out the front end of the otherwise closed car generally offered a filmed point of view from the front or rear of a moving train, producing the illusion of movement into or away from a scene while mechanical apparatus and levers simultaneously vibrated, rocked, and tilted the car. Other effects enhanced the sensation of travel: steamwhistles tooted, the sound of clattering wheels was heard. The first travel ride films simulated railroad or auto

travel in order to foreground the body itself as a site for sensory experience. They articulated a seemingly contradictory process for the spectator: they attempted to dematerialize the subject's body through its extension into the cinematic field while they repeatedly emphasised the corporeality of the body and the physical delirium of the senses. (Rabinovitz, 2006: 42)

Hale's Tours can be considered as one of the first examples of a purely immersive technology for simulated travels: they were a hybrid system which inscribed a traditional cinematic screening of a phantom ride into a material architectural space simulating the interior of a runaway train. Thus, the very logic of phantom rides was reinvented because space itself was becoming part of the spectacle, while also preserving the distance between spectator and representation. In fact the viewer, who was seeing the landscape through the windows, could not interact with it. Moreover, *Hale's Tours* employed a variety of mechanical tricks in order to increase the level of realism of the experience by, for example, reproducing the sounds of the train or the shakes of the wagons on the rails.

4D Cinema is a technology which hybridises an audiovisual projection on a wide screen and a variety of mechanical gears producing physical effects on the spectator's body. Seats are designed to shake or recline synchronously with a specific fragment of the screening, and atmospheric phenomena – such as air flows, fog, rain, and the like – are simulated in order to produce a synaesthetic experience affecting the body in its entirety. From this point of view, contemporary 4D Cinema does not entail any structural shift from the medial identity of *Hale's Tours*, except for the wider dimensions of the screen which, in 4D Cinema, can truly envelope the spectator from every direction, even from above her head. Moreover 4D Cinema, due to its apparent inability to tell compelling stories (for example, a close-up is simply impossible to project on a circular screen without resulting in a grotesque deformation of the face of the actor), heavily relies on the theme of the journey and its spectacular charge. Therefore, the difference between *Hale's Tours* and 4D Cinema is just quantitative – not qualitative – in nature, and they share the same essential properties as immersive experiences.

What broader theoretical principles can be deduced from an analysis of these media and the spectatorial bodily experience they promote? First of all, I claim that these immersive technologies strive to blur the perceptive distinction between the space of the viewer and the space of the fiction, so that the images of the latter are re-structured

as enveloping environments which solicit the viewer in a haptic way. I borrow the concept of hapticity from Marks' (2000) theory and especially from its recent reformulation made by Ross (2015) in order to adapt the concept to the new high-tech cinematographic formats of the digital age.

Marks discussed the importance of the sense of touch for many cinematographic practices, advocating a 'tactile epistemology' (2000: 122), namely a model of spectatorship opposed to the rational understanding of the image-frame implied by the detached observer of Renaissance perspective, and based on a pre-rational, sensuous engagement which turns vision into (simulated) touch. This is the core idea behind the notion of haptic visuality, in which 'the eyes themselves function like organs of touch' (ivi: 162), meaning that certain filmic styles can foster mental simulations of physical contact with the textures and surfaces of the bodies and objects presented on the screen. However, Marks' thought was rooted in the analysis of experimental movies made by diasporic directors who needed to develop new, personal forms of expression in order to counter the alienating and stereotyping effects of mainstream cinematographic language on representations of non-western populations and their cultures. These films exalted the material fabric of skins and surfaces (i.e. by means of extreme close-ups) up to the point that the intelligibility of what was shown in the image was seriously threatened. But, obviously, this is not the aesthetics adopted by immersive media; on the contrary, they aim at producing a synaesthetic experience of an environment in which the technology enhances the vividness and intensity of the perceptive stimuli. If the films discussed by Marks demonstrate a collapsing of the intelligibility of what was represented, the images of immersive media denote an excess of intelligibility. Therefore, such images can be considered, I argue, as perfect examples of what Ross defines a hyper-haptic visuality³:

If the intercultural cinema that Marks examines plays upon and exploits the uncontrollable, tactile quality of images in the production of haptic visuality, then 3D cinema asserts an uncontrollable, infinite depth in its image, producing a *hyper-haptic* visuality' (2015: 24).

³ Though the scholar applies such concept only to contemporary digital 3D cinema, I believe it is actually a useful analytical tool with regards to all immersive media.

But in spite of the respective differences of their accounts, both Marks' and Ross' theories agree on the fact that audiovisual media can charge the optic faculty with tactile values. This is consistent with the aforementioned logic of Pinotti's an-iconology. But it is important to clarify that although any immersive audiovisual technology engages its viewer in tactile ways, not all of them turn the image into an illusive environment. Classic anaglyph 3D of the 1950s, for example, strived to create the impression that the objects in the narrative world and the viewer coexist in the same physical space. In order to do so, anaglyph 3D employed a range of stylistic solutions which work in a monodirectional manner, fostering the illusion that the fictional world exits the screen and 'invades' the real one, but not that the spectator can enter the image, too. Objects thrown towards the viewer threatening to hit her, or characters protruding their limbs outside the threshold of the screen, inviting the spectator to ideally touch them; these are examples of what I label figuratively as an aesthetic of invasion of the viewer's physical space. That means that the latter can be reached and penetrated by the image, whilst the fictional world is out of the spectator's reach. The spectator is not allowed to join the narrative world, and the illusion of tactile interaction is enabled only by the image exiting the boundary of the screen. Moreover, such aesthetic has persisted also in the recent revival of 3D in its new digital identity, in spite of Elsaesser's prediction that D-3D would have been primarily focused on the experimental production of non-mimetic spaces (2013: 235-240); a claim that has turned out to be wrong and too optimistic.

Instead, the immersive formats hosting travel films realise the opposite process, albeit in pursuit of the same aim (that is, establishing a haptic relationship with the spectator). They do not push the representational world outside the screen, but soak the viewer up in the representation. Both these categories of immersive devices belong to Grusin's

aesthetic of the animate, in which spectators or users feel or act as if the inanimate is animate, in which we simultaneously know that the mediated or the programmed are inanimate even while we behave as if they were animate (2006: 72).

Such effect can be achieved (at least in theory) by negating the metaphysically detached observer postulated by the optic model of spectatorial engagement characterising the arts based on the principles of the Renaissance perspective (Marks,

2002: 5). The difference lies in the strategies employed by the immersive technologies I am discussing in this article. Such strategies are smoother and less striking than the invasion of physical space performed by 3D through the illusions of objects thrown against the viewer or creatures attacking her. Rather, they rely on dissolving – instead of breaking – the boundaries of the screen, so that the resulting expanded images can envelope the viewer and address her from every direction, without producing that perceptive shock typical of 3D. These images end up being no longer recognisable as images in a conventional sense; they become environments which solicit the viewer in tactile no less than optical ways.

Therefore, I propose to term this kind of image-environments enveloping tactile images⁴ (henceforth, ETIs), and it will be useful to further analyse the two adjectives held together in this expression, because their connection gives birth to the paradoxical and controversial aesthetics of ETIs and, thus, of immersive simulations of travels as well. To explain such claim, let's try, at first, to theoretically define what the turning of an image into an illusive environment means, applying to the task Gibson's ecology of perception. When one is unable to percept the picture frame dividing an image from physical space due to the format envisaged by the former, then the shape of such an image is not conceptually related to the archetype of a painting anymore, but approximates the boundlessness of the three-dimensional environment human beings always inhabit. So, enveloping images successfully replicate in the mediated space the basic perceptive conditions regulating the non-mediated experience of real environments. This means, according to ecology of perception, that the animal, being immersed in an environment, recognises in it what Gibson calls 'affordances', namely possibilities for interaction with the material elements (whether animate or inanimate) constituting that environment (Gibson, 2014 [1979]).

Since its original formulation in 1979, the notion of affordance has been discussed, criticised (Turvey, 1992; Scarantino, 2003; Withagen *et al.*, 2012), even contested (Oliver, 2005). Such debate is beyond the scope of this article, but what is important is

⁴ I am aware that these images are not actually tactile. However, I argue that the use of this term is fitting, because it points to that inconsistency – pivotal for the aesthetics of immersive technologies – between enhancement of a hyper-haptic engagement and stylistic strategies developed in order to hinder any potential actual interaction with the image. I will further discuss these aspects in the following paragraphs.

that the majority of scholars who have addressed this issue (Warren, 1984; Chemero, 2003; Heft, 2003; Michaels, 2003; Stoffregen, 2003; Penny, 2017) agrees that affordances are not unchanging properties of things, but dynamic qualities born from the relationship between a specific animal and a specific environment forming an 'animal-environment system' (Stoffregen, 2003). By accepting to define affordances as 'the actions permitted an animal by environmental objects, events, places, surfaces, people, and so forth' (Michaels, 2003: 146) and 'relations between particular aspects of animals and particular aspects of situations' (Chemero, 2003: 184), I want to stress the pivotal role played by action, and thus by the body, in experiencing an environment. Ecological psychology does not conceive its subject as the disembodied subjectivity of western culture, detached from the world of objects and exercising control upon it mainly by virtue of its gaze; more realistically, the subject is an embodied creature, a material being inhabiting a material world from no privileged position, able to exercise an agency but also to suffer the effects of the agencies of other creatures. My suggestion is that ETIs reproduce these perceptive conditions, thus promoting an aesthetic model and a form of engagement based on the recognition of affordances and the primacy of action. In other words, the perceptive asset enabled by the enveloping image invites the viewer to interact with the objects which surround her, stimulating her sense of agency. Here lies the link with Marks' and Ross' theories: the ecological validity of an enveloping image enhances the perception of affordances and thus the tactile charge of the experience and the hyper-haptic involvement suggested.

But why did I claim earlier that the aesthetics of ETIs is paradoxical and controversial? Because the arousal of the sense of agency due to the tactile stimuli provided by the image-environment is exactly what ETIs strive to hamper. This is the main point of my discussion: that albeit ETIs offer themselves as environments rather than as conventional images, nevertheless they are precisely images, meaning that they are pre-recorded artefacts which could not react in real-time and appropriately to the viewer's actions. By stating this I do not presuppose some kind of metaphysical naive spectator, 'captured in the process of being "seduced" by spectacle' (Gurevitch, 2015: 5), unable to differentiate between fiction and reality, and driven by irresistible impulses like the characters of early films such as *The Countryman and the Cinematograph* (1901) and *Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show* (1902).

Bottomore has offered an answer to reports of panicking audiences during projections of early films. Relying on psychological studies (Regan and Beverly, 1978), he has argued that basic uncontrollable responses to certain situations (i.e., of danger) can be suppressed by the development of higher competences related to cultural and social factors (2010: 190). So, spectators coming from country areas may have lacked the competences of sophisticated urban audience, and this could have resulted in actual reactions of panic in front of the images of the cinematograph. But in the case of ETIs, we already possess those competences allowing us to master the stimuli produced by immersive technologies, which are part of a visual culture of the moving image to whom we are accustomed. Therefore, the viewer is always aware of the mediated nature of these experiences, and if not, the latter would cease to be fun and entertaining (for instance, when the theme of the images is frightening or dangerous⁵).

The arousal of a sense of agency is, rather, a matter of quantity and balance: the more ETIs are detailed and realistic, the higher the hyper-haptic engagement and the call to interact with the environment. That means that, in the paroxysmal case that the sense of agency elicited by the enveloping format would be so high that the spectator would actually try to act on the image, then the mimetic illusion and the pleasure of the spectacle would be shattered. This would be caused by the lack of an adequate response by the images, thus revealing that mediation that the spectator pretends to not see, and that the text must keep hidden. ETIs have to play a very risky game of balancing: the more they increase their spectacular and attractional value, the more fragile and easily destroyable their illusion becomes.

To clarify this statement, it is important to stress that the recognition of affordances can happen in any audiovisual medium. If scholars have demonstrated the role played by affordances in interactive virtual environments (Regia-Corte *et al.*, 2013; Grabarczyk and Pokropski, 2016; Meyer, Draheim and von Luck, 2019), one must highlight that they can be detected also in non-interactive media such as cinema

⁵ Also, in the case of immersive horror experiences – which seem to derive their charm precisely by the blurring of fiction and reality – their thrills and shocks can be entertaining only if at a basic level the user remains aware of the mediation. Horror experiences can momentarily provoke physical reactions by virtue of the stylistic solutions employed, but their effects are rapidly mitigated by the resurfacing of the awareness of the fabricated essence of the images. This prevents the experience from exceeding a peak of stimulation beyond which the former would result too intense, and thus unpleasant.

(Gallese and Guerra, 2015). The difference lies in the fact that, while watching a movie, affordances are perceived through mechanisms of embodied simulation with the characters on screen (Gallese and Guerra, 2015); moreover, 'we find ourselves situated at a *safe distance* from what is being narrated on the screen' (Gallese and Guerra, 2012: 196) by virtue of the clear separation between the space of the narrative and the space of existence of the viewer. So, such a specific form of spectatorial experience does not invite actual interactions with the images. On the contrary, ETIs envelop the viewer and conceal their nature behind their appearance as environments; therefore, they develop a much stronger invitation to actual interaction, which is further enhanced accordingly with the level of believability of the images and of the intensity of the sensorial stimulation. As suggested by Grabarczyk and Pokropski, 'highly realistic images may easily lead to high expectations of an environment's affordances' (2016: 35). But the point is that ETIs are not truly interactive (nor even tactile), and thus they must be able to balance between spectacular dimension and control of potential impulses to interaction. If the realism or the intensity of the experience is too high, the spectator may be pushed to satisfy the possibility for action suggested by one of the affordances perceived, and this would immediately shutter the illusion, because the images would be incapable of producing, in real time, a reaction consistent with the spectator's action.

Ancestors of immersive media: *tableau vivant*

At this point, it could be useful to provide a clarifying example of such a circumstance in which direct actions on the image were executed. It is taken from Bredekamp's reflections on a medium I consider a legitimate ancestor of immersive technologies: *tableau vivant*. Bredekamp recalls the *tableaux vivants* realised for the religious parade dedicated to John the Baptist in Florence, in 1453, and especially one representing emperor Augustus. Bredekamp says that a German man, recognising in the actor, who was playing Augustus, the personification of Alphonse the V King of Aragon too, reached the chariot of the *tableau vivant* in order to attack the actor (2015 [2010]: 80). The scholar interprets this event as epitome of human beings' natural tendency to often confer value of reality and existence to images, not as the delusion of a madman. Without trying to dismiss Bredekamp's reading, which instead fits in his overall theory of the 'image act' (2015 [2010]: 36), I want to suggest an alternative explanation, which

accounts for the haptic configuration of the experience produced, maybe unintentionally, by the medium *tableau vivant*.

By erasing the distance separating the existential space of the spectator from that of the images, *tableaux vivants* create a tactile proximity with the human subject which generates intense stimuli inviting to physical interaction. Therefore, this aesthetic identity poses the logical conditions legitimating the attack by the German man, because the embodied image presents itself as installed in the same physical space shared by the viewer. From an ecological perspective, it becomes part of the environment (ceasing to be an image) and thus its components elicit affordances for interaction.

Obviously, this is a side-effect of *tableaux vivants* (and of immersive media in general), whose charm is based on the constant oscillation between annihilation and preservation of the identity of the image as such: in a *tableau vivant*, actual interaction between the image and the viewer is not supposed to happen, and if it does, the very essence of *tableaux vivants* as embodied replications of the composition of pre-existing works of art breaks down. In fact, the actions performed by the German, provoked by an irrational fury (indeed fuelled by the perception of the image as a living image), can be seen as a transgression of the implicit rules regulating the model of engagement presupposed by the medium.

So, the case of this transgressive attack testifies to the misunderstanding one could face when experiencing image-environments. As argued above, such apparently boundless images impose a system of relationships with the spectator which is founded on detecting the possibilities for interaction provided by them. But an unexpected external factor (i.e., the man's hatred for king Alphonse) could cause a temporary loosening of the consciousness of the norms which, despite the uncommon charge of tactile stimuli of the work of art, forbid any direct intervention on the latter. In this case, then, operations not allowed by the text under normal circumstances may occur. And, since non-interactive images are unable to react to the viewer's agency, the realistic illusion would be shattered and the artifice would be revealed.

Such a concise digression concerning an ancient medium like *tableau vivant* has been important for the subject of this article, because it has described a model of

spectatorial experience similar to that promoted by ETIs⁶. Such model presents traits which correspond to crucial shortcomings affecting the aesthetics of immersive formats and media. But it has also stressed that in spite of such shortcomings, these technologies do precisely strive for an enhancement of the viewer's hyper-haptic faculty, with the purpose of making her feel immersed into a tangible situation not limited to the frontal observation of a representation, and which asks for an active engagement of one's own body in order to be fully enjoyed. So, it is necessary to address now the topic of the strategies employed by immersive media in order to maintain a stable balancing between attractational power of physical immersion in the enveloping image and avoidance of its degenerating into performed actions whose outcome would be the destruction of the illusive and fascinating effects of the images.

Immersed, yet distant

First of all, a recurring method to reduce the tactile stimulation and the sense of agency to implicit allusions while preserving the psychological and perceptive condition of immersion in the image-environment is that the elements of the latter do not directly address the spectator. Thereby, she feels herself as present in the virtual space of ETIs, but as an invisible entity rather than as an actual actor. This stylistic choice can take two forms, one smoother and the other more radical in their effects on the viewer's self-perception, with good examples of both coming from the old medium of panoramas. In the case of the former, let's consider landscape panoramas: here, the absence of living beings crystallises the scene in a dimension beyond time, so that the viewer is immersed in the environment but at the same time occupies a position of supremacy over it. Since in this typology of panoramas there are no living beings depicted, it is difficult for the spectator to recognise affordances in the representation. Plus, she is not addressed as an embodied subject whose body could suffer the effects of the agency exerted by others. The spectator is reduced to a detached and contemplative eye, and, thus, her being physically installed in the apparatus becomes superfluous.

⁶ Moreover, Bredekamp discusses *tableaux vivants* as direct ancestors of immersive technologies, due to the fact that the forms of experience fostered by both are based on the blurring of the threshold between space of the viewer and space of the fiction (2015 [2010]: 91).

The latter, more radical solution is related to those circumstances in which the characters do not see and recognise the viewer, or in which her body seems to possess a ghost-like consistency, making her unable to touch or interact with the environment. A recent example of this is the VR experience *Carne y Arena*, directed by Alejandro Iñárritu in 2017: the spectator witnesses the tragic experience of Mexican men and women crossing the border with the United States, chased and threatened by the American police. The spectator can explore the virtual environment, but cannot intervene in the events in order to help the Mexicans. However, in *Carne y Arena* (whose subtitle is, not by chance, *virtually present, physically invisible*) such intangibility of the body serves a precise expressive purpose, that is, to make the viewer feel what Montani has brilliantly defined as a sense of ‘interpassivity’ (2017: 136). Namely, being there but as a subjectivity forcefully devoid of any agency, therefore as a passive victim of a cruel situation, just like the Mexican people.

So, in *Carne y Arena* the disembodied spectator is a sign of authorship, but usually in immersive media it is just a necessary and unjustified precondition to disrupt any potential interaction with the image. Returning to panoramas, an example of this latter case is provided by the narrative panorama *The Battle of Sedan*, realised by Anton von Werner in 1883, which depicts the homonymous battle that took place during the Franco-Prussian War. Considering that this work promises to immerse the viewer in the event in order to make her relive it in all its spectacular and dramatic charge, it would be legitimate to expect the spectator to be somehow involved in the narrative. Instead, the characters never address her position, and this is even more relevant if one focuses the attention on the realistic features presented by *The Battle of Sedan*, discussed by Oliver Grau:

Abandoned fieldwork tools, weapons, knapsacks, and coats, a broken-down baggage wagon, deep ruts running through the clay soil of the ‘terrain’, grasses, shrubs, branches and stones, as well as the cap made of cloth and patent leather, lost by a Chasseur—all these properties were plastic and [...] ‘natural enough to touch’ (2003: 106).

Such qualities, combined with the immersive format of panoramas, give birth to an aesthetics of hyper-hapticity and tactile engagement; nevertheless, the work forces its

viewer to take a disembodied position which weakens that aesthetics, once again in order to avoid direct contact with the image.

Moreover, these effects of dis-embodiment are also achieved by virtue of the physical position assigned to the viewer by the medium. As originally designed in 1787 by its inventor, the British painter Robert Barker, panorama was a circular canvas whose dimensions and form were designed in such a way that the spectator could see any element of the image without perspective distortions if – and only if – she stood still on a platform located at the centre of the canvas. Thus, it is true that panoramas installed the viewer inside the image, but they also established an unbridgeable distance between them. The result was that, by imposing norms and prohibiting certain behaviours, panoramas granted the viewer ‘a perfect, commanding view of the painted horizon’ (Grau, 2003: 57).

By now, I hope it is clear why I have titled this article ‘immersed, yet distant’: when experiencing ETIs, the viewer is indeed in a condition of perceptive immersion (namely, she is surrounded by the circular format of the images), but she is also placed at a spatial and logical distance from the events depicted which condemns her body to the inability to be addressed by or to interact with the environment. These considerations on the media analysed thus far allow me to draw the following theoretical conclusion: that in spite of the tactile engagement they carry, ETIs betray their own hyper-haptic aesthetics and ultimately reaffirm that very optic logic of Renaissance perspective they seemed to fight against. In fact the viewer, forced to keep only a certain position and unrecognised by the environment, is reduced to a detached gaze, her bodily presence dissimulated by the style adopted by the work; so that the viewer truly corresponds to Grau’s ‘commanding view’ (2003: 57), and the world of the fiction is nothing but a collection of objects to visually master and consume. According to this interpretation, it is now useful to discuss how the theme of the travel matches the aesthetic requirements of ETIs.

Immersive travels

The theme of the travel represents a great narrative source for immersive media because the experience they reproduce is based precisely on such a condition of ‘immersion from a distance’. When one travels by vehicle, one is surrounded by the environment but also naturally distant from it due to being physically located inside

the vehicle. Schivelbusch, in his insightful study of the railway journey in the nineteenth century, has labelled this experience ‘panoramic perception’:

Panoramic perception, in contrast to traditional perception, no longer belonged to the same space as the perceived objects: the traveler saw the objects, landscapes, etc. *through* the apparatus which moved him through the world. That machine and the motion it created became integrated into his visual perception: thus he could only see things in motion. That mobility of vision — for a traditionally orientated sensorium, [...] an agent for the dissolution of reality — became a prerequisite for the ‘normality’ of panoramic vision. This vision no longer experienced evanescence: evanescent reality had become the new reality (2014 [1977]: 75-76).

Such inherent evanescence of vision represents a specific trait of panoramic perception, whose legitimacy can be extended also to later means of transportation, like automobiles and aeroplanes. Moreover, Schivelbusch’s evanescent reality points out the paradoxical condition of the traveller, who experiences a shocking intensification in perception of the landscape, but is at the same time detached from it. In fact, it was impossible for the traveller to acquire a clear and steady mental representation of the places seen through the window, due to the speed of the moving vehicle reducing them to changing kinetic lines:

Hurling through space in the body of the train (conceived as a projectile), as if being shot through the landscape, travelers experienced the loss of the foreground, and thus the homogeneity of space between them and the view outside of the window. This was experienced as a loss of depth perception (Kirby, 1997: 45).

This experiential configuration has been replicated by genres such as early phantom rides, or later by avant-garde films, which were fascinated precisely by the disruptive perceptive effects of fast motion. Compared to the traditional theatrical screening of these films, immersive cinematographic formats – like the aforementioned *Hale’s Tours* and 4D Cinema – add the implementation of the space of exhibition, which is transformed in a mimetic environment simulating the interior of the vehicle and hosting expanded images which envelop the audience. Since these media reproduce the situation of being placed inside a vehicle, surrounded by the landscape but also spatially separated from it, it is possible for the spectator to be enveloped by the images without also being haptically stimulated to interact with them. Besides, the fact that one can see the environment through the windows of a car or a train, namely not just

from a frontal perspective, but also from lateral ones, legitimates the use of expanded screens, whose enveloping effect is paramount in providing the illusion of being spatially present in a virtual/fictional world, according to Lombard and Ditton's claim that the bigger the dimensions of the image, the more intense the viewer's responses related to the feeling of presence (1997).

I want to point out the specific theoretical importance of *Hale's Tours* and 4D Cinema for this study of the aesthetics of immersive technologies, because they add to the latter a feature that panoramas and *tableaux vivants* did not possess. As explained above, panoramas and *tableaux vivants* constrained the viewer in an undesired condition of dis-embodiment. Instead, *Hale's Tours* and 4D Cinema technically reconfigure the physical space hosting the screening as part of the immersive simulation of travel. Mechanical gears such as seats shaking or reclining, and tricks producing simulations of atmospheric phenomena, affect the body directly, thus arousing in the viewer a strong awareness of the embodied nature of the experience. Therefore, *Hale's Tours* and 4D Cinema strengthen the spectator's sense of ownership of her own body, which represents the counterpart to the sense of agency in human experience of an environment. In fact, the sense of ownership can be defined as the awareness of possessing a physical body, acquired by suffering the effects of the agencies of other beings on such body. As Gregersen and Grodal state, 'we are agents that influence the world, and we may also be patients, that is: objects of other agents' actions or events unfolding around us' (2009: 65).

Applied to media analysis, this means that in order to make the viewer feel spatially present in the virtual world, it is not enough to provide her with an agency; it is necessary to stimulate the passive aspect of the body enduring others' actions, too. That is, the viewer must recognise herself as able to satisfy the possibilities for action provided by the environment, but also as a subject that, being embodied, can suffer the effects of the actions executed by other beings. As I have argued, non-interactive immersive media must lessen the sense of agency so that actions which would shatter the realistic illusion are prevented. So, immersive travel films compensate for this by directly involving the body as a factor in the mediated experience, although only in its passive dimension, whilst preserving the logical segregation between spectator and images. An example of this is provided by the simulation of a space travel, a common theme for 4D Cinema experiences. The viewer can see the outer space through the

windows of the spaceship, but she is not pushed to interact because the objects and beings she sees are out of her reach. However, her body is passively stimulated by tricks such as the reclining seats, or air flows sprayed towards her, which aim at reproducing and exalting the spectacular thrills of extremely fast motion.

In this way, immersive travel films strive to produce a truly synaesthetic experience, not dissimilar to those designed by a variety of – today largely forgotten – hybrid cinematic systems: it is useful to mention, at least, Morton Heilig's Sensorama (patented in 1957), an archetypal form of Virtual Reality devices; Smell-O-Vision (employed for Jack Cardiff's *Scent of Mystery*, 1960) and Odorama (developed by John Waters for his *Polyester*, 1981), both aiming at enriching film spectatorship with the sense of smell; and Sensurround, used in *Earthquake* (directed by Mark Robson in 1974), which made the seats shake during the scenes representing the earthquake. It is important to stress that all these technologies bear a unilateral model of tactile engagement. Namely they blur the boundaries between physical world and image world and, acting on the material space surrounding the viewer, they figuratively touch her, thus involving the body in the experience but without letting it exercise any haptic agency. So, I suggest that immersive travel films – with their enveloping but not interactive, immersive but distancing aesthetics – must be analysed as perfect examples of an 'optical tactily'. This concept has been proposed by Carrillo Quiroga as explicitly opposed to Marks' hapticity and used as a theoretical tool for the study of stereoscopic formats. According to the scholar, optical tactility describes those immersive experiences which tend to erase that very sense of proximity which was paramount in the theory of the haptic:

tri-dimensional images entail a mode of vision that does not rely on closeness or proximity, qualities intrinsic to the sense of touch. Instead, optical tactility is implicated in the visual display of texture and a precise detail of visual volume (2017: 253).

Optical tactility presupposes a logical and physical distance between viewer and image, and reinforces Ross' hyper-hapticity by directly stating that the specific tactile pleasures derived from the hyper-realist traits of the representation are determined by a calculated subtraction of the viewer's agency (a process not necessarily affecting her sense of ownership of the body, too).

Immersive travels and narrative

The last theme I believe must be discussed is the conflictual relationship between immersive technologies and narrative. From a historical perspective, cinema rapidly dethroned the popular stereoscopic devices of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but the latter did not disappear altogether. Instead, as argued by Gurevitch, stereoscopy survived as ‘a continual and popularly embraced technique applied to multiple media forms’ (2013: 403), cyclically re-emerging in a variety of formats, including the immersive technologies I am discussing in this article. However, these media never succeeded in regaining a position of dominance in the market of audiovisual entertainment over the rectangular, flat screen of conventional cinematic experience, and the model of detached vision it bears. The formats of the 1950s all disappeared after a brief burst of popularity, the hybrid systems designed to provide a synaesthetic engagement were soon dismissed due to their inaccurate and bizarre outcomes, and today 4D Cinema (in another remarkable similarity with the *Hale’s Tours*) is confined, as a special attraction, to amusement parks. One of the reasons behind this apparently inevitable marginality could be found in the fact that, at the current state of their technical development, immersive media seem unsuitable for accomplishing the duty of which mainstream cinema has been historically invested, namely to tell stories through images. The topic of immersive storytelling is open and complex, and one must not make the mistake of formulating simplistic judgements⁷. Nevertheless, if one analyses the state-of-the-art of the technologies I am discussing, it would seem that, in the best case scenario, immersive media cannot add any important feature to cinematic storytelling. In the worst one, they diminish the power and scope of cinematic storytelling, because the technical specificities of their material apparatuses make it difficult to develop a complex story through editing and camera movements. Thus, immersive media appear suited to show only brief travel scenes, which are convincing as attractions but inconsistent from a narrative point of view.

⁷ Moreover, it is important to differentiate between various forms of immersive technologies. Virtual Reality, for example, has achieved high technical and aesthetic standards, such that VR movies and videogames seem now capable of developing long and compelling narratives. But the same cannot be claimed for a medium like 4D Cinema, whose material infrastructure appears to be at odds with purposes of storytelling.

What should be remarked is that, paradoxically, ETIs strive to provide an impression of realism superior to that of traditional bidimensional screenings by transforming the place of projection itself in an immersive narrative space. But precisely this heightened realism ends up hindering that very storytelling it promises to bring to an all new level of engagement for the spectator. As noted by John Belton in his analysis of expanded cinematic formats of the 1950s, 'the 'greater realism' produced by the new technology was understood, it would seem, as a kind of excess, which was in turn packaged as spectacle' (1992: 202). Such excess pushes the higher sensorial stimulation and sense of co-presence of spectator and image in the same haptic space to the point that they annihilate the rules of classical cinematic grammar, whose logic serves to foster spectatorial identification with the characters. A startling example of that is represented by one of the most advanced forms of immersive cinema of 1950s: Cinerama, a system (inspired by Abel Gance's experimental Polyvision, used for many scenes of the movie *Napoleon*, in 1927) based on three synchronus projections on a curved screen, resulting in extraordinarily large images which provided amazing depictions of landscapes but prevented the cameras from approaching the characters (whose traits would have been distorted by the wide angle of the lenses) too closely. It is telling that *This is Cinerama* (Merian C. Cooper, 1952), the documentary intended as a demonstration of the power of the new technique, is structured as nothing more than a collection of short stand-alone scenes – furthermore, it opens with a rollercoaster ride sequence, thus establishing an explicit line of continuity with phantom rides. Due to its fragmented identity, what *This is Cinerama* was truly already demonstrating was Cinerama's inherent deficiency in storytelling. Producers and directors were surely aware of that, and in fact the majority of the few films shot using Cinerama followed the model of Cooper's film, namely documentaries composed of independent scenes held together by a thin thematic unit. So, the excessive visual spectacle of Cinerama reduced the aesthetic scope of the latter to a primitive *découpage*, therefore dooming it to a premature demise. The high production cost of Cinerama films, combined with their lack of appeal for the spectator who just wished to enjoy a compelling story, made them economically unsustainable, vanishing the cautious hopes of those who, like André Bazin, saw in the early appearance of Cinerama the possibility for a renewal of cinematic language (Andrew, 2014).

However, there were attempts to produce markedly narrative films in Cinerama, the most ambitious of them surely being *How the West Was Won* (1962), directed by the three masters of the western genre Henry Hathaway, John Ford and George Marshall, and conceived as a sort of ultimate epic spectacle aiming at (re)telling the mythical foundation of modern United States by employing the most advanced technology of the time. Sadly, the aesthetic shortcomings discussed above did not spare *How the West Was Won* either, and the film could be judged as a failure from a stylistic standpoint. The impossibility of using cinematic language to set up mechanisms of identification and empathy with the characters, and to invest the latter of a strong psychological background, forced the directors to adopt the same structure of the previous documentaries, so that the epic narrative ended up reversed in its opposite. The result was, in fact, a fragmented, discontinuous and unbalanced story, full of stereotypical characters and composed of unrelated episodes.

But what is most interesting for the purposes of this article, is to note that in order to cope with these narrative flaws, *How the West Was Won* heavily relies on the theme of the journey, presented in an enveloping form and with an attractional rather than narrative function. That means, returning to King's distinction between spectacle and narrative discussed above, that the numerous shots of places and landscapes do not serve a narrative purpose (that is, adding new information to the story); instead, they offer the pure display of remote and picturesque places, magnified by the technology. In *How the West Was Won* the schemes of the western are inscribed between a prologue and an epilogue recalling the aesthetics of travelogue films. The first shot after the overture is an aerial shot over the Rocky Mountains, whose flying point of view is very unusual for the western genre, and which is used to immerse the viewer in the archetypical landscape of the wilderness of the Far West. While the final sequence, still composed of aerial shots, links the past of the Wild West with the present, flying over the symbols of civilization (cultivated fields, highways, bridges, skyscrapers). Moreover, both the starting and ending sequences are accompanied by a voice over conferring epic value to the travelogue images projected, in the attempt to tie them more to a narrative meaning than to a spectacular one. But in spite of this unsuccessful intervention of re-interpretation of the visual contents, it is clear that these scenes are intended to amaze and astonish the spectator, in a purely attractional manner, and to configure the space traversed as an enveloping environment with which she cannot interact.

The case of *How the West Was Won* demonstrates the prominence of the semantics of the travelogue in immersive media even when the movie is primarily conceived as a narrative experience. It is not surprising that travelogues have offered a set of cheap formal cliches for documentaries such as *Cinerama Holiday* (Robert Benedick, Philippe De Lacy, 1955), *Seven Wonders of the World* (Tay Garnett, Paul Mantz, Andrew Marton, Ted Tetzlaff, Walter Thompson, 1956) or *Search for Paradise* (Otto Lang, 1957), which present exotic and folkloristic images of touristic sites or faraway places. Much more remarkable is that storytelling itself is affected and influenced by the attractational power of immersive journeys.

Conclusion

In this article I have tried to introduce and justify a few theoretical concepts as part of a more general aesthetic theory of immersive media, which are deeply interwoven with the cross-media genre of the travelogue. I have proposed the concept of enveloping tactile images, which strive to conceal their nature as images by presenting themselves as complex environments. Then, I have analysed how they employ a variety of stylistic strategies in order to weaken the sense of agency aroused by the higher realistic illusion that they provide but cannot actually fulfil. I have stated that their spectator is immersed, yet distant, namely she is stimulated in her sense of ownership but not in the active sense of agency, because her body is kept at a safe distance from the objects of the representation and can be touched by them but cannot touch in turn. Finally, I have discussed the fact that their unparalleled mimetic capacity carries on, nevertheless, the inability to develop gratifying narratives, which is the reason why they seem doomed to never earn the status of works of art or expressive forms.

The topics discussed in this article represent just a small part of the problems brought up by immersive media. Further research is needed, especially on complex themes such as the relationship between immersive technologies and storytelling, or the effective role of the body in the mediated experience. My hope is that the concepts developed here may have proposed a new perspective on media forms which constitute an important part of our contemporary mediascape, and that they may be useful for future debate in this field of research.

REFERENCES

- ANDREW, DUDLEY (ed.) (2014), *André Bazin's New Media*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- BELTON, JOHN (1992), *Widescreen Cinema*. Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press.
- BOTTOMORE, STEVEN (2010), The Panicking Audience? Early Cinema and the 'Train Effect'. *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 19 (2), pp. 177-216.
- BREDEKAMP, HORST (2015 [2010]), *Immagini che ci guardano. Teoria dell'atto iconico [Theory of the Image Act]*. Milan: Raffaello Cortina.
- CARRILLO QUIROGA, PERLA (2017), Perceptual Realism and Embodied Experience in the Travelogue Genre. *Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications*, 3, (3), pp. 229-257.
- CHEMERO, ANTHONY (2003), An Outline of a Theory of Affordances. *Ecological Psychology*, 15 (2), pp. 181-195.
- ELSAESSER, THOMAS (2013), The "Return" of 3D: On Some of the Logics and Genealogies of the Image in the Twenty-First Century. *Critical Inquiry*, 2, pp. 217-246.
- GALLESE, VITTORIO — GUERRA, MICHELE (2012), Embodying Movies: Embodied Simulation and Film Studies. *Cinema. Journal of Philosophy and the Moving Image*, 3, pp. 183-210.
- (2015), *Lo schermo empatico. Cinema e neuroscienze [The Empathic Screen. Cinema and Neuroscience]*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina.
- GIBSON, JAMES J. (2014 [1979]), *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. London: Routledge.
- GRABARCZYK, PAWEŁ — POKROPSKI, MAREK (2016), Perception of Affordances and Experience of Presence in Virtual Reality. *AVANT*, 7 (2), pp. 25-44.
- GRAU, OLIVER (2003), *Virtual Art. From Illusion to Immersion*, Cambridge-London: The MIT Press.
- GREGERSEN, ANDREAS — GRODAL, TORBEN (2009), Embodiment and Interface. In: Wolf, Mark — Perron, Bernard (eds), *The Video Game Theory Reader 2*. Abingdon-New York: Routledge, pp. 65-83.
- GRUSIN, RICHARD (2006), DVDs, Video Games, and the Cinema of Interactions. *Ilha do Desterro. A Journal of English Language, Literatures in English and Cultural Studies*, 51, pp. 69-91.
- GUNNING, TOM (2006), "The Whole World Within Reach": Travel Images without Borders. In: Ruoff, Jeffrey (ed.), *Virtual Voyages. Cinema and Travel*. Durham-London: Duke University Press, pp. 25-41.
- (2009), An Aesthetic of Astonishment. Early Film and the (In)credulous Spectator. In: Braudy, Leo — Cohen, Marshall (eds), *Film Theory and Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 736-750.
- GUREVITCH, LEON (2013), The Stereoscopic Attraction: Three-dimensional Imaging and the Spectacular Paradigm 1850–2013. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 19 (4), pp. 396-405.
- (2015), From Edison to Pixar: The Spectacular Screen and the Attention Economy from Celluloid to CG. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*. Available from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10304312.2014.986062> (accessed 07 October 2021).
- HEFT, HARRY (2003), Affordances, Dynamic Experience, and the Challenge of Reification. *Ecological Psychology*, 15 (2), pp. 149-180.
- KING, GEOFF (2000), *Spectacular Narratives. Hollywood in the Age of the Blockbuster*. London-New York: I. B. Tauris.
- KIRBY, LYNNE (1997), *Parallel Tracks. The Railroad and Silent Cinema*. Durham: Duke University Press.

- LOMBARD, MATTHEW — DITTON, THERESA (1997), At the Heart of It All: The Concept of Presence. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 3 (2). Available from: <https://academic.oup.com/jcmc/article/3/2/JCMC321/4080403> (accessed 10 January 2021).
- MARKS, LAURA (2000), *The Skin of the Film. Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*. Durham-Londra: Duke University Press.
- (2002), *Touch. Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*. Minneapolis-London: University of Minnesota Press.
- MEYER, ULI — DRAHEIM, SUSANNE — VON LUCK, KAI (2019), A Model for Sensorimotor Affordances in Virtual Reality Environments. In: *2019 11th International Conference on Virtual Worlds and Games for Serious Applications (VS-Games)*, Vienna, pp. 1-4. Available from: 10.1109/VS-Games.2019.8864514 (accessed 08 October 2021).
- MICHAELS, CLAIRE (2003), Affordances: Four Points of Debate. *Ecological Psychology*, 15 (2), pp. 135-148.
- MONTANI, PIETRO (2017), *Tre forme di creatività: tecnica, arte, politica [Three Forms of Creativity: Technique, Art, Politics]*. Napoli: Cronopio.
- OLIVER, MARTIN (2005), The Problem with Affordance. *E-Learning*, 2 (4), pp. 402-413.
- PENNY, SIMON (2017), *Making Sense: Cognition, Computing, Art, and Embodiment*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- PETERSON, JENNIFER LYNN (2013), *Education in the School of Dreams. Travelogues and Early Nonfiction Films*. Durham-London: Duke University Press.
- PINOTTI, ANDREA (2018), Immagini che negano se stesse. Verso un'an-icologia [Images denying themselves. Towards an an-icology]. In: Montani, Pietro — Cecchi, Dario — Feyles, Martino (eds), *Ambienti mediali [Media environments]*. Sesto San Giovanni: Meltemi, pp. 231-243.
- RABINOVITZ, LAUREN (2006), From *Hale's Tours* to *Star Tours*. Virtual Voyages, Travel Ride Films, and the Delirium of the Hyper-real. In: Ruoff, Jeffrey (ed.), *Virtual Voyages. Cinema and Travel*. Durham-London: Duke University Press, pp. 42-60.
- REGAN, DAVID — BEVERLEY, KENNETH I. (1978), Looming detectors in the human visual pathway. *Vision Research* 18 (4), pp. 415-421.
- REGIA-CORTE *et al.* (2013). Perceiving affordances in virtual reality: Influence of person and environmental properties in the perception of standing on virtual grounds. *Virtual Reality*, 17 (1), pp. 17-28.
- ROSS, MIRIAM (2015), *3D Cinema. Optical Illusions and Tactile Experiences*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- SCARANTINO, ANDREA (2003), Affordances Explained. *Philosophy of Science*, 70 (5), pp. 949-961.
- SCHIVELBUSCH, WOLFGANG (2014) [1977], *The Railway Journey. The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- STOFFREGEN, THOMAS (2003), Affordances as Properties of the Animal-Environment System. *Ecological Psychology*, 15 (2), pp. 114-134.
- TURVEY, MICHAEL (1992), Affordances and Prospective Control: An Outline of the Ontology. *Ecological Psychology*, 15 (3), pp. 173-187.
- WARREN, WILLIAM (1984), Perceiving Affordances: Visual Guidance of Stair Climbing. *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 10 (5), pp. 683-703.
- WITHAGEN, ROB, *et al.* (2012), Affordances can invite behavior: Reconsidering the relationship between affordances and agency. *New Ideas in Psychology*, 30, pp. 250-258.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nicolas BILCHI is a PhD graduate of Roma Tre University in “Paesaggi della città contemporanea. Politiche, tecniche e studi visuali”. His research is primarily focused on interactive media such as videogame and Virtual Reality, dealing with the themes of presence and immersion, studied from an ecological perspective. He is author of the book *Cinema e videogame. Narrazioni, estetiche, ibridazioni* (Unicopli, Milano 2019) and has published for the journal *Imago. Studi di cinema e media* and *Cinergie – Il cinema e le altre arti*.

Anime tourism in Italy: Travelling to the locations of the Studio Ghibli films¹

Giulia LAVARONE & Marco BELLANO | University of Padua, Italy

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/2021.10.LAV.ITALY](https://doi.org/10.32926/2021.10.LAV.ITALY)

ABSTRACT

Film-induced tourism, intended as travelling to places where films and Tv series have been shot or set, has been extensively studied in the last two decades in several disciplinary fields. For example, the term 'media pilgrimage' emerged in media sociology to highlight the sacred dimension these practices may assume, while fan studies have focused on the narrative of affection built upon specific places. Calling forth the relationship between film and landscape, these phenomena have been also explored in the light of film semiotics and media geography.

In the past decade, the representation of landscape and the construction of the sense of place in animation benefited from increased scholarly attention; however, the links between tourism and animation still appear under-explored. Japanese animation, because of its prominent use of real locations as the basis for the building of its worlds and the tendency of its fanbases to take action (even in the form of animation-oriented tourism), is an especially promising field, in this respect. In the last fifteen years, a debate on 'content(s) tourism' has involved the Japanese government as well as academic scholarship, referring to a wide variety of contents, from novels to films and Tv series, anime, manga, and games.

The article presents a case study: a discussion of the experience of anime tourists who visited the Italian locations featured in the films by the world-famous animator and director Miyazaki Hayao, especially in Castle in the Sky (1986) and Porco Rosso (1992). The experiences of anime tourists were collected from images and texts shared through the social network Twitter.

KEYWORDS

Film-induced tourism; Media pilgrimage; Anime tourism; Contents tourism; Milan; Civita di Bagnoregio; *Porco Rosso*; *Castle in the Sky*; Studio Ghibli; Miyazaki Hayao.

Date of submission: 17 May 2021

Date of acceptance: 6 December 2021

Date of publication: 20 December 2021

1. Introduction

In the past decade, the representation of landscape and the construction of the sense of place in animation benefited from an increased scholarly attention (as testified by Pallant, 2015); however, the links between tourism and animation still appear under-explored in international film tourism research. Japanese animation, because of its

¹ The planning and research for this article was carried out jointly by the two authors. Giulia Lavarone wrote sections 2, 4, 5 and 7; Marco Bellano wrote sections 1, 3 and 6.

prominent use of real locations as the basis for the building of its worlds, and the tendency of its fanbases to take action (even in the form of animation-oriented tourism), is an especially promising field, in this respect. However, in a recent article on the anime pilgrimage, Ono Akinori² *et al.* argue that ‘scant research has been conducted on this phenomenon’ (2020), while Hernández-Pérez (2019) highlights the lack of research concerning specifically anime pilgrimages ‘out of Japan’.

This paper will report on ongoing research studying how memories of European settings from favourite series and films participate in orienting the travel desires and practices of the audience of Japanese animation. We decided to focus on Studio Ghibli films to kickstart our research, because of their widespread fame and cross-age group appeal. The main tools we used to question and interpret the qualitative data we collected about travel desires and experiences issue from theoretical frameworks developed by scientific literature on film-induced tourism and anime tourism. We particularly focused on the concept of nostalgia, with reference to its wide framework of interdisciplinary scholarship, here accessed through the specific lens of tourist studies and animation studies.

2. Film Tourism, Anime Tourism, and Nostalgia: Experiencing Authenticity through Emotions.

The wider theoretical framework of this research is film-induced tourism, intended as travelling to places variously connected with film and Tv programmes, such as shooting or setting locations, production studios, film museums, celebrity homes, or festival premises (Beeton, 2005; Beeton, 2015).

Film-induced tourism has been extensively studied in the last two decades in several disciplinary fields, from tourism management to cultural geography and media studies (Connell, 2012). The term includes experiences that involve various degrees of tourists’ interest in the film, which can be strong and determine the search for the film’s actual locations, or weak and even non-existent, when ‘serendipitous’ film tourists ‘just happen to be’ in a place used for shooting (Macionis, 2004). In the first case, these experiences can be sometimes read within the framework of fan tourism, which

² For Japanese names we use the surname-name order.

presents specific features such as fans' typical worries about the commercial exploitation of the beloved film or Tv series (Williams, 2018). Film tourists' degree of interest in a film is often situated somewhere between the two poles, with tourists participating in film-related activities for different motivations, including the 'novelty' of this experience and its educational potential (Macionis, 2004). Film tourism is often integrated with other forms of tourism, such as heritage tourism, with which it is frequently paired by scholars (e.g., Schofield, 1996; Agarwal and Shaw, 2018). Film tourists are often interested in the actual history of the toured places, even if their 'historical imagination' is obviously mediated by the film or Tv series (Waysdorf and Reijnders, 2017: 185).

Heritage, screen, and literary tourism have in common a strong involvement of the tourist in the co-creation of the experience, as she/he is directly engaged in attributing meaning to places 'only because of a person, event, movie and/or literary association featured there' (Agarwal and Shaw, 2018: 34). Inspired by Pierre Nora's definition of *lieu de mémoire*, Reijnders (2011: 8) has coined the term 'places of imagination' for places visited by film and literary tourists, which 'serve as a symbolic anchor for the collective imagination'. 'Places of imagination' are often authenticated by media tourists themselves, regardless of their being the places which have actually inspired the author of the work. The authenticity that film tourists look for is not necessarily that of the toured objects, it is rather identified in the existential value of the experience, as described by Wang (1999), or at least in a complex relationship between the two. According to Buchmann *et al.* (2010), the 'authenticity' of the film tourist experience is identified in the quality of the encounter with a unique place, that of shooting, in the analysed study case of *The Lord of the Rings*, Peter Jackson, 2001-2003. This encounter must appear as 'authentic' both physically—e.g., when the weather conditions are bad, because 'film tourists, like pilgrims, welcome physical exercise and even discomfort as a further validation of their experience as authentic' (Buchmann *et al.*, 2010: 241)—and socially, when the relationships with the guide and the other tour participants are recognised as sincere.

While originally dealing with case studies located in Anglo-Saxon countries, Western film tourism research has eventually focused on Asian countries (Connell, 2012), with recent publications exploring the Asian context at large (Kim and Reijnders, 2018). In parallel with the development of Western research on film tourism, a relevant debate

on ‘content(s) tourism’ has involved the Japanese government as well as scholarship (Beeton *et al.*, 2013). In a 2005 government report, ‘content tourism’ is defined as: ‘the addition of a ‘narrative quality’ (*monogatari sei*) or ‘theme’ (*teemasei*) to a region—namely an atmosphere or image particular to the region generated by the contents—and the use of that narrative quality as a tourism resource’ (Beeton *et al.*, 2013: 179). The expression ‘content(s)’ refers to all aspects of popular culture, including novels, films, Tv series, anime, manga, and games (Beeton *et al.*, 2013). Linguistic barriers have inhibited the dialogue between these different research traditions (Beeton *et al.*, 2013) until recently, when many publications in English have appeared, including collections of articles dealing with specific case studies (Seaton and Yamamura, 2015), as well as comprehensive historical overviews (Seaton *et al.*, 2017).

The term usually employed to refer to these tourist practices in relation to anime is that of “anime pilgrimages”. While the term ‘(media) pilgrimages’ is frequently used within Western research in the disciplinary fields of media sociology and fan studies (e.g., Couldry, 2000), its diffusion in the Japanese context goes far beyond scholarship, being normally used by official tourist marketing and by tourists themselves. The expression fits the peculiar practices blurring the devotion to traditional gods with that of the anime world, like the writing of vows and prayers, or drawing of anime characters, on the traditional votive plaques (*ema*) in actual shrines (Okamoto, 2015; Yamamura, 2015; Hernández-Pérez, 2019).

Actually, the term ‘anime pilgrimage’ is often used to embrace a wide variety of practices that entail different degrees of fandom and in some cases blur with cultural tourism. Hernández-Pérez (2019) has proposed a classification of tourist forms connected to anime, within and outside Japan, distinguishing fan tourism (*otaku tourism*) from a wider ‘contents tourism’. To the first category belong the properly defined ‘pilgrimage’ (*seichi junrei*), as well as ‘scene hunting’ (*butaitanbou*), i.e., taking photographs at the actual spot, aimed at reproducing anime scenes (on *butaitanbou*, see also Loriguillo-López, 2021). ‘Content tourism’ implies instead a weaker involvement with the media text itself and with fan communities, while often dealing with more institutionalised places and activities. It includes ‘casual otaku tourism’ (or ‘anime tourism’), often moved by nostalgia for the anime watched in the past, as well as proper ‘cultural tourism’, like in the case of foreign anime tourists in Japan who are willing to discover Japanese culture at large (Hernández-Pérez, 2019).

Despite relevant research concerning tourism in anime locations situated in Japan, studies on Japanese animation-related tourism ‘out of Japan’ are still lacking (Hernández-Pérez, 2019). As regards non-Japanese places connected with Miyazaki Hayao’s movies, two interesting contributions deal with places that are authenticated as ‘places of imaginations’ by fans themselves, despite not being the declared settings of the films, nor the source of inspiration acknowledged by the director. Norris (2013) analyses the case of the Tasmanian bakery connected to *Kiki’s Delivery Service* (*Majō no takkyūbin*, 1989), while Yagi and Pearce (2017) focus on the worldwide attractions about which the TripAdvisor comments in Japanese mention *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* (*Kaze no tani no Naushika*, 1984) or *Castle in the Sky* (*Tenkū no shiro Rapyuta*, 1986). The latter is mentioned in relation to 88 different attractions, 50 of which are outside of Japan, including Mont Saint-Michel in France (see the next section). If authentication processes of ‘places of imaginations’ by film tourists themselves are often recognised in Western film tourism, the disregard for a factual connection with actual movie production is sometimes patent in animation-related Japanese tourism, possibly because of two main factors. On the one hand, the specificities of animated films and series, which potentially leave free course to the imagination more than live-action films (Yagi and Pearce, 2017)—even if their being inspired by specific locations is sometimes well documented, and even if this connection is promoted by local institutions (e.g., in the case of the Spanish city of Cuenca: see Hernández-Pérez, 2017). On the other hand, cultural factors concerning Japanese tourists’ concept of authenticity, ‘more about the ability of the tourists’ imaginative capacity to generate key emotions and values, and less about the search for truth, accuracy, and credibility’ (Yagi and Pearce, 2018: 20).

Speaking of ‘key emotions’, nostalgic feelings can play a pivotal role in the film tourist experience (among others, see: Schofield, 1996; Grenier, 2011; Kim, 2017), as well as in the anime experience (see the next section). As regards animation related tourism, situated at a convergence of the two, the concept of nostalgia must be understood in multiple ways.

First, nostalgia for one’s own past, including childhood memories (Norris, 2013; Yagi and Pearce, 2017; Geraghty, 2019), which Hernández-Pérez (2019), in his classification of anime tourists, relates to the large category of ‘casual otaku tourists’. This understanding of nostalgia, which can be extended to film tourism in general when

dealing with movies watched in one's own past (e.g., Hong Kong movies watched by Korean audiences in the 1970s-1990s: Kim, 2017), relates both to the text itself and to the context of watching. Just like the very experience of watching, the objects seen in the movie (e.g., places, commercial brands, characters' gestures) join personal memories, thus possibly becoming the target of nostalgic feelings (Kim, 2017). The intimacy with movie characters, or places, originates actions carried out by spectators in the real world (Kim, 2012; Beeton, 2015), possibly including an active engagement with the real place and local communities (in relation to anime fans, see Yamamura, 2015).

Besides being an actual push factor for tourist visitation (Kim, 2017), nostalgia may be the main emotional mood of film tourist experiences on-site, regardless of their motivation. Kim (2012) suggests understanding these experiences with reference to three dimensions: 1) 'prestige and privilege', marked by the excitement of being in the 'real' location and taking photographs there; 2) 'beyond screen, sensory experience and re-enactment', entailing more active interactions with the place, such as the re-enactment of film scenes, gathering information about the movie production behind the scenes, or enjoying sensory experiences (e.g. tasting typical food); 3) 'intimacy and memory', referring to 'film tourists' attempt[s] to remember and experience how they were emotionally and behaviourally touched by the story, characters, and other production values' like background music (Kim 2012: 394). In the latter case, the toured destination appears familiar and stimulates personal memories, nurturing a nostalgic mood. Ono *et al.* (2020) adapted these categories in their study on anime pilgrimages, proposing a terminology which explicitly includes the word 'nostalgia': 1) 'immersive' experiences, based on the excitement of being in the actual locations that inspired anime scenes; 2) 'vicarious' experiences, based on the identification with characters and re-enacting of scenes; 3) 'nostalgic' experiences, based on the recognition of familiar objects and recollection of the anime narrative.

As regards the specific case of Japanese tourists outside Japan, the choice of touring anime-related locations, and/or referring to Japanese popular culture when visiting foreign attractions, must also be understood as a 'search for the familiar in unfamiliar places' (Yagi and Pearce, 2017: 285; see also Yagi and Pearce, 2018). Somehow paradoxically, foreign locations might even stimulate nostalgia towards traditional values perceived as lost (or in crisis) at home, an emotion blurred with nostalgia towards childhood. According to Rea (2000), the values of *furusato* (native places) can

be found ‘away from home’ by contemporary Japanese tourists when they pilgrimage to places like Prince Edward Island in Canada, the location that inspired the book series *Anne of Green Gables*, adapted as a famous anime series by Takahata Isao in 1979³. Tourists’ nostalgia is addressed towards ‘wondrous premodern (and fictional) worlds encountered in their youth’ (Rea, 2000: 642), preserving beautiful landscapes and ‘a frugal, non-commercial lifestyle’ (Rea, 2000: 656) which can be better appreciated in foreign locations connected to children’s books than in contemporary Japan.

Finally, nostalgia towards a lost past is recognised as a key component in heritage tourism, whose connections with film tourism have already been discussed. When dealing with Japanese tourists, this emotional involvement with vestiges of the past should also be understood in relation to the Japanese aesthetic sense of *wabi-sabi*, leading, as an example, to the appreciation of ruins covered by moss, testifying the transience of all things (Yagi and Pearce, 2017; on *wabi-sabi*, see Koren, 1994). In the study cases of Italian locations connected to Miyazaki’s animated movies, this nostalgia towards lost worlds (whether real or imaginary ones) is magnified by the peculiar features of the texts, rooted in Miyazaki’s poetics, which will be discussed in the following section.

3. Miyazaki and Europe

The interest in the European landscape by Miyazaki and his colleagues is longstanding. It predates the establishment of the Studio Ghibli in 1985, as testified, for example, by many explicit references to European locations in the Tv series *Heidi, the Girls from the Alps* (*Arupusu no shōjo Haiji*, 1974) and *3000 Leagues in Search of Mother* (*Haha o Tazunete Sanzenri*, 1976). Together with *Anne of Green Gables* (*Akage no An*, 1979), those works were among the most accomplished titles from the World Masterpiece Theater (1975-2009), a project by the production company Nippon Animation aimed at developing animated transpositions of classics from children’s literature (Le Roux, 2009: 189). Miyazaki provided layouts to the aforementioned three series, which were all written and directed by Takahata, who later became the main

³ These famous pilgrimages have been effectively described as a form of ‘embodied fandom’ aimed at entering a ‘world’, rather than dealing with single ‘works’—like the books by Lucy Maud Montgomery or their anime adaptation by Takahata (Bergstrom, 2014).

creative force at Studio Ghibli, together with Miyazaki. Views with a European flavour had also appeared in the first *Lupin III* series (1971), which Takahata and Miyazaki co-directed from episode 9 onwards, after the previously appointed director had been removed (Greenberg, 2018: 53). Episode 15 has quite a telling title, in this respect: *Rupan wo Tsukamaete Yōroppa e Ikō* (*Let's Catch Lupin and Go to Europe*).

Miyazaki and Takahata developed their fascination with Europe through their shared appreciation of foreign books. Takahata graduated in French literature at the Tokyo University, with a dissertation on Jacques Prévert; he later translated some of his poems into Japanese (Bendazzi, 2015: 217). An animated film written by Prévert, *Le roi et l'oiseau* (Paul Grimault, 1980), first released in 1952 as *La bergère et le ramoneur*, became a major reference in Takahata's approach to animation. As for Miyazaki, he had been an avid reader of fiction from Europe since his youth; differently from his peers, he reportedly enjoyed *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Three Musketeers* and *The Prisoner of Zenda* more than *manga* (Napier, 2018: 21). During his studies in political science and economics at the Gakushuin University, he joined a children's literature research society, through which he was exposed to works by writers like Rosemary Sutcliff, Philippa Pearce, Eleanor Farjeon, and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (McCarthy, 1999: 30).

The experience that consolidated Miyazaki's preference for the representation of the European landscape⁴ was a location scouting trip he took in 1971 with the president of the production company Tokyo Movie Shinsha, Fujioka Yutaka, in order to secure the rights for an animated adaptation of Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking* (Greenberg, 2018: 32). It was Miyazaki's first time travelling outside Japan. The journey proved unfruitful, as Lindgren did not agree to meet with Miyazaki, probably because of a bad negotiation strategy executed by the mediators between the author and the Japanese studio, that is to say Ernst Liesenhoff and Olle Nordemar, the producers of the 1969 live-action *Pippi Longstocking* Tv series written by Lindgren herself. That series was shot in the picturesque island town of Visby, which then became one of the

⁴ Miyazaki's specific choice of Europe to picture an idealised and positive Western world might also imply the notorious anti-American stance of the director, as noted by Hernandez-Perez (2016: 305). Some evidence of this attitude can be found in several interviews of Miyazaki, but also in the presentation of a vain and opportunist American character in *Porco Rosso* (Curtis).

destinations of Miyazaki's journey, along with Stockholm. Even though the *Pippi Longstocking* anime never happened, those places left a longstanding impression on Miyazaki, and also convinced him about the importance of location scouting in the process of animation pre-production. He remarked:

Before I went there, I honestly thought that I could depict Europe without ever having to see it. But once I was there in person, I keenly felt the profundity of the real thing. I realised that although we lumped it all in as 'Europe' everything changes depending on where you are. ... It was the location hunting that made me feel that way. It's when I found myself standing at the gateway to Europe (Miyazaki in Clements, 2017).

Other major non-Japanese destinations visited by Miyazaki and his crew during location scouting trips were Maienfeld in Switzerland (for *Heidi*, in 1973) (Olof-Ors, 2019); Argentina and Italy (for *3000 Leagues in Search of Mother*); Wales (two weeks starting from 18 May 1985), where the crew visited 'coal mines, castles, museums' (Studio Ghibli, 2016: 11) (probably Caernarfon Castle, Powis Castle, the Rhondda Cynon Taff coal mining district and the Big Pit National Coal Museum), during the pre-production of *Castle in the Sky*; Visby and Stockholm again in 1988, to get inspiration for *Kiki's Delivery Service*, whose locations are partly based on the downtown district of Stockholm known as Gamla Stan (Studio Ghibli, 2006: 11); and a 2002 twelve-day trip to Heidelberg, Paris, and Colmar to develop the locations of *Howl's Moving Castle* (*Hauru no ugoku shiro*, 2004) (Studio Ghibli, 2005: 12, 49).

When transplanting European views into his films, Miyazaki has never been literal. On the contrary, he preferred to mix together the subjective impressions he got from different places, to create an imaginary landscape rooted in reality. The scenery can still contain hints of physical places, but there are never exact correspondences. This arguably leaves the viewers free to come up with their own associations between reality and animation, widening thus the spectrum of real-life places that can be associated with Ghibli films. This attitude of Miyazaki is actually in tune with the idealised, picturesque, and exotic representation of Europe rooted in Japanese popular culture. Helen McCarthy talked of the

never-never land that is the Japanese dream of Europe, a rustic paradise of crumbling yet infinitely sophisticated cities and castles; ancient titles and even older secrets; lakes, mountains, and high flower-strewn meadows; and mystery and

romance. There is a Japanese phrase that sums up this yearning for the beautiful, mysterious fantasy elsewhere—*akogare no Paris*, the Paris of our dreams (McCarthy, 1999: 65).

Yagi and Pearce bring up the term *akogare* in their discussion of the Japanese appreciation of Western locations seen in animated films: it expresses a form of admiration for Europe, kindred in emotional value to *wabi-sabi* (the quiet contemplation of the transience of things, already mentioned in the previous section and connected with the aesthetics of ruins mentioned by McCarthy) and *natsukashii*, a Japanese word which roughly translates as ‘nostalgia’ (Yagi and Pearce, 2018).

The concept of nostalgia has always been an important part of the *anime* experience, as argued by Marco Pellitteri (Pellitteri, 2018: 18) but it is especially pertinent to the Studio Ghibli films. Susan Napier used the word *natsukashii* to define ‘the elegiac’, one of the three dominant modes of expression she identifies in *anime* (together with ‘the apocalyptic’ and ‘the carnivalesque’): it is ‘a lyrical sense of mourning often connected with an acute consciousness of a waning traditional culture’ (Napier, 2005: 13). Napier notices how this emotional range especially stands out in Ghibli films such as *Omohide Poroporo* (*Only Yesterday*, Takahata Isao, 1991), noting that Taeko, the protagonist, explicitly uses the word *natsukashii* when reacting to a view of the countryside; she also says *furusato*, which, as noted in the previous section, is a sentiment of ‘homeland’ that may arise in the Japanese sensibility also when finding signs of a domestic familiarity in a faraway place. The *natsukashii*, and Napier’s ‘elegiac’ tone, make the mourning an aesthetic pleasure in itself. It could be compared with Svetlana Boym’s ‘reflective nostalgia’, a concept which focuses on ‘the imperfect process of remembrance’ (Boym, 2001: 41), as opposed to ‘restorative nostalgia’, propelled by the desire to take action and fight the loss by rebuilding a lost past in the present.

Alistair Swale, though, argues that Miyazaki’s declination of *natsukashii* is not mainly about mourning a loss: ‘this is arguably not Miyazaki’s dominant mode of engagement with the past, and he shows himself just as happy to depict an idealised and highly stylised Europe or a quasi-feudal Japan’ (Swale, 2015: 416). So, by going back to Yagi and Pearce, it could be argued that, especially when setting his stories in Europe, Miyazaki underplays the *natsukashii* feeling in favour of the *akogare* (and perhaps in conjunction with the *wabi-sabi*).

In fact, as the director himself has often remarked, Miyazaki's films mainly deal with a feeling of 'yearning for a lost world' (Miyazaki, 2009[1]: 18), which, however, could also be an imaginary one. Such an imagined and aesthetic experience of loss might be likened to the 'ersatz nostalgia' discussed by Arjun Appadurai, 'a nostalgia without lived experience or collective historical memory' (Appadurai, 1996: 78). Miyazaki consciously distinguishes the nostalgia based on memories from the one based on imagination: on the one hand, he concedes that 'adults fondly [recall] something from their childhood [...]. As we get older, the breadth—or depth—of our nostalgia definitely increases' (Miyazaki, 2009[1]: 18); on the other hand, he posits that 'the moment someone is born into this present instant, [...] he or she has already lost [...] the chance to be born in other ages [...] This yearning for other, lost possibilities may also be a major motivator' (Miyazaki, 2009[1]: 18).

Many films by Miyazaki play with the nostalgic desires in the audience, by using imaginary settings and scenery that retain only a vague imprint of real places: two outstanding cases are *Castle in the Sky* and *Porco Rosso* (*Kurenai no Buta*, Miyazaki Hayao, 1992). In the latter, this 'ersatz nostalgia' was also fueled by an appeal to the desire to travel. Miyazaki's 'Directorial memoranda' reads: 'A town that people would like to visit. A sky through which people would like to fly. A secret hideaway we ourselves would want. And a worry-free, stirring, uplifting world. Once upon a time, earth was a beautiful place' (Miyazaki, 2009[3]: 268).

In *Porco Rosso*, the backdrop of the action is the Adriatic Sea and the seashore of Croatia, but there is an extended sequence that takes place in Milan, in the area of the Navigli channels. However, no famous landmark is pictured in the film; the production materials even mention that the Hotel Adriano, one of the main sea locations, was initially supposed to be in a certain Moonshine City (*Doburoku-shi*) (Studio Ghibli, 2011: 18), which obviously does not exist. On the other hand, the time of the story seems to be the late twenties, because of the references to fascism and the looks of the vehicles, the phones, and the clothes; however, the opening titles set the film in the 'age of the flying boats', a fairytale-sounding epoch name that has never been used in reality. There is a good reason for this emphasis on the desire to travel in the *Porco Rosso* film plans: the film was initially conceived as a medium-length, in-flight feature film, for passengers on Japan Airlines international flights (Studio Ghibli, 2011: 12).

Castle in the Sky, instead, never tries to provide any reference to real locations; however, the look of the backgrounds is a direct result of a location scouting trip that Miyazaki took to Wales and Sussex, along the coast south of London (Miyazaki, 2009[4]: 339). The director, though, embellished the valleys he actually saw with ‘lots of mine holes’ (Miyazaki, 2009[4]: 339), in order to achieve the feeling of place he was aiming for since the film proposal he penned in 1984: ‘the setting is vaguely European, but we can’t tell exactly what race or nationality its people are’ (Miyazaki, 2009[2]: 253). The look of the floating city, on the other hand, might have been based on illustrations of Jonathan Swift’s satirical novel from which the name Laputa comes, *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726). Raz Greenberg advanced that Miyazaki could have taken inspiration from ‘the classic nineteenth-century illustrations of the novel by French artist Jean Ignace Isidore Gérard that portrayed Swift’s flying island as a fortress on a round flying platform’ (Greenberg, 2018: 116). Apart from that, tall architectonic conglomerates with a pyramidal shape had already appeared several times in Miyazaki’s works; one of them is the main location of the 1979 feature *Lupin III – The Castle of Cagliostro* (*Rupan Sansei – Kariosutoro no Shiro*). The origin of this visual trope was Miyazaki’s admiration (Greenberg, 2018: 65) for the French animated feature *Le roi et l’oiseau*, set in a castle that looked almost like a towering mountain. Floating fortresses that may have influenced Miyazaki can also be found in a 1984 artbook by the French comic artist Moebius (*Venise celeste*), as well as in René Magritte’s painting *Le Château des Pyrénées* (1959). A real location in France, Mont Saint-Michel, has been pointed out by fans as a reference, too. This, however, was never confirmed by Miyazaki; instead, it might be reasonable to see this as a consequence of spontaneous touristic practices that paired the appearance of Miyazaki’s Laputa with those of numerous places all over the world (Yagi and Pearce 2017). Among them there is Civita di Bagnoregio, an Italian historical town perched on top of a hill, which we selected as a study case in respect to our research hypothesis.

4. Research Method

The sources of the following two sections have been selected in accordance with research models already tested in relation to anime tourism by Yagi and Pearce (2017). They are digital word-of-mouth, that is to say short messages pertinent to tourist

experiences spontaneously posted by Japanese-speaking people in social media.⁵ While Yagi and Pearce focused on digital word-of-mouth gathered from a Japanese version of TripAdvisor, we decided to focus on Twitter. The choice of Twitter is due to its extensive use in Japan, its effective search functionalities, and the identification of a suitable number of relevant results acknowledged during preliminary research.

We searched for tweets related to two Studio Ghibli films that feature a European setting and some sort of connection with Italy: *Castle in the Sky* and *Porco Rosso*. The search was carried out between 18 September 2020 and 3 February 2021. We used keywords written in Japanese. For *Castle in the Sky*, we resorted to the word 'Laputa' or 'Miyazaki', together with 'Italy' or 'Civita', which refers to the city of Civita di Bagnoregio, in the Lazio region. A sample of 215 pertinent tweets has been identified in the time interval between the launch of Twitter in 2006 and 1 October 1 2020. Then, we used the Japanese title of *Porco Rosso* together with 'Italy' or 'Milan'. The final count about *Porco Rosso* is 873 pertinent tweets.

We have done a deductive qualitative analysis of textual⁶ and visual content of the data set issued from the Twitter search. The choice of manual analysis, facilitated by the limited dimensions of the identified corpus, was preferred because of two factors. First, the intention to strongly focus our analysis on the interaction between visual and textual content in each tweet. Second, the intention to distinguish, whenever possible, the tweets testifying actual tourist experiences from the extremely numerous ones describing other forms of virtual tourism and/or expressing a mere desire of travelling.

In order to organise and interpret our data, we have used theoretical frameworks conceived within previous research on film-induced tourism and anime tourism described in the second section, in particular the classification of anime tourists proposed by Hernández-Pérez (2019) and the identification of the three dimensions of the film tourist experience elaborated by Kim (2012) and adapted to anime tourism by Ono *et al.* (2020). In approaching the corpus, we have thus looked for visual and textual clues allowing us to hypothesise a distinction between the experiences more easily

⁵ The corpus is composed of tweets in the Japanese language, including those written by non-Japanese users and excluding tweets written by Japanese users in other languages. Like Yagi and Pearce (2017), we have preferred this solution to a manual search aimed at distinguishing the tweets based on the declared origin of the author (where present), as this would have led to extremely uncertain results.

⁶ We thank Manuel Majoli for helping us with the translations of the texts.

identifiable as ‘contents tourism’ and those of ‘fan tourism’, also drawing on the classification of film tourists provided by Macionis (2004) and research on fan tourism (e.g., Williams, 2018). As our main focus, anyway, was less on tourists’ motivations than on their emotional engagement with the place, we have mostly looked for visual or textual references to practices typical of film and anime tourists, like ‘scene hunting’ or re-enactments (e.g., Kim, 2012; Hernández-Pérez, 2019), and, more generally, to visual and textual hints suggesting one or more of the three dimensions of the film (and anime) tourist experience identified by Kim (2012) and Ono *et al.* (2020). Particular attention has been paid to the notion of nostalgia, understood as a multifaceted concept whose relevance has been acknowledged in previous studies in relation to the anime experience (Pellitteri, 2018), to film tourism (Grenier, 2011; Kim, 2017; also in its understanding as a form of heritage tourism: Schofield, 1996) and specifically to anime tourism (Norris, 2013; Yagi and Pearce, 2017; Geraghty, 2019; Hernández-Pérez, 2019), as well as to Miyazaki’s work (McCarthy, 1999; Miyazaki, 2009[1-4]; Swale, 2015).

We have also examined the texts and the images to look for what they suggest about the readings of the two locations (Civita and Milan) made by anime tourists, including the latter’s potential interest towards their history (Waysdorf and Reijnders, 2017). We have enquired whether and in which ways these readings were mediated by the specific movie text and, also, if a ‘narrative quality’ or ‘theme’ appeared to be added to the place, bearing in mind the very definition of ‘content tourism’ provided by the Japanese government in 2005 (Beeton *et al.*, 2013: 179).

In respect to this last point, we have also identified and studied a subset of tweets (116) which mention other Italy-based anime works alongside *Porco Rosso*, in order to voice admiration for the country or a desire to travel. The wide diversity of the works grouped together in these tweets seem to imply that for some tourists (or prospective tourists) Italy as a whole might be endowed with a ‘narrative quality’ derived from anime as an expressive field, not from a specific storyline.

5. Anime Tourism in Italy: The case studies of Civita and Milan

The Civita di Bagnoregio is only accessible via a 300-metre long bridge, panoramically suspended over the valley; when the bridge disappears because of fog or clouds, it seems to float in the sky. It was founded by the ancient Etruscan people, while its present aspect mainly derives from the Middle Ages. It is known as ‘the dying city’, because landslides

and erosion have been causing over the centuries an uninterrupted, severe loss of territory, ‘creating an ever-changing landscape that looks different year after year’ (Margottini and Di Buduo, 2017). Moreover, the town has lost most of its population, now only having eight inhabitants (Di Veroli *et al.*, 2018).

The tourist website of the Lazio Region defines it as ‘the first European locality for growth in tourist population’ (<https://www.visitlazio.com/web/en/luoghi/civita-di-bagnoregio/>). According to the town management, tourists increased from around 40,000 in 2007 to 400,000 in 2014 (Ballario, 2015) and 600,000 in 2016 (Di Veroli *et al.*, 2018). They are reported to have exceeded one million in 2019 (Combs, 2020). A boom of Asian tourists has been observed, especially Japanese, reported to account for 20 per cent of total tourists in 2015 (Cambiaso, 2016). This growth is often related to the connection with Miyazaki’s *Castle in the sky* (Angeloni, 2019). There is no evidence that Civita actually inspired Miyazaki and, in 2018, the town offices asked Marco Müller, former director of the Venice Film Festival, to send a letter to Miyazaki asking him for more information.⁷ In spite of that, the reference to *Castle in the Sky* is regularly present in tourist marketing made by regional and national tourist bodies (for just one example, there is a tweet published in Japanese by the Italian National Tourist Board, showing a picture of Civita, accompanied by the statement whose English translation reads: ‘It looks like *Castle in the Sky*’).⁸

Civita can be defined as a ‘place of imagination’ (Reijnders, 2011), whose connection with *Castle in the Sky* has been authenticated by media tourists themselves and eventually institutionalised and promoted by official tourist bodies. The connection between Civita and Laputa is assumed without question in most of the tweets in our data set, which use the recurring expression identifying the town as the ‘model’ (102 tweets) or ‘stage’ (11 tweets) of Laputa. We have found only four examples of protective fandom, questioning the authenticity of this connection, but none of them appears to be written by a user who has actually visited Civita. Another user, who has

⁷ For this information, we would like to thank Gaia Basso, graduate student at the University of Padua, and Roberto Pomi, communication consultant for the municipality of Bagnoregio.

⁸ https://twitter.com/Italia_jpn/status/1102328421915406336 (accessed 10 December 2021). The Italian press, and sometimes even official sources, often confuse *Castle in the Sky* with *Spirited Away* (*Sen to Chihiro no Kamikakushi*, Miyazaki Hayao, 2001), as Civita hosts an international festival of illustration named *La città incantata*, the Italian title for *Spirited Away*.

been to Civita, comments on its tourist exploitation, remarking the strong presence of Japanese, but there is no other evidence of typical fan tourists' concerns about the commercial abuse of the movie (Williams, 2018).

We can hypothesise, in relation to the classification of otaku tourists proposed by Hernández-Pérez (2019), that our data set mainly refers to 'content tourists', including both 'casual otaku tourists/anime tourists' and wider forms of 'cultural tourism', than proper 'otaku/fan tourists'. No practices like 'scene hunting' are expressly recorded—obviously, because there are no specific spots having been portrayed in the movie—and the organisation of a trip with the explicit purpose to visit Civita is expressly mentioned only twice. In most cases, it is unclear if tourists have personally chosen to visit Civita, as it appears to be often inserted in organised tours as a halfway stop between Florence and Rome.

Among the tweets undoubtedly written by people who have personally visited Civita (78 tweets), around half do not express the search for an emotional connection with the movie on-site. The formula 'a model of Laputa' pairs with the typical photo of an overall view of the town, hinting at the status acquired by the destination through its relation to the movie, thus highlighting the dimension of 'prestige and privilege' of the film tourist experience (Kim, 2012; Ono *et al.*, 2020). Sometimes there is more commentary, and more photos are taken inside the town centre, but they are not apparently selected with the aim of recreating Laputa's atmosphere. They focus on different aspects such as the main square, the alleys, food, and the omnipresent cats (featuring in 20 out of 78 tweets)⁹, suggesting the blurring of anime tourism with wider cultural tourism and, sometimes, an accent on the 'sensory' dimensions of the experience (Kim, 2012).

The other half (almost 40 tweets) suggest, instead, the activation of different kinds of emotional connection with the film or display a reading of the place and its history highly influenced by the mediation of the movie.

There is only one case of (imagined) re-enactment (Kim, 2012), with a tourist verbally expressing the desire of imitating the character of Muska. Most of the other tweets,

⁹ In three cases, cats are defined in the tweets as almost the only living beings in Civita, a reading probably mediated by the image of the deserted Laputa. These tweets thus reveal a sort of emotional connection with the movie during the tourist experience on-site, as discussed later.

instead, highlight the dimension of ‘intimacy and memory’ of the film tourist experience (Kim, 2012)—or, we could say, describe a ‘nostalgic’ experience (Ono *et al.*, 2020). The latter is based on the recognition of a familiar place that entered personal memories when the movie was watched, often during childhood, and on the recollection on-site of memories of the anime. While visiting this foreign place, Japanese anime tourists recognise ‘wondrous premodern (and fictional) worlds encountered in their youth’, somehow finding ‘homeland overseas’ (Rea, 2000: 642; Yagi and Pearce, 2017; Yagi and Pearce, 2018). In 21 tweets out of 78, namely around a quarter of the total, the recognition of a familiar place is stated with formulas like ‘Laputa was really there’, ‘Civita was exactly Laputa’, ‘the feeling of Laputa was amazing’ and so on. The authenticity of the tourist experience is not measured in relation to historical accuracy, as it does not involve the search for a proven connection between the town and Miyazaki’s movie. In this sense, the case of Civita is similar to that of the Tasmanian bakery put in relation to *Kiki’s Delivery Service* (Norris, 2013) and to the numerous Laputa-related attractions mentioned by Yagi and Pearce (2017). Authenticity is rather evaluated in terms of the existential meaning of the experience (Wang, 1999) and is based on tourists’ ‘imaginative capacity to generate key emotions and value’ (Yagi and Pearce, 2018: 20). Tourists are highly involved in the co-creation of the experience and the attribution of meaning to the place (Agarwal and Shaw, 2018).

The ‘addition of a narrative quality’ to Civita ‘and the use of that narrative quality as a tourism resource’ perfectly fits the definition of ‘content(s) tourism’ already provided (Beeton *et al.*, 2013). The narrative of the ‘castle in the sky’ is embedded into the place, whose reading is thus highly influenced by the mediation of the movie. First of all, Civita is read, and often photographed, as a town floating in the sky, and the tourist experience is sometimes considered satisfying in the presence of fog and clouds, while a sunny day is accused of effacing the similarities with Laputa:

It was fine that day and there were no clouds. You can’t see it floating anymore.
Because it was connected to the road normally.

It is acknowledged in film tourism literature that seasonal and weather conditions highly influence tourists’ satisfaction, depending on their similarity with those

portrayed in the movie (e.g., Roesch, 2009). Secondly, Civita is read as an abandoned, dying city, built by an ancient civilisation (the Etruscans), exactly like Laputa:

[...] the atmosphere of the decaying Civita is overwhelming, and it is exactly Laputa after Balus.

The combination of stone buildings and greenery in the upper part, the collapsed part on the back side, and the passage of ancient people in the underground. *Laputa, the Castle in the Sky*. It's like after the crash and I'm thrilled [...]

References to the real history of Civita do not vanish from anime tourists' reports, even if their 'historical imagination' is mediated by the film text (Waysdorf and Reijnders, 2017). The feeling of nostalgia, typical of heritage tourism in destinations like Civita, is amplified by the narrative of the film, set in an imaginary past and referring to another, fictional lost past, that of ancient Laputa. This is also confirmed in the tweets at a visual level, with most of the photos focusing on desert streets, and on buildings partly damaged or covered by greenery. This nostalgic attitude, implied in textual and visual references to a lost past, conflates with the present pleasure of being in such a place. Civita is often described as a silent and peaceful place like Laputa, full of green spots and flowers which are often portrayed in the pictures, and in 4 tweets even compared to heaven (occasionally, this is also conveyed by images focusing on Christian symbols of spirituality, like a statue of the Virgin Mary):

A beautiful place like heaven surrounded by tranquillity [...] The sound of many cats and church bells. There are only 7 inhabitants, and the soft bedrock gradually collapses and disappears someday. I miss the memories of my trip.

11 tweets out of the total 78 emphasise the dramatic account of Civita's possible disappearance, a scientifically grounded concern that is imaginatively transfigured through the overlapping with Laputa. Anime tourists' nostalgic attitude does not prevent them from the possibility of an active engagement with the place, for example when—in 3 occurrences—they fervently solicit their contacts to visit Civita before its disappearance.

The esteem for Civita's ruins, nature and a peaceful atmosphere can also be traced back, as Yagi and Pearce (2017) do for other Laputa-connected attractions, to the Japanese aesthetic sense of *wabi-sabi*, bringing an appreciation of places or objects

whose aspect is unfinished, flawed, or uneven, showing the action of nature on human artefacts, which reveals that all things are transitory (Koren, 1994). This typical Japanese taste interacts with the consolidated image of Italy as a tourist destination issued by the Grand Tour tradition, that of a 'pre-modern (...) place fixed into the realm of the ruin and the picturesque' (Hom, 2015: 215), conveyed in Japan through the mediation of the gaze cast on Italy by North- and Middle-European countries (Miyake, 2010), and also with the wider, idealised vision of Europe discussed in the third section, effectively summed up by the expression *akogare no Paris*.

The pivotal importance of ruins is testified by the numerous tweets, found during our search yet excluded from the sample, that mention Laputa in relation to other Italian locations like Rome or Pompei, confirming Yagi and Pearce's (2017: 279) identification of the 'remains of a temple or the ruins of castle' as a common feature of the attractions that Japanese tourists abroad relate to Laputa. This apparently confirms that multiple locations can be linked to the movie by tourists themselves, showing how the atmosphere of the place, deriving from a combination of narrative and visual values, and the stimulation of an emotional contact with the film are given much higher value than strictly visual correspondences. Actually, in our data set there is no occurrence of visual confrontations between movie images and photos taken in Civita.

Turning to *Porco Rosso* and Milan, the identified data set, compared to that of Civita, includes a smaller proportion of tweets undoubtedly testifying actual tourist experiences (153 out of 873), while many others express the desire of travelling (470), strongly conveyed by the narrative of *Porco Rosso*, or fuel an idealised anime-inspired view of Italy, as the next section will discuss. In order to circumscribe the study case to a single tourist destination, in this section we will focus on tourist experiences in Milan (described in 42 tweets), which is the only Italian locality expressly mentioned in the movie, even if this is not the only Italian tourist destination associated with the film in the selected tweets. Other destinations include the entire Italian coast on the Adriatic Sea, aviation museums that exhibit Italian aircrafts, and the overall Italian skies (often photographed from the window of an airplane, the place where *Porco Rosso* was initially conceived to be watched). In Milan, the specific location of Navigli provides the only recognisable inspiration for the scene when Porco and Fio take off from the canals, even if there is no intention of providing an accurate portrayal in the movie. Differently from Civita, the connection with *Porco Rosso* is not used for official tourist promotion, but the fact that Milan is expressly mentioned in

the movie induces veritable pilgrimages to the city (sometimes within wider itineraries including Croatian locations that have inspired some of *Porco Rosso* scenes, referred to in 4 tweets out of 42), or to the specific spot of Navigli. The words ‘pilgrimage’ and ‘sanctuary’ explicitly appear in 3 tweets out of 42. Visiting Italy, Milan, or specifically Navigli represents for some the fulfilment of a childhood desire (explicitly expressed in 2 tweets), and Navigli is sometimes put first as the famous attractions of Milan’s city centre (also by people not drawn to the city of Milan by the film):

The Naviglio district I wanted to go most in Milan! Porco asked Piccolo to repair the flying boat [...] and this river was the model that flew with Fio [...]. This is my favourite work in Studio Ghibli, and thanks to this work I’ve been longing to go to Italy since I was little, so I’m very satisfied this time.

Like for Civita, there are no tweets proposing visual confrontations between film images and photos taken on-site, even if one tourist reports of having spent a lot of time futilely searching for the exact canal where the seaplane could have taken off (‘scene hunting’). The dimension of ‘prestige’ of the film tourist experience (Kim, 2012) is emphasised in tweets highlighting that the city has been used as a ‘model’ or a ‘stage’ for *Porco Rosso*. These statements are sometimes combined, like in Civita, with texts and photos that suggest a blurring with wider forms of cultural tourism, portraying Navigli’s typical aperitif (6 tweets out of 42) or other places in Milan like churches (4), tramways, and trains (4), or the football stadium (2). The ‘nostalgic’ dimension of the film tourist experience, implying the recognition of familiar places seen in the movie (Kim, 2012; Ono *et al.*, 2020), is explicitly described only in a pair of tweets (e.g. ‘Waterside in Milan, Italy. I just fixed the plane of Porco Rosso’), and is thus paradoxically less apparent than in the Civita data set, despite the latter location not having been an actual inspiration for Laputa. This nostalgic attitude towards *Porco Rosso* is much more evident in tourists’ tweets inspired by generic and less identifiable locations, such as the aforementioned Italian skies or the Adriatic Sea.

The ‘nostalgic’ dimension of the tweets concerning Milan mostly lies in another understanding of the concept, similar to the meaning it acquires in relation to wider heritage tourism, i.e., the yearning for the lost past of the place. Milan is mostly a business tourist destination and, to a lesser extent, a heritage and leisure tourist destination. The Navigli quarter, with its ancient canals, is considered to have a

peculiar, romantic atmosphere. The reading of Milan mediated by *Porco Rosso* is very different from its usual image as a business city, and the discovery of the latter side sometimes surprises *Porco Rosso* tourists:

Did you know that Milan is a business district like Tokyo or Yokohama in Japan?
There is a metro, there is a tram, and you can see skyscrapers here and there.

Milano is read as a former city of canals that do not exist anymore, except for those remaining at Navigli which have lost, anyway, their original use:

Milan used to have many canals, and Porco flew away with red pigs.

Stroll along the canals that remain in Milan.

[...] Now it only remains as a tourist destination.

As already mentioned, nevertheless, sometimes this portrait of a dead city is contrasted—like in Civita—by visual or textual depictions of Navigli as a living place, because of its nightlife, shops and markets (the latter mentioned or portrayed in 3 tweets out of 42).

6. Anime and Italy: The construction of an imaginary travel destination

In the search results pertinent to the occurrences of the Japanese title of *Porco Rosso* together with 'Italy' or 'Milan' in the 2006-2020 interval, a peculiar subset of tweets (116) reveals how Miyazaki's film participates in a wider anime representation of the European country, mostly based on Tv series. Even though *Porco Rosso* is a full-length feature, and Studio Ghibli films do not use the same communicative and marketing strategies of mainstream anime works,¹⁰ audience perception seems to group together

¹⁰ For the purpose of the present article, it is not necessary to treat anime and Studio Ghibli films as different objects; our target audience freely compares travel desires and activities coming from Studio Ghibli films with those that originated from popular TV anime. To be aware of the issue, and to suggest further readings, it might suffice to recall here Jacqueline Berndt's remarks about the wrong attitude of non-Japanese scholars, who often consider Studio Ghibli films as typical of *anime* (Berndt 2008: 296-297) and historian Tsugata Nobuyuki's definition of *anime* 'as a particular kind of Japanese animation, that diverges in the 1970s by fastening itself to other objects and processes, including but not

popular Japanese animations that contain references to Italy. The titles that get more often quoted with *Porco Rosso*, with no significant variations in frequency over the years, are *Gunslinger Girl* (two seasons, 2003-2008), *Aria the Animation* (three seasons and one OVA,¹¹ 2005-2008),¹² and *Hetalia: Axis Power* (five ONA¹³ series, 2009-2021, and a feature film, 2010). They are all based on previous manga series. *Gunslinger Girl* tells about the Social Welfare Agency, an undercover Italian military organisation which, in an undefined future time, employs traumatised young girls as agents to fight against the separatist faction of the Padanians, who are associated with the terrorists of the Five Republics Faction. Each girl has been given cybernetic implants and assigned to a human tutor, called *fratello* (Italian for 'brother'). *Aria* is set in the early 24th century on the planet Mars, which has been rendered habitable and renamed Aqua; the main location of the story is Neo-Venezia, obviously based on the appearance and atmosphere of Venice. The plot follows Akari, a young woman who trains as a gondolier for the Aria Company. *Hetalia: Axis Power* is instead a comedy series of 5-minute episodes, whose characters are personifications of countries or regions. The stories usually satirise recent or historical events (mostly from the Second World War); the protagonist is Italia Veneziano, a young man who embodies Northern Italy (his older brother, Italia Romano, is Southern Italy). The series name itself, *Hetalia*, is a pun on 'Italia' and 'hetare', which in Japanese means 'useless' or 'pathetic', but in an endearing way.

Another work which is often paired with *Porco Rosso* (even though not as much as the three aforementioned shows) is *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure (JoJo no Kimyō na Bōken)*, an ongoing manga started by Araki Hirohiko in 1987, which was adapted several times into animation. It is about the surreal battles and mysterious events that unfold in the story of the Joestar family, from the 19th century to the present day. A whole story arc, *Golden Wind (Ōgon no Kaze, 1995-1999)* is set in Italy; it was recently animated as the fourth season (2018) of the anime version of *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* started by David Production in 2012.

restricted to: foreign interest, transgression, visual cues, merchandising and integration into a media mix' (in Clements 2013: 1). Studio Ghibli films are not part of this kind of Japanese animation.

¹¹ OVA stands for Original Video Animation; this refers to direct-to-video *anime* works.

¹² The series was revived by a 2015 set of three OVAs (*Aria the Avvenire*) and by two 2021 theatrical features: *Aria the Crepuscolo* and *Aria the Benedizione*.

¹³ ONA stands for Original Net Animation; this is used for anime series exclusively released through streaming services.

A smaller number of references brings up series such as *3000 Leagues in Search of Mother*, which is based on the Italian novel *Cuore* by Edmondo de Amicis and partly set in Genova; *Romeo's Blue Skies* (*Romio no aoi sora*, Kusuba Kōzō, 1995), a World Masterpiece Theater series with a major storyline that takes place in Milan; *Ristorante Paradiso*, a 2009 adaptation of a manga (2005-2006) by Ono Natsume which chronicles the daily lives of the staff of a restaurant in Rome; and *Girls und Panzer*, an anime franchise started in 2012, which imagines that real tanks from the Second World War are being used in sports activities by Japanese high school girls. One of the sports teams comes from Anzio High School, which is supposedly promoting Italian culture in Japan; this includes using replicas of Roman monuments as school buildings.

The Twitter users who bring up those references when talking about *Porco Rosso* usually declare that their idea of Italy is majorly defined by those anime. The typical statement, here exemplified by a 2019 tweet, is: 'The image of Italy inside me is made of *Gunslinger Girl*, *Aria* and *Porco Rosso*'; a 2020 tweet from a different user reiterated this as: 'My view of Italy consists only of *Romeo's Blue Skies* and *Porco Rosso*'. A 2012 message reads: 'When looking at *Aria* and *Porco Rosso*, it seems that Italy has many small and beautiful islands'. Such representation of Italy is often charged with a positive mix of nostalgia and desire, arguably close to the *akogare* attitude (Yagi and Pearce, 2018) that Japanese have towards the Western world. This admiration appears so deeply rooted in the selected Twitter users that it invites the few who actually visited Italy to be moved not so much by the real landscape, but by the memories of their favourite anime. A tweet from 2009 says: 'When I look at the scenery of Italy, I remember *Aria* and *Porco Rosso* at once and tears come out'; in 2018, another user mentioned that '... At the age of 19, I went to Italy for the first time by boat from the Adriatic Sea, and in the morning I was impressed by the port of Bari approaching the Italian sea while listening to the *Porco Rosso* soundtrack'. In those cases, people project onto Italy the emotions they got from the animations. The same happens in the tweets which express a desire to go to Italy, already fulfilled or yet to come true: 'I went to Italy due to the influence of *Aria*, *Hetalia* and *Porco Rosso*' (2011); 'I want to go, I want to go around the Adriatic coast and Italy to see the place where *Aria*, *Porco Rosso*, *Gunslinger Girl*, *Romeo's blue sky* came from' (2012). The fact that those tweets point to generic emotional experiences, and not to the enjoyment of real places, is also evidenced by the absence of any attempt at describing or providing pictures of real

locations, or of settings from those anime. The titles are usually enough to justify the mention of Italy.

The Italian setting is actually the only common trait between the referenced anime. As it is evident from the summaries provided above, they differ a lot in terms of narrative and target audience; even from the point of view of the visual style, they mostly take separate approaches. The users who connect *Porco Rosso* with other Italy-related anime are thus automatically leaving out all the specificities of Miyazaki's style (including his typical construction of nostalgia) in order to focus on just the Italian setting, which, for example, is the only way *Porco Rosso* can be kindred with a quirky and violent series like *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure*. The users even disregard the fact that *Porco Rosso* features Milan, while the Italian arc of *Jojo's Bizarre Adventure* focuses on Naples.

This subset of tweets seems to represent a population of expert Japanese anime fans who just desire to feel closer to some of their favourite shows. They look at Italy as a generic exotic elsewhere, and a visit to the country becomes, first of all, a chance to enter the world of anime. The fact that they are understanding Italy through the category of the exotic is apparently confirmed by the remarks of some users, who say that, apart from anime, they are curious about Italy because of Saizeriya, a chain of family-style Italian restaurants; of the books of Shiono Nanami, a best-selling novelist and author who extensively wrote about the Italian history; and of *Bura Tamori*, a Japanese weekly geographical Tv series broadcasted by NHK. The Italy they desire is arguably a narrative construction; the country is an element in a storytelling process. This seems to imply that the concept of 'contents tourism' (Beeton *et al.*, 2013) might be applied in a wider and more abstract way. It is not only possible to find an anime narrative attached to an actual place like Civita (or like the port of Bari mentioned in one of the tweets quoted before, which was deemed fit to be enjoyed while listening to music from *Porco Rosso*), but a whole country can be positioned inside an imaginary elsewhere; for those who embrace this perspective, to go to Italy is like entering the domain of anime, and not just of *Porco Rosso* or *Gunslinger Girl*.

7. Conclusion

This essay has explored the relationship between animation, landscape, and tourism, focusing on European, and especially Italian, places connected to Miyazaki Hayao's works.

First, the representation/reconstruction of European landscapes in Miyazaki's films has been thoroughly analysed, highlighting the director's tendency to create imaginary landscapes only partly rooted in reality, as a result of mixed suggestions issued from his location scouting trips in Europe. The peculiar meaning that the word 'nostalgia' may assume in relation to European settings in his works has been identified in a 'yearning for a lost world' (Miyazaki, 2009[1]) which is most likely an imaginary one, rather than in the mourning for a historical, actually remembered past.

Attention has been subsequently oriented towards virtual and actual tourism, through the qualitative analysis of a data set made of texts and images published on Twitter by actual, or prospective, Japanese anime tourists. For this part of the research, the focus has been narrowed to Italy and two films, namely *Porco Rosso* and *Castle in the Sky*, that present a connection with the whole country or single Italian locations. As regards *Porco Rosso*, a specific survey has been led on the other Japanese animation titles that are repeatedly mentioned together with Miyazaki's film in relation to Italy, and thus contribute to building the image of the country as a whole fascinating anime tourist destination.

As regards actual tourism, the selected study cases of Civita and Milan have presented two different viewpoints on Japanese tourist experiences in Italian locations connected to Miyazaki's works. In the case of Civita, the connection between the place and *Castle in the Sky* has been created by tourists themselves and promoted by official tourist bodies, 'add[ing] a narrative quality' to Civita 'and us[ing] that narrative quality as a tourism resource', thus providing a convincing example of 'contents tourism' (Beeton *et al.*, 2013). Milan, instead, is expressly mentioned in *Porco Rosso*, but the link with the movie is not used by official destination marketing. Even if our main focus is not on tourists' motivation, our Civita data set suggests a clear prevalence of 'contents tourists' rather than 'fan tourists' (Hernández-Pérez, 2019), blurring with wider forms of cultural tourism, as shown by the textual and visual focus on varied spots and objects—while there is no trace of typical fan practices like *butaitanbou*. Moreover, *Castle in the Sky* is almost never explicitly mentioned (2 tweets out of 78) as the motivation of tourists' visits to Civita, which is often inserted within wider sightseeing tours. Some of the 42 tweets testifying actual tourist experiences in the Milan data set, instead, explicitly suggest the intention of visiting Italy, Milan or the specific spot of Navigli spot because of the link with *Porco Rosso*, fulfilling childhood desires (expressed in 2 tweets) or, in any case,

doing veritable ‘pilgrimages’ to ‘sanctuaries’ (3 tweets), within trips which sometimes also includes Croatian locations (4 tweets).

Our main focus has been on the quality of the film tourist experience as described in the tweets, especially dealing with the three dimensions highlighted by Kim (2012) and adapted to anime tourism by Ono *et al.* (2020). The role of nostalgia has been particularly emphasised. Nostalgia, understood as a multifaceted concept, is a key component both in the anime experience (Pellitteri, 2018) and in the film tourism experience (Kim, 2017), as well as in the practice of referencing pop culture national products recently identified among Japanese tourists overseas (Yagi and Pearce, 2018). Nostalgia is also a key component in heritage tourism, identifying the fascination for a lost past.

In both cases of Civita and Milan’s Navigli, the mediation of the movie text typically influences the reading of the two places and film tourists’ ‘historical imagination’ (Waysdorf and Reijnders, 2017), so that both places are often interpreted as remains of a lost world. This nostalgic attitude is enhanced by the specific features of Miyazaki’s texts, rooted in his poetics. The ‘yearning for a lost world’ (Miyazaki, 2009[1]) felt while watching Miyazaki’s movies can be somehow re-lived during the tourist experience, when tourists yearn altogether for memories of the film (sometimes belonging to childhood, and somehow reminding them of ‘home’), for the imaginary past of Laputa and that of Porco, for the lost heritage of Civita and Milan.

In respect to nostalgia as a recognition of ‘familiar’ places and a recollection of film memories (Kim, 2012; Kim, 2017; Ono *et al.*, 2020), this experience is more clearly testified in a higher percentage of Civita’s tweets (with around a half of them expressing an emotional connection with the movie while on-site, and a quarter of the total explicitly mentioning a veritable ‘recognition’ of Laputa) than in the Milan data set (only 2 tweets out of 42), despite the potentially higher recognition values in the second location. This raises observations on the understanding of the concept of ‘authenticity’ in relation to film tourism in general, to be integrated with a consideration, on the one hand, of the specificities of animated films, leaving free course to imagination more than live-action ones (Yagi and Pearce, 2017), and, on the other hand, of the cultural features of Japanese tourism. When it comes to the latter, ‘authenticity’ is to be found more in ‘tourists’ imaginative capacity to generate key emotions and values’ than in ‘the search for truth, accuracy, and credibility’ (Yagi and Pearce, 2018). Doubts on the actual connection between Civita and Miyazaki’s work are overcome, like for other tourist attractions related

to *Castle in the Sky* by Japanese tourists (Yagi and Pearce, 2017). The ‘authenticity’ anime tourists look for is not related to the toured objects—in fact, the two data sets do not present any precise visual confrontations between film images and actual locations. It is rather found in the existential value of the experience (Wang, 1999) and in the aforementioned ‘imaginative capacity to generate key emotions and values’ (Yagi and Pearce, 2018). Our data sets seem to suggest that nostalgic recognition of a familiar place is stimulated in stronger forms by the ‘dubious’ Civita than by the ‘proved’ Milan. This might be explained by several factors, pertaining to the inherent qualities both of the fictional place and of the actual location. As regards the fictional place, the vagueness of the Laputa image (associated, in fact, with countless attractions in the world), less culturally connoted as Italian than *Porco Rosso*’s Milan, may more easily assume universal values and be transfigured by Japanese anime tourists into a familiar place. As regards the actual place, Navigli’s vibrant vitality more evidently brings back to the present ‘reality’ of the place, requiring a more difficult negotiation with its fictional identity and the narrative of a lost world. Nostalgic imagination of a fictional world is more easily stimulated by ‘empty’ locations, like the vague images of the (Italian) sky and the (Adriatic) sea for tourists who mention *Porco Rosso*. Or like the isolated and nearly abandoned Civita, which in addition perfectly fits the typical Japanese aesthetic taste of *wabi-sabi*.

Compared to the lively Milanese spot of Navigli, crossing Civita’s bridge apparently allows a more convincing and ‘authentic’ immersion in a familiar world met during childhood, putting in contact with the vestiges of a historical—but, also, of a personal—past irremediably lost.

CAPTIONS



Fig. 1. Civita di Bagnoregio, Italy. **Source:** Dreamstime.com/Freesurf69



Fig. 2. Flea Market on the Naviglio Grande in Milan, Italy.
Source: iStock.com/claudio-arnese



Fig. 3. Still from *Porco Rosso*. © *Kurenai no buta*, Miyazaki Hayao, 1992.



Fig. 4. Still from *Porco Rosso*. © *Kurenai no buta*, Miyazaki Hayao, 1992.

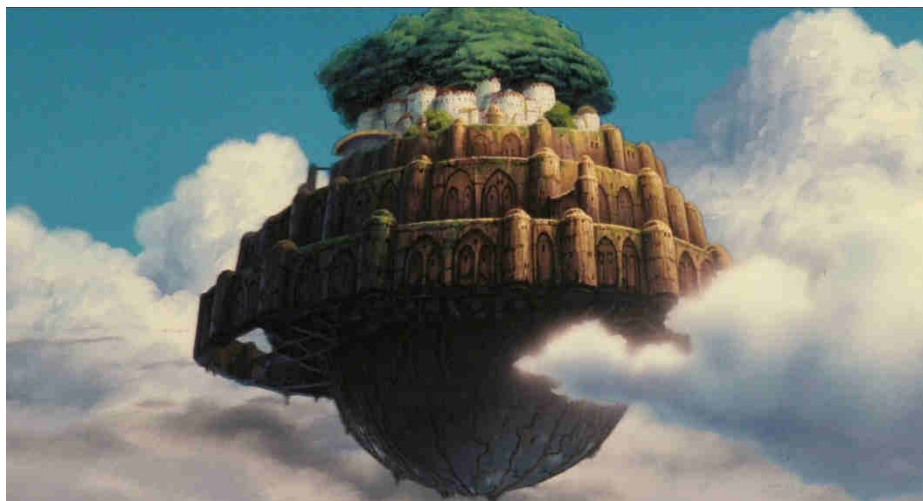


Fig. 5. Still from *Castle in the Sky*. © *Tenkū no shiro Rapyuta*, Miyazaki Hayao, 1986.



Fig. 6. Still from *Aria the Crepuscolo*. © Satō Jun'ichi, 2021.



Fig. 7. Composition of stills from a panoramic shot from *Romeo's Blue Skies*. © *Romio no aoi sora*, Kusuba Kōzō, 1995.

REFERENCES

- AGARWAL, SHEELA — SHAW, GARETH (2018), *Heritage, Screen and Literary Tourism*. Bristol-Blue Ridge Summit: Channel View.
- ANGELONI, MATTEO (2019), *Il fenomeno Civita. Le azioni di marketing dietro un successo internazionale [The Civita phenomenon. Marketing actions behind an international success]*. Orvieto: INTERMEDIA Edizioni.
- APPADURAI, ARJUN (1996), *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- BALLARIO, NICOLAS (2015), Il nuovo alfabeto della 'Città incantata'. Ci siamo fatti un viaggio nel nome del fumetto [The new alphabet of the 'Città incantata'. We've made a journey in the name of comics]. Available from <https://www.rollingstone.it/cultura/libri/nuovo-alfabeto-citta-incantata-un-viaggio-fumetto/275278/#P> (accessed 15 March 2021).
- BEETON, SUE (2005), *Film-induced tourism*. Clevedon: Channel View.
- (2015), *Travel, Tourism and the Moving Image*. Clevedon: Channel View.
- BEETON, SUE — IMAMURA, TAKAYOSHI — SEATON, PHILIP (2013), The Mediatization of Culture: Japanese Contents Tourism and Pop Culture. In: Lester, Jo-Anne — Scarles, Caroline (eds), *Mediating the Tourist Experience. From Brochures to Virtual Encounters*. London-New York: Routledge, pp. 171-189.
- BENDAZZI, GIANNALBERTO (2015), *Animation. A World History, vol. III, Contemporary Times*. Boca Raton: CRC Press.

- BERGSTROM, BRIAN (2014). Avonlea as 'world': Japanese Anne of Green Gables tourism as embodied fandom. *Japanese Forum*, 26, pp. 224-245.
- BERNDT, JAQUELINE (2008), Considering Manga Discourse: Location, Ambiguity, Historicity. In: Mark MacWilliams (ed.), *Japanese Visual Culture*, Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, pp. 295-310.
- BOYM, SVETLANA (2001), *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books.
- BUCHMANN, ANNE — MOORE, KEVIN — FISHER, DAVID (2010), Experiencing Film Tourism. Authenticity & Fellowship. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 37, pp. 229-248.
- CAMBIASO, DIEGO (2016), Borghi più belli d'Italia: Civita di Bagnoregio superstar (dall'Unesco a Airbnb) [The most beautiful villages in Italy: Civita di Bagnoregio superstar (from UNESCO to Airbnb)]. Available from <https://viaggi.corriere.it/itinerari-e-luoghi/borghi-piu-belli-ditalia-civita-di-bagnoregio-superstar-dallunesco-a-airbnb/> (accessed 15 March 2021).
- CLEMENTS, JONATHAN (2013), *Anime. A History*. London: BFI.
- (2017), The Phantom Pippi Longstocking. *All the Anime*. <https://blog.alltheanime.com/the-phantom-pippi-longstocking/> (accessed March 11, 2021).
- CONNELL, JOANNE (2012), Film tourism – Evolution, progress and prospects. *Tourism Management*, 33, pp.1007-1029.
- COMBS, SIDNEY (2020), Civita di Bagnoregio: il turismo salverà “la città che muore?” [Civita di Bagnoregio: will tourism save “the dying city”?]. Available from: <https://www.nationalgeographic.it/viaggi/2020/02/civita-di-bagnoregio-il-turismo-salvera-la-citta-che-muore> (accessed 15 March 2021).
- COULDRY, NICK (2000), *The Place of Media Power. Pilgrims and Witnesses of the Media Age*. London-New York: Routledge.
- DI VEROLI, VERONICA — DI BUDUO, GIOVANNI MARIA — MARGOTTINI, CLAUDIO, *et al.* (2018), Il turismo come strumento per la salvaguardia e lo sviluppo del territorio: il caso di Civita di Bagnoregio (Viterbo, Italia) [Tourism as a tool for natural hazard protection and territory development: Civita di Bagnoregio (Viterbo, Italy) as a case study]. In: Gómez-Ullate, Martín — Ochoa Siguencia, Luis — Álvarez-García, José, *et al.* (eds), *Cultural Management and Governance for European Pilgrimage Routes, Religious Tourism and Thermal Tourism: Book of Actas*. Czestochowa: Publishing House of the Research and Innovation in Education Institute, pp. 155-173.
- GERAGHTY, LINCOLN (2019), Destination Antwerp! Fan Tourism and the Transcultural Heritage of *A Dog of Flanders*. *Humanities* 8 (2), pp. 90-101.
- GREENBERG, RAZ (2018), *Hayao Miyazaki. Exploring the Early Work of Japan's Greatest Animator*. London: Bloomsbury.
- GRENIER, ALAIN A. (2011), Ciné-tourisme: du concept au fan, au coeur de l'expérience. *Téoros*, 30(1), pp. 79-89.
- HERNÁNDEZ-PÉREZ, MANUEL (2016), Animation, branding and authorship in the construction of the 'anti-Disney' ethos: Hayao Miyazaki's works and persona through Disney film criticism. *Animation* 11(3), pp. 297-313. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1746847716660684> (Accessed November 15, 2021).
- (2017), 'Thinking of Spain in a flat way': Spanish tangible and intangible heritage through contemporary Japanese anime', *Mutual Images*, 3, pp. 43-69. <https://doi.org/10.32926/2017.3.her.think> (Accessed November 16, 2021).

- (2019), *Otaku Tourists Out of Japan: Fictionality, Shared Memories, and the Role of National Branding in the Japanese Pilgrimages of Anime Fans in the United Kingdom*. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 52 (6), pp. 1512-1535.
- HOM, STEPHANIE MALIA (2015), *The Beautiful Country. Tourism & the Impossible State of Destination Italy*. Toronto-Buffalo-London: University of Toronto Press.
- KIM, SANGKYUN (2012), Audience involvement and film tourism experiences: Emotional places, emotional experiences. *Tourism Management*, 33(2), pp. 387-396.
- KIM, SANGKYUN — REIJNDERS, STIJN (eds) (2018), *Film Tourism in Asia. Evolution, Transformation, and Trajectory*. Singapore: Springer Nature.
- KIM, SEONGSEOP — KIM, SANGKYUN — PETRICK, JAMES F. (2019), The effect of film nostalgia on involvement, familiarity and behavioral intentions. *Journal of Travel Research*, 58(2), pp. 283-297.
- KOREN, LEONARD (1994), *Wabi-Sabi for Artists, Designers, Poets & Philosophers*. Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press.
- LE ROUX, STÉPHAN (2009), *Isao Takahata cinéaste en animation. Modernité du dessin animé*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- LORIGUILLO-LÓPEZ, ANTONIO (2021), Scene hunting for anime locations: otaku tourism in Cool Japan. In: Månsson, Maria — Buchmann, Annæ — Cassinger, Cecilia — Eskilsson, Lena (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Media and Tourism*. Abingdon, Oxon-New York: Routledge, pp. 287-296.
- MACIONIS, NIKI (2004), Understanding the Film-Induced Tourist. In: Frost, Warwick — Croy, Glen — Beeton, Sue (eds), *International Tourism and Media Conference Proceedings. 24th-26th November 2004*. Melbourne: Tourism Research Unit, Monash University, pp. 86-97.
- MARGOTTINI, CLAUDIO — DI BUDUO, GIOVANNI (2017), The Geological and Landslides Museum of Civita di Bagnoregio (Central Italy). *Landslides*, 14, pp. 435-445.
- MCCARTHY, HELEN (1999), *Hayao Miyazaki. Master of Japanese Animation*. Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press.
- MIYAKE, TOSHIO (2010), Il boom dell'Italia in Giappone: riflessioni critiche su Occidentalismo e Italianismo [The boom of Italy in Japan: critical considerations on Occidentalism and Italianism]. *Between* 1(1).
- MIYAZAKI, HAYAO (2009[1]), "Nostalgia for a Lost World", in Miyazaki, *Starting Point 1979-1996*, transl. by Beth Cary and Frederik L. Schodt. San Francisco: Viz Media, 17-24.
- (2009[2]), "Original Proposal for Castle in the Sky", in Miyazaki, *Starting Point 1979-1996*, transl. by Beth Cary and Frederik L. Schodt. San Francisco: Viz Media, 252-54.
- (2009[3]), "The *Porco Rosso* memos: Directorial Memoranda", in Miyazaki, *Starting Point 1979-1996*, transl. by Beth Cary and Frederik L. Schodt. San Francisco: Viz Media, 267-68.
- (2009[4]), "Personally, I think there is a continuity from *Nausicaä*", in Miyazaki, *Starting Point 1979-1996*, transl. by Beth Cary and Frederik L. Schodt. San Francisco: Viz Media, 339-49.
- NAPIER, SUSAN (2005), *Anime from Akira to Howl's Moving Castle. Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- (2018), *Miyazakiworld. A Life in Art*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- NORRIS, CRAIG (2013), A Japanese media pilgrimage to a Tasmanian bakery. *Transformative Works and Cultures*, 14(1).
- OKAMOTO, TAKESHI (2015), Otaku tourism and the anime pilgrimage phenomenon in Japan. *Japan Forum*, 27(1), pp. 12-36.

- OLOF-ORS, NATHALIE (2019), "How 'Heidi' conquered Japan, sparking an anime revolution", *The Jakarta Post*, September 26. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2019/09/25/how-heidi-conquered-japan-sparking-an-anime-revolution.html> (accessed March 11, 2021).
- ONO, AKINORI — KAWAMURA, SUMIAKI — NISHIMORI, YASUTO, *et al.* (2020), Anime Pilgrimage in Japan: Focusing Social Influences as Determinants. *Tourism Management*, 76. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2019.06.010>, 3 (accessed October 25, 2020).
- PALLANT, CHRIS (ed.) (2015), *Animated Landscapes*. London: Bloomsbury.
- PELLITTERI, MARCO (2018), *Mazinga nostalgia. Storia, valori e linguaggi della Goldrake-generation dal 1978 al nuovo secolo*. 2voll. Latina: Tunué.
- REA, MICHAEL H. (2000), A *furusato* away from home. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 27(3), pp. 638-660.
- REIJNDERS, STIJN (2011), *Places of the Imagination. Media, Tourism, Culture*. Farnham-Burlington: Ashgate.
- ROESCH, STEFAN (2009), *The Experiences of Film Location Tourists*. Bristol-Buffalo-Toronto: Channel View.
- SEATON, PHILIP A. — YAMAMURA, TAKAYOSHI (eds) (2015), Japanese Popular Culture and Contents Tourism. *Japan Forum*, 27(1).
- SEATON, PHILIP A. — YAMAMURA, TAKAYOSHI — SUGAWA-SHIMADA, AKIKO, *et al.* (eds) (2017), *Contents tourism in Japan. Pilgrimages to 'Sacred Sites' of Popular Culture*. Amherst: Cambria Press.
- SCHOFIELD, PETER (1996), Cinematographic images of a city: Alternative heritage tourism in Manchester. *Tourism Management*, 17(5), pp. 333-340.
- STUDIO GHIBLI (ed.) (2005), *L'arte di Il castello errante di Howl*, transl. by Claudia Baglini. Modena: Panini.
- (2006). *The Art of Kiki's Delivery Service*, transl. by Oniki Yūji. San Francisco: Viz Media.
- (2011). *The Art of Porco Rosso*, transl. by Oniki Yūji. San Francisco: Viz Media.
- (2016). *The Art of Castle in the Sky*, transl. by Jocelyne Allen. San Francisco: Viz Media.
- SWALE, ALISTAIR (2015), Miyazaki Hayao and the Aesthetics of Imagination: Nostalgia and Memory in Spirited Away. *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 39, No. 3: 413-429. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2015.1056086> (accessed March 15, 2021).
- WAYS DORF, ABBY — REIJNDERS, STIJN (2017), The role of imagination in the film tourist experience: The case of *Game of Thrones*. *Participations*, 14(1), pp. 170-191.
- WANG, NING (1999), Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience. *Annals of Tourism Research* 26(2), pp. 349-370.
- WILLIAMS, REBECCA (2018), Fan Tourism and Pilgrimage. In: Click, Melissa A. — Scott, Suzanne (eds), *The Routledge companion to media fandom*. London: Routledge, pp. 98-106.
- YAGI, CHIEMI — PEARCE, PHILIP L. (2017), Imagination, Anime and Japanese Tourists Abroad. In: Pearce, Philip L. — Wu, Mao-Ying (eds), *The World Meets Asian Tourists*. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Ltd, pp. 267-286.
- (2018), European Castles through Japanese Eyes and Minds. *European Journal of Tourism Research*, 19, pp. 5-22.
- YAMAMURA, TAKAYOSHI (2015), Contents tourism and local community response: *Lucky star* and collaborative anime-induced tourism in Washimiya. *Japan Forum*, 27(1), pp. 59-81.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Giulia LAVARONE, PhD, is a research fellow in Film Studies at the University of Padova (Italy). She has authored scholarly articles and chapters in edited books, as well as the book *Cinema, media e turismo* (Padova University Press, 2016). Her most recent publications include chapters within the volumes *The Routledge Companion to Media and Tourism* (edited by Maria Månsson et al., Routledge, 2021) and *Audiovisual Tourism Promotion. A Critical Overview* (edited by Diego Bonelli and Alfio Leotta, Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming).

Marco BELLANO, PhD, is adjunct professor in the History of Animation and in Digital and Interactive Multimedia at the University of Padova (Italy). He is author of articles, book chapters and monographies about animation and film music (Václav Trojan. *Music Composition in Czech Animated Films*. CRC Press, 2019; *Allegro non troppo. Bruno Bozzetto's Animated Music*, Bloomsbury, 2021). In 2014, he received the Norman McLaren-Evelyn Lambart Award for the Best Scholarly Article from the SAS-Society for Animation Studies. He participates in international research initiatives, such as the Erasmus+ project Co-POEM.

Ipar Haizearen Erronka:

A boat trip from the Basque Country to Newfoundland

Maitane JUNGUITU DRONDA | Independent Researcher, Spain

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/2021.10.JUN.IPARH](https://doi.org/10.32926/2021.10.JUN.IPARH)

ABSTRACT

The nature of animated cinema involves the creation of any realistic or fantastical characters, places, and situations. Animation can be used to take characters far from their hometowns on believable journeys without big budgets used on location shooting.

The Basque animated feature film Ipar Haizearen Erronka (The Challenge of the North Wind), directed in 1992 by Juanba Berasategi, illustrates how animation can represent a journey and a historic reality in a plausible way. The movie depicts a Basque whale hunting vessel travelling to the wild coast of Newfoundland, Canada in the sixteenth century. Typically, Basque live action movies in the 80s would recreate foreign locations with nearby settings. Ipar Haizearen Erronka avoids this problem by showing America through drawings.

In this paper, we will use the movie Ipar Haizearen Erronka to interpret how animation uses backgrounds and objects to represent a voyage across the Atlantic Ocean and determine the realistic accuracy of the social and historical moments represented in the movie. We will also see how this journey embodies the characteristics of the literary genre of Bildungsroman, as well as the narrative structures pointed out by Vladimir Propp's folktale and Joseph Campbell's monomyth. The study also focuses on how the film depicts the most representative characteristics of the journey, and how they are used as filming narrative resources. A closer look will be taken into the main vessels, the captain's logbook, the map, the historical context of the sailing of the ship, the maritime laws where sexism is abundant, the financing of the trip, and the work on board.

KEYWORDS

Basque Country; Newfoundland; Animation; Film analysis; Whale Hunting; Basque Cinema.

Date of submission: 11 March 2021

Date of acceptance: 18 December 2021

Date of publication: 20 December 2021

1. Introduction

Ipar Haizearen Erronka (The Challenge of the North Wind) is the second animated feature film produced in the Basque Country. It was released in 1992 and directed by the Basque animation pioneer Juanba Berasategi.¹ The director previously signed

¹ It is necessary to mention that there was a conflict over the attribution of the direction duties. Maite Ruiz de Austri and Carlos Varela signed as directors on the first version of the movie. As *Ipar Haizearen Erronka* was based on the project *Balearenak* (1992) by Juanba Berasategi, he claimed to be author of *Ipar Haizeren erronka* too, and won the trial (Junguitu Dronda, 2019: 278-280).

Kalabaza Tripontzia (1985), the first animated commercial feature film made in the Basque Country, which is also the first one in Basque language.²

This movie is a good example of an adventure that involves a trip from a known world to the unknown. It depicts a specific historical moment and place —Basque whale hunting industry in the sixteenth century— while trying to present an interesting story for children. Furthermore, the movie is a free adaptation of a previously released graphic novel for adults titled *Justin Hiriart* (2015, Fructuoso & Muro Harriet). The original plot of the graphic novel features adults as main characters and tries to be accurate to the depicted historical context. However, the filmmakers aimed at a youth audience, presenting children as the main characters and adding fantasy to the plot. With these decisions, the film tries to emulate the narrative and aesthetic successful formulas used in Hollywood's cel-animated³ movies, specifically what Chris Pallant calls 'Disney Formalism' (2011: 35-53). The plot is described by the following:

Anne and Peiot are two twins from the Basque town of Pasai Donibane. Peiot becomes part of the crew of the whale hunting vessel Donibane to Newfoundland. Anne joins the journey as a stowaway because they don't allow girls aboard. Meanwhile, the evil Athanasius wants to steal the power of the North Wind, which remains in a ceramic pot. Anne, Peiot and their new Mi'kmaq friend Watuna fight Athanasius in Newfoundland to protect the North Wind and the whales.

In the following lines, we will look over the film's formal and narrative elements, and then focus on how the voyage is depicted. Firstly, we will set animation and indexicality in a theoretical context. This will help us understand the possibilities that this kind of cinema offers, in terms of the ability to differentiate between reality and the representation of reality. Then, we will focus on the use of backgrounds in Basque cinema to represent Basque identity. At this point, we will mention some live-action

² The modern Basque language is spoken in seven provinces divided between France and Spain. Those seven provinces all together are Euskal Herria (Basque Country). This can be mistaken for the Basque Autonomous Community from Spain, which is formed by three of those provinces. The movie was created in the Basque Autonomous Community, hence, in the Basque Country.

³ Cel-animation is an animation technique that creates 2D images using hand-drawn transparent sheets made of celluloid. Halas and Manvel claimed that this technique was revolutionary as 'it stemmed the possibility of introducing division of work and specialization into animation, and thus effecting improvements in the whole character of cartoon drawing' (Halas and Manvel, 1980: 27).

movies that coincide with *Ipar Haizearen Erronka* showing Basque characters travelling abroad in similar historical contexts. We will take a look at the plot using Vladimir Propp's folktale functions, Joseph Campbell's monomyth and the main elements of the Bildungsroman as references. We will also consider narrative structures, the use of the landscapes, and the voyage from an ecological point of view, as the plot defends the value of natural resources. After that, we will describe some of the most representative characteristics of the journey made in *Ipar Haizearen Erronka*. Finally, after the theoretical and descriptive approach to the movie we will summarise some conclusions.

This research will allow us to learn more about animated cinema made in the Basque Country. There is a lack of research on Basque animated movies. This paper will increase the availability of academic materials for animation, a problem that Basque live-action cinema does not have. It is important that animated movies are studied within the field of national cinema.

2. Animation and the representation of the real

Ipar Haizearen Erronka depicts a Basque whale hunting vessel travelling to the wild coast of Newfoundland, Canada in the sixteenth century. The main characters are the Basque twins Anne and Peiot and their Native American friend Watuna.

This film —as with many other animated features— is based on a previous graphic novel. The movie was inspired by the graphic novel *Justin Hiriart*, whose authors are the illustrator Francisco Fructuoso and the scriptwriter Gregorio Muro 'Harriet'. In fact, Muro is also the scriptwriter of the film. The graphic novel was released in the 80s in French, Basque, and Spanish, and then republished in 2015.

Justin Hiriart is a graphic novel that tries to depict sixteenth century Basque and Native American Mi'kmaq society.⁴ The authors tried to be accurate about the Basque whale hunting industry and the trades between Europeans and Americans. They used bibliographical sources that added details to the plot. They also used historical graphic representations of the vessels that they depicted. There is much bibliography about

⁴ The Mi'kmaq or Micmac are Native American people that live in Eastern Canada and Maine (United States). European sailors, including Basque, contacted them in the sixteenth century.

Basque whale hunting. For instance, Jerardo Elortza writes about the literature created about Basques in Newfoundland (2010: 147-158).

To understand the aesthetic choices made by the filmmakers of *Ipar Haizearen Erronka* we need to understand the basis of the indexicality within the animation technique and the characteristics of the 'Disney Formalism' movies.

In opposition to live-action films, the nature of animated cinema involves the creation of every picture in frame. The author —as an individual or as part of a large team of artists— creates beings and places by drawing, building puppets or creating digitally. Those beings and places can be represented between the two opposite ends of indexicality. Maureen Furniss explains the continuum between live-action pictures and animation, and sets the two ends of indexicality in mimesis and abstraction (2014: 6). On one side, we find extremely indexical and naturalist pictures, such as the hyperrealistic ones created by CGI that try to replace reality. As we approach the other end, indexicality becomes less strong, and the pictures can show different degrees of simplicity until they reach abstraction.

Indexicality is also linked to fantasy as an inherent feature of animation. This allows us to create caricatured, distorted, and metaphorical characters that we are able to easily identify despite their more or less lack of resemblance to our reality. This feature is typically used in comic books. That metaphorical animation is the one that Halas and Manvel defended in their theories. These authors think that animation should not be used to tell stories that can be told by live-action: 'as the animator draws away from naturalism the powers of his medium increase; there is nothing but the limits of his imagination and his technical resources to hold him back' (Halas and Manvel, 1980: 68).

Halas and Manvel pointed out their theory in opposition to the feature films that The Walt Disney Company has released since the 1930s. These cel-animation movies often present characters of human proportions and the use of the rotoscope to emulate movement. Some researchers point out that the narrative construction of those movies and not the aesthetics are 'hyperrealistic':

Hyperrealism also covers the Disney Studio's application of realist conventions of narrative, logical causality and character motivations [...] hyperrealism is a measure not so much of the proximity of the representation to its referent but of the remediation of the codes (and attendant ideologies) of live action cinema. [...] However, given the important role of Disney in the development of popular spectacular culture in general (theme parks as well as movies), and in the pioneering of new cinematic technologies [...], it could be argued that the concept

of hyperreality and the animation aesthetics of hyperrealism are closely connected (Lister, Dovey, Giddings *et al.*, 2009: 138).

Many animation techniques, along with other mechanical and optical effects, are used in live-action movies as special effect resources. Nowadays, Computer Generated Imagery (CGI) allows creators to recreate all kinds of live-action pictures and reach the highest degree of mimesis. That makes it hard to differentiate between the photorealistic animation and the real live-action images. Lately, animation gained evident importance as an invisible resource for live-action. 'It is a visual realism, a verisimilitude, premised not on the indexicality of photography, but on the 'wizardry' of digital synthetic imagery and its designers, that re-introduces that least realist cinematic form, animation, back into the mainstream.' (Lister, Dovey, Giddings *et al.*, 2009:142).

Aside from the discussion of whether animation should be used or not in a hyperreal way, this technique has been used since the early years for documentary purposes. In fact, animated documentaries are a cinematographic genre.

Paul Ward points out that Halas and Manvell's views about animation can fit within this genre: '[...] animated documentary demonstrates clearly how documentary can be the realm of subjectivity, fantasy, and non-normative approaches to understanding the world around us' (2005: 86).

This author also reminds readers that recent animated documentaries are what he calls the creative interpretation '[...] of a real person's testimony or reminiscence' (Ward 2005: 87). In other words, animation can be used not only to accurately recreate past situations, but also to add the subjectivity of the storyteller.

When it comes to fictional stories, we usually have some characters developing certain actions in specific spaces. Maureen Furniss points out that within animation, characters and background are the two main categories of images (2014: 66). According to Furniss, after the professionalisation of animation, 'backgrounds developed into an art form of their own, greatly impacting the animated productions' (2014: 72). That idea, in the context of Disney features, is explained by Casey Riffel as he analyses the animated pictures of *Bambi* (1942, various directors), one of the movies from 'Disney Formalism' style.

Riffel puts together the theories of various authors to understand the contradiction between the flatness of cel-animation and the realistic effort of reaching volume depth

with the multiplane camera. The foreground —the characters— oppose the background as a divergence between reality and fantasy: ‘This second gap occurs in both the foreground —in the tension between Disney’s conflicting desires for emotive anthropomorphism and accurate animal anatomy— and in the background —between romantic depictions of nature and the role of these romanticised backgrounds in “naturalising” the seemingly coherent space of the animated image’ (Riffel, 2012: 4).

As far as we have seen, there is a place in animation for both realistic and abstract pictures, finding a big way in between them. Animated documentaries can be used to recreate a subjective reality. But also, animation —and more specifically cel-animation— can be used in fictional stories with artistic and almost naturalistic drawings.

Ipar Haizearen Erronka is made with cel-animation technique and tries to recreate the successful works of the formalist style of the Walt Disney Company. This style is defined by Chris Pallant as a filmmaking approach that prioritises ‘artistic sophistication, ‘realism’ in characters and contexts, and, above all, believability’ (2011: 35).

Of course, the movie we are analysing did not have the same economic or human resources to achieve the same results that Disney did. But, within the limitations of the animation technique, the animators tried to be as accurate as possible and create naturalistic and recognisable pictures.

The main setting in the Basque Country, the port of Pasai Donibane, even if it is a bit simplified, it is clearly recognisable. The aerial shot shows the port’s main square, the surrounding buildings and the mouth of the river that leads to the Cantabrian Sea and after that to the Atlantic Ocean. Newfoundland is characterised by the wild coastline. We see cliffs, beaches, and caves. Meanwhile, the nomadic settlement of the Mi’kmaq lays down on the top of a cliff, close to a precipice. Even though the depiction of the American landscapes is naturalistic, we cannot talk about their realistic accuracy, as we did not find any exact picture of the exact landscapes portrayed in the movie. There is also a shot of the moon that is very realistic. Undoubtedly, they tried to make the places on the long shots or big long shots recognisable. On the other hand, when it comes to more specific shots or closed spaces, the pictures are less realistic. This also happens with character designs, as their figures are not realistically proportional and tend to show physical stereotypes. For instance, female characters are always depicted with exaggerated female features such as non-realistic breast sizes and they always wear skirts (Junguitu Dronda, 2021: 157-158).



Fig. 1 & 2. On the left (**Fig.1**) the port of Pasai Donibane as seen in the movie. On the right (**Fig.2**) Newfoundland.

3. Basque cinema: Identity, travel and backgrounds

Stories need characters, actions, and a time-space setting. Chris Lukinbeal points out the importance of the election of a specific place to set the plot, as this provides realism to the narrative (2005: 6). He explains that a location is linked to elements such as a regional sense of place, and the history of that specific area. Lunkinbeal expounds the importance of the cinematic landscapes saying that ‘when cinema retains its sense of place the mise-en-scène spatial meaning remains open to interpretation. In these instances, narrative films may contain a more realistic representation of a landscape where the viewer can begin to establish a cognitive map of the social and physical geography’ (2005: 6).

Traditionally, Basque cinema has been used to underline Basque identity. Roldan Larreta spoke in 1999 about two stages within ‘modern Basque Cinema’ (1999: 19-20). During the late sixties and mid-seventies, Basque cinema was used to fight against oppression. It was symbolic cinema and there was no purpose of creating any industry. At the end of the seventies and beginning of the eighties, Basque Cinema started to be funded. That provoked an increase of feature films, while the industry was still precarious. During that time, directors and scholars showed a big concern about defining what Basque Cinema is. The debate involved many characteristics such as the language or the compromise on the Basque national revolution. They did not reach any conclusion, but, as a matter of fact, funding of the Basque Government specified that the movies they helped must be settled in the Basque Country.

As there is not much research about the depiction of the Basque Country in animated cinema, we need to widen our scope and look at live-action movies. Ann Davies explains that the rural landscapes are iconic of Basque nationalism (2012: 61). The city and the industrial landscape are also typical in the movies. Davies adds that the Basque identity usually appears in opposition to the Spanish identity haunting each other, while landscape is used to depict that confrontation.

Marvin D'Lugo explains that in some movies Basque identity appears by confronting the new place that the characters visit (2010:126), as it happens in the movie *Los Amantes del Círculo Polar* (*Lovers of the Arctic Circle*, 1998, Julio Medem). Davies adds that Basque terrorism is also depicted by road movies through rural landscapes (2012: 60).

Ipar Haizearen Erronka is a movie for children that avoids deep social and political struggles. It does underline the Basque Identity in contrast to the native American Mi'kmaq tribe, but does not show any reference to the contrast to Spain. Basque and Mi'kmaq identity are mostly defined by their looks, clothes, way of living, and the architecture of their towns. These urban areas and more clearly the natural landscapes help to define these identities, which end up in a common understanding. In the words of Ann Davies, 'the spaces and places depicted in Basque cinema and beyond come to be spaces of distance, displacement and denial appropriate for uncanny identities' (2012: 61).

Moreover, when it comes to the representation of minorities in the American animation industry, Nur Liana Mohd Redzuan Roy and Nora Edrina Sahharil explain that 'was influenced heavily through their historical timeline and the movements these minorities have gone through or have become witnesses of it' (2020: 571). These are two main features represented in *Ipar Haizearen Erronka*; two minorised communities depicting a specific moment in time that involves travelling and market-trade.

The relationship between the Basques and foreign places and cultures was represented in three movies close in time to the release of *Ipar Haizearen Erronka*: *Agur Everest* (*Goodbye Everest*, 1981, Fernando Larrukert), *La Conquista de Albania* (*The Conquest of Albania*, 1981, Alfonso Ungría) and *La Monja Alférez* (1987, Javier Aguirre).

Agur Everest is a documentary that as the name suggests takes Basque mountaineers to the peak of Mount Everest. The pictures of the several attempts of the mountaineers were taken during actual missions in Nepal. As the director explains to Roldán Larreta, they wanted to show the expedition and the places in the most human way (Larreta 1999: 200). They did not want to picture the mountaineers as superheroes completing a heroic deed.

The two other examples are fiction films where the main Basque characters travel abroad. Both movies are historical, and the foreign places were not filmed in the actual places that they represent. *La Conquista de Albania* tells a story about an historic military mission of Basque —or more specifically Navarre— soldiers of the fourteenth century. These soldiers tried to conquer Albania for their King. According to Roldán Larreta, this epic adventure was filmed mostly in Navarre —and also in the well-known castle of Loarre in Huesca, used in the movie *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005, Ridley Scott)—, including the plot set in Albania (1999: 202).

La Monja Alférez presents some similar elements with *Ipar Haizearen Erronka*. The main character is Catalina de Erauso, a nun that dresses up as a soldier and travels to America. Anne tries to get into the vessel dressed up as a sailor. The director filmed the Andes Mountains in Andalucia. Roldán Larreta thinks that the movie does not accurately portray the historic moment that it is represented in and points out that the location and the clothes were ‘poor’ (1999: 253).

Except for the documentary *Agur Everest*, the rest of these live-action movies filmed the foreign places that they represent in places close to the Basque Country. It is interesting that Larreta considered the setting of *La Monja Alférez* as not accurate enough. This issue is overcome when it comes to cel-animation, as the hand-drawing of the picture allows it to be naturalistic enough to identify foreign places without needing to be hyperrealistic. Even if there are not many animated movies set in the Basque Country, the audience recognises the places easily, and feels closer to the story.

Backgrounds in animated movies, as Chris Pallant reminds us, do not really exist (2013: 183). But the originally static drawings acquire depth and movement through the multiplane camera that allows the backgrounds to become believable (Pallant, 2013:187). It is interesting to point out though that, as Pallant says, this believability suppresses one of the main characteristics of animation, the metamorphic potential of the pictures (Pallant, 2013: 187). As we explained before, *Ipar Haizearen Erronka* reaches some balance between the naturalistic backgrounds and the less realistic characters.

4. A Bildungsroman between the Basque Country and Newfoundland

The graphic novel *Justin Hiriart* was aimed at an adult audience, but the movie was created for a children's audience.⁵ The graphic novel was just an inspiration for the film and copied the time-space setting and the name of the main vessel —*San Juan* in Spanish and *Donibane* in Basque. All the violence and the complex and plausible plots were substituted by children as main characters —the twins Anne and Peiot, and Watuna— and a story that involves magic and fantasy.

When it comes to narrative structures, Vladimir Propp points out that every folktale presents the same 31 functions of characters (Propp, 2009: 21-22). These are independent functions, and the sequence is always identical. Within this structure, we find functions that we can clearly identify in the plot of *Ipar Haizearen Erronka*. Anne suffers the absence of her brother, and she is forbidden to join him. Anne violates the interdiction, and as the rest of the main characters do she leaves home. The villain, Athanasius, gets information and tries to make Anne drown in the sea. The heroes are tested and they get a magical agent, a ceramic pot that contains the North Wind. Anne, Peiot, and Watuna fight and defeat the villain. The heroes liquidate their misfortunes and return the magical object. They do not travel back home, but they return to the adults. Peiot and Watuna are claimed as false heroes, while at the end, Anne gets the recognition of the adults. There is no wedding, but there is indeed a final celebration.

This narrative structure can be also interpreted as the 'hero's journey' defined by Joseph Campbell (2004). The author explains the characteristics of the hero with the following words:

'The composite hero of the monomyth is a personage of exceptional gifts. Frequently he is honored by his society, frequently unrecognized or disdained. [...] Typically, the hero of the fairy tale achieves a domestic, microcosmic triumph, and the hero of myth a world-historical, macro-cosmic triumph. Whereas the former—the youngest or despised child who becomes the master of extraordinary powers—prevails over his personal oppressors, the latter brings back from his adventure the means for the regeneration of his society as a whole' (Campbell, 2004: 35).

⁵ Gregorio Muro states that while working on the script of *Balearenak*, Juanba Berasategi asked him to write a 'kids movie' (Junguitu Drona, 2015). The records of *Ipar Haizearen Erronka* in Spanish Film Catalogue shows that the film is for General Audiences (ICAA, 2021).

The movie presents Anne as a child of exceptional gifts. She is unrecognised by society just because she is a girl. She defends her values, and she fights the villain to finally become recognised by society.

Monomyth, explained by Campbell, contains three rites of passage of the hero that are clear in the movie: separation, initiation, and return (2004: 28). These same concepts are already mentioned regarding Propp's theory.

Although the film takes the main characters, the twins Anne and Peiot, on a physical journey across the Atlantic Ocean, the twins and the Mi'kmaq child Peiot carry out an inward 'hero's journey' from childhood to adulthood. That frames the plot within the Bildungsroman literary genre, where the characters have an inner evolution.

Manuel López Gallego brings together theories of various authors regarding the Bildungsroman and tries to describe the main elements that defined the genre. The Bildungsroman is an initiation process where the main characters, children or teenagers, develop their personalities, know themselves, and become adults (López Gallego, 2013: 65). These characters do not fit into society —this is what makes an antagonist—, and because of that, they feel lonely. That is why they usually challenge society.

This is especially relevant in the case of the two boys, Peiot and Watuna, who are constantly pressured to become men: they need to become good sailors and good hunters, almost in a ritualistic way. At the end of the movie, they effectively reach adulthood in a ritual in front of all the adults.

The journey is different for Anne; as is typical in the female Bildungsroman, the adults made her stay in the Basque Country —probably to raise her as a stay-at-home-mom— and deprive her of the freedom of a male hero (López Gallego, 2013: 63 and 66). Anne, after spending all of the story hidden from the adults, finally reveals herself in front of everyone, showing that she is as valuable as the boys.

The Bildungsroman theory explains that the success of the characters' adventures and their maturing may change society as well. We could understand that Anne's victory may change the way that society sees female sailors, but the conversation she has at the end of the movie with the captain does not make it clear.

Another main characteristic of the Bildungsroman is the difference between generations (Moretti, 1987: 4-5). Anne, Peiot, and Watuna do not belong to nor understand the values of adults. However, Peiot and Watuna fulfil what is expected from them, leaving Anne as the only one who really challenges adults.

Magic is also an important element of the gap between generations. The new or unknown world the adventure is set in involves a fantastic myth. As the children are trying to get along with the rest of the adults, they realise that one of them, the villain Athanasius, is able to make magic and seeks the legendary *North Wind*. Athanasius and the kids are the only ones aware that the *North Wind* is not only a legend and indeed has magical powers that the rest of adults ignore. This magical being has the shape of a ceramic pot and is the key to find the bay where the whales live. Athanasius wants to take the secret back to the Basque Country and share it with businessmen that will kill the whales to get oil and become richer. The pot represents the balance of the universe, a magic that adults ignore and only the kids understand. Saving the ceramic pot, the kids save the environment. The kids understand and defend that a balanced use of natural resources is necessary.

These ecological values and messages are also represented by the landscapes and animals that the children want to preserve. Ursula K. Heise studies the ecological plots within animated movies and mentions several examples of US-American and Japanese feature films that show the struggle between human, nature, and machinery (2014: 304-305). She claims that 'in some cases, animation has given rise to vivid portrayals of a natural world shaped by perceptions, agencies, and intentions—of animals, plants, even features of the landscape—some of which resemble those of humans, and some of which remain resolutely alien' (Heise, 2014: 316). That means that the fable told in *Ipar Haizearen Erronka* is inherent to animation.

That is precisely displayed by the long shots and big long shots of the American coastline that are shown from the beginning of the movie. In this gargantuan and wild landscape, humans and animals need to share their space. This contrasts with the civilised port of Pasai Donibane, with many buildings following the flow of the river to the open sea. The uncertainty and fear transmitted by the American cliffs and the brave ocean coincide with the unknown world of Campbell's 'hero's journey'. This depiction of nature corresponds to the interpretation that Agustín Gámir Orueta and Carlos Manuel Valdés make about cinema landscapes and coincides with Heise's thoughts about ecology:

Nature, through a medium as powerful as cinema, is easily converted into landscape, that is, modified by human perception. In this sense, the view of film towards nature has changed since the ideas of «reverential fear», to other ideas which promote the exploitation of its resources, and more recently showing examples of degradation resulting from the productive activity of modern society, [...] (Orueta & Valdés, 2007: 409).

Finally, we will discuss what Maria Luisa Torres Reyes calls ‘Multicultural Bildungsroman’. This specific kind of Bildungsroman is defined by characters who question themselves about their identity and belonging (2017: 167-168). *Ipar Haizearen Erronka* definitely shows multicultural relationships but does not question the national identity of the Basque and Mi’kmaq societies. In fact, both happen to have the same values regarding the gap between generations, gender rules, and ecology. There is apparently no struggle between them and the movie portrays an idyllic relationship between different people. As mentioned previously, Anne, Peiot, and Watuna question their role in society.

5. The depiction of the Journey

We have already mentioned the importance of the time-space setting in *Ipar Haizearen Erronka* and how the boat trip also represents the inner journey of the main characters. Besides these, there are other several concepts that depict the journey not only physically as objects and situations, but also socially and metaphorically. All these elements help to contextualise the journey within the plot and help to understand the historical context. Also, many of them are used as narrative filming resources. In the following section we will take a closer look at six elements.

5.1. The captain’s logbook

Captain Galar, the captain of the *Donibane* vessel, appears twice writing down the ship’s log. At the beginning of the movie, the captain’s voiceover reads the title of the film and while we listen to his words, three shots take us from a long shot of the town to inside the boat where the captain stands. The logbook besides the over voices of the captain is used twice to foretell his plans and the details of the trip that the audience is going to see in pictures.



Fig. 3. Captain Galar writes in the logbook.

5.2. The map

There are two maps in the captain's cabin: a large one that shows the entire world and a small one just with Europe. The large one is used twice besides the captain's logbook. First, the map is used to foresee the trip across the ocean; the picture starts with a zoom out from the Basque Country, and the camera zooms in to Newfoundland. Then, after a shot of Captain Galar, the map is used as a space transition; the plot moves from the Basque Country to Newfoundland as the picture dissolves over America in the map.

There is no doubt that the map is a simplified version of a sixteenth century ornamental cartography map. It includes drawings of boats and whales over the ocean, a compass rose, and a cartouche.

The plot explains that not everyone is able to get to Newfoundland and the Bay of the Whales. That is why Athanasius uses magic to guide his ally across the ocean with shining marvels. Athanasius's dark magic is used as a resource to substitute the map he does not have.

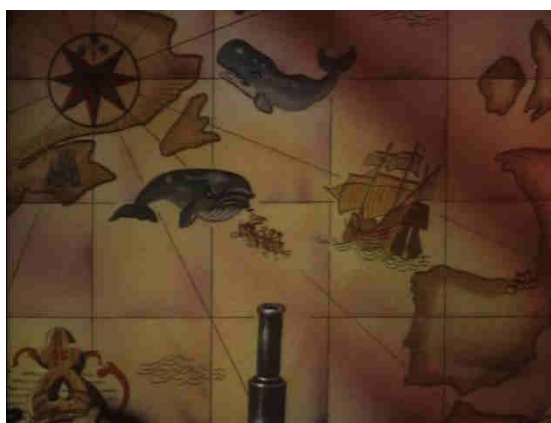


Fig. 4. The map in Captain Galar's cabin.

5.3. The main vessels

There are two main vessels in the movie linked respectively to the heroes and the villains. The *Donibane* —*San Juan* in Spanish— is a strong big vessel used by the heroes to travel. It is the prize that the pirate Captain Makailu is going to win if he achieves his evil goals. In the seventeenth century, a boat called the *San Juan* that left the port of Pasai Donibane did exist and sank in the Red Bay of Newfoundland.

The pirate vessel has several iconographic elements that make evident that it is the villain's boat. It has a demon as a figurehead, it always appears under shadow —we never see the vessel in sunlight—, and of course, Captain Makailu raises the Jolly Roger when he shows his real character.



Fig. 5. The Jolly Roger in Captain Makailu's boat.

5.4. Financing the trip

The movie also shows the social layers of the Basque society from the sixteenth century. On the one hand, the main town is crowded with ordinary people; we see fish sellers, a priest, orphan kids, and, of course, sailors. Their houses are mostly made of stone and wood and they are poorly decorated. This is very different from the looking and house of the financiers that helped Athanasius. These three rich men are surrounded by money and jewellery in a big house with tall walls, a lot of space, and nice curtains. They are counting their money, trying to reach even the last coin, and they undoubtedly want to make more. They do not care if they need Athanasius and a pirate's help to achieve their goals. Sound and images also help to ambient the scene, as we listen to the clink of coins and we see the shine of the money and the jewellery.

5.5. Maritime Laws, Sexism and Witchcraft

As we have seen, the character of Anne is not allowed to travel in the *Donibane* vessel. She thinks it is unfair that her twin brother can do it just because he is a boy. A girl cannot work as a sailor because the maritime laws forbid it. Besides that, the characters in the movie point out that having a woman aboard brings bad luck to the trip. Traditionally, bad luck during a voyage is caused by a witch. All this suspiciousness represents an inherent sexism that is not just fiction. As José Dueso explains, historically there are rumours that involve witches and Basque whale hunters (1996: 82-84).

All the public spaces in the movie are dominated by men. Even though there are a few female characters on screen, Anne is the only one with a name. As Maitane Junguitu Points out, the rest of the female characters are related to motherhood, feeding and caring for others, not only the humans, but also female animals (2021: 158).

5.6. The sailing of the *Donibane* and the work on board

The moment that the boat leaves the port of Pasai Donibane is a big event for the entire town. They create a festive atmosphere that we understand represents the importance that whale hunting has for this society.

We even see some actions that become a performance. The bells ring in the church, and underline that even the religious stratum relies on the sailors. Some men help to take the vessel out of the port in rowboats. Olga Macías points out that in the seventeenth century in Pasai Donibane, there were many women working as boatwomen —*batelari* in Basque and *batelera* in Spanish— (2016: 832-833), but the movie does not feature them. We do see women besides children and men in the port saying goodbye to the sailors that are leaving.



Fig. 6 & 7. On the left (**Fig.6**), inhabitants of Pasai Donibane say goodbye to the sailors. On the right (**Fig.7**), rowboats help the vessel to leave the port.

6. Conclusions

Ipar Haizearen Erronka is a very rich movie that can be analysed from very different points of view. In this paper, we focused on how the movie contextualises the life of the Basque sailors of the sixteenth century on their voyage to Newfoundland from the children's view of the main characters.

It is clear that the authors wanted to show a historical setting, and tried to be as accurate as possible. Knowing that the movie was going to be watched by children, they tried to add elements that would attract their attention, such as young main characters and magic, which is certainly a constant in animation. However, there are many details that show us the history and traditions of the Basque Country, always related to maritime life. This takes us to the underlining documentary approach of the movie, as the plot presents in the background accuracy in the settings, props and the historical reconstruction.

The movie creates a balance between the real setting and the fantasy of the story. That is also underlined with the aesthetic of the films that try to be naturalistic when it comes to real settings that can be easily identified. This is unquestionably an approach to recreate the main features of 'Disney Formalism', especially concerning the realistic backgrounds. The landscapes are part of the definition of the Basque and Mi'kmaq identities, as it helps to define who they are and how they live. The voyage and the different backgrounds represent the inner and outer travels of the main characters, according to the characteristics of the Bildungsroman genre.

Finally, we need to point out that this film allows many other analyses. It would be interesting to research the adaptation from the graphic novel in detail, or the production itself within the European minority languages and small cinemas context.

REFERENCES

- Bambi* (1942), produced by Walt Disney Productions. United States of America, RKO Radio Pictures, 1h 10min.
- CAMPBELL, JOSEPH (2004), *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- DAVIES, ANN (2012), *Spanish Spaches: Landscape, Space and Place in Contemporary Spanish Culture*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- DUESO, JOSÉ (1996), *Brujería en el País Vasco*. Bilbao: Orain.
- ELORTZA, JERARDO (2010), Balleneros vascos en Terranova. Ecos literarios. In: Ayerbe Etxebarria, Enrique (ed.), *La Enciclopedia Emblemática. Cultura de Mar. Historia Marítima*. Lasarte-Oria: Etor-Ostoa, pp. 147-158.

- D'LUGO, MARVING (2010), Landscape in Spanish Cinema. In: Harper, Graeme — Rayne, Jonathan (eds) *Cinema and Landscape: Film, Nation and Cultural Geography*. Chicago: Intellect, pp. 119-129.
- FRUCTUOSO FRANCISCO — MURO HARRIET, GREGORIO (2015), *Justin Hiriart*. Donostia-San Sebastián: Erein.
- FURNISS, MAUREEN (2014), *Art in Motion. Animation Aesthetics*. Herts: John Libbey & Company Limited.
- HALAS, JOHN — MANVELL, ROGER (1976), *The technique of film animation*. New York: Hastings House.
- HEISE, URSULA K. (2014), Plasmatic Nature: Environmentalism and Animated Film. *Public Culture*, 26 (2 (73)), pp. 301-318.
- ICCA, INSTITUTO DE LA CINEMATOGRAFÍA Y DE LAS ARTES AUDIOVISUALES (2021), The Spanish Film Catalogue. La Leyenda del Viento del Norte. Available from <https://sede.mcu.gob.es/CatalogoICAA/en-us/Peliculas/Detalle?Pelicula=34292> (accessed 6 December 2021).
- Ipar Haizearen erronka* (1992), produced by EPISA Euskal Pictures International. Spain, 70 minutes.
- JUNGUITU DRONDA, MAITANE (2015), interview with Muro, Gregorio. Vitoria-Gasteiz, 15 August 2015 (Unpublished).
- (2019), *Kalabaza Planeta eta Juanba Berasategi. Panorámica de la Animación Comercial Vasca*. PhD, University of the Basque Country. Supervised by: Nerecan Umaran, Amaia; Gutierrez Paz, Miren Arantza.
- (2021), Ipar Haizearen Erronka Filmaren Emakumezko Pertsonaien Análisis: Rolak, Espazioak eta Ekintzak. In: Arbelaitz, Olatz — Latatu, Ainhoa — Omaetxeberria, Miren Josu — Urgell, Blanca (eds) *V. Iker gazte Nazioarteko Ikerketa Euskaraz. Kongresuko Artikulu-bilduma. Gizarte Zientziak eta Zuzenbidea*. Bilbao: UEU, pp. 153-159.
- LUKINBEAL, CHRIS (2005), Cinematic Landscapes. *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 23 (1), pp. 3-22.
- LISTER, MARTIN — DOVEY, JON — GIDDINGS, SETH, et al. (2009), *New Media: a Critical Introduction*. London & New York: Routledge.
- LÓPEZ GALLEGO, MANUEL (2013), El Bildungsroman. Historias para crecer. *Tejuelo*, 18, pp. 62-75.
- MACÍAS, OLGA (2016), Las Mujeres y las Actividades Marítimas en el País Vasco: Trabajo Portuario y Ámbito Pesquero (1700-1950). *Itsas Memoria. Revista de Estudios Marítimos del País Vasco*, 8, Donostia-San Sebastián: Untzi Museoa-Museo Naval, pp. 831-845.
- MORETTI, FRANCO (1987), *The Way of the World: the Bildungsroman in European culture*. London: Verso.
- ORUETA, AGUSTÍN GÁMIR — VALDÉS, CARLOS MANUEL (2007), Cinema and Geography: Geographic Space, Landscape and Territory in the Film Industry. *Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles*, 45, pp. 157-190.
- PALLANT, CHRIS (2011), *Demystifying Disney: a History of Animation*. New York: Continuum.
- (2013), Animated Landscapes. In: Harper, Graeme — Rayne, Jonathan (eds) *Film Landscapes: Cinema, Environment and Visual Culture*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 183-198.
- PROPP, VLADIMIR (2009), *Morphology of the Folktale*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- RIFFEL, CASEY (2012), Dissecting Bambi: Multiplanar Photography, the Cel Technique, and the Flowering of Full Animation. *The Velvet Light Trap*, 69, pp. 3-16.
- ROLDÁN LARRETA, CARLOS (1999), El Cine del País Vasco: de Ama Lur (1968) a Airbag (1997). *Ikusgaiak Cuadernos de Cinematografía (3)*. Donostia-San Sebastián: Eusko Ikaskuntza.
- ROY, NUR LIANA MOHD REDZUAN — SAHHARIL, NORA EDRINA (2020), Racial Representation in Western Animation: A Media Influenced by History and Society. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(12), pp. 558-574.

MAITANE JUNGUITU DRONDA

TORRES REYES, MARIA LUISA (2017), Multicultural Bildungsroman. Coming of Age between Han and Sana. *Kritika Kultura*, 28, pp. 147-189.

WARD, PAUL (2005), *Documentary: the Margins of Reality*. London & New York: Wallflower.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maitane JUNGUITU DRONDA worked as a teacher in the department of Art History and Music and as a researcher in the Audiovisual Communication and Advertisement department at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU). Her research subject is the historical development of commercial animated cinema from the Basque Country. Her PhD dissertation focuses on the features by Juanba Berasategli, including a narrative, formal, aesthetic and thematic approach to the films. She completed several research stays at University of Nevada, Reno (USA) and at University of Stirling (Scotland). Nowadays she works in Game Erauntsia Elkarteak promoting video games in Basque language. She is member of the Society of Animation Studies.

Journeying to the actual World through digital games: The *Urban Histories Reloaded* project

Stefano CASELLI | University of Malta

Farah POLATO & Mauro SALVADOR | University of Padua, Italy

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/2021.10.CAS.URBAN](https://doi.org/10.32926/2021.10.CAS.URBAN)

ABSTRACT

The paper aims at reflecting on the potential of digital games to convey meaning, tell stories and, most importantly, become a tool to discover and experience the actual world. Using as a case study the experience of the Urban Histories Reloaded. Creatività videoludica per azioni di cittadinanza (Urban Histories Reloaded. Digital Game Creativity for citizenship actions) project (UHR), we will discuss the role digital games can play in activating territorial processes, by favouring the engagement with the actual world as well as with playful approaches to city living.

In particular, we will focus on the artist residency for game designers, game artists, and game programmers held in Padua between September and October 2020 within the frame of the project and on its main outcome, the mobile game MostaScene. MostaScene consists of a fifteen-minute mobile game set in District 5 Armistizio-Savonarola of Padua. Both its design and its overall content have intertwined with the urban space since the very beginning.

Above all, we will inspect the use of digital games for city-making actions via two different paths: on the one hand, through the involvement of stakeholders (public institutions and specific groups, but also and most importantly citizens) as co-designers; on the other hand, using digital games as non-functional experiences that may encourage innovative interpretations of the urban space for player.

From a theoretical perspective, this research requires us to look at digital games as both fictional worlds that involve imagination and interpretation, as well as digital worlds that are experienced as part of reality in a phenomenological sense. Once this is acknowledged, we can provide an overview of how games can tackle reality and engage with the actual world.

KEYWORDS

Digital games; City-making; City-memory; Memory-making; Urban games; Experiential tourism.

Date of submission: 16 May 2021

Date of acceptance: 6 December 2021

Date of publication: 20 December 2021

Disclaimer

Despite this paper being the result of shared discussions between the authors, the authorship of each paragraph should be attributed as follows: Stefano Caselli is the author of the paragraphs "Brief Notes on Digital Games and the Actual World"; Farah Polato is the author of the paragraphs "Introduction" and "The Tourist Figure in the UHR Project"; Mauro Salvador is the author of the paragraphs "The Urban Histories Reloaded Project" and "Digital Games and the Actual World: Games Tackling Reality and the Game MostaScene". The "conclusions" are co-written by Stefano Caselli and Farah Polato.

Introduction

Using as case study the experience of Urban Histories Reloaded. Creatività videoludica per azioni di cittadinanza (Urban Histories Reloaded. Digital Game Creativity for citizenship actions) project (from now on, UHR), with a focus on the mobile game *MostaScene*, we will discuss the role digital games can play in activating territorial processes, by favouring the engagement with the actual world as well as with playful approaches to city living.

UHR is part of the Per chi crea 2018 programme by MIBAC and SIAE (The Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and the Italian Authors' and Publishers' Association), which is devoted to the promotion of artistic creativity in Italy through a strong connection between the artists involved, the territory, and the people who live in it. Through the lens of the programme, artist residencies are the ideal context to encourage these encounters.

In line with the aims and tools expected by Per chi crea call, UHR promoted an artist residency for game designers, game artists, and game programmers (from here on: artists in residence) to be held in Padua between February and April 2020. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic it was then rescheduled to September and October 2020.

A team characterised by different fields of expertise and professional profiles coordinated UHR: IMPACT SRL, an academic spin-off of the University of Padua working to enhance local cultural and economic development, and the DBC-Dipartimento dei Beni Culturali (Department of Cultural Heritage) of the same university together with IVIPRO (Italian Videogame Programme), an Italian national and cross-regional project that aims at facilitating the production of video games set in Italy or that engage with the Italian cultural heritage.

The main output of the residency was the concept and development of a prototype of a narrative mobile game focused on a specific area of the city of Padua. During the five-weeks residency, the artists developed the open access prototype of *MostaScene* (Various authors, 2020). *MostaScene* is a fifteen-minute mobile game inspired by the place where the residency was set, District 5 Armistizio-Savonarola in Padua, as well as its design and its overall content which were intertwined with the urban space since the very beginning.

The choice of District 5 Armistizio-Savonarola as an area of interest is due to its historical dynamics, emblematic of their social and cultural processes and evolution. In

the past the district was one of the main destinations of the rural migration towards the city. During the Second World War, some of the inhabitants took part in the Italian Resistance. In recent times, it has become a working-class neighbourhood, and now it is an area with a high rate of immigrants and citizens with foreign origins. Even nowadays, District 5 has been the theatre of civic actions, public engagement and grassroots movements promoted by the inhabitants, associations and other social institutions. Among them, it is worth mentioning the protest against the conversion of a public football field into a residential area (April 2015, Picture “Il campo di via Dottesio ai bambini del rione!/Dottesio Football Field for the childrens of the district!”; see Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. A scenario of MostaScene (left side), protests against the conversion of the public football field of via Dottesio into a residential area and the football field (right side) or the involvement of the inhabitants in the process of public space re-thinking (*Contratti di Quartiere/Neighborhood Agreements*, an ongoing process from 1998) (Licari, 2006).

In this reshaping of urban spaces, a specific attention was paid to the urban renewal of the little square, the beating heart of the district, which changed its name from *Piazza*

Toselli (Toselli Square) to Piazza ai Caduti della Resistenza (To the Fallen in the Italian Resistance Square).

In October 2020, in accordance with protest movements born in different countries around the world, the local movement named *Decolonize Your Eyes* coordinated public demonstrations (<https://www.facebook.com/DecolonizeYourEyes/>), questioning the toponymy of the district, where several street names recall the Italian colonial period. As an example, the ‘ancient’ Toselli Square, mentioned above, was dedicated to Captain Pietro Toselli, the ‘hero’ of the Amba Alagi battle (1895), who fought during the first phase of the Italian colonial military offensive in Ethiopia. The artists in residence were able to follow the public actions promoted by the *Decolonize Your Eyes* movement thanks to the live streamings of the events or the testimonies of the activists (Frisina, Ghebremariam Tesfau’, Frisina, 2021).

The narrative world of MostaScene was inspired by events of the past – and their narrations – and the present, as we can observe from the relevance given in the game to the football field as stage, to the activism during the Italian Resistance, and to the lively, intercultural life of the district nowadays.

As said above, the residency should have physically taken place in Padua, but the first COVID-19 lockdown was imposed in Italy on the day the guests were supposed to arrive. The project had to be reshaped, from a full immersion two-week period to a less intensive five-week period with scheduled meetings and milestones. The actual journey of the participants had to be transformed into a virtual one and, while this change was initially felt as risky and potentially harmful, it opened several new opportunities.

During the first week of the residency, some organisers and instructors managed to visit the neighbourhood and to record urban explorations and interviews. Moreover, different stakeholders and local people participated in live discussions online with the artists in residence, preserving somehow a “first-hand” feeling for those mediated explorations. Also, the systematic use of agile and functional digital tools (such as the online board Mirò) improved the efficiency of the design processes.

Eventually, what was perceived as an obstacle, turned out to be an improvement for the overall experience, especially in terms of smoother workflow and easier involvement of citizens.

During the residency, the artists in residence developed the open access prototype of *MostaScene* (Various authors, 2020), a narrative digital game inspired by the place where the residency was set (see Fig. 2; Fig. 3; Fig. 4).



Fig. 2. Splash screen, map, and last section of *MostaScene*.

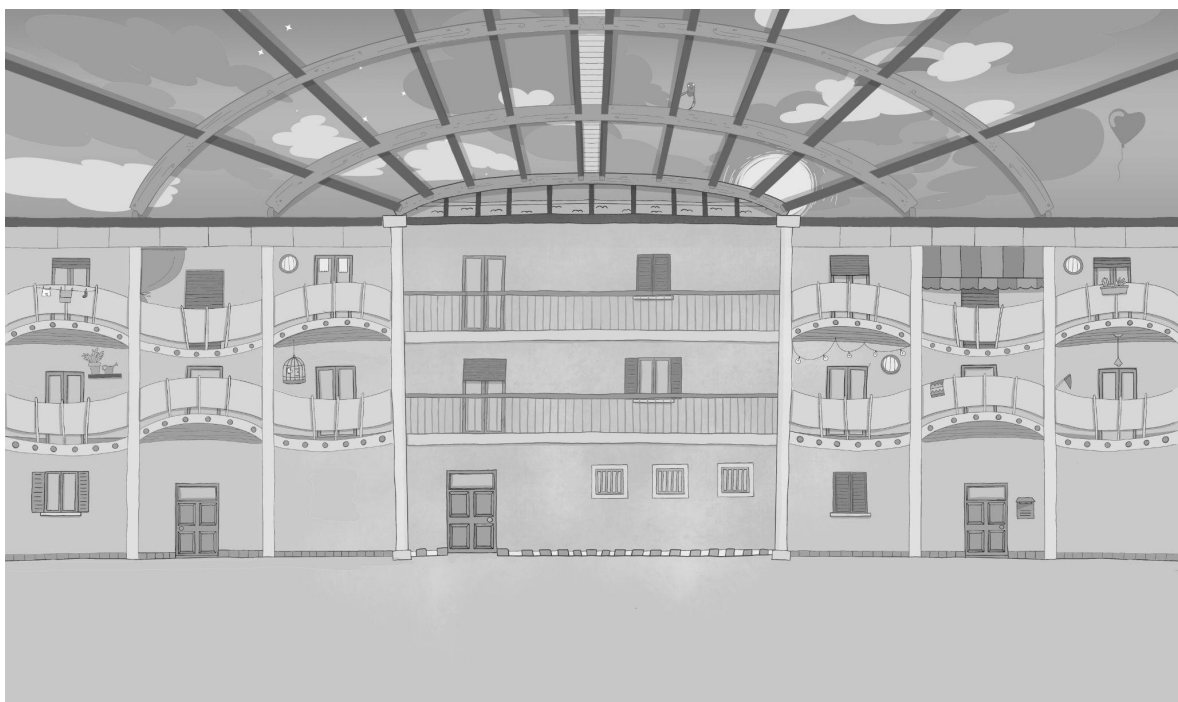


Fig. 3. A scenario of *MostaScene*.



Fig. 4. Picture of “il giardino d’inverno”-District 5 Padua.

Based on this project’s experience, this paper questions the potential of digital games not only as narrative machines, but also as effective tools to discover and experience the world that surrounds us, and the role digital games can play in activating processes of space awareness and territorial actions on both individual and community levels.

In the next pages, we will briefly describe the UHR project, then we will specifically focus on the experience of the residency and on its impact on District 5 Armistizio-Savonarola. Then, we will provide a broader theoretical framework, concerning virtual worlds and actual contexts, that will help us set the UHR project as a specific case study to acknowledge how digital games can offer memory-making experiences for local contexts and histories, ultimately stimulating both top-down and bottom-up city-making actions. In fact, thanks to these experiences, citizens may ask for a deeper participation and for further knowledge about how cities are planned and how they evolved. Their interest might evolve specifically into improving urban environments for the inhabitants, and expressing a strong desire to co-design public spaces and their use (Schouten *et al.* 2017). As we will see in a moment, the UHR project did not aim at

generating specific responses in its user, but rather aimed at starting processes of thoughts and reasoning about the places it was about.

Finally, we will introduce some reflections on the tourist as a key figure in the conception of the *MostaScene* project. As the focus on the reloading process aims to stress the polyvocal narrability – never exhaustive – of a territory, the tourist-figure – someone coming from outside and staying for a while – seemed useful to evoke a notion of knowledge and experience that is partial and anchored to a specific status. Nevertheless, the lack of knowledge and the feeling of ‘unfamiliarity’ are also fruitful, postulated at the basis of the tourist’s curiosity and desire to explore other places and meet people. The tourist-perspective offers as well a different point of view different from the internal and acquired ones, thus allowing switches that may be interesting. In the design of *MostaScene*, this approach is echoed in the photographer-tourist main character, to whose point of view is linked to the player’s experience.

The Urban Histories Reloaded Project

The UHR has been conceived in three main phases. In the first phase, the artist residency, six participants conducted the “mediated” visits to District 5 Armistizio-Savonarola described above, virtually met people who live or work there, and recorded information about it. The aim of this phase was the development of a short, playable prototype set in the district. The six artists came from different backgrounds, both technical and artistic. They had a fair share of experience in producing digital artefacts, and they shared a common point of view and a common set of references about the type and genre of product they were going to design (a short and narrative-driven experience, using mobile games like *Florence* (Mountains 2018) as references). Only one out of six lived near Padua and, even if not in depth, already knew the district. This fact, combined with the absence of an actual, physical, visit to the neighbourhood, pushed the artists towards the design of an informative solution rather than a “place-making” one, a game in which the player gets to know a place better, rather than intervening, even if virtually.

MostaScene was developed in Unity3D using original scripts and original graphic assets. The game lasts fifteen minutes and the user plays the role of a photographer visiting the neighbourhood for the first time from a first-person point of view. With the excuse of chasing their cat that has run away from a window, the player explores the

neighbourhood, engages with its people, and takes photos. At the end of the game, she stages an exhibition of photographs taken during the journey. The artists in residence produced a representation of District 5 divided into three distinct scenarios. In these scenarios, the player interacts with simple gestures to discover texts and images related to historical and present events of the neighbourhood (see Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. The three scenarios of *MostaScene*.

The following phase of UHR consists of an event, organised to allow people who live or work in the neighbourhood to watch and play the game prototype. Some of them were people that the artists had already met [and who had contributed to the project]: thus, storytellers had become story-players. Others became aware of the project and of the game only thanks to the event: they played histories of their neighbourhood, narrated and revisited by other people.

The third phase is ongoing: it aims to extend the narrative world of the game through other stories, ‘reloading’ them into the game. To this purpose, a week-long event for game developers has been organised in collaboration with Progetto Giovani, an office of the municipality based in District 5 and specifically devoted to youth policies that supported the project from its first steps. During this last event, developers accessed a set of stories of the neighbourhood, collected thanks to the involvement of people and associations during the first phase. Throughout the following months, this reloaded

version of the original game *MostaScene* was presented to an audience consisting of the inhabitants of the district (*Scopri il quartiere 5 con un videogioco!/Discover the district 5 with a videogame!*, official presentation in collaboration with Progetto Giovani, Padua, 15 December 2021) as well as of the city of Padua as a whole (Game Developers Session, Festival FÉMO-Festival dell'espressione multimediale, Padua, 12 April 2021), as well as of other cities (Venice-Lido, 6 September 2021).

Brief notes on Digital Games and the Actual World

UHR is based on a significant assumption: that digital games, in a way, can engage with actual contexts of experience, and that they can therefore represent the (at times astonishing) complexity of the actual world. It is worth providing an at least brief overview on how digital games can engage with the actual world and convey meaning before we proceed. This will allow us to approach the matter at hand more clearly and unproblematically. However, the aim of this paper is not to deepen concepts such as 'virtuality' or 'world', which we refer readers to the more thorough theoretical accounts that other scholars have provided for further discussion.

To begin with, we look at digital games as virtual worlds, and virtual worlds, in turn, as both digital and fictional worlds. This implies looking at digital games' potentiality to engage with the actual world in a way that is peculiar and substantially different from those of other media. By referring to authors such as David J. Chalmers (2017), or to game scholars such as Nele Van de Mosselaer (2020), Jasper Juul (2005), and Stefano Gualeni and Daniel Vella (Gualeni, 2015; Gualeni and Vella, 2020; Vella and Gualeni, 2018), we argue that digital games are both fictional, representational experiences that require of their user a certain degree of interpretation and imagination, and experiences that can be understood as 'worldly' in a phenomenological sense.

Without delving into the phenomenology or philosophy of fiction, suffice it to say that playing a digital game means simultaneously interacting with a set of real objects and environments (in this case, objects, events, and digital spaces made of bits or strings of code – Chalmers calls this thesis 'virtual digitalism'; Chalmers, 2017) and interacting with a set of unreal fictional objects, relationships, and events (Chalmers calls this thesis 'virtual fiction'; Chalmers, 2017)

While every digital game entails the experience of a digital (real) world, the same is not true for fictional worlds: slaying a dragon in a digital game may be experienced as merely

making some bits disappear from the screen, without any degree of interpretation or imagination involved. If a user fears that dragon, recognises it as a fictional dragon, and knows that that dragon can breathe fire, and that its claws can cut down an oak tree, then she is interpreting and imagining a fictional counterpart represented by those bits (see also Fluck, 1988). To interpret digital games as ‘half-real’ (Juil, 2005), then, it means claiming that they are real experiences from a phenomenological perspective, and that at the same time they tend to give rise to narratives that are subject to interpretation. From now on, we will use the term ‘virtual world’ to refer to both these understandings, i.e., with ‘virtual’ we will mean at the same time real (digital) and non-real (fictional).

So, what does it mean to deal with the actual world through a digital game? It means providing the user with a digital world (made of bits, data, and digital spaces) that represents, or re-interprets, the actual world. The intertwining of representational content and interaction is pivotal here: while the player acts within virtual worlds following rules and activating meaningful procedures (Ian Bogost introduces the concept of procedural rhetoric to point out how procedures can convey meaning; Bogost, 2007), at the same time she tends to interpret and understand those procedures according to the representational content of the virtual world in question. Of course, procedures themselves cannot provide meaning without representational content (Bogost, 2007). Nonetheless, it would be reductive to claim that digital games can provide meaning or tell stories only based on in-game representations, regardless of the chance the player has to configure them (Aarseth, 1997) and to produce meaning through in-game actions and procedural rhetoric.

Developers that choose to represent the actual world within a digital game, then, provide the user with a fictional version of the actual world, in which she is free to act and to produce as well as to interpret meaning.

Of course, it is worth noting that to be recognised as a reinterpretation of the actual world, the representational nature of the world has to be acknowledged by the player: if she knows nothing about Padua, for example, she might assume that it is some fantasy city or country. To discuss the relationship between virtual worlds (and digital games) and actual contexts, it is therefore worth referring to hermeneutics, especially to ideas such as resonance and implied authorship (Apperley, 2010; Arjoranta, 2015; Grace, 2020; Van de Mosselaer and Gualeni, 2020). This requires looking at digital games and virtual worlds as analogous, at least to a certain degree, to texts in the

hermeneutic understanding of the term (Arjoranta, 2015). In an attempt to summarise widely different approaches, for brevity we may claim that, to interpret in-game actions, in-game representations, and in-game meanings as entangled with actual contexts, the player has to:

(1) have a previous knowledge of relevant contexts, i.e., the content of the game has to resonate with the experiences or background of the player (see, e.g., how Adam Chapman applies the concept of resonance to history in Chapman, 2016) and

(2) acknowledge that the developers of the game are willingly dealing with such contexts, i.e., the player must construct an implied author (Schmid, 2009) of the world that refers to certain specific contexts.

If these two pre-conditions are met, then the player may interpret the virtual world, as well as her actions within it, as dealing with its actual counterpart both before, during, and after the gaming experience, since the hermeneutic spiral of possible interpretations of a text is not limited to the duration of the textual experience itself (see Gadamer, 1977; 2006).

Engaging with actual contexts through digital games, then, means the production side (i.e., game designers and developers) must design a fictional world that represents those contexts more or less explicitly and promote interpretations by the user that may acknowledge her representationality. On the receiving side (i.e., the user), on the other hand, it means to recognise – depending on personal backgrounds, knowledge, and interpretations – that the content of the game refers to actual contexts.

The same goes for other non-interactive media and related mechanisms of meaning production, and for all those media that favour the experience of fictional worlds. Suffice it to think of historical fictions such as historical movies, novels, or comics, and how they cannot but be interpreted as “historical” once they are recognised as representing actual contexts through interpretation (Chapman, 2016; see also Zhang, 2004).

What sets digital games (and virtual worlds at large) apart from other media is their accessibility. Such worlds have to be interpreted as representation but are then accessed, experienced, and modified.

Digital Games and the Actual World: Games tackling Reality and the Game *MostaScene*

Digital games can engage with the actual world in different ways. On the one hand, they can be pervasive: games are capable of generating experiences that renegotiate the limits of the playful situation in a spatial, temporal or social sense (Montola *et al.*, 2009). Games like Google's *Ingress* or *Pokémon Go* integrate themselves into the actual world they represent; they are designed to be played directly in this world by adding a playful layer to it (Frissen *et al.*, 2015).

On the other hand, games can favour forms of critical play, in which, through playful interactions, certain social and cultural dynamics are represented for and experienced by the player. Games like *Papers, Please* or *September 12th* provide a virtual environment in which the player can safely experiment with positions and choices that are different to or riskier than those she would undertake in the actual world (see Goffman, 1961). What should emerge from these experiences is an individual and autonomous critical thought about the actual world situations portrayed, explicitly or implicitly, by the game (Flanagan, 2009). Critical play can be described in different ways, for example historical games represent events through the experience of a designed scenario in which the player interacts and makes choices. These games attempt to represent the historical memory of certain facts, often controversial or traumatic facts (on trauma and digital games see, among others, Smethurst and Craps, 2014), and use different design strategies and precautions tailored to the event itself or to requests from specific stakeholders (i.e., victim relatives; see Ferri *et al.*, 2017).

Another approach to critical play is the so-called serious urban games: play experiences that take place in urban environments through guided explorations often (but not always) using geo-localised devices. The label 'serious' is intended to be a synonym for critical, stressing the fact that these experiences also aim to activate an interpretation of the actual world through a playful layer (Ferri and Coppock, 2013). In recent years, this approach to urban gaming has moved towards innovation and design practices, often related to the development of smart or hackable cities (de Waal *et al.*, 2018). Smart solutions to approach the most varied problems that an urban environment may face are hypothesised through playful design methods and developed as playful experiences. This synthesis is obtained by directly involving stakeholders in the problem at hand and rethinking the definition of public spaces:

This use of play fits into a broader approach that understands the urban public sphere not so much as a predetermined spatial site, but as a potential event space, which has recently also been embraced by city governments as a strategy to increase the quality and functionality of public spaces, a development that the UK government for science has called 'vibrant cities' (Schouten *et al.*, 2017: 27; see also Calzada, 2016).

This use of games for city-making moves through two different paths: on the one hand the stakeholders (public institutions and specific groups, but also and most importantly citizens) are involved not only as testers or potential final users, but also as co-designers. As Schouten *et al.* point out, the 'reflective understanding' of situations represented by a game is not something that naturally emerges through play, but it is something that can be triggered by participation: different stakeholders better understand the issues tackled by a game not only by playing it, but also by co-designing it (Schouten *et al.*, 2017). This co-creation occurs in what can be called the shared 'affinity space' that games generate (Shaffer 2006).

In the context of these games, the very concept of city living is developed through a playful approach, based on what Bernard Suits called 'lusory attitude' – a playful way of acting that can be adopted in most (if not all) human actions (1978). This attitude keeps a constant focus on a fundamental feature of games: their uselessness. Considering this non-teleological reading, instead of being considered tools to be used to obtain a specific result, games are capable of producing free, non-functional experiences within the urban fabric with great potential for innovative interpretations.

The creative focus of the artist residency proposed by UHR dealt with several of the issues discussed so far from different perspectives, with noteworthy implications.

First of all, District 5 Armistizio-Savonarola has been reinterpreted by a group of people that do not live there, as a result of a co-design process in which citizens produced thoughts on citizenship actions during their dialogue with the artists in residence. During the residency, the artists designed this representation, inevitably to be considered a reinterpretation, through a long discussion. The discussion was necessitated by the fact that, due to the COVID-19 lockdown, they could not effectively visit and live in the neighbourhood (with a few exceptions). Because of this, most of the urban explorations that laid the foundations for the design were narrated by other people (experts living in Padua or citizens) and mediated by technologies such as videos or pictures from Google Street View. This, along with the overall difficulty of telling and describing a place to

people who are not locals, led to two consequences: the artists in residence decided to use a main character who arrives on the spot without knowing it (the photographer) and decided not to represent ideas about the future of the neighbourhood (the game is set in present time and is about present or past events).

These choices move the focus from the general idea of triggering citizenship actions through play, towards a different approach that employs the player's reasoning on possible interventions in a later time, disconnected and independent from the game. This premise reveals that the people involved in the project were not interested in setting up a "gamified" context in which game structures aim to trigger predetermined reactions in the player (i.e., she gains points when she completes a level) (see again Schouten *et al.* 2017 and Fuchs *et al.* 2014). The aim has always been to create a "chilled" narrative, set in an urban context to be discovered just out of curiosity. In terms of design, then, the game focuses more on environmental storytelling (Ryan in Koenitz *et al.* 2015) and narrative-driven exploration, and less on deep interactivity and player's sense of agency. There are no complex goals, and the only real objective is purely narrative: to find a fled cat. This objective functions as an excuse for the player to freely explore, interact and discover places and stories, without any kind of pressure or competition, as happens in games like *A Short Hike* (Adamgryu 2019) or *Kentucky Route Zero* (Cardboard Computer 2013) that are not easily linked to classical categories of video games (i.e., the "role-playing games" described by Apperley (2006) or Flanagan's "artist's locative games" (2009). Through its main character, a tourist but also a traveller getting lost in the relational texture the game depicts, *MostaScene* metaphorically represents a non-teleological wandering, a journey as discovery and encounter conducted with Suits' 'lusory attitude' (1978), which defines a possible playful approach to city living (Montola *et al.*, 2009). For the game to be an activator of the subsequent reasoning mentioned above, in-game actions, in-game representations, and in-game meanings are entangled with actual contexts: *MostaScene's* target player is a citizen of District 5 Armistizio-Savonarola, and as such she is supposed to know the urban space portrayed by the game, which obviously resonates with her background. In turn, the artists in residence deal with this urban space by adopting an external perspective, made explicit during the game through the in-game narrative expedient of the photographer.

Citizen involvement has been pivotal during the design phase: citizens spoke with the artists in residence, sharing stories and opinions about the district itself. These interactions were then fully interpreted as a co-design process carried out within an effective affinity space using a human-centred approach (Ideo, 2015); the citizens involved can be considered the main stakeholders of the citizenship actions at hand. A clear example of this process happened during the second phase of UHR, a playtest session conducted with some citizens. While playing the game, among many confirmations and acknowledgements, in certain cases a bit of confusion between the participants emerged. Specifically, one of the scenarios presented in the game deals with an episode of the Italian resistance during the Second World War that not all the citizens involved in the playtest knew. In an emergent narrative exchange not controlled by the artists in residence conducting the playtest, one of the citizens that knew this episode decided to tell and explain through her family's memory the historical facts to the others.

This prolonged relationship between artists in residence and citizens who are both co-designer and players led the game design in a strong non-solutionist direction (Morozov, 2013). The game aims not at proposing practical ways of addressing problems but at 'making complex situations more understandable and accessible for researchers and stakeholders alike' (Schouten *et al.*, 2017: 41). *MostaScene* does not speak of the future or of possible active citizenship interventions in an explicit way. Instead, it aims at providing an experience that will stimulate comprehension and deepen personal knowledge of a specific place.

The Tourist figure in the UHR project

The developments of UHR also intersect other perspectives, different from those outlined so far. One is that of tourism and territorial promotion. In this regard, despite their problematic status in Italy and their slow entry into academic disciplines,¹ digital games increasingly enjoy great attention, as highlighted by the engagement of the Italian Film Commission and IIDEA (Italian Interactive Digital Entertainment Association) in the

¹ In Italy, digital games have been recognised as audio-visual works only recently with the law n. 2020 (2016), entitled *Disciplina del cinema e dell'audiovisivo*, which reforms the provisions of the previous law.

mapping of digital games set in the country or linked to Italian culture, developed by IVIPRO. Being part of this map, *MostaScene* can be used as a tool for promoting an exciting and unusual tour of a multicultural neighbourhood in Padua (See Fig. 6).

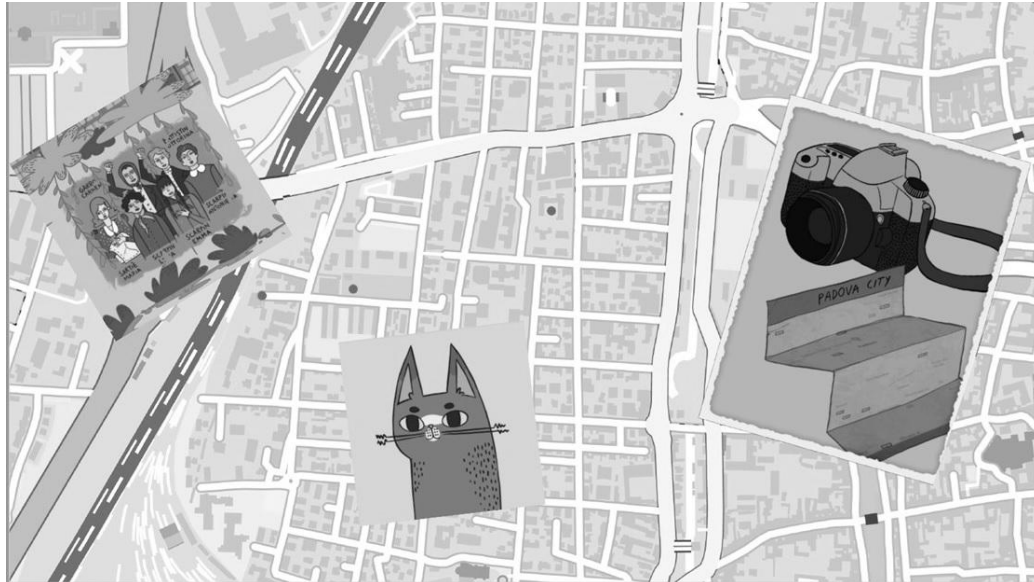


Fig. 6. Map.

Another level of this relationship concerns the key-role given to the tourist-figure in the concept and design of *MostaScene*. As we have highlighted above, UHR project intersects this figure in different moments of its development and in different ways: in the approach of the artists in residence and of the developers of the third phase, in the position of a player, in the concept of the game design and, finally, in the main character of the *MostaScene* prototype. Moreover, it has a determinant role on the notion of reloading process, also stressed in the title of the project, *Urban Histories Reloaded*. The latter identifies the idea of a potentially endless reloading process, allowed by the open access code of the prototype, and promoted by the third phase, a week-long event, which aspires to preserve the attitude towards an endless curiosity and discovery.

This concept has been inspired by some recent developments in tourism studies that question the dominant notion of tourism and tourist-gaze as merely expressions of the commodification of culture “unquestioning” embraced with the market (Bianchi, 2009 p. 484). As Urry clarifies in his 1992 *The tourist gaze revisited*, follow-up of the foremost *The Tourist gaze* (1990), the commodification of culture is not the only field of application of the tourist gaze, while the tourist experience is also not limited to the gaze. Considered as a product of the recent ‘cultural turn’ in social sciences, fresh

approaches address tourism as a controversial phenomenon, interacting with social-cultural representations and promoting social-cultural processes, including the empowering ones. Assumed as a political project and an 'academy of hope' (Ateljevic, Pritchard and Morgan, 2007, 3), the so-called 'critical turn' in tourism studies looks at a model of tourism that may break the submission of touristic experiences to business prerogatives. As we noted in the previous sections, in *MostaScene* the tourist-gaze has been brought into play in different kinds of gaze and experiences, both external and internal, as well as the performativity of the tourist way of seeing. On the external side, the artists in residence, as well as the developers of the reloading phase, adopted for themselves the perspective of tourists visiting District 5 Armistizio-Savonarola: like the photographer in the game, they have been curious explorers, aware of their being strangers but, at the same time, captured by, and caring about, the places they were discovering. On the internal side we find the neighbours: in the first phase they have been storytellers and they testified about their experiences. By playing, the neighbours shift to an external-touristic position, from which they discover different ways and perspectives to see and live in their domestic space, as we have seen during the mentioned playtest. In this regard, we notice that the parameter of distance, as well as that of duration, traditionally involved in the definition of the tourism phenomenon, are now less influential than before, while the experiential factor is becoming increasingly important.

In chasing this shift, UHR focuses on a tourist that has abandoned a safe and distant positioning (protected from the window of a tourist bus or supported by guides in his/her encounter with places and people) and for whom discovery has become something to make an experience of. In touristic terms, an extensive and comprehensive definition of 'experiential' engages participation, involvement, immersion, and an active attitude that goes along with the will – and the pleasure – to learn first-hand about the places visited (Edgell, 2019). Advancing from the traditional paradigm of the tourist gaze, defined as fundamentally visual and image saturated (Urry, 1990), the influential 'performance turn' takes part in breaking the notion of distance between the tourist and the visited places and stresses physical and corporeal patterns into tourism, therefore suggesting that it necessarily consists in 'performing' rather than 'gazing' (Larsen and Urry, 2011). At the same time, the very notion of the touristic journey has changed. Whilst it has been traditionally associated with far away,

even exotic places, the touristic journey has recently been influenced by a fascination with the rich and exciting ‘unknown near’: in other words, the desire to discover or rediscover, but most of all to experience, has taken the place of a desire for distance and for displacement.

In this regard, in opposition to the idea of the tourist as a mere consumer and prisoner of the tourism industry, some argue that tourism and tourists can be included in the enhancement of local heritage and even take part in its ‘creation’ (Palmer and Tivers, 2019; Montella, 2016). The dynamic and broad notion of ‘heritage communities’ (‘comunità patrimoniali’ Bonesio, 2007; Carmosino, 2013) involves every person who pays attention and cares about spaces, monuments, or objects: not only the natives or inhabitants of a territory or the citizens of a nation, but everyone who cares, including the figure of the tourist we are talking about. On the other hand, the recent trends towards domestic tourism and slow-travel approaches are involving more and more indigenous people in the role of tourists (e.g., in the so-called Km Zero tours). Inhabitants are then involved both into the relational path, as tourists interact with them in an experiential mutual exchange, and as potential tourists themselves of their own territory, which becomes a place to discover, enjoy and care about, even if only for a while.

Conclusion

As outlined so far, the UHR project aimed at favouring the engagement with the actual world, and especially with experiences of city-living and tourism. This has been achieved by the *MostaScene* co-designing participatory processes (involving both stakeholders, citizens, and institutions) we described above. More importantly, as we have outlined, the playable prototype designed during the project favours an innovative and autonomous interpretation of the urban space by a player, by providing her with a non-functional digital experience. In other words, *MostaScene* is a playful digital experience that aims at empowering individuals and at favouring active citizenship, and at the same time at triggering proximity tourism and proactive city living.

Such ‘empowering sway’ is not limited to the game experience itself: not only can *MostaScene* favour novel interpretations of the urban space in the user but, maybe more interestingly, it can favour such interpretations and territorial processes due to its openness. By allowing developers and designers to download, modify, and expand

the open-access source code of the game, the UHR project may achieve its most interesting implications: co-designing the game becomes itself an action of citizenship.

This chance of ‘reloading’ new areas, characters, narratives, representations, and game mechanics, at the same time, is one of its most uncertain aspects – as a matter of fact, the openness of the project may require the interlocking skills and backgrounds of further groups of designers, artists and programmes, and therefore the empowering effect of UHR may run the risk of remaining unexpressed.

Despite this, of course, some outputs and developments of the project seem to confirm the interest that both institutions and associations have towards the project.

On the one hand, the municipality of Padua was interested in promoting new policies of *neighbourhood* storytellings, in echoes with other experiences carried out in Italy, such as in the case of the graphic novel *Quartieri. Viaggio al centro delle periferie italiane (Neighbourhoods: A Journey into Italian Suburbs, 2019)* by the designer and geographer Giada Peterle and the sociologist Adriano Cancellieri, which focused on five neighbourhoods in five different Italian cities, including the District Arcella in Padua. The impact aroused by these narrations is able to support internal and external touristic attention influenced by the new waves of touristic thinking and praxis above recalled, such as in the case of the success of ‘migrant tours’ inside the Italian cities or of so-called alternative (to the monumental ones) urban itineraries. On the other hand, on the association side, a cooperation with Geacoop as associated partner has launched the Project Consortium, to carry out the project’s proposal, “SPORT is N.E.A.R. – Sports in Neighbourhoods for Empowerment, Activation, Reconnection”, which was submitted under the Erasmus+ Cooperation partnerships (ERASMUS-SPORT-2021-SCP) of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission, to promote a European cooperation on the Priority “Inclusion and Diversity”. GEA is a non-profit social cooperative, founded in Padova in 2004 focused on the promotion and the implementation of activities and programmes aimed at facilitating integration and active citizenship of migrant people, families, communities, with specific attention to women, youth, and vulnerable groups. Another example is the collaboration for the Abitare Festival (To Inhabit Festival, 5 August 2021), event of the Next to me - Reti di vicinanze project (Next to me – Networks of proximities), promoted by several territorial entities, including the municipality of Padua, in partnership with the University of Padua and social associations, supported

by the European council related to the strategies on social inclusion and legality. The *MostaScene* experience has been selected as well for the EduTalks@Council of Europe on the pedagogical potential of video games for developing digital citizenship (October 8, 2021). Concerning the tourism impact and the promotion of the territory, it is worth mentioning the presentation given in the frame of the encounters organised by Veneto Film Commission and Regione Veneto during the 78th Mostra Internazionale d'Arte Cinematografica (6 September 2021).

Such expressions of interest, together with the repeatability of the project, may favour the rise of other similar experiences, eventually based in other cities or local contexts.

At the same time, as we may have outlined throughout this paper, and regardless of its future iterations, the UHR project may already have proven useful for theoretical reasons. It exemplifies how participatory processes of co-design may result in empowering playful experiences, favouring active citizenship in both users and designers, even if for the moment we are dealing with provisional conclusions and recognition of potential. For a deeper and more precise report on the results of such an intervention, we would need a new field study to observe both the eventual long-term effects on District 5 citizens and the eventual further uses of *MostaScene* or its future versions.

REFERENCES

- AARSETH, ESPEN J. (1997), *Cybertext. Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- APPERLEY, THOMAS H. (2006), Genre and Game Studies: Towards a Critical Approach to Video Game Genres. *Simulation and Gaming*, 37(1), pp. 6-23.
- (2010), Gaming Rhythms: Play and Counterplay from the Situated to the Global. *Theory on Demand*, 6, pp. 1-170.
- ARJORANTA, JONNE (2015), *Real-Time Hermeneutics. Meaning-Making in Ludonarrative Digital Games*. PhD, University of Jyväskylä. Supervised by: Koskimaa, Raine, and Harviainen, J. Tuomas.
- ATELJEVIC, IRENA — PRITCHARD, ANNETTE — NIGEL, MORGAN (eds) (2007), *The Critical Turn in Tourism Studies*, Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- BOGOST, IAN (2007), *Persuasive games: The expressive power of videogames*, Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- BONESIO, LUISA (2007), *Paesaggio, identità e comunità tra locale e globale*, Reggio Emilia: Diabasis.
- CALZADA, IGOR (2016), *Smartness for Prosperity: UK & Brazil*. Rochester: Social Science Research Network.
- CANCELLIERI, ADRIANO — PETERLE, GIADA (2019), *Quartieri. Viaggio al centro delle periferie italiane*. Padova: Becco Giallo.
- CARMOSINO, CINZIA (2013), Il valore del patrimonio culturale fra Italia e Europa. La Convenzione quadro del Consiglio d'Europa sul valore del patrimonio culturale per la società. *Aedon. Rivista di Arti e Diritto online*, 1, pp. 1-14.

- CHALMERS, DAVID J. (2017), The Virtual and the Real. *Disputatio*, 9(46), pp. 309-352.
- CHAPMAN, ADAM (2016), *Digital Games as History. How Videogames Represent the Past and Offer Access to Historical Practice*. New York: Routledge.
- DE WAAL, MARTIJN — DE LANGE, MICHIEL — BOUW, MATTHIJS (2018), *The Hackable City Cahier #1 #2 #3. The Hackable City: a Model for Collaborative Citymaking*. Amsterdam: The Hackable City.
- DUBOIS, GIBS (2018), Video game-induced tourism: a new frontier for destination marketers. *Tourism Review*, 73/2, pp. 186-198.
- EDGELL SR, DAVID L. (2019), *Managing Sustainable Tourism: A Legacy for the Future*. New York, NY: Routledge
- FERRI, GABRIELE — COPPOCK, PATRICK (2013), Serious Urban Games. From play in the city to play for the city. In: Tosoni, Simone — Tarantino, Matteo — Giaccardi, Chiara (eds), *Media and the City: Urbanism, Technology and Communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholar Publishing.
- FERRI, GABRIELE — SALVADOR, MAURO — SCHOUTEN, BEN — VENTURI, IVAN (2017), Memory Must Not Be Lost. “Progetto Ustica” and Civically-Engaged Games. In: *CHI PLAY '17 Extended Abstracts: Extended Abstracts Publication of the Annual Symposium on Computer-Human Interaction in Play*. New York: Association for Computing Machinery.
- FLANAGAN, MARY (2009), *Critical Play: Radical Game Design*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- FLUCK, WINFRIED (1988), Fiction and Fictionality in Popular Culture: Some Observations on the Aesthetics of Popular Culture. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 21(4), 49-62. doi:10.1111/j.0022-3840.1988.00049.x
- FRISINA, ALESSANDRA — GHEBREMARIAM TESFAU', MAGDA — FRISINA, SALVATORE [n.d.], Decolonize your eyes, Padova. Pratiche visuali di decolonizzazione della città. *Roots & Routes. Research on visual Cultures*. Available from: <https://www.roots-routes.org/decolonize-your-eyes-padova-pratiche-visuali-di-decolonizzazione-della-citta-di-annalisa-frisina-mackda-ghebremariam-tesfau-e-salvatore-frisina/> (accessed 22 November 2021).
- FOUSEKI, KELLIPOI — GUTTORMSEN, TORGRIM SNEVE — SWENSEN, GRETA (eds) (2020), *Heritage and sustainable urban transformations: deep cities*. Abingdon: Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge.
- FRISSEN, VALERIE — LAMMES, SYBILLE — DE LANGE, MICHIEL — DE MUL, JOS — RAESSENS, JOOST (eds) (2015), *Playful Identities. The Ludification of Digital Media Cultures*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- FUCHS, MATTHIAS — FIZEK, SONJA — RUFFINO, PAOLO — SCHRAPE, NICHOLAS (eds) (2014), *Rethinking Gamification*, Luneburg: Meson Press.
- GADAMER, HANS-GEORG (1977), *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. Linge, David E. (ed.), Berkeley: University of California Press.
- (2006), Classical and Philosophical Hermeneutics. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23(1), pp. 29-56.
- GOFFMAN, ERVING (1961), *Encounters. Two studies in the Sociology of Interaction*. Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill.
- GRACE, LINDSAY D. (2020), *Love and Electronic Affection. A Design Primer*. Boca Raton: CRC Press.
- GUALENI, STEFANO (2015), *Virtual Worlds as Philosophical Tools: How to Philosophize with a Digital Hammer*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- GUALENI, STEFANO — VELLA, DANIEL (2020), *Virtual Existentialism: Meaning and Subjectivity in Virtual Worlds*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- IDEO (2015), *The Field Guide to Human-Centered Design*. Ido.org
- JUUL, JASPER (2005), *Half-Real: Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

- KOENITZ, HARTMUT — FERRI, GABRIELE — HAAHR, MADS — SEZEN, DIĞDEM — SEZEN, TONGUÇ İBRAHİM (eds) (2015), *Interactive Digital Narrative. History, Theory and Practice*, New York: Routledge.
- LARSEN, JONAS — URRY, JOHN (2011). Gazing and Performing. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29 (6), pp. 1110-1125.
- LEORKE, DALE — OWENS, MARCUS (eds) (2020), *Games and Play in the Creative, Smart and Ecological City*. London: Routledge.
- LICARI, GIUSEPPE (2006), *Antropologia Urbana. Il caso dei contratti di quartiere*. Padova: Cleup.
- MONTELLA, MASSIMO (2016). La Convenzione di Faro e la tradizione culturale italiana. *Il capitale culturale*, 5, pp. 13-36.
- MONTOLA, MARKUS — STENROS, JAKKO — WAERN, ANNIKA (2009), *Pervasive Games. Theory and Design*. Burlington: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers.
- MOROZOV, EVGENIJ (2013), *To Save Everything, Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism*. New York: PublicAffairs: New York.
- PALMER, CATHERINE — TIVERS, JACQUELINE (2019). *Creating Heritage for Tourism*. Abingdon Oxon-New York: Routledge.
- SCHMID, WOLF (2009), Implied author. In: Hühn, Peter — Pier, John — Schmid, Wolf — Schönert, Jörg (eds), *Handbook of Narratology*. Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 161-173.
- SCHOUTEN, BEN — FERRI, GABRIELE — DE LANGE, MICHIEL — MILLENAAR, KAREL (2017), Games as Strong Concepts for City-Making. In: Nijholt, Anton (ed.), *Playable Cities, Gaming Media and Social Effects*. Singapore: Springer.
- SHAFFER, DAVID WILLIAMSON (2006), *How Computer Games Help Children Learn*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- SMETHURST, TOBY — CRAPS, STEF (2014), Playing with Trauma: Interactivity, Empathy, and Complicity in The Walking Dead Video Game. *Games and Culture*, 10(3), pp. 269-290.
- SUITS, BERNARD (1978), *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- URRY, JOHN (1990), *The Tourist Gaze*. London: Sage.
- (1992), *The Tourist Gaze Revisited*, *American Behavioral Scientist*, 36 (2), pp. 172-186.
- VAN DE MOSSELAER, NELE (2020), *The Paradox of Interactive Fiction. A New Approach to Imaginative Participation in Light of Interactive Fiction Experiences*. PhD, University of Antwerp. Supervised by: Cools, Arthur, and Myin, Erik.
- VAN DE MOSSELAER, NELE — GUALENI, STEFANO (2020), The Implied Designer and the Experience of Gameworlds, *Proceedings of the 2020 DiGRA international Conference*. Tampere, Finland, June 2-6, 2020.
- VARIOUS AUTHORS (2020) *MostaScene* [mobile game]. Impact Srl, Dipartimento dei Beni Culturali, IVIPRO. Available from: www.urbanhistories.it/il-gioco/ (accessed April 27th, 2021).
- VELLA, DANIEL — GUALENI, STEFANO (2018), Virtual Subjectivity: Existence and Projectuality in Virtual Worlds. *Techne': Research in Philosophy of Technology*, 23(2).
- ZHANG, LONGXI (2004), History and fictionality: Insights and limitations of a literary perspective. *Rethinking History*, 8(3), pp. 387-402.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Stefano CASELLI is a PhD student at the Institute of Digital Games (University of Malta). His research is focused on the role of memory in digital games, concerning both collective and individual memory studies,

existential ludology, and philosophy of technology. As a part of his research, he has recently written a paper about memory and digital games' aesthetics and organised the 'Forgetting and Remembering' workshop at the international conference FDG 2020. He is a teacher of video game screen-writing at the Academy of Fine Arts SantaGiulia in Brescia (Italy). Since 2017, he has collaborated with the Italian Cultural Association IVIPRO – Italian Videogame Program, a national and cross-regional project that aims at mapping Italy from a videogame-oriented perspective.

Farah POLATO *is a lecturer at the University of Padua, where she teaches Filmology. She is on the scientific advisory committee of the book series SPCM (Studi Postcoloniali di Cinema e Media/Postcolonial Film and Media Studies) and on the editorial board of FES (From the European South. A transdisciplinary journal of Postcolonial Humanities). Her research focuses on postcolonial theory and cultures, new citizenships and belongings. She is the coordinator of CineLands, a multidisciplinary project about media, landscape and tourism. Among her recent works, the special issue of Imago, Postcolonial Narratives of the Present, between Conflict and Coexistence (19, 2019) co-edited with Leonardo De Franceschi.*

Mauro SALVADOR *holds a PhD in Communication Culture. He works on gamification processes and on the spreading influence of games in media environments. He is Adjunct Professor at the University of Bologna, at the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, and at the University of Padua. He works as a game designer with the Dotventi Collective and he teaches Game Design at the Event Horizon School of Digital Art.*

What is visual Vaporwave?

Vaporwave arts and their history and position in China

ZHANG Xiaolong | Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/2021.10.ZHA.VAPOR](https://doi.org/10.32926/2021.10.ZHA.VAPOR)

ABSTRACT

By Vaporwave we refer to a digital-born electronic music genre and a trend in visual aesthetics. It emerged in some US-based online communities in the early 2010s, and now its visual expressions are in vogue in Chinese visual media context. In this article, Vaporwave's aesthetics are discussed through three stages of analysis. In the first part, the paper outlines relevant theories and general features of Vaporwave's (both visual and musical) aesthetics; next, the paper focuses on Vaporwave's visual characteristics, and, to provide a deeper understanding of its visual aesthetics, I discuss a school of painting derived from early twentieth-century Italy—Metaphysical art. In the second part, the article discusses why and how vaporwave aesthetics are inseparable from some Japanese visual characteristics and how it is represented in China, with particular reference to examples of Japanese comics from the 1980s/early 1990s and one popular Chinese video-focused social media TikTok in recent years. In the third part, the article focuses on illustrating Vaporwave's visual features in the Chinese context in recent years, and several examples are provided.

KEYWORDS

Vaporwave; Social critique; Nostalgia; 1980s/1990s Japan; Japanese animation; Chinese cultural context; TikTok ('Dou yin').

Date of submission: 21 November 2021

Date of acceptance: 17 December 2021

Date of publication: 20 December 2021

1. Introduction

Since previous research have focused mainly on exploring vaporwave music rather than vaporwave images. Even the characteristics and general features of visual Vaporwave are not well defined and analysed, so one of my aims for this study is to discuss vaporwave images in the first instance. In addition, since Vaporwave is currently known to a large Chinese audience mainly through the platform TikTok (more than 600 million Chinese people use TikTok now), it is important to investigate how Vaporwave visuals represented on TikTok. Thus, in section 1, I will introduce the origin of Vaporwave. After that, vaporwave music and visuals will be analysed in sections 2 and 3, respectively. Of course, the focus of the discussion will be on visual Vaporwave. In sections 4 and 5, I will discuss vaporwave arts and their history and position in China.

Vaporwave is a neologism that is thought to be derived from “vapourware”, a term that is used to describe “products that miss their previously announced release date” (Bayus, Jain, and Rao, 2001: 3) or products that are publicly announced or advertised but never reach production (Born and Haworth, 2017; McLeod, 2018). In 1982, when Ann Winblad, president of Open Systems Accounting Software, visited Microsoft and sought to know whether the company was really planning to develop “Xenix” operating systems for her company, and she was told by two engineers of Microsoft (Jhon Ulett and Mark Ursion) that the project was only “vaporware”, as it had stopped (Bayus, Jain, and Rao, 2001; McLeod, 2018). Later, Ann Winblad described it as “selling smoke” (McLeod, 2018: 125). Taking its name from vaporware, Vaporwave “employs a corny depiction of retro imagery to evoke capitalist sleaze, working to expose the emptiness underlying the glossy sheen of late consumer capitalism” (Koc, 2016: 61).

The term “Vaporware” was popularised by the editor of *InfoWorld*, Stewart Alsop in 1985, as he presented Bill Gates with the Golden Vaporware award at the Alexic Hotel in Las Vegas to celebrate Microsoft’s release of the first version of the Windows operating system. Although “vaporware” was coined in the 1980s, Vaporwave emerged in the early 2010s, and it refers to a kind of “audio-visual Internet aesthetic characterised by a fascination with retro cultural aesthetics” (Koc, 2016: 61). However, it is worth noting that Vaporwave appeared as music in the first instance. According to Born and Haworth (2017: 634), it first appeared in one anonymous post on the experimental music blog Weedtemple in 2011. Soon after, Vaporwave emerged on the Internet across various formats, including still images, GIFs (Graphics Interchange Format), memes, videos, etc. Therefore, Koc (2016) defined it as audio-visual aesthetics.

In sum, vaporwave aesthetics generally present themselves in two types of presentations: one is the musical form, and the other is the visual form. Due to the popularity of video platforms, vaporwave artists tend to combine these audio-visual contents together into one video; but regardless whether it is in audio or visual form, Vaporwave is usually considered as an “Internet genre”, as “it emerged solely on and through digital platforms” (Glitsos, 2018: 103). In the following two sections, I will start with a discussion of vaporwave music; the following discussion will focus on the outgrowth of vaporwave music—vaporwave visuals, because “Vaporwave” first appears as a genre of music; subsequently, vaporwave visuals are derived from vaporwave music.

2. A misty music

The history of “Vaporwave” is not very long. It is widely accepted that Vaporwave first emerged as a genre of electronic music on the Internet in the early 2010s, and several new media platforms and websites like Tumblr, Turntable.FM, Reddit, and 4Chan have been mainly used by vaporwave artists to share their outputs (Born and Haworth, 2017; Killeen, 2018; Whelan and Nowak, 2018;). Also, it is consistently recognised that Macintosh Plus’s *Floral Shoppe*,¹ James Ferraro’s *Far Side Virtual*,² and Chuck Person’s *Eccojams Vol. 1*,³ are the three foundational albums in the vaporwave genre, and these albums have been named as the “big three” (Glitsos, 2018; Whelan and Nowak, 2018). Macintosh Plus’s *Floral Shoppe* (2011) in particular generally stands as the prototype of vaporwave music (Glitsos, 2018: 103); one track of this album, リサフランク 420 - 現代のコンピュー (Lisa Frank 420 / Modern Computing), is widely recognised as the defining work of this genre (McLeod, 2018). Although the name of this track is in Japanese, it is based on Diana Ross’s *It’s Your Move*, an English-language song.

In general, vaporwave music is not original music, as it is created by using pre-existent music. York (2020: 105) directly points out that vaporwave music “is far from original: it does not use samples in a clever or innovative way, it just rips the original music and slows it down”. More specifically, vaporwave music generally takes extensive samples from “elevator music” of the 1980s/early 1990s, including mellow adult-contemporary pop music, smooth jazz, MoR (morendo music; dying away in tone and time), easy listening, ringtones, Tv advertising soundtracks,⁴ and so on (Born and Haworth 2017; McLeod 2018; Whelan and Nowak 2018). The structure of vaporwave is usually short and repetitive (Glitsos, 2018). Having recycled the crude samples of

¹ *Floral Shoppe* by Macintosh Plus (Ramona Andra Xavier, an American artist, she also creates under the pseudonyms of Vektroid, New Dreams Ltd, PrismCorp, Virtual Enterprises, Laserdisc Visions and 情報デスク VIRTUAL), and this album was released in 2011.

² *Far Side Virtual* by James Ferraro, this album was released in 2011.

³ *Eccojams Vol. 1* was released in 2010 by Chuck Person (Daniel Lopatin, he also goes by Oneohtrix Point Never).

⁴ Elevator music refers to popular songs that often played in the elevator and in retail stores; this term was first used in 1963. “Elevator music.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/elevator%20music> (Accessed 21 Aug. 2021). The advertising soundtracks particularly refer to “those for consumer electronics, luxury hotels, and other icons of consumer capitalism” (Born and Haworth 2018, p. 636).

music that dates from the 1980s/early 1990s, these samples are orchestrated by blending, slowing down (sitting around 60-90 BPM),⁵ reverbing, looping, and adding noise, which aims to make the music enigmatic, nostalgic, “stretched out” and lo-fi, and then to give the audience a sense of detachment from the real world.⁶

Vaporwave is generally capable of provoking and evoking the memory of the 1980s/early 1990s because of its heavy use of music samples that date from that time. This capability of triggering a strong surge of nostalgia for the days of the 1980s/early 1990s is more explicitly and obviously manifested through its visuals (this issue will be discussed in the section 3). Glitsos (2018: 100) therefore treats Vaporwave as a kind of project that “produces, and takes pleasure in, a kind of ‘memory play’”; Born and Haworth (2017: 633) directly indicates that “Vaporwave is the most ‘current’ of the nostalgia genres”. However, Vaporwave cannot be simply read as “retro aesthetic” because the recycled or borrowed historic music samples are produced by cutting-edge digital systems; it embraces the Internet as its medium; its circulation is net-based (Glitsos, 2018; Born and Hawaorth, 2018). As a result, Vaporwave “both constructs and represents the anxieties in digital communities that emerge from tensions between memory and amnesia” (Glitsos, 2018: 106).

On the other hand, drawing on Trainer’s (2016) and Healy’s (2006) discussions on memory and nostalgia, Glitsos (2018) indicates that Vaporwave creates a tension between memory and forgetting in the listening experience, as the aroused memory during the listening, in fact, may never happen, or it happened but has been imperceptibly forgotten or discarded in terms of one’s memory. This is because, in the age of media oversaturation, the “mass-marketed” memory we consume is generally an “imagined memory” that can be rapidly replaced by another one. Hence, it can be more easily forgotten than lived memories. Drawing from “vaporware”, Vaporwave is a mockery of capitalism’s windbaggary, which “plays with the idea of nostalgia for something that never happened” (Glitsos, 2018: 104). Hence, Vaporwave discursively mixes (or remixes) and repurposes pre-existent music to “construct a phantasmal and liminal *remembering experience* in which memory both happens and does not happen”

⁵ BPM is an abbreviation of Beats Per Minute.

⁶ Here is a free link for Macintosh Plus’s *Floral Shoppe*: <https://youtu.be/cCq0P509UL4?t=207>.

(Glitsos, 2018: 106); the contradictions between “happen” and “unhappen” and old and new in Vaporwave, in effect, empower Vaporwave to create a kind of surreal auditory and visual feeling that pass through the boundaries between the past, the present, and the future (Glitsos, 2018: 114).

3. Vaporwave visuals

General features of vaporwave visuals

Vaporwave’s “retro aesthetic” (Reynolds, 2011: 349) is more directly and vividly apparent in vaporwave visuals. Visual Vaporwave is derived from musical Vaporwave, so the general aesthetic features of visual Vaporwave conform to the aesthetics of vaporwave music, which, to recapitulate briefly, are lo-fi, fuzzy, distorted or “glitched”, both old and new, both familiar and odd, etc., and more importantly, like vaporwave music, visual Vaporwave is a created based upon pre-existent artefacts. However, for both vaporwave music and visuals, critics and the audience hold different views regarding them.

First, the title of vaporwave outputs, on the Internet, is usually typed in full-width Unicode text or with full-width capital letters (McLeod, 2018; Killeen, 2018). In doing so, the audience has to read the “partitioned” word letter for letter; therefore, the “fractured” and elongated visual effects of the text are in line with Vaporwave’s audio expressions, whose “glitched” and slowed down samples produce a lo-fi and muzzy quality that feels as if it is not from the real world.

Vaporwave visuals are often comprised of collages with low-resolution images, including images of 1980s commodities (like the Nintendo Entertainment System, Video Home System, Sony Walkman, soda cans, etc.), dated 8-bit computer graphics, Greco-Roman sculpture busts, checkboard patterns, geometric patterns, Japanese characters (Koc, 2016; Mcleod, 2018; York, 2020; Glitsos, 2018), as well as “isolated Japanese cityscapes, idealised images from popular Japanese culture—invariably in neon colours” (Born and Haworth, 2017: 636). With equal significance, the visual aesthetics of Vaporwave frequently and heavily rely on pastel colours (predominantly pink). Figure 1 shows the album cover of *Floral Shoppe*: the colour tone of this picture is pink, which is the key to set a kind of magic, fantastic and chic mood; moreover, the pastel lime green of the title, the fluorescent purple reflected by the sea surface and the

orange of the sunset, all have the same effect in the image of creating a fantastic and dream-like atmosphere.



Fig. 1. Album cover of *Macintosh Plus* album, *Floral Shoppe* (2015). **Source:**
<https://warosu.org/fa/thread/6308267> - Fair use,
<https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=56767115>

In addition to the heavily used pastel pink, the most salient object in Figure 1 is the image of a marble portrait of Helios, the ancient Greek sun god, set on a pink-and-black checkboard pattern. In contrast to the Greco-Roman statue, the title of this album is written in Japanese characters (*katakana*, *hiragana*, and *kanji*), which represents Japanese culture. Previous research (Bartal, 2013; Seaton, 2001) has found that in the case of Japanese advertising design, the use of Japanese characters (except for *rōmaji*) often represents a sense of tradition, and the image of Helios is even truer of symbolisation of traditional fine arts culture; however, an image of a contemporary metropolis is placed on the right side of this figure. In line with vaporwave music, therefore, this juxtaposition of a contemporary city with an ancient bust creates an anachronistic construction of “old and new”. It is also a collision of tradition and modernity. It is, by its very nature, a paradoxical genre that “generally disavows capitalism and consumerism” (McLeod, 2018: 128). Like one article from the magazine *Tharunka* says,

Vaporwave [...] seeks to investigate capitalism “from within” instead of challenging it “from without.” By sampling, mixing, chopping, and mashing heavily commercial

music and sounds from the 80s and 90s, Vaporwave questions the promise and idealism of that era. It was a time when capitalism had prevailed over communism, when greed was good and crucially, a time when computers became commercially available for the first time, offering a brighter and easier future. The disappointment of many at the hands of neoliberal economics, in combination with our clear failure to achieve the promised techno-utopia, gives rise to the resistance within Vaporwave (Mangos 24 August 2017).

Similar opinions are also given by many other critics. For example, Grafton Tanner indicates that “the majority of vaporwave albums can be read as indictments of life under the sign of consumption” (Tanner, 2016: 44), as the sonic and visual representations and distortions in vaporwave are the aesthetics of parody and dissent that criticise the logic of capitalism (Killeen, 2018: 630); these aesthetics aptly demonstrate the dissatisfaction with both the political failure and the utopian dreams of 1980s’ corporate capitalism (McLeod, 2018: 138), and this may also reflect why Vaporwave emerged in the early 2010s, just a few years after the 2008 global financial crisis. Therefore, Vaporwave is often described as a critique of contemporary capitalism or an exponent of dystopia. As Koc says,

vaporwave reproduces a melancholy affect through an aesthetic representation of the depthlessness, waning of affect, new technologies, pastiche, and collapse of high/low categories into consumer culture ... Vaporwave aesthetics can thus be understood as creating a cognitive map of the bleak affective space of late capitalism, inviting viewers and listeners to step inside of it and critique it from within (Koc, 2016: 40-1).

However, Nowak and Whelan comment that it would be simplistic to view Vaporwave as a critique of contemporary capitalism; if it is,

it is the kind of critique which also undermines, or, in the interpretive idiom these writers often espouse, accelerates, the moment of critical insight by pre-emptively turning it against itself. Vaporwave is given the cake and gets to eat it too, insofar as it seems to have something to say about capitalism, but what it says could not be said without the commercial music it repurposes or the networked platform cultures that gave rise to and sustain it (Nowak and Wheland 2018, p. 457).

Recently, McLeod (2018: 128-9) has found evidence that vaporwave seemingly falls into the embrace of capitalism, as some leading vaporwave artists sell their works

online, from albums to related products like T-shirts and hoodies that feature the album cover of *Floral Shoppe*, for example.

Although the success of Vaporwave's audio and visual messages increases its own popularity, media exposure, and Internet fame and then it is passively or actively associated with consumption in some respects, its original intentions are more likely to be related to the critique of capitalism. For example, the work of most vaporwave artists is released under various offbeat company names such as New Dreams Ltd., Virtual Information Desk, PrismCorp Virtual Enterprises, and Laserdisc Visions (McLeod, 2018). The use of a language of empty business names and the heavy use of pseudonyms makes vaporwave or vaporwave artists akin to one of the most famous hacking groups—Anonymous, and very interestingly, 4Channnel.org (4Chan) was one of the most important platforms for both Vaporwave and Anonymous in their very beginning stages. The “anonymous” phenomenon constructed by vaporwave creates an aura of worldwide ambiguity and mystery, as it evokes “a dystopic and vaporous, if not vapid, technocorporate world” (McLeod, 2018: 127), or in short, it evokes “vaporware”.

More significantly, Vaporwave is a critique of capitalism, but clearly not limited to it. Vaporwave's nostalgic contents or themes indeed mock the previously mentioned concept of “vaporware”. But it is not only a critique of the failure of capitalism, it is also a critique of the rapid expansions of capitalism in the 2000s/2010s, or, for the major fans of Vaporwave (predominantly, the generation who is born after 80s/90s), a deep reminiscence for the lost 1980s, in which the culture and consumer exotica they once dreamed of and desired to have become obsolete or faded before they could embrace or achieve them (Zhao, 27 September 2019). It is, therefore, a kind of mourning and nostalgia for the lost 1980s/early 1990s. Nostalgia is a sentiment that we can find among all generations; in Svetlana Boym's book *The Future of Nostalgia*, the author notes that

Nostalgia... is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's fantasy. Nostalgic love can only survive in a long-distance relationship. A cinematic image of nostalgia is a double exposure, or superimposition of two images—of home and abroad, past and present, and dream and everyday life. The moment when we try to force it into a single image, it breaks the frame or burns the surface (Boym, 2001: xiii)

Thus, in Figure 1, the anachronistic juxtapositions of, for example, the image of Helios with the image of the modern metropolis, certainly breaks the frame itself and brings the

audience to a mysterious world that appears as neither the present nor the past, but it satisfies the nostalgia of the 1980s/early 90s, and people are immersed in the melancholic atmosphere this figure creates. In support, Killeen (2020: 632) also demonstrates that in the early stage of Vaporwave's development, vaporwave artists did not solely treat their work as social critique, "but as a more poetic intervention, one borne of a fascination with the surpluses of intensity transmitted by these outmoded audiovisuals".

Visual aesthetics of vaporwave and Giorgio de Chirico's metaphysical paintings

Regardless of the social critique of Vaporwave, nostalgia and melancholy would appear to be the overarching themes in visual Vaporwave (as well as in music). The nostalgic theme can be represented by the vaporwave artist's engagement with visual elements of cultural nostalgia, childhood memory, and dated technologies, but these elements could not ensure the melancholy theme in vaporwave being properly manifested. According to Koc (2016: 64), the effect of melancholy or melancholic nostalgia in Vaporwave is largely created by "an aestheticisation of the feelings of estrangement produced by the salient characteristics of late capitalism". That is to say, in vaporwave visuals, there must be something through which it is possible to reconstruct these nostalgic contents to be "untouchable" or "impalpable", just like Koc (2016: 57) defines as a nostalgic longing for the 1980s' and 1990s' capitalism "that is fleeing further and further into an inaccessible history".

However, in his article, Koc's (2016) text analysis partly fails to explicate what exactly constructs the melancholy in Vaporwave, as he merely believes that the use of visual elements like VHS, Windows 95 operating system, outdated video game consoles can at least reproduce a bleak affective space of 1980s/90s late capitalism.⁷ According to Boym (2001: xiii), "fantasises of the past determined by needs of the present have a direct impact on realities of the future"; in light of this statement, Vaporwave arts are the manifestations of our current longing for the past. However, if there really is a market for these "old" technologies, it is apparent that today's world has no barriers or

⁷ The concept of late capitalism was introduced by Ernest Mandel in his 1972 book *Late Capitalism*. Tratnik (2021, pp. 39-40) remarks that later capitalism was "signified by the establishment of multinational corporations, globalized markets and work, mass consumerism and the fluid flow of capital, which has taken place from the 1960s onwards", and the present globalized market "is still in the phase of late capitalism" (p. 39).

challenges to reproduce these commodities, but why is our society today not flooded with these obsolete products? This is because what we truly yearn for is “a different time—the time of our childhood, the slower rhymes of our dreams” (Boym, 2001: xiii) rather than the material outmoded commodity. Therefore, for achieving or producing an “untouchable” feeling towards the so-called past, in the context of Vaporwave, a range of discursive visual elements are used to furnish the feeling, as it can create a surreal image. Therefore, the visual elements of outmoded objects in Vaporwave largely convey people’s longing for the past. Melancholy at this point may only be manifested through the aesthetic that makes the past “untouchable”. In spite of the wide popularity of vaporwave visual styling, it has not been without criticism. Some critics just see it as a kind of “mash-up” art (Glitsos, 2018), and some viewers directly question “is this art?” (Koc, 2016: 64). Is this art? In this article, I will now argue that Giorgio de Chirico’s metaphysical paintings, in particular, his work *Canto d’amore* (‘Song of Love’, 1914), may have the explanatory power for this issue.

Giorgio de Chirico (1888–1978) was an Italian artist. In 1915, he met Carlo Carrà (a former Futurist artist) in the Military Hospital in Ferrara, and they founded the *Pittura Metafisica* school (the school of Metaphysical Painting). Hassall writes that his “place in the canon of twentieth-century art is not only secure, but was indeed pivotal” (2020: 100). Broadly speaking, metaphysical painting refers to building a dream-like image or creating a visionary world of the mind which goes beyond the real physical world. As noted by Brazeau (2019: 20-1), de Chirico’s metaphysical paintings are usually pastiched by unconnected/loose and mutually bizarre objects. Hence, it can be seen from this perspective that the visual aesthetics of Vaporwave are quite similar to de Chirico’s metaphysical aesthetics, as they both refer to the creation of discursivity and the oneiric world; however, metaphysical painting is not the only genre that applies unsystematic visual elements, similar expressions can also be found in art movements such as Dadaism, Futurism, and Surrealism. Therefore, what makes Vaporwave and de Chirico’s metaphysical painting similar, in effect, is the nostalgic and melancholy themes they both present.

Many of de Chirico’s metaphysical paintings are titled with the word— “melancholy” such as *Malinconia di una bella giornata* (‘Melancholy of a Beautiful Day’, 1913), *Mistero e malinconia di una strada* (‘Mystery and Melancholy of a Street’, 1914), *La malinconia della partenza* (‘The Melancholy of Departure’, 1916). Giorgio de Chirico’s emphasis on

“melancholy” is understandable because when he was very young, his father died; he experienced the First World War (1914-1918), and he was weary of relocating due to the war and his family issues. Therefore, he usually pinned his longing for the “hometown” or childhood memory to his paintings. The dream-like objects or scenes in de Chirico’s metaphysical paintings are nothing but his nostalgia for his childhood, a beautiful memory of no return, doomed to live in his mind. De Chirico himself said that “to become truly immortal a work of art must escape all human limits: logic and common sense will only interfere. But once these barriers are broken it will enter the regions of childhood vision and dream” (cited in Friedenthal, 1963: 231).

Human beings are physically constrained by time and space, so de Chirico believed that the only way to go back to childhood or the “imagined childhood” is to break the general logic of time and space. Therefore, in his paintings, the viewer can often see that the typical Italian town squares are depicted in a realist style, but these squares are unnaturally empty. This seems to say that “I” have been here, but where are my friends, my family (which also reminds the audience it is a dream. e.g., Figure 2 and Figure 3)? In doing so, a sense of melancholy arises spontaneously in the viewer’s mind. Similarly, as noted by Koc (2016) the depiction of a town’s emptiness is very common in vaporwave visuals, which aims to produce an “elsewhere” imagery which looks like a faded memory, consequently giving the audience a feeling of desolateness and melancholy (for example, Figure 4).



Fig. 2. *Piazza d'Italia* ('Italian Square'), Giorgio de Chirico (1913). **Source:** <https://www.wikiart.org/en/giorgio-de-chirico/piazza-d-italia-191>



Fig. 3. *Malinconia di una bella giornata* ('Melancholy of a Beautiful Day'), Giorgio de Chirico (1913). **Source:** <http://www.psycoattivo.com/meditazione-vipassana-mindfulness-e-dipendenze/de-chirico-melanconia-bella-giornata/>

The employment of a range of discursive objects is manifested more explicitly in another painting by de Chirico, *Canto d'amore* ('Song of Love', 1914); the alien and impenetrable feeling this work (see figure 5) engenders is more alike to Vaporwave's

visual aesthetics. It can be seen from the comparison of Figures 1 and 5 that, at the forefront of these two images on their left sides sit the bust of Helios; in contrast to this ancient cultural element, “modern” cultural elements are placed on the right sides of the two figures: in Figure 1, there is an image of a large city; in Figure 5, there are a rubber glove and a green sphere or ball. In Figures 1 and 5, these irrelevant objects have been brought together in strange juxtapositions, and then these artists broke the frames and achieved their goals of going back to the past, but an untouchable past; as a result, the melancholy is manifested. Furthermore, in de Chirico’s metaphysical paintings, the artist usually blurs the boundaries between the real and the unreal by breaking the laws of the scientific linear perspective of architectonic elements. Brazeau (2019: 26) calls this “paradoxical perspectives”. In vaporwave visuals, artists generally use low-resolution, “glitched” images, oversaturated/boosted colours to build a phantasmal and dream-like world. This use of colour is also common in the cinema, for instance, in Jean-Jacques Annaud’s film *L’ours* (*The Bear*, 1988). After eating the poisonous (or hallucinogenic) mushroom, the little bear looks like it is drunk and hallucinates, for which the director uses iridescent colours to depict the little bear’s affected vision.

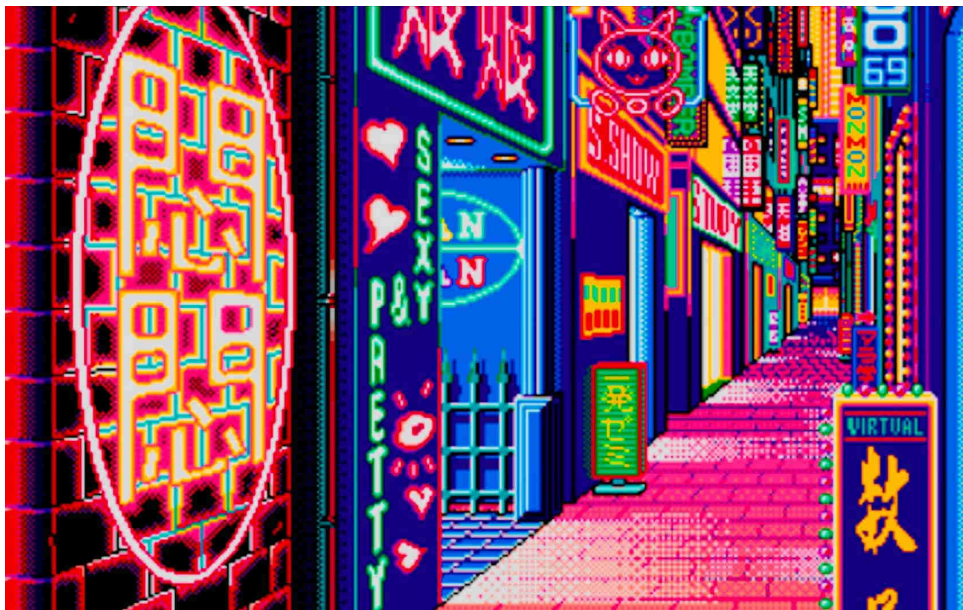


Fig. 4. *The Empty City* (a screenshot from Zhong Hua Wan Jia’s video, 9 March, 2017, Bilibili).
Source: <https://www.bilibili.com/video/av9052895/>



Fig. 5. *Canto d'amore* ('*Song of Love*'), Giorgio de Chirico (1914). **Source:** <https://campeyblog.wordpress.com/2018/03/28/canto-damore-di-giorgio-de-chirico/>

From my discussion on vaporwave visuals and general features of de Chirico's metaphysical paintings, it may be safe to conclude that the visual aesthetics of Vaporwave seek to bring the audience back to the glory days of the 1980s (predominantly) that the audience once experienced or never experienced (only imagined) by combing miscellaneous and ambivalent elements in one single image. This kind of practice not only makes the past "unapproachable" but also functions as a lampoon that satirises the promise of late capitalism that still remains forever out of reach because it plays with the idea of a peculiar nostalgia "for something that never happened" (Glitsos, 2018: 104).

For some viewers, Vaporwave is the "antidote" to their nostalgia, or more thoughtfully, a social critique to the failure of a utopian economic future that once promised by 1980s' capitalism; but for some others, Vaporwave is just a collage art, "mash-up" art, and kitsch art, and some Internet users even use words like "garbage" to comment it. For example, on one of the most popular Chinese question-and-answer websites Zhihu, an Internet user named "Aniima" commented that "it is too disgusting,

I cannot accept it” (own translation).⁸ Besides these two groups, some viewers merely see it as a liberating, trendy, cool, and avant-garde art, and an art, by its nature of pastiche and collage, which enables ordinary net citizens to easily create their own Vaporwave. Thus, just like many other art trends, the interpretation of Vaporwave is up to its audience. Nonetheless, these commentaries (critical or not critical) that Vaporwave is receiving now make it different from most other Internet art genres, which tend to have a shorter lifespan; Vaporwave, however, has been around for many years (Nowak and Whelan, 2018: 451), and now it greatly thrives in China in a commercialised manner. Thus, in the following sections, I will look at Vaporwave in China and find out how it has been commercialised.

4. Japanese cartoon culture in visual Vaporwave of China

As has already been discussed, Vaporwave is a totally net-based genre; but in fact, it was mainly established on some US-based websites and new media platforms such as 4Chan.org, Tumblr, and Reddit.com in the early 2010s.⁹ At the outset of its development, it absorbed many features of other electronic music genres like Synthwave and Chillwave (McLeod, 2018), which take inspiration from American science-fiction films. In its early stages, Vaporwave had already applied Japanese characters as well, the main goal being to “depict a globalised future that is alien and impenetrable to its presupposed demographic of white Western viewers” (Koc, 2016: 65). But in China, the popularity that Vaporwave has achieved, to a great extent, is due to the Chinese audience’s affection for Japanese culture and anime. For example, some famous Chinese vaporwave artists use Japanese-style pseudonyms (more specifically, names of Chinese-Japanese translation and most of them are meaningless) such as 幸子小姐拜托了 (literally, “Please, Sachiko san”), 小町幸子 (“Sachiko Komachi”), and 葛城-美-里 (“Katsuragi Misato”, this name referring to the character in the anime series *Shinseiki Evangelion*). These artists’ works are also generally titled with Japanese

⁸ Retrieved from <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/29361771> on 23 July 2021.

⁹ 4Chan.org is set up in the USA, a simple image-based digital community where the Internet user can anonymously post and share images; Tumblr is established in the USA, and now it is one of the most popular blogs in the world, and its main users are youths; Reddit is a website that focuses on what is hot, new, or popular on the Internet, and this website provides the user the “vote” function to help decide what is popular.

characters, and the content (audio or visual) draws extensively from Japanese comics and animations from the 1980s and early 1990s.

For some other notable Chinese vaporwave artists like Dr. Wu¹⁰ and Believer,¹¹ although their aliases are composed of Latin letters, their creations are also mainly based upon the heavy use of materials of manga and anime (e.g., drawing from *Cowboy Bebop*, *Bishōjo senshi Sailor Moon Sailor moon*, *Cat's Eye*, *Yōju Toshi/Supernatural Beast City*, aforementioned *Shinseiki Evangelion*, *City Hunter*). As the aforementioned leading vaporwave artists primarily publish their work through Chinese online video platforms (like bilibili and TikTok), the main media form of visual Vaporwave is the video; still images, illustrations, and memes are, currently, relatively rare in the Chinese digital community.

Visual Vaporwave occurred as a complex mixture of the Occident-Japanese style long before Vaporwave entered China. Visual Vaporwave evokes Europe and America because visual elements like the image of Helios, palm trees in United States' West Coast, Fiji water bottles, and English letters are common in vaporwave visuals; it evokes Japan because it represents Japanese text and imagery like Sony Walkman, dated Nintendo colour Tv games, the 1991 Toyota Camry, and shimmering neon lights of Tokyo's nightlife. Although Japan-inspired visual elements are an important component of early vaporwave visuals (or early Vaporwave outside of mainland China), they differ greatly from the entirely "Japanised" vaporwave visuals in present China. For instance, in many Chinese artists' vaporwave videos, one important visual element of Vaporwave, the statue of Helios, has never been used; they just montage pre-existent Japanese animations. This phenomenon may be due in large part to the huge influence of Japanese Tv animation on the Chinese mediascape in the 1980s and early 1990s (Chen and Teng, 2006). Moreover, Japan's newer cultural-diplomatic strategies since

10 Dr. Wu's TikTok archive:

https://www.douyin.com/user/MS4wLjABAAAA7uZoKLuM7ji-B3GQiyU6ST45uLp9jsPTmlWzGVU49Ac?enter_method=video_title&author_id=65465864045&group_id=6963554398244982016&log_pb=%7B%22impr_id%22%3A%22021624718243314fdbddc0100fff0030ac2d10e00000048e29b8a%22%7D&enter_from=video_detail

11 Believer's TikTok archive:

https://www.douyin.com/user/MS4wLjABAAAAvkcbFjFwr3vexB20t0N9Rjv39oFph_gWPXWRaulJkm0?enter_method=video_title&author_id=94787312967&group_id=6821771537511648519&log_pb=%7B%22impr_id%22%3A%22021624719663593fdbd400a040000000a70522e000001f76d9b36%22%7D&enter_from=video_detail

the 2010s (such as “Cool Japan”¹² and “Menmeiz pop-up”),¹³ to a lesser extent, have a certain influence too.

As previously shown, the main theme of vaporwave aesthetics is nostalgia or, more precisely, melancholic nostalgia. The emergence of Chinese vaporwave artists as well reflects their longing for their childhood; it was a time that was brimming over with Japanese comic and anime. The 1980s and early 1990s can be described as a “honeymoon period” for China-Japan relations. According to Chen and Teng (2006: 78), Chinese state television introduced a number of Japanese Tv animations during that period (more than 50 different Tv animation series), and the main audience was 3–12 years old children. Today, these former children form the biggest part of Vaporwave’s fans in China, and some of them have become vaporwave artists; for example, the pioneer and leader in the field of Chinese Vaporwave, 银河骑士李老板 (or 李老闆, which can be roughly translated as “Galaxy Knight Boss Lee” in English), is the generation of people born in the 80s. This artist is recognised as the first people who introduced vaporwave music into China; afterwards, with the popularity of TikTok, a short video social media platform, Vaporwave (both visuals and music) became known to a wider public in China via the video format.

Japanese Tv animations, had been dominating the Chinese mediascape since the early 1990s; but its rapid development was ended by the arrival of the China Broadcast Bureau’s ban on foreign animation in 2006 (Wang, Li, and Chen, 2018),¹⁴ which aimed, officially, to protect Chinese local animation industries, as the foreign animation’s dominance allegedly threatened Chinese relevant industries. Among these foreign animations, Japanese animation could be the greatest “threat”; for instance, in 2004, among the top 15 national longest-broadcasting Tv animations in the Chinese market,

¹² Tamaki remarks that “‘Cool Japan’ is an instance of Japanese government’s nation branding exercise as part of its soft power projection in which the unique selling point is identified as Japanese national identity” (p. 108).

¹³ Menmeiz Movement: “Menmeiz” is derived from a Chinese Internet slang which means “kawaii girl”; “The Menmeiz pop-up is planned to be the first in a cross-country series aiming to bridge the divide between Japan and its neighbouring countries through the soft power of kawaii, retro-infused art” (Lee, 12 July 2019). The head of the “menmeiz” project, Saho Maeta, indicates that the project aims to disseminate the “transnational kawaii” culture. Retrieved from:

<https://tokion.jp/en/2021/03/27/menmeiz-leading-the-kawaii-culture/> (Accessed on 15 October 2021).

¹⁴ This ban is on all foreign animations in the Chinese market.

there were 11 Japanese animations, accounting for 73% of the total (Wang, Li, and Chen, 2018: 89).

Nevertheless, the 2006 foreign animation restriction of the Chinese government did not dampen the passion for Japanese animation of these “anime natives” at all. For example, from 2014 to 2015, “online anime distribution rights to China increased by 78.7%”: this shows a high demand for Japanese animation among young Chinese audiences (Pellitteri, 2018: 469). Thus, thereafter, Chinese fans of Japanese animation have gradually shifted from television to the Internet. However, online video viewing does not seem to bring an equivalent happiness to that which these anime natives once achieved from watching animations on television sets when they were kids.¹⁵ This may be due to that they are today grown-up and mature, so for them now, those manga are not that attractive any longer, or in the age of informational oversaturation, manga works have become easily accessible in China today, so they seem to be no longer that precious. But visual aesthetics of Vaporwave have the ability to take them back to the past by imitating the visual effects of the outdated CRT (cathode ray tube) Tv as well as its use of various fragmented outdated televised animations.

However, it is notable that Japanese Tv animation of the 1980s/1990s is selectively used by Chinese vaporwave artists. As noted by Chen and Teng (2006), in 1980s/1990s, various genres of Japanese Tv animation had been imported into China, including *Doraemon*, *Ikkyū san*, *Evangelion*, *Dragon Ball*, *Saint Seiya* and so on; especially, *Saint Seiya* could be the most popular anime in the 1990s in China. But why have only Japanese Tv animations, these “urbanite-story-based”, “kawaii-girl-based”, and futuristic Tv animation stories, been mainly used? Except for the “hybrid images” of mixing features of Japanese imagery and features of Euro-American imagery these animations suggest paradoxical features of Vaporwave’s visual aesthetics, which can create a weird and odd but fantastic atmosphere to its target audience. Nonetheless, two other possible factors might explain why these Japanese animations are so ubiquitous in vaporwave visuals of

¹⁵ In June 2020, Sina Weibo Animation issued the “2020 Weibo Animation White Paper”, which shows that the main audience of animation in current China is the post-95s (37.18%) and post-00s (23.85%), while the post-80s (the so-called anime natives) only account for almost 4%. Retrieved from: <https://data.weibo.com/report/reportDetail?id=444> on 15 December 2021.

China but not others: the peculiar image of Japan in the 1980s/early 1990s and the dominance of so-called *kawaii* aesthetics in Japanese pop cultures.

As previously mentioned, Vaporwave is often viewed as an ironic critique of 1980s' capitalism, and its themes are associated with nostalgia and melancholy. Considering these three factors, Japan, to some extent, is often regarded as a "national equivalent of vaporwave" (McLeod 2018, p. 133): from the start, vaporwave aesthetics are inspired by unique images of 1980s Japan (Lee, 12 July 2019). This is because Japan's economic glory from the 1980s to the early 1990s and the following story of its "lost decade",¹⁶ is a vivid example of "vaporware". Of course, this also ties with the effect of Japan's national image, in particular, the image of Tokyo (or other economically and technologically developed areas in Japan) all over the world, as many non-Asian people see "Japan as populated by robotic salaryman workers and obsessed with technology and consumerism" (McLeod 2018, p. 133). Hence, in this case, "urbanite-story-based" Japanese animation is pertinent to the core of vaporwave aesthetics that criticises capitalism and consumerism.

However, one Mcleod's (2018) argument may not be correct. In his reading, the author attempted to relate Vaporwave with what David Morley and Kevin Robins termed "Techno-Orientalism" for revealing why Vaporwave is inherently linked with Japan, as this so-called Japanese Techno-Orientalism assumed and suggested that if the technology is our future, then Japan is our future (Morley and Robins 1995, pp. 168–9). The concept of "Orientalism" was popularised by Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1979), in which he "unpacks the Orient as 'almost' a place of European invention. [...] the Orient becomes a site ironically inhabited by the dominant West's most persuasive yet passive cultural contestants" (Kushigian, 2021: 95). Hence, "Orientalism" is inherently biased by the European perspective. Therefore, to Western societies, this "Japanised" future existed as "the figure of empty and dehumanised technological power" in the framework of Techo-Orientalism. This figure has been exemplified by many Euro-American cultural products such as William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer* (1984) and Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner* (1982, McLeod, 2018: 134). Hence, for

¹⁶ For more detail, please see Fletcher and Von Staden (2013).

McLeod (2018), Techno-Orientalist stereotypes in Vaporwave critique the utopian images of capitalism's developments.

Techno-Orientalism within the political and cultural discourse of most Euro-American scholarship is usually a criticism of capitalism, but what it is actually criticised is the idiosyncrasy of anti-humanity in capitalism and technicism (or technolatry); this kind of critique often appears in Cyberpunk artistic output, as it aims to create a mood that everything is amazing, and nobody is happy (Brown, 2010; Martin, 2015; Lai, 2019). For instance, Figure 6 is a frame from Rupert Sanders' cyberpunk film *Ghost in the Shell* (Rupert Sanders, 2017).¹⁷ The whole frame is driven by a dark and cool tone, and although this picture is full of high buildings, the audience cannot see any human beings on the streets, this represents the heartlessness of capitalism. Therefore, at this point, McLeod's (2018) ideal seems to enter a mistaken position, because Vaporwave is a sardonic critique of the lost promise of 1980s capitalism rather than a critique of a dehumanised picture of capitalism and technicism. At a more basic level, through comparing the use of colour between cyberpunk visuals and vaporwave visuals (Figure 6 vs. Figure 1), the colour tone of cyberpunk visuals is dark-grey and dull, whereas vaporwave visuals are prone to use oversaturated-garish colours, this shows the different purposes of their respective visual aesthetics.

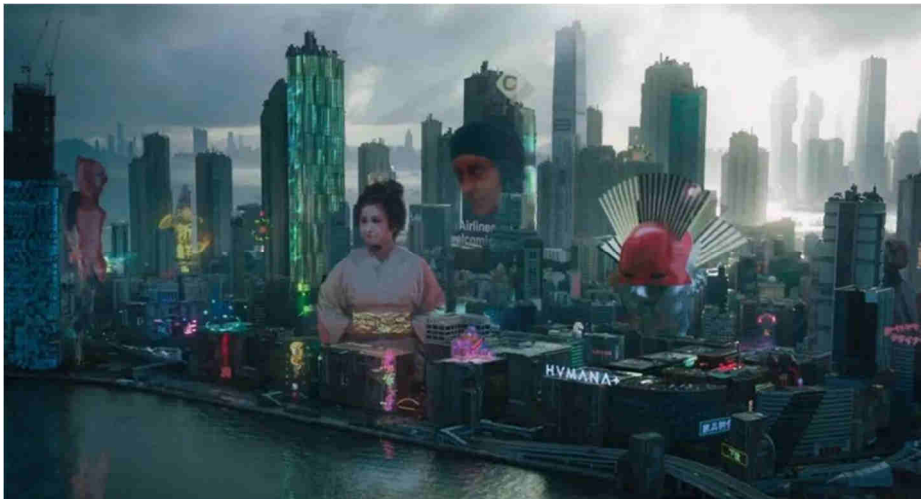


Fig. 6. *Ghost in the Shell* (Rupert Sanders, 2017).

¹⁷ This film was adopted from Shiro Masamune's comic of the same title.

Japan, during its glittering period from the 1980s to the early 1990s, provided and premised its domestic and overseas consumers with numerous media commodities; most people had never thought that this country would experience such a great fall (Okazaki and Mueller, 2011; Bell and McNeill, 1999) in its peak. The financial bubble's burst in Japan brought not only Japan itself into a prolonged recession but also let the consumer market down. In Lee's (12 July 2019) interview with F*Kaori (a leading Japanese pop-art illustrator), the artist says that the nostalgia of 1980s Japan at play in Vaporwave reflects artists' strong desires for tracking back to the past, a glamorous and fairy tale-like past, and the answer for this phenomenon is quite simple— "Because reality is painful", F*Kaori says, so this also reflects a kind of escapism in vaporwave aesthetics. Thus, "urbanite-story-based" Japanese Tv animation from the 1980s/early 1990s, by its nature, obviously feeds people's desire for a fantasised past—a place where they can temporarily escape from the troubles of the present.

In addition, this "escapism" in Vaporwave is also fulfilled by the visual pleasure of *kawaii* culture (predominantly, *kawaii* female characters in Japanese animation). First, as noted by Kinsella's (1995: 224), from the outset *kawaii* objects were used by Japanese youths to erase and blur the wartime period; this may be due to the fact that the concept of "*kawaii*" often stands for a "good side" of our world, and "This choice can be perceived as a form of distraction from reality", as Bîrlea (2021: 56) notes; in support, building upon Eiji Ôtsuka's work (*Shōjo Minzokugaku*, 1997), Pellitteri (2018: 9) argues that the emergence of *kawaii*-stylised cartoon characters (*kyara*) after the 1970s like Alare and Hello Kitty represents "Japanese's desire to leave the war behind and fully plunge into the postmodernity". Second, the pop culture in 1980s Japan, was dominated by *kawaii* aesthetics (Kinsella, 1995: 220); also, "*kawaii*" is highly related to the genre of teenage girls' visuals (Pellitteri, 2018; Yiu and Chan, 2013). Therefore, when Chinese vaporwave artists utilise the aesthetics of these aforementioned Japanese Tv animations, the image of *kawaii* girls, naturally, becomes the main subject of Chinese visual vaporwave, especially when it functions as a visual pleasure which helps the audience of Vaporwave to escape from their tough reality.

5. Visual Vaporwave in China: Its story with Chinese capital giants

In This article previously indicated that Vaporwave emerged as social critique of capitalism in the early 2010s on the Internet. However, the case in China is quite

different, as Vaporwave and vaporwave aesthetics (mainly visual) have been highly utilised by capitalism both online and offline (predominantly, online). In the following section, I will merely focus on discussion of vaporwave visuals in China.

On the Internet, the present Chinese social media giant, TikTok, can be seen as a vaporwave-aestheticised social media platform, because its logo heavily uses visual aesthetics of Vaporwave, which may be seen as an indicator that Vaporwave is popular in China. Meanwhile, other mainstream online shopping platforms in China like Taobao and JD also embody visual aesthetics of Vaporwave in their online advertising to attract the Chinese young and not-so-very young consumers in China; some Chinese pop musicians apply visual vaporwave aesthetics in their MVs (music videos) for improving the creativity of their videos; vaporwave live concerts have been organised by Chinese leading musicians like 传琦 Sama ('Denki Sama') and 银河骑士李老板 ('Galaxy Knight Boss Lee') many times. Most of these activities are commercial, and their billboards and the stages all display vaporwave style. Moreover, visual aesthetics of Vaporwave have been used by various kinds of store operators to embellish or decorate their shops, including restaurants, gyms, pubs, arcades, karaoke parlours, and so on. For instance, there is a vaporwave style pub located in Zhuhai, China.¹⁸ In the light of this, Vaporwave in China seems to be highly associated with the consumerism. Thus, the rise of visual Vaporwave in China clearly no longer adheres to its original purpose—a criticism of capitalism.

Visual Vaporwave has been largely used by Chinese business magnates to attract their consumers and expand their markets, because first, in the new era of digital communication, visuals, in some aspects of communication, are replacing or have already replaced the written text, as they “have imposed themselves as the preferred way of cognition and communication [...] Many people feel that images are more natural than text and promise/give quicker access to realities” (Briel, 2018: 6). Although Briel (2018: 6) mentions that the image is usually considered as “a stepping stone, an early stage to deeper knowledge to be acquired from written code”, in the case of business (especially, in today’s competitive business environment), the visual (image-based appeal) has already proven its higher efficiency in attracting global

¹⁸ For more details: https://www.sohu.com/a/346152065_147249 (Accessed on 15 December 2021).

customers than written/verbal text (information-based appeal) does (Okazaki, Mueller, and Diehl, 2013).

Additionally, the use of the visual aesthetics of Vaporwave in China is not limited to advertising; vaporwave aesthetics are also used by some Chinese social media platforms to make their UI (user interface) designs like logos, icon, colour use, more visually appealing or to improve the creativity of their platforms' entertainment functions, the filters and effects, for instance. Among these Chinese social media platforms. TikTok (Douyin in Pin'yin, or 抖音 in Chinese written form) could be an exemplary vaporwave-aestheticised social media application. Therefore, in this section, I will discuss Tik Tok as an example to study how Vaporwave has been commercially used by this Chinese social media platform.

As noted by Wang and Wu (2021: 3269), the number of TikTok's daily active users reached 600 million in August 2020. Founded in September 2016, TikTok is a short music video social media platform; it is owned by ByteDance, the second-largest Chinese enterprise in market value today. On this platform, users are encouraged to wildly run their imaginations and set their expressions for free.¹⁹ Therefore, in itself, this platform does not produce content; the content is created by its users (which includes casual users, institutions, brands, and so on). Its business model or revenue model is mainly based on third party advertising, which enables users to consume content for free. Also, once a user has many followers, he/she can make money through this platform as well, but only a tiny group of users can be Internet celebrities. With respect to the background of its emergence, the existence of TikTok suggests that since the advent of video technologies, the most popular form of video in the world is the music video (MV); but it is too difficult for one individual to create a relatively decent MV. Hence, a group of passionate people identified a fresh business opportunity, and they tried to compress various video technologies together into one mobile application (app). Based on previous popular online video platforms in the Chinese domestic and global markets, they created TikTok, a short video platform.

Through this brief introduction of TikTok, we can see that TikTok aims to attract the Internet users with a relatively new socialising means of visuals and music. But how

¹⁹ For retrieving Tik Tok's website (Douyin): <https://www.douyin.com/>.

has TikTok been related with Vaporwave? This article now looks into visual creations and representations on Tik Tok in relation to visual Vaporwave. In this regard, people's use of Vaporwave in the virtual world of Tik Tok and their relationship with this app should be seen as what Fung, Emi, and Yan (2015: 483) call "a social relation mechanism". Thus, this may lead us to look at how TikTok uses Vaporwave to attract Chinese Internet users, what messages or agendas these vaporwave visuals express on TikTok, how these visuals are perceived by the audience, how Vaporwave is created and represented on TikTok, and how other Chinese companies get money by using visual aesthetics of Vaporwave.

My discussion in this section of this article will start with the logo of TikTok. Figure 7 is TikTok's welcome screen, which shows this app's name (抖音) and logo. Unlike many other apps' logos that tend to make their logos bright-coloured, high-quality, and clear-figured, TikTok's logo is glitched. The background of this frame is fully black, and the image quality is an imitation of the outdated CRT television set. These design aspects would appear to run counter to the mainstream logo design of mobile apps in the Chinese market; but TikTok's great success in the present Chinese market may suggest that in a largely homogenous market, the user may experience aesthetic fatigue,²⁰ and they need something new. Vaporwave is a new thing in the Chinese media. As previously illustrated, Vaporwave was introduced to the Chinese market in 2015 by 银河骑士李老板 ('Galaxy Knight Boss Lee'), just one year before the foundation of TikTok in 2016. Also, in one recent article published on a Chinese magazine (*Little Thing 恋物志*) the author also indicates that Vaporwave brings Chinese young people a new art trend in the "tasteless" or "boring" Chinese pop culture market.²¹ Therefore, the features of Vaporwave have been used by TikTok to catch the attention of young Chinese Internet users. Particularly in the era of digital-visual oversaturation, the "bizarreness" of Vaporwave makes its visual expressions more outstanding in the Chinese market.

²⁰ Li, Cheng, and Xiao (2018, p. 356) notes that when a type of commodity has been largely homogenised in a given market, the consumer is bound to generate aesthetic fatigue.

²¹ Retrieved from: https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/v6M6qnfHd_nTcg31fggbhQ on July 3, 2021. This magazine was founded by 达摩麦田文化传播 ('Damo Maitian Culture Communication') Co, Ltd. in 2008, and focusing on creativity and aesthetics. It is distributed in both paper form and electronic form, and simultaneously circulates in Taiwan, Hong Kong SAR, and Japan.



Fig. 7. The logo of TikTok. **Source:** https://www.sohu.com/a/330267666_120166516

On the other hand, TikTok attracts these Internet users by its powerful videoing functions (like smart digital filters, easy-to-use editing techniques, abundant music resources, quick downloading/uploading speeds, etc.). Many Internet users thus come to this digital community to create and share their videos; of course, many vaporwave artists also come here and seek opportunities to promote Vaporwave and try to turn it from a subculture into a pop culture. For example, according to Zhao (27 September 2019), the online user has created more than 6,500 vaporwave related videos on TikTok, and these videos have been streamed more than 10 million times; vaporwave related music has been used more than 3.5 million times; in particular, the music 嘉禾天橙国际大影院 (this can be translated as ‘Jia He Tian Cheng International Cinema’), has been used by other users 290,000 times; one of the most famous vaporwave artists, SUAT 栗砸, has more than 1.3 million followers on TikTok, but on Sina Weibo, an “older” social media platform in China, he only has about 59,000 followers. This evidence may prove that TikTok strongly contributes to the popularity of Vaporwave in China.

The success of Vaporwave brings TikTok with more and more users. To TikTok, these users are traffic, are money, so this app is also constantly developing new filters or visual effects for meeting people’s growing demand of Vaporwave. In addition, except for TikTok’s profits from people’s practices of Vaporwave, some popular vaporwave artists also achieve the fame and economic benefits from TikTok: for instance, Dr.Wu directly advertises himself on his personal page on TikTok. Some popular artists stay true to the original mission of vaporwave by rejecting any advertising campaigns, and just sharing their content with their fans on TikTok; but

this does not negatively influence TikTok's revenues at all, because the audience is here, and the ad investment follows the audience.

As discussed in the previous section, vaporwave visuals meet Chinese audiences with strong Japanese characteristics; hence, to avoid repetition, the following section will pay attention to the audience's reactions. I will use a popular Chinese web crawler (also known as a web spider or web robot; it is a system that can be used to collect information on web pages), called 八爪鱼 (Bazhuayu in Pin'yin) to collect the audience's comments from one of the most viewed videos that was posted by the aforementioned artist Believer.²² Although some other artists like Dr.Wu and SUAT 栗砸 seem to be more popular and notable than Believer, they also post some other genres, like Synthwave and Chillwave on TikTok. To avoid confusion, Believer's video has been selected. More than 600 comments have been collected from this video,²³ but most of them display text like "@someone" (asking other users to see this video), and only the top 150 comments have actual analysable content. Some of them are in full-width text (which is the *de rigueur* response to the author); some of these collected comments say "love/like it"; some describe "an indefinite mood, but it is great"; some are only interjections like "wow", "holy shit", "awesome", "Geez", etc. In aggregate, negative evaluations are rare, most of which show favoured attitudes towards Vaporwave, but none of the collected comments point out that Vaporwave embeds a social critique; all these viewers seem to be immersed in the fantastic world the video creates. This may also reflect that most of them are not vaporwave connoisseurs.

Undoubtedly, the consumer's comment plays an important role in the field of business. It can improve a brand's products, speed up its product development, and even direct the production of new products (Kusawat and Teerakapibal, 2021), so TikTok will collect these comments for improving its performance, and other Internet companies come to TikTok to collect them as well, as these messages reflect the latest trend in a

²² <https://www.bazhuayu.com/download/windows>

²³ The link of this video:

https://www.douyin.com/video/6821771537511648519?previous_page=search_result&extra_params=%7B%22search_id%22%3A%22202107040457210102121640353B85E1D9%22%2C%22search_result_id%22%3A%226821771537511648519%22%2C%22search_type%22%3A%22video%22%2C%22search_keyword%22%3A%22%E8%92%B8%E6%B1%BD%E6%B3%A2%22%7D
(Retrieved on 3 July 2021).

given society. For instance, since TikTok was established in September 2016, Taobao (owned by Alibaba), the biggest e-commerce platform in China, launched a vaporwave-related business activity (a fashion week) in the summer of 2017. Figure 8 is a poster of this fashion week. The visual aesthetics of Vaporwave are fully apprised in this poster. The irony, however, is that many current products are placed at the bottom of this poster, and now, when you type “蒸汽波 (‘Vaporwave’)” in the search engine of this platform, you can find tens of thousands of vaporwave-related products. Is this still a Vaporwave? Maybe or maybe not. But Vaporwave in China definitely joined capitalism; it has been “corrupted”, so to speak. But it is fully understandable, as current China is, in some respects, like 1980s Japan; with the rapid development of the national economy, the main responsibility of capital is seemingly to expand value; hence, to these Chinese capital giants, there are no things that cannot be utilised to make money.

Pushed by TikTok and other Chinese Internet companies, Vaporwave has arguably achieved the transformation from subculture to mainstream pop culture in the Chinese market, and most of these vaporwave outputs are strongly associated with consumption. In light of the previous discussion, I argue that Vaporwave is destined to lose its current high popularity in the near future in the Chinese market. This is because, on the one hand, Vaporwave’s current popularity in China is largely due to the widespread day-to-day use of TikTok; however, as previously illustrated, most of these Chinese TikTok users are not vaporwave connoisseurs. Currently, these people are drawn to Vaporwave because it satisfies their nostalgia and visual/aural curiosity; but as it is only a collage art form, it will eventually become a new kind of aesthetic weariness in China as it is increasingly interlinked with mass consumption and therefore prevalent in our daily life. On the other hand, the debate over what Vaporwave actually means lengthens its lifespan; therefore, it has already died after joining the capitalistic processes. Maybe when China’s economic bubble bursts, Vaporwave will emerge again with strong 2020s Chinese characteristics.



Fig. 8. Taobao Fashion Week. **Source:** <https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/27001058>

6. Conclusion

Building upon previous research and through the comparison of de Chirico's metaphysical paintings and vaporwave visuals, first, I illustrated the general features of Vaporwave; it plays with the ideal of nostalgia for something that “never took place”, which thus satirises the failure of 1980s capitalism; it fulfils people's nostalgia by the anachronistic and paradoxical juxtapositions of Euro-American and Japanese visual imageries, the familiar and unfamiliar objects, and the present and the past; it, therefore, conveys a sense of nostalgic melancholy. Its aesthetics have received both praise and criticism; but the mixed comments it received make it enjoy a relatively long lifespan on the Internet and be wildly spread around the world.

However, Vaporwave in China is another story. With the help of TikTok and thanks to the attractive/addictive nature of the 1980s/1990s Japanese animation, Vaporwave is no longer a subculture in China. From the very beginning, Vaporwave came into Chinese consumers' life as a serendipity; it then had many Chinese followers. But the popularity of Vaporwave in the Chinese market has attracted many investments; it, therefore, has nothing to do with the “melancholy” but “money”; when Vaporwave has been commercialised, it is “vaporised”. Nevertheless, there is still a small group of Chinese vaporwave artists who are persisting in highly commercialised environments putting forward the original intention of Vaporwave. Nonetheless, TikTok's remarkable success in China may suggest that the consumer is experiencing aesthetic fatigue in a homogenous media market. Smartly/creatively using the aesthetics of avant-grade art can help the digital media stand out in a crowd.

REFERENCES

- BELL, DESMOND — MCNEILL, DAVID (1999), Multimedia and the crisis economy in Japan. *Media, Culture & Society*, 21, pp. 759-785. doi:10.1177/016344399021006004.
- BOYM, SVETLANA (2001), *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books.
- BAYUS, BARRY L. — SANJAY JAIN — AMBAR G. RAO (2001), Truth or Consequences: An Analysis of Vaporware and New Product Announcements. *Journal of Marketing Research (JMR)*, 38 (1), pp. 3-13. doi:10.1509/jmkr.38.1.3.18834.
- BARTAL, ORY (2013), Text as Image in Japanese Advertising Typography Design. *Design Issues*, 29 (1), pp. 51-66. https://doi.org/10.1162/DESI_a_00196.
- BROWN, STEVEN T. (2010), *Tokyo Cyberpunk: Posthumanism in Japanese Visual Culture*. 1st ed. Palgrave Macmillan.
- BRIEL, HOLGER (2018), A Portrait of the Computer as a Young Artist. *IAFOR Journal of Cultural Studies*, 3 (1), pp. 5-24. <https://doi.org/10.22492/ijcs.3.1.01>.
- BORN, GEORGINA — CHRISTOPHER HAWORTH (2017), From Microsound to Vaporwave: Internet-Mediated Musics, Online Methods, and Genre. *Music and Letters*, 98 (4), pp. 601-47. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/gcx095>.
- BRAZEAU, BRYAN (2019), Building a Mystery: Giorgio de Chirico and Italian Renaissance Painting. *Italianist*, 39 (1), pp. 20-43. doi:10.1080/02614340.2019.1556446.
- BÎRLEA, OANA-MARIA (2021), How Are Kawaii (Cute) Fictional Characters Used in Japanese Advertising. *Journal of Media Research*, 14 (1), pp. 55-78.
- CHEN, QIANG — TENG, YINGYING (2006), Riben dongman zai zhongguodalu chuanbo fenxi ('An analysis on the communication of Japanese anime in mainland China'). *Journal of Chuanboyishu & Yishuchuanbo*, 4, pp. 78-81.
- FRIEDENTHAL, RICHARD (1963), Letters of the Great Artists: From Ghiberti to Gainsborough. *Art Education*, 16 (9), p. 24. doi: 10.2307/3190500.
- FLETCHER III, W. MILES. — VON STADEN, PETER W. (2013), *Japan's 'lost decade': causes, legacies and issues of transformative change*. New York & London: Routledge.
- FUNG, ANTHONY Y.H. — ERNI, JOHN NGUYET. — YANG, FRANCES (2014), Asian Popular Culture Review. In: Toby Miller (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Global Popular Culture*. New York & London: Routledge, pp. 481-491.
- GLITSOS, LAURA (2018), Vaporwave, or Music Optimised for Abandoned Malls. *Popular Music*, 37 (1), pp. 100-118. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143017000599>.
- HEALY, CL. (2006), Dead man: film, colonialism, and memory. In: Katharine Hodgkin — Suannah Radstone (eds), *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- HASSALL, DOUGLAS (2020), The Art of Giorgio de Chirico The Modernist Who Returned to Craftsmanship. *Quadrant Magazine*, 64 (5), pp. 100-103.
- KINSELLA, SHARON (1995), Cuties in Japan. In: Lise Skov — Brian Moeran (eds), *Women, Media and Consumption in Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, pp. 220-54.
- KOC, ALICAN (2016), Do You Want Vaporwave, or Do You Want the Truth?: Cognitive Mapping of Late Capitalist Affect in the Virtual Lifeworld of Vaporwave. *Capacious: Journal for Emerging Affect Inquiry*, 1 (1), pp. 57-76. <https://doi.org/10.22387/cap2016.4>.
- KILLEEN, PADRAIC (2020), "Burned out Myths and Vapour Trails: Vaporwave's Affective Potentials." *Open Cultural Studies*, 2 (1), pp. 626-38. <https://doi.org/10.1515/culture-2018-0057>.

- KUSHIGIAN, JULIA A. (2021), The Politics of Orientalism and Self-Orientalism in a South-South Dialogue: Revisiting Hispanic Orientalism from Said to Sarduy. *Hispanic Orientalism Project*, pp. 95-111. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353267861_The_Politics_of_Orientalism_and_Self-Orientalism_in_a_South-South_Dialogue_Revisiting_Hispanic_Orientalism_from_Said_to_Sarduy (30 August 2021).
- KUSAWAT, POOMPAK — SURAT TEERAKAPIBAL (2021), The Roles of Culture in Online User Reviews: An Empirical Investigation. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 34 (3), pp. 189–204. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08911762.2021.1903641>.
- LI, ZHE — CHENG, YUNING — XIAO, RONG (2018), Electroencephalogram Experiment Based Analysis of Aesthetic Fatigue on Chinese Traditional Garden. *Neuro Quantology*, 16(5), pp. 356-362. doi: 10.14704/nq.2018.16.5.1296.
- LAI, OPHELIA (2019), Phantom Plane: Cyberpunk in the Year of the Future. *Art Asia Pacific*, 117, pp. 87.
- LEE, GIACOMO (2019), From Vaporwave to Future Funk: Night Tempo artists talk Japanese aesthetics of cuteness and City Pop. *Digital Arts*, 12 July. Retrieved 23 June 2021, from: <https://www.digitalartsonline.co.uk/features/illustration/from-vaporwave-future-funk-night-tempo-artists-talk-japanese-aesthetics-of-cuteness-city-pop/>.
- MORLEY, DAVID — ROBINS KEVIN (1995), *The Space of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries*. New York: Routledge.
- MARTIN, DANIEL (2015), The Superhero and the Cyberpunk: Transforming Genres in Spider-Man 2009. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*, 29 (3), pp. 466–78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2015.1025363>.
- MANGOS, JACK (2017), “Welcome to the Virtual Plaza.” *Tharunka*, 24 Aug. Retrieved 20 June 2021, from: <http://tharunka.arc.unsw.edu.au/welcome-virtual-plaza/>.
- MCLEOD, KEN (2018), Vaporwave: Politics, Protest, and Identity. *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 30 (4), pp. 123–41. <https://doi.org/10.1525/jpms.2018.300409>.
- OKAZAKI, SHINTARO — BARBARA MUELLER (2011), The Impact of the Lost Decade on Advertising in Japan, *International Journal of Advertising*, 30 (2), pp. 205–32. <https://doi.org/10.2501/IJA-30-2-205-232>.
- OKAZAKI, SHINTARO — BARBARA MUELLER — SANDRA DIEHL (2013), A Multi-Country Examination of Hard-Sell and Soft-Sell Advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 53 (3), pp. 258-72. doi:10.2501/JAR-53-3-258-272.
- PELLITTERI, MARCO (2018), Kawaii Aesthetics from Japan to Europe: Theory of the Japanese “Cute” and Transcultural Adoption of Its Styles in Italian and French Comics Production and Commodified Culture Goods. *Arts*, 7(24), pp. 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.3390/arts7030024>.
- (2019), Japan’s soft power and “grand fictions” in global venues: Japanese pop culture franchises and fictionality-based tactics. *Kritika Kultura* 32, pp. 453-81.
- REYNOLDS, SIMON (2011), *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past*. New York: Faber & Faber.
- SEATON, PHILIP (2001), ‘Shampoo for Extra Damage’: Making Sense of Japanized English. *Japan Forum*, 13 (2), pp. 233–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09555800120081411>.
- SANDERS, RUPERT (2017), *Ghost in the Shell* [Motion picture], United States: Paramount Pictures & DreamWorks Studios. IMDb: tt1219827.
- TRAINER, ADAM (2016), From hypnagogia to distroid: postironic musical renderings of personal memory. In: Sheila Whiteley — Shara Rambarran (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Virtuality*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 409-27.
- TANNER GRAFTON (2016), *Babbling Corpse: Vaporwave and the Commodification of Ghosts*. New Alresford: Zero Books.

- TAMAKI, TAKU (2019), Repackaging National Identity: Cool Japan and the Resilience of Japanese Identity Narratives. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 27 (1), pp. 108–26. doi:10.1080/02185377.2019.1594323.
- TRATNIK, POLONA (2021), Art Addressing Consumerism in the Age of Late Capitalism. *Croatian Journal of Philosophy*, XXI (61), pp. 39-51. doi: 10.52685/cjp.21.1.3.
- NOWAK, RAPHAËL — ANDREW WHELAN (2018), Vaporwave Is (Not) a Critique of Capitalism: Genre Work in an Online Music Scene. *Open Cultural Studies*, 2 (1), pp. 451–62. <https://doi.org/10.1515/culture-2018-0041>.
- WANG, NIANZU — LI, CHANGQING — CHEN, TING (2018), A study on Japanese animation spread and its subculture influence after animation restrictions in China. *Journal of Ocean University of China (Social Sciences)*, 2, pp. 89-98.
- WANG, WEI — JIENA WU (2021), Short video platforms and local community building in China. *International Journal of Communication*, 15, pp. 3269-3291. doi: 1932-8063/20210005.
- YIU, WAIHUNG — ALEX CHINGSHING CHAN (2013), 'Kawaii' and 'Moe' - Gazes, Geeks (Otaku), and Glocalization of Beautiful Girls (Bishōjo) in Hong Kong Youth Culture. *Positions*, 21 (4), pp. 853–84. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10679847-2346032>.
- YORK, JAMES (2020), It's your moooove: Why teaching with games should be like vaporwave (and not nightcore). *The Journal of Ludic Language Pedagogy Playground*, 2, pp. 104-114.
- ZHAO, YICHU (2019). Yelang disco、zhengqibo、qingnian yawenhua: jiumengnanhui de dikang (Wild wolf disco, Vaporwave, and youth subculture: old people dream on old dreams), *Epoch Stories*, 27 September. Retrieved July 3 2021, from: <https://www.douban.com/group/topic/153663835/?type=like>.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ZHANG Xiaolong is currently a doctoral student at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, after having obtained his MA in Mass Communications from the University of Leicester. His research interests include advertising, cross-cultural advertising, visual communication, consumer culture, strategic communication, and gangster/mob film genre.

REVIEWS

Diverse Voices in Translation Studies in East Asia **– Nana SATO-ROSSBERG & Akiko UCHIYAMA (eds)**

Switzerland: Peter Lang UK, 2019, 214 p.

Review by Jamie TOKUNO | Independent Researcher, MIRA, USA

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/2021.10.R.TOK.DIVER](https://doi.org/10.32926/2021.10.R.TOK.DIVER)

Date of submission: 7 April 2021

Date of acceptance: 1 June 2021

Date of publication: 20 December 2021

Diverse Voices in Translation Studies in East Asia is the 27th volume in the Peter Lang series *New Trends in Translation Studies*. While each chapter in *Diverse Voices in Translation Studies in East Asia* independently bears fruit to the particular facet of translation studies that it examines, as a whole this edited volume reads as one sweeping encapsulation of contemporary East Asian translation studies that demonstrates the depth and potential of the field. It engages scholars from linguistic and regional backgrounds outside of the Anglophone world, underscoring that translation studies are not a practice or an area of study exclusive to the West or between only English and other languages. The very nature of translation studies demands ever-growing knowledge and understanding of translation activity and research in all regions and languages. This ethos is captured succinctly in this three-part volume, edited by two pioneering scholars of and advocates for East Asian translation studies, Dr. Nana Sato-Rossberg and Dr. Akiko Uchiyama. The majority of the contributors to this volume were participants in the inaugural East Asian Translation Studies conference held in 2014 at the University of East Anglia, led jointly by Dr. Sato-Rossberg and Dr. Gloria Lee. Many of the conferences' participants do not present or publish their research in English, given the regional nature of the subject, and this is reflected in *Diverse Voices*, which includes a chapter translated from Japanese to English. The volume begins with a highly useful introduction by the editors, which provides an illustrative background on the aforementioned 2014 conference that led to the volume's inception. According to the introduction, the organising principle behind *Diverse Voices* was to develop "a platform for the discussion of translation in East Asia by presenting research in translation with its distinctive

regional voices, while also maintaining a dialogue with ‘Western’ translation studies” (1). The editors then set about accomplishing this task by structuring the volume’s eight chapters into three semi-chronological sections that highlight the wide scope of rich research areas for the field, particularly in the East Asian arena.

The first section, Translation in Historical and Political Contexts, provides a rich foundation upon which the subsequent two sections further build upon, outlining the development of translation studies in the region before the widely recognised “birth” of the field in 1972, when James S. Holmes presented the paper “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies” at the Congress of Applied Linguistics in Copenhagen. Peter Kornicki’s opening chapter, “The Origins and Development of Translation Traditions in Pre-Modern East Asia”, offers a thorough overview of key concepts on the nature and development of translation in Asia before Western influences took hold. The focus is on the transmission of Chinese Buddhism texts throughout language communities in Asia, including some that are no longer extant: Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Mongolia, as well as Khitan and Jurchen empires, Tangut, and Uyghurs. Kornicki deftly covers this extensive ground, demonstrating the diversity of writing systems in pre-modern Asia, as well as whether a system existed and whether a given linguistic community chose to transliterate or translate a text. Sharon Lai’s chapter “Erasing the Translators: A History of Pirated Translation in Taiwan, 1949–1987” reviews the impact of piracy on translation studies in Taiwan and Taiwan’s complicated linguistic history vis-à-vis its experiences with colonialism. As in the previous chapter, Lai also provides a broad overview of the history and politics that are wrapped up in the practices of and access to translation in Taiwan, including an examination of the role of publishing houses in producing translations and providing or omitting information about the translator. The third and final chapter of this section is “The Emergence of Translation Studies in Japan in the 1970s”, penned by one of the volume’s editors, Nana Sato-Rossberg. This chapter refutes the argument that translation studies in Japan began after the start of the new millennium, pointing to two journals in circulation in Japan during the 1970s, *Kikan hon’yaku* and *Hon’yaku no sekai*, as evidence of the scientific study of translation at that time. Sato-Rossberg offers insights into backgrounds of the contributors and the variety of translation genres, not only literary, covered by the publications. The chapter also discusses Eugene Nida’s role in developing *hon’yaku-ron*, Japanese translation theory, and how it differs from Western translation theory. The section as a whole lays the

groundwork for the reader to be situated firmly in translation studies in Asia, providing a region-specific background and history of the field in Asia that is not rooted in the history of Western translation studies.

The second section, *Women Translators and Women in Translation*, examines the role of translation during the modernisation of Japanese and Korean society, specifically through the lens of Women Studies. The two chapters that comprise the section consider the influence of translated works on the evolution of gender norms in modernising Asia. The first chapter, Akiko Uchiyama's "Translating as Writing: Wakamatsu Shizuko's Empathetic Translation as a Creative Literary Art", is a case study of the translation strategies of Wakamatsu Shizuko (1864-1896), with a focus on "empathetic translation", which brings attention to a female translator whose work and contribution to translation has been widely overlooked in the literature. The chapter is nuanced and multifaceted, using Wakamatsu's translation contributions to explore "women's role in society through Western literature, at a time when Japan was experiencing a radical social transition after opening up to the world following two centuries of isolation" (89), as well as her role in promoting the *genbun itchi* movement at the time, which unified the written and spoken Japanese language. Similarly, the following chapter, "Translating/Transforming Women in North Korea: Traditions, Foreign Correspondences and the Creation of the Socialist Woman in the 1950s and 1960s", by Theresa Hyun, examines the role of literary translation in the development of social norms and sensibilities for modern women in East Asia, this time looking at North Korea. Like Sato-Rossberg, Hyun also takes into account the role of periodicals, in this instance *Choson nyosong* (Choson Women), in disseminating translated fiction that reinforced government stances on the roles of women. Both chapters in this section shed light on the interplay of gender norms, translation, and the processes of modernisation from specifically East Asian perspectives.

The third section, *New Media Translation*, focuses on more contemporary trends in translation, which are informed by the preceding sections and simultaneously open a window into the future of the field, and how it is being radically and excitingly transformed by technological developments in media. The opening chapter by Thomas Kebara, "The Cultures of Professional Subtitling and Fansubbing: Tradition and Innovation in Audiovisual Translation in Japan", challenges the conceptions that professional translators follow a highly conventionalised system and that fansubbers flout conventions. Kebara analyses how recent technological developments (file-sharing, unofficial online channels,

etc.) have impacted the formation of fansubbing communities and practices, and how those practices in turn have transformed the norms of interlingual subtitling. The focus of this chapter is Japan, which Kebara explains is a unique case because of the relatively unusual status and visibility of translators in Japan, but he also touches upon the state of fansubbing elsewhere in Asia more broadly. Kebara's chapter is followed by the only translated chapter, "A Gender-Based Analysis of the Translation of South Korean Tv Dramas in Japan", which was originally written in Japanese by Yeong-Ae Yamashita. This chapter continues the dialogue on gender studies from the prior section, but through the lens of subtitling. Yamashita assesses the translation of gender norms and patriarchal values in Tv subtitles between non-English languages, in this case Korean and Japanese, using the hit Korean drama *Winter Sonata* as a case study. This chapter points to the richness of non-Anglophone, regional comparative translation research, as it highlights the difficulty of reproducing more nuanced cultural norms around gender and politeness registers. The final chapter of this section and the volume is "Transcreation in Game Localization in China: A Contemporary Functionalist Approach to Digital Interactive Entertainment", co-written by Xiaochun Zhang and Minako O'Hagan. The subject of game localisation and the role of transcreation is examined from the perspective of the Chinese market for international massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG). Zhang and O'Hagan offer a fresh perspective of Hans Vermeer's well-worn *skopostheorie* and the functionalist paradigm in translation studies. Specifically, they delve into the concept of 'transcreation', "in which translators are granted 'quasi absolute freedom'" (183), and a higher degree of creativity, although they note that there is currently no consensus on the boundaries or definitions of transcreation, apropos translation. They differentiate transcreation from localisation, and trace the former's roots to postcolonialism in Brazil and India, before examining transcreation strategies in the Chinese market that strike a balance between "maintaining a similar gameplay feel in the target version and also to responding to a commercial drive for effective international marketing" (201) while also navigating explicit censorship by the Chinese government and implicit self-censorship, all of which underscore the need for the revision of skopos theory and the functionalist approach to translation, to adapt to more contemporary translation scenarios such as gaming. While the ramifications for technological change in this section are examined from the perspective of East Asian pop culture, there is plenty of room to extrapolate the conclusions drawn therein and apply them meaningfully to other linguistic

and cultural regions. This section as a whole illustrates beautifully the wide variety of new directions and future opportunities for translation research, as well as how the field continues to be richly informed by earlier iterations of translation theory and practices.

A product of the pioneering East Asian Translation Studies conference series that has thus far been held twice since 2014, this edited volume provides an extensive view of the multifaceted applications of translation studies within the East Asian context, with plenty of room for application to regional translation studies more broadly. With a non-Anglophone focus on translation, *Diverse Voices in Translation Studies in East Asia* sheds light on flourishing new traditions in translation studies in a region that is often assessed only in relation to Western translation theories and research. It helps to fill the lacuna that has stemmed from a lack of regional East Asian primary resources in English. Furthermore, each of its chapters reiterates the fact that translation studies research always simultaneously accomplishes two feats: promoting the study of translation itself and exhibiting how translation in turn impacts other areas of study, whether it be gender studies, linguistics, mass media studies, or political science, to name only a few.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jamie TOKUNO has a Masters of Arts in the Theory and Practice of Translation from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, and was a recipient of the Meiji Jingu Japanese Studies Research Scholarship during the first year of her PhD at SOAS. Her primary field of research is Japanese translation studies with a focus on ecotourism promotional texts, though her research also focuses on corpus-based translation studies, tourism studies, and Japanese sociolinguistics. She is currently based in Portland, Oregon, working as a market researcher for an international media and digital communications company, in addition to conducting independent research and freelance translation projects.

When the World Laughs. Film Comedy East and West **– William V. COSTANZO**

New York: Oxford University Press, 2020, 360 p.

Review by Jose MONTAÑO | Rikkyō University, Japan

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/2021.10.R.MON.COMED](https://doi.org/10.32926/2021.10.R.MON.COMED)

Date of submission: 15 October 2021

Date of acceptance: 30 October 2021

Date of publication: 20 December 2021

While film genres have risen or declined along with the times and its trends, according to Aldredge (2019), comedy has remained steady in high popularity through all the years since 1910, which is practically to say throughout the whole history of cinema as an industry. Furthermore, it can be said that comedy stands as the second genre in number of films produced when considering only a single genre tagging. However, as many films might encompass multiple genres, their consideration as “comedies” is often removed in favour of more serious genres reducing the volume of films that might be considered comedies (Bioglio and Pensa, 2018).

This trend to undermine what is humorous, to privilege “seriousness”, can be detected in many other spheres. Snibbe (2020) argues that film prizes are genre biased, and comedies have more difficulty getting recognition at events such as the Academy Awards. The scarce attention given by scholars to the genre is another example, as Yoshida Junji (2006) comprehensively argues with focus on the specific case of Japanese film comedy. The book under review here, *When the World Laughs. Film Comedy East and West*, by William V. Costanzo, comments on some figures about the genre popularity in South America, where “as elsewhere, comedy is the most popular film genre (...) Yet despite its obvious importance to the movie industry and to the culture at large, Latin American comedy has received little serious scholarly attention” (p. 267). Actually, this is not something exclusively circumscribed to cinema, as “for much of human history, tragedy has received more critical attention –and respect– than comedy” (p. 5).

It is under this regard that the publication of this book can be considered excellent news. Not just for the ambitious scope and the amount of valuable information contained in this

volume but precisely for its vocation as a call to fill in the described gap. Usually underrepresented in any kind of publication with an analytical aim, scholarly publications included, the comedy genre is relevant enough for the cinema ecosystem to deserve a wider and deeper analytical approach. This book is a potential trigger of further research efforts on the subject. Hopefully, it will become a landmark book for the discipline of Film Studies.

And yet, the volume's reach is hindered by several aspects one can disagree with and certain inconsistencies in the way the subject is tackled. Hence the need to start with an emphatic, if sincere, praise of a work that this review is far from trying to sharply condemn. The core of my objections to the book are related to my own research interests, oriented around understanding the bias under which Japanese films are often approached in the West. Since, presumably, the author lacks the perspectives that this specialisation might confer, it would not be fair to harshly disapprove his work under this single point of view. And the volume, let me insist, is worth reading and reflecting on its contents for many and varied reasons. As mentioned, the first and foremost of them is the scarcity of comprehensive works on film comedy, especially when it comes to considering comedies outside the Western domain.

The book is structured in two main blocks: an introductory one to set the theoretical frame and an extensive second one devoted to delving on film comedy around the world. In agreement with the times, Costanzo's research is not just contained within the published 335 pages but continues online with a series of chapters discussing particular case study films. There are currently eight of these bonus chapters uploaded by the publisher on its website, with the promise of updating and extending them gradually. The best part is that the film selection is not obvious and revolves around titles a bit out of common knowledge and appreciation such as, for instance, the Malian film *Skirt Power* (Adama Drabo, 1997).

The first block, *Frameworks and Foundations*, starts with a detailed historical journey through the different theories that have shaped our understanding of humour since Aristotle's time. According to the state of the art, Costanzo sets the *incongruity* theory over those of *superiority* or *relief* that were hegemonic in the past. This necessary overview includes insights on the debate around the disruptive, even revolutionary nature of humour versus the opposite stance that defines it as intrinsically conservative. Perhaps the most controversial aspect to tackle at researching and commenting on comedy films.

Let me skip for the moment the next chapter and go to the third, *Archetypes of Comedy*, to examine the universality – highlight this term – of different roles adopted by comic characters such as the clown, the trickster, or the comic duo. This section closes with a mention of recent scholarship on female comedy characters, a still undeveloped topic that is starting to offer new insights to better understand humour.

The next brief chapter, *Comedy, History, and Culture*, recounts the evolution of comedy from its first manifestations in the ancient world to contemporary screen culture. The fifth epigraph, *Technique and Style*, finally closes the first part, focusing on the forms and crafts used in film to convey comicalness.

Three steps behind, chapter 2 describes main forms of cinematic humour, from slapstick to parody, through farce and satire, with a brief incursion on some others like black comedy or the subgenre of romantic comedy. It concludes with another remark worth highlighting: humour is something dynamic, something that might change with the times and its circumstances, fashions, and vogues. This diachronic dimension also manifests in a generational perspective. Teenagers might experience fun differently than their elders; middle-aged people find amusing things that they did not at a younger age, and that they perhaps might find boring some years later. While I – aligned with current scholars – completely agree with this dynamic quality of humour, here is where I would introduce my first objection.

As Matthew Bevis puts it, “whilst comedy takes shape in time, discernable ideas and patterns recur over time” (Bevis, 2013: 3). Following Bevis, in this review I want to plead for “thinking about what might be themed the repertoires of comedy –with comedy conceived as an instinct that can exceed specified boundaries, as a container for expectations and surprises, and as a way of encountering the world” (Bevis, 2013: 3).

If the perception of what is laughable changes diachronically, it is because of different expectations of the audiences (Wells, 2006: 193). Experience of the world is what shapes our understanding and enjoyment of humour, or our lack of it. We can even consider humour as a matter of taste, reducing it to an individual experience. There is, nevertheless, an obvious social dimension to it, and some level of generalisation might be inevitable, but reducing everything to diachronicity as the only factor at play is forgetting that there is no society that is homogenic. One nation might encompass multiple cultural environments and sensitivities. Differences like gender, social status, educational background, and so on,

are as important to shape our understanding of the world as time, so all these dimensions should be included in the equation.

In 1987, the East-West Center in Honolulu, in conjunction with the Hawaii International Film Festival, held a symposium focused on humour and comedy on both sides of the Pacific. The concluding remarks for the symposium were entrusted to Susan Sontag, who lamented that all the contributors made statements merely about the particularities of the countries they were experts on, their culture, history, and other national dilemmas (Sontag, 1987: 100). While not denying interest in humoristic traditions particular to different countries or cultures, Sontag was disappointed by the exclusion from the debate of what is universal in humour (Sontag, 1987: 102).

Overestimation of the national rationale facilitates overlooking the social complexity that any nation carries within, as well as some dimensions of transnationality. There are countries that share the same language and similar cultural dynamics, while regions within the same country might not. Young people from countries with different cultures might have similar hopes and anxieties. The experience of rural life might bring the worldview of a farmer from a different country closer than that of an urban fellow countryman. More than thirty years after Sontag expressed her claims, we are still stuck in the national paradigm and continue to disregard the relevance of this complexity in understanding how humour and comedy are perceived within society. This book, as the organisation of its second section makes evident, is yet another example.

Under the promising title *Local and Global Contexts*, this second part includes eight chapters, devoted to British, French, Italian, and Russian comedies, as well as film comedy in Africa, Scandinavia, South America, and East Asia. This division reveals a purely local approach, since everything is compartmented nationally, in the case of European countries, or regionally for the non-European ones except for Scandinavia, but we will find out that the Scandinavian chapter is subdivided into sections for each of the countries in the region. All this converges to create a sense that differences are the focus. The *global* in the section heading is disregarded and *the World* of the book title laughs, but not unison. Instead of *comedy East and West*, we end up with comedy from the East segregated from that of the West. The imbalance between regional representation in this division might also cause us to wonder if *Film Comedy Europe and the Rest*, or perhaps *North and South*, would have been a more accurate title.

Chapter 1 includes a subsection whose header is *Thinking About Humor in the East*. It starts enumerating the Western thinkers on humour, from Plato to Freud, through Descartes or Kant, who were previously mentioned, to ascertain that theorists within Asian cultures are fewer. The study of their works “suggest some similarities to European views and a few striking differences” (p. 16). And yet, the few differences are privileged over the many commonalities in the body of the text. By setting the Asian domain as Other, the position of the other non-European regions covered by the work remains ambiguous. Why are African traditions not mentioned in this theoretical recount? Is South America considered part of the West?

Chapter 13, *Film Comedy in East Asia*, starts by stressing how distant East Asia is for Western moviegoers, both physically and culturally. The second line refers to the ancient traditions of East Asian countries. Two recurrent elements of the discourse around things Asian, otherness and tradition, justify the perception of how difficult it is to understand their humour. Elaborating on this, it mentions the Japanese term *nazo*, meaning a linguistic pun, to point out wordplay as a common feature that is practically untranslatable and unfathomable for Westerners. So well rooted in the collective imaginary, the slippery soil of exoticising discourse is difficult to overcome – sometimes even for experts trained in analysing non-Western societies and its culture. Using a Japanese term to confer some kind of exclusive category to common things is one of these unconscious strategies. Here this is especially obvious since there is no need to borrow a term. Wordplay is as common and easy to understand as its practice. Those who are ignorant of the language might not be able to decipher and enjoy such jokes, but there are no difficulties in understanding the mechanism behind them. Also, if wordplay is a common trait of humour in many different cultures, why should it be marked as a feature of humour in the East? Furthermore, is it not equally inapprehensible between any language, regardless of how culturally distant are they?

This introduction is continued in the first epigraph, *Laughing in Asia-Traditions of Comedy in China, Japan and Korea*, whose title is eloquent enough: the allusion, once again, to essential ancient traditions along with the recurrence of the national framework. This grouping reveals tension between the potential of having separated chapters for each country against the need to think of them as a block. Actually, after this contextualising section, some subchapters devoted to particular national cases follow.

In any case, this section itemises the implications of the essential belief systems such as Dao, Buddhism, Zen, or Shinto on the conformation of the different forms of comedy we can find in East Asian cinemas. The conclusive paragraph, referring to the Japanese case, states that “all these early forms of humour contributed in one way or another to the genre of Japanese film comedy known as *kigeki*. *Kigeki* spans a broad spectrum of slapstick, burlesque, parody, irony, black comedy, comedy of pathos, and comedy of manners.” (p. 303) Again, a term that might simply be substituted by its equivalent, *comedy*, to describe it as wide and comprehensive that practically includes everything this volume has previously theorised about. These facts are telling us that there are no essential differences. Why, then, the insistence and the effort to establish those differences? Have we learnt anything specific to Asian comedies in the end? Would it not have been more productive to get rid of the national mindframe and just talk about films, subgenres, themes, aesthetics, and other related topics, regardless of their culture of origin?

The chapter devoted to South American comedy films starts to regret that extension constraints force it to “sidestep the important contributions to Latin American film comedy of Mexico and Cuba, for example, along with the rest of Mesoamerica and the Caribbean” (p. 268). These space limitations might also have determined the choice of one of the two main linguistic domains in the subcontinent, Spanish or Portuguese. The decision to maintain both remains unexplained. All things considered, the statement conveys a clear sense of differentiation from Anglo-Saxon North America.

In the case of Africa, the author declares its precautions to avoid “perpetuating Western stereotypes, lumping all Africa together as if there were no differences in language, culture, history, ethnicity, or religion.” (p. 211). It would have been advisable, then, that the chapter title includes the specification that it is about sub-Saharan Africa, excluding the wide northern part of the continent. Even labelling it central Africa or intertropical Africa might have been fair since South African movies are also excluded. However, the justification of the regional framework, at least from my viewpoint as a non-expert in African cultures, is convincing. Film histories in the region have been researched from the linguistic paradigm, not the national, so national boundaries have blurred in favour of filiations inside the Lusophone, Anglophone, or French-speaking spheres. Common challenges such as the legacy of colonialism or the slow development of film industries’ assets such as theatres and distribution chains, might explain parallel developments throughout the different cultural domains in the area.

I wonder how an expert on Africa and its cinemas might react to that baseline. Nevertheless, the result is a chapter that does not rely on the limitations of the national framework. And this is not due to the exoticism of the films described, but because of a thought-provoking tracing of a genuinely transnational spread of styles, genres, and influences. Also, the South American chapter is infused with a similar taste, as it relies more upon tropes and thematic reasoning than on national particularities. For these reasons, both chapters are, by far, the most interesting of the book, showing its potential and somehow revealing what it might have been.

In conclusion, the search for boundaries and local specificities, with the false sense of homogeneity conveyed by the national framework, and the unconscious need to disconnect exotic cinemas from the Western ones, has prevented a truly global approach to the topic of film comedy. And yet, I will insist one last time, I consider the book, even despite all my many disagreements – or perhaps precisely because of them –, an opportunity to invigorate a much-needed intellectual debate around comedy films. It is a book that should be read, its contents spread, criticised, revised, upgraded. New perspectives might be born from and built upon it. It is a valuable volume and perhaps a first step, potentially a leap, to further studies that significantly improve our understanding and appreciation of film comedy.

REFERENCES

- ALDREDGE, J. (2021), Infographic Breaks Down Film Genre Popularity of the Past 100 Years Check out this cool look into how Film Genre Popularity has evolved over. Retrieved February 4, 2021, from <http://nofilmschool.com/Film-Genre-Popularity-Infographic>.
- BEVIS, M. (2013), *Comedy: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- BIOGLIO, L. — PENSA, R. G. (2018), Identification of key films and personalities in the history of cinema from a Western perspective. *Applied Network Science*, 3 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41109-018-0105-0>.
- SNIBBE, K. (2021), Oscars: Does a film's genre affect its chances of winning? What each best picture nominee has in common. *Orange County Register*.
- SONTAG, S. (1987), In Conclusion... *East-West Film Journal*, 2 (1), pp. 99–106.
- WELLS, M. A. (2006), Satire and Constraint in Japanese Culture. In: J. Milner Davies (ed.), *Understanding Humor in Japan*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, pp. 193-217.
- YOSHIDA, J. (2006). *Origins of Japanese Film Comedy and Questions of Colonial Modernity*. University of Oregon.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jose MONTAÑO holds a PhD in Humanities from Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona), obtained with a dissertation on contemporary Japanese cinema and its reception by Spanish film criticism. Previously, he completed an MA in Contemporary Cinema and Audio-visual Culture in the same institution, as well as an MA in East Asian Societies and Cultures at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Barcelona). Currently, he is a part-time lecturer at different institutions as Rikkyō University, Toyo-Gakuen University, Kanda University of International Studies and IES–Abroad Tokyo. His research interests are film criticism, contemporary Japanese cinema and Japanese film comedy. orcid <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5930-5704>

***The Values in Numbers: Reading Japanese Literature in a Global Information Age* – Hoyt LONG**

Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2021, 376p.

Review by Vicky YOUNG | University of Cambridge, UK

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/2021.10.R.YOU.VALUE](https://doi.org/10.32926/2021.10.R.YOU.VALUE)

Date of submission: 15 October 2021

Date of acceptance: 30 October 2021

Date of publication: 20 December 2021

The Values in Numbers: Reading Japanese Literature in a Global Information Age by Hoyt Long (Columbia University Press, 2021) sets out with two aims: to ask what computational methods might bring to the acts of reading and studying Japanese literature; and to open up the Digital Humanities, which in the United States have been dominated by the English language, to alternative insights, challenges, and solutions that arise when the objects of analysis are Japanese texts. The book's opening sets the tone by outlining a debate that unfolded in the Académie de Médecine in Paris in 1837 between the "numerists", who saw the future of medical science in new concepts such as the average, and their detractors for whom medicine was an art in which the imposition of numbers could never match the powers of observation and experience. This may seem a curious point of entry for a book on Japanese literature. However, as this brief account sets up a dichotomy between statistical advancements and the reservations held by "antinumerists", it establishes Long's optimistic position that digital methods hold the future for (Japanese) literary studies.

Mindful of the reader who might be unfamiliar, or even unsympathetic, to the notion of applying statistical methods to literature, Long begins by asserting that numbers are already a part of Japan's modern literary history. The opening chapter maps out key debates among Japanese writers and scholars who since the Meiji era (1868-1912) have wrangled with what it means to "think with numbers". These include Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916), who underwent a "numerical turn" (p. 33) motivated by the question of how to quantify emotion within literature, and Hatano Kanji, who sought to determine the relationship between a writer's style and his psychological make-up by measuring textual

attributes such as sentence length. This historical overview presents a narrative of writers caught in the conflux between the need to understand what distinguished modern Japanese fiction at a time of nation-building, and an interest in how new technologies of science and measuring could help dig into those features. Hatano's case also brings into focus how linguistic difference might shape statistical possibilities. While in English, the word can be considered a single, countable unit of language, Japanese complicates that presumption due to its composition through unspaced strings of kanji – each of which carries its own meaning – and phonetic scripts.

These examples provide a bridge across which *The Values in Numbers* seeks to lead the uninitiated reader from traditional literary studies into more numerical thinking. Long weaves into this chapter an introduction to Digital Humanities as they have been developed in North America and trained on English-language works of literature. This context provides comparative touchstones for the Japanese examples given and allows Long to set out the toolkit of key concepts and methods that he will apply and develop in his subsequent chapters.

Long's methodologies are rooted in frequentist statistics that measure the recurrence of certain traits within a sample to draw conclusions about the whole and sometimes make predictions. In Chapter Two, Long sets out this approach in reference to his primary archive, Aozora Bunko, the greatest online repository of more than 16,000 titles (although this number is continually growing). Aozora makes for an interesting case study. Titles can be created once they are out of copyright – which in Japan means waiting until seventy years after the author has died – and they are input manually by volunteers without recourse to digital scanning. Long makes no reference to the possibility of human error here, but his discussion of Aozora acknowledges its constraints in such a way that expresses the biases inherent in any kind of sampling.

Long argues that a key to Digital Humanities is to uncover what kinds of questions they can be deployed to answer. In Chapter Three, he considers how to “diagnose” the *shishōsetsu* (“I-novel”), a genre known for “defying and demanding definition” (p. 128). (Long frequently repurposes medical terms that recall the opening Parisian debate). Efforts to pin down the I-novel have a long history in modern literary studies. Long's quest is to see what answers might result from a “scaled-up reading” (p. 13) across multiple texts. Building on the I-novel's dominant image as a confessional mode that expresses the focal character's descent into psychological despair, Long computes the repetition (which

he equates with “redundancy”) of personal pronouns and terms that connote emotional qualities within both literary works that have been considered to epitomise the I-novel and those that have not. Long’s textual evidence suggests that some more popular works that have been rejected from the I-novel pantheon in fact carry just as many, if not more attributes that would warrant their full inclusion. This raises many questions, but the most salient is to ask why there is still a need to defer to this mode of literary categorisation that emerged in its own social, and historical milieu, and which seems out of joint with this new, digital apparatus. The limitations of Aozora’s archive makes it inevitable that Long should focus on pre-war texts, but this application of new technologies fails to address why those debates still matter.

The “global information age” in Long’s title suggests a context and opportunity for this research to forge new conceptual ground. Long begins by locating the texts under his analysis amid the tides of a global literary modernism in the 1930s. Through his computational analyses in later chapters, he traces the influence of stream-of-consciousness narrative techniques, that spread like a “virus” following the translation into Japanese of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (Chapter Four), and the preponderance of racial characterisations in literary works written against the backdrop of rising imperialism (Chapter Five). Long also appeals to the global to connect his work to a burgeoning discourse of world literature that has developed in the United States and Europe in recent decades. Given Long’s goal to address the asymmetry by which Japanese literature finds itself marginalised, it might have been productive to tap into how Japanese writers throughout the past century have debated world literature (*sekai bungaku*) concomitant to the texts under analysis.

This reader set out to be sympathetic with Long’s claim that there is a space within which digital methods and traditional literary studies can meaningfully collaborate. However, in its effort to shuttle between these contexts and across myriad conceptual, historical, and theoretical divisions, *The Values in Numbers* is a challenging read. Most chapters run to between fifty and sixty pages, inclusive of graphs and charts that each demand different reading skills. Added to this are extensive footnotes, an Appendix, and an open-access weblink to a repository containing Long’s original data and codes in full. While this appeals to the perceived transparency of Digital Humanities, only the most fastidious and accomplished reader will navigate this distribution of printed and online information. There are also several inconsistencies and inaccuracies, such as the pairing

of *junbungaku* ('pure literature') in Japanese with "popular literature" in English, without acknowledging the complexities of defining and translating these terms; Japanese names listed in Excel spreadsheets under "first names" and "second names" in a way that inverts the standard Japanese order; and a failure to report actual sample sizes in the legend, for example Fig. 3.1 (p. 143). While these individual points are small, collectively they run the risk of misinforming readers unfamiliar with either Japanese Studies and/ or statistical analysis.

The Values in Numbers arrives at a time when Digital Humanities is being elevated within Asian Studies as an opportunity to quell the widespread sense of crisis within higher education, and to "radically reshape our profession".¹ It seems logical in this climate, exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, that more data and digitisation could be the answer. This conclusion also follows Long's suggestion that his findings could be developed through an expanded archive. However, as this book also acknowledges, the inputting of texts is already a form of selection, and thus conditioning. It is an inevitable outcome of a frequentist approach that more can be deduced with large sample sizes than can be said about minorities. What the current enthusiasm does not address is how these methods of statistical analysis might accommodate writers who deploy strategies rooted in multilinguality, non-standard dialects, and hybrid orthographies, without imposing upon them codes of conformity or altering their materiality. This includes writers from Okinawa whose visibility is already under threat within the globalising literary marketplace. *The Values in Numbers* has value as the first book to question how digital methods and Japanese literary studies might learn from one another. However, before co-opting digital methods fully as the future of Japanese literary studies, we should also value those voices and textual practices within Japanese literature that enable us to challenge those methods, and consider the wider impacts of the current rush towards data.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vicky YOUNG is the Kawashima Lecturer in Japanese Literature and Culture at the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge. Her work engages with issues of multilinguality, historical memory, and translation in Japanese literature, with particular focus on the work of Okinawan, ethnic Korean, and 'transborder' writers. She is writing a monograph on the role of translation in constructing the borders of Japanese literature in relation to world literature.

¹ <https://www.asianstudies.org/making-it-count-the-case-for-digital-scholarship-in-asian-studies/>

***An Affair with a Village* – Joy HENDRY**

Stirling: Extremis Publishing, 2021, 154 p.

Review by Aurore YAMAGATA-MONTOYA | Independent Researcher, MIRA, France

[HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.32926/2021.10.R.YAM.AFFAI](https://doi.org/10.32926/2021.10.R.YAM.AFFAI)

Date of submission: 15 June 2021

Date of acceptance: 17 November 2021

Date of publication: 20 December 2021

Joy Hendry is today a leading Japanese studies scholar and anthropologist, recompensed with the Order of the Rising Sun, who founded and presided over several major research associations over the past decades. However, at the time this story starts (as it is a story Hendry is writing in this book), she is a young woman starting her fieldwork for a doctorate. She had mastered the Japanese language already, but many aspects of Japanese daily life, especially in a retired rural area such as the small village of Kurotsuchi (Kyushu), elude her – as it did for most foreign academics in the 1970s.

Written during lockdown due to the pandemic, Hendry narrates her memories of life and work in Japan. This book is not an academic work, but the pendant to her earlier research. She writes with nostalgia and personal engagement about her encounter and love affair – its ups and downs – with the village she lived in for one year to do her fieldwork and which she visited regularly for over forty years. If you want to read the academic version, you should open *Marriage in Changing Japan: Community and Society* or her textbook *Understanding Japanese Society*. *An Affair with a Village* will introduce you to the real people, those she met and those she brought with her – Dennis, her husband who stayed with her in Kurotsuchi for several months during the fieldwork for her doctorate, and her own children who visited several times both during their childhood and as adults. It has been a lifelong love affair. She has seen children grow and become parents themselves; she has buried many acquaintances of the older generations, those who told her about the past life of the village. Hendry grew old alongside the villagers. She witnessed their changes as much as they did hers and her own family's growth.

For those who, by any chance, have never read Hendry's work – there must not be that many around – do not worry. *An Affair with a Village* can be read alone, without being

familiar with her published research findings. However, an interesting reading strategy might be to read them in parallel, thus allowing you a peek behind the curtain. Hendry follows a tradition of personal narrations of anthropologists' fieldwork that emerged in the 1960s. This book goes beyond the factual, beyond the anthropological analysis and focuses on the emotions and personal souvenirs. In this autobiographical narration, Hendry recalls chronologically over forty years of relationships with the village.

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the village with a description of the place, that Hendry "did not think [...] beautiful at first" (p. 1) and introducing what would be the places of interest for an anthropologist in a rural area: the places of social life, the religious places and the fields.

Chapter 2, titled "Introductions", is both an introduction to the main figures of authority (her academic tutor, a member of parliament, the village head, the policeman) and how they introduced her to the village and each in his (as all were men) own way helped her be accepted in the community. Hendry also presents the first steps of her fieldwork with the formal meeting of all the families, the police records and the genealogical tree of the village she made.

In Chapter 3, Hendry explains how she "wooed" the families, how the first formal meetings turned into less formal encounters, how she exchanged gifts with them, and also got to know their ancestors.

Chapter 4 lists how she was able to build relationships with different groups of people: the shopkeepers who are always around, at events she was invited to, by being allowed into their homes, by tagging along specific groups such as the youth group. She finishes the chapter by developing two specific events she witnessed: a baby presentation at the shrine and the rebuilding of a house.

Chapter 5 introduces the concept of the Japanese family registry and why and how she gained access to them and presents the mourning rituals she encountered for the first time.

In Chapter 6, after mentioning the difficult line between her need to fit in the community and her own family's privacy, she focuses on her friendlier relationship with one family and the sudden death of their head of the household, a middle-aged father of three. Here, we see clearly both sides of Hendry's reaction: her own emotional response to this death and her professional reading of how it affects the household (*ie*) and the whole village.

In the next chapter, Hendry explores the more intimate aspect of life within the home and the evening and night routines. Once her husband returns to the UK for his work, she

is inundated with invitations to stay over, and uses the occasion to stay with as many families as possible to discover the sleeping arrangements and the questions of privacy within each household. Thanks to that closeness to the private life of the villagers, she manages to attend more meetings and get a better understanding of the village life.

In chapter 8, the author details how her house being broken into by an unknown man who she caught wearing her clothes scared her into staying over at her neighbor's house for the rest of her fieldwork. She describes her dealing with the police and the four hours she spent being interrogated. Staying at with Kumagais helped her understanding of Japanese social and family life, in addition to building a lifelong friendship.

When Hendry was not informed about an important festival in the village, as she recalls in Chapter 9, she felt betrayed – with this feeling becoming the title of the chapter. It became the occasion that led her to question her position in the village, the gap between what was said to her and what was actually thought or felt, about how she might be imposing on the villagers; lives. However, their curiosity towards her lowered her concerns about her own curiosity. The second half of the chapter focuses on the presence of a stray dog she adopted – rather, it adopted her – and the issues it created with some of the villagers.

Chapter 10 narrates the final weeks before she finishes her field study and leaves the village. It matches the end-of-year season and is packed with parties, speeches and even a radio interview. Hendry recalls the departing gifts she received and the send-off party that accompanied her to the train station.

The “glorious return” that composes Chapter 11 takes place three years later. By then, her thesis had been published and she had given birth to her first son. Her second stay lasted one month and she was to accompany a BBC film crew to the village. There were still few foreign visitors at the time and the film crew were treated as guests by the villagers. Although it went smoothly, the BBC crew being used to working abroad and complying with expectations, an issue arose when Hendry and the crew were given the wrong time to assist with some field preparatory work. But all bad feelings were left behind at the farewell party the villagers threw for the crew.

Chapter 12 highlights the author's difficulties with keeping up with the correspondence of the villagers and the difficult reception of her work and the BBC's film. Indeed, the eleven hours of film turned into a fifty-minute documentary and some people's sensibilities were hurt at being excluded from the final product. The same happened with her published thesis. It included some photographs of the villagers but not all. Moreover, none of the

villagers could read English. The head of the village offered to have it translated but Hendry refused, as a bad translation could cause more damage than no translation at all. Nevertheless, during the three-weeks stay, everybody warmed up again to her, thanks to her – by then – two young children, the oldest of which could speak Japanese from having attended a Japanese kindergarten for several months while Hendry was conducting new research on childrearing methods. Her new research project also helped her get close to the mothers in the village and learn about rural methods of childrearing.

Over the next chapter, Hendry recalls the many visits she paid to Kurotsuchi both for personal (to keep in touch) and professional (to update her understanding of changing rural Japan) reasons. She recalls that the visits around that time were sad as the economic bubble burst had affected the chrysanthemum sales, the crafts, and small businesses. She notes the many changes on the social life of the village: a lowered population and only one child in primary school age (in 2002), many one-person households, difficulties finding a wife for sons who agreed to carry on the family business, the increase of outside care for elders, neighbours no longer involved in housebuilding. While the village emptied out, its younger members started travelling internationally, and Hendry welcomed several villagers during their visits to Oxford. With the contribution of a carpenter from the village, she planned the – difficult – construction of a Japanese room at Oxford Brookes University.

Chapter 14 points at a change in attitude towards rural Japan. Both academics and city dwellers show an interest in rural areas and, thanks to wireless Internet, it is the start of country retreats. Hendry witnesses more changes, such as the new phenomenon of the “hands-on father” (*ikumen*), but also questions the “disastrous drop in the birth-rate” (p. 107) when she has “plenty of evidence of new generations being born” (p. 107). Before closing the chapter, she narrates how she was given an unworn wedding kimono – another sign of the changing times, as the daughter bought her own kimono and refused her mother’s handmade one. She donated the garment to the Japanese room at Oxford Brookes University, and avoided paying heavy duty in the UK thanks to the kindness of a Japanese port employee. This chapter closes with a short visit that coincided with the festival of the sacred tree (*gorogorosan*) that she missed during her field stay forty years ago.

The next chapter, titled “Forty years and counting”, summarises the changes she has witnessed during that timeframe and how she has been recording it in the five successive editions of her textbook *Understanding Japanese Society*. The change is not only in the village, but in her gaze. The village that had first appeared to her as “untidy” is now full of

charm. However, the village has lost all its shops and the public bath; only a drinks machine remains. People now drive around and, as a consequence, informal chats have subsided. The overall population lowered from 54 houses to 45 and there has been a decrease in the number of farmers and horticulturalists, although the chrysanthemums and tea fields are now prosperous and unfortunately are the cause of pollution in the area. The different crafts that Hendry witnessed in the village, such as lantern-making, paper-making, or *Kurume gasuri*, are now only practised in the Craft Centre next to the Tourist Information Centre in the nearby town Yame. Hendry specifies that all changes are not bad: some less well-off households have grown, the formerly plastic covered greenhouses are now properly finished glasshouses, all the houses look well maintained, new occupations have emerged: health care, a plastic bags factory and several small businesses. If a family's continuity is not the norm anymore, some new forms of continuity emerge, such as building new houses on the same plot to allow the older and younger generations to work together but live separately.

The last chapter recalls Hendry's last two visits to Kurotsuchi. During her penultimate trip, Hendry could not find her notebook (from her first stay) with the information about each family and was unable to remember all their faces well, especially those of the departed. As a result, for the first time, she could not visit the Buddhist altar of the people who died since her last visit, not knowing in which house they had lived. From this mishap emerged the idea of a farewell to the community. She informed her editor that it would be the last update of the textbook mentioned above. She also handed over all the photographs to the Pitt Rivers Museum (Oxford). In 2017, she offered to give to the village some documents she thought could be of interest to the villagers, mostly village-wide family trees and charts about outsiders' provenances. In 2019, a formal handover was organised. Accompanied by her son James and his girlfriend Nadine Kreter who filmed her last visit,¹ she took copies of the documents to the individual households and nostalgically reminisced about the past while looking at photographs.

Actually, the whole book is about nostalgia. It reads like a goodbye to the village and her lifetime love affair. A goodbye to academics, even. It is fully understandable as Hendry's age places her in the "retired" category. However, do we ever retire from

¹ The film *Understanding Japanese Culture* (2019) is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7qptoXqnhE>

Academia? Can we ever stop being researchers? Hendry has demonstrated that she is among the researchers who – despite other interests – go back to the same subject over and over again, who deepen their understanding of their subject and follow its evolution. I believe that if Hendry were to return to the village, she would not be able to prevent herself from analysing the most recent changes, and her resolution to not update her textbook anymore might be somewhat difficult to keep. Hendry has invested so much, professionally, in this village, that it might be hard to resist the temptation and it might be easier to just walk away as she announced she will do. But the book I am reviewing is also, if not mainly, about Hendry’s personal involvement with the village. Hendry had to juggle everyday the balance between fitting in and being an outsider. Not only a foreigner, but an academic, an anthropologist. She had built not only a relationship with her study subject, but many interpersonal relationships. As she said: “It is not easy to be sure of one’s relationship with a village. With families perhaps, with individuals more surely, but with a village – it is quite difficult!” (p. 83). She managed to keep her relationships alive for over forty years, within and outside the village. She has been fully invested in her research: her sons visited with her, helped lower tensions at times, filmed her with the villagers; she welcomed villagers into her home in the UK; she kept correspondence with many of the housewives. She asked the villagers to open up to her, but, in a reciprocal movement, she also opened up to them. Would her research have been as good if she had not invested herself and her family? I believe not. And neither does Hendry, as she had previously written about “the advantages of the personal involvement of a fieldworker in gaining understanding of a society” (1999, p. 155).

Already in 1999, Hendry wrote a “highly personal” – as her publisher states – account of another fieldwork in *An Anthropologist in Japan*; that book is nonetheless turned towards Academia in a way that *An Affair with a Village* is not. The former is published by Routledge, who qualifies it as “reflexive anthropology in action” in the abstract; the prologue presents the method of research and states that its overall goals are to “provide interesting and revealing glimpses of Japanese life” and “to make a contribution to the wider aim that I believe is made especially possible by the subject of social anthropology, namely to overcome the dreadful propensity of people to misunderstand one another” (1999, xiv). The back cover clearly states the book is aimed at academics, more precisely anthropologists and Japanese studies scholars.

As I was reading *An Affair with a Village*, I kept wondering who it was written for? Was it for future anthropologists to learn about a predecessor's failures and successes? Was it for the faithful reader who for years has been reading Hendry's latest studies? Was it for the layman with an interest in Japan or in rural life? I think in the prologue Hendry actually gives us a hint. This book is about nostalgia and it was written mostly for herself. It is a trip down memory lane. That the subject makes it of interest for fellow scholars, is just a plus. Hendry opts for a more informal style than her 1999's publication and has no other goal than to reminisce. There are thoughts about her role within the community as an anthropologist, but they remain brief inclusions to the main narrations. The publishing house, Extremis Publishing, is neither aimed at an academic audience nor a Japan-focused one. Her book is published alongside a variety of other memoirs, local historical accounts, travel books and nonfiction on media and culture.

I cannot in good faith complete this review without mentioning a few more critical points. Although I understand that Extremis Publishing is a young independent publishing house (started in 2015), the printing quality of the book is overall low. Many photographs have been included (those donated to the Pitt Rivers Museum), to our great pleasure. The choice was made to display the photographs alongside the text. I personally find it nice to be able to look at the images while reading about the event or people in the photograph, rather than having to flick back and forth. However, this choice forces all pages to be printed in colour (as testified by a Bordeaux header), but all in a lower quality, for financial reasons, I assume.

I also have to admit a slight irritation at Hendry's writing style, especially in the first chapters. She seems to have forced her narration into a chronological line – although almost never providing indications of the date, not even just the decade. In theory, there is nothing wrong with that approach for an autobiographical text. However, she keeps jumping ahead of the events in a somewhat inelegant style: "I am jumping ahead again [...] it will be revealed in due course" (p. 23), "as we shall see in due course" (p. 28), "and will reappear in a later chapter (read on, dear reader!)" (p. 38).

Do not expect *An Affair with a Village* to be Hendry's latest update on her early research. It is not. As long as you read it for what it is – a memoir, a nostalgic account of a life in Japan in the 1970s and the subsequent changes she witnessed, a goodbye from a renowned anthropologist who has deepened our understanding of rural Japan relentlessly since then – you should enjoy this peek behind the curtains.

REFERENCES

- HENDRY, JOY (1981), *Marriage in Changing Japan: Community and Society*. London: Croom Helm.
— (1999), *An Anthropologist in Japan: Glimpses of Life in the Field*. London; New York: Routledge.
— (2019), *Understanding Japanese Society [1987]*. 5th edition. London; New York: Routledge.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aurore YAMAGATA-MONTOYA obtained her PhD on the representation of Japanese children and the construction of national identity in photography from the University of the West of England (UK). Her research interests are at the junction of photography, childhood and family studies, Japanese and cultural studies. Her current research focuses on two different but related themes: the childhood of the feminist Tsuda Umeko, especially her experience of life in America in the 1870s; and the representation of the Iwakura Mission in the Press both in Japan and abroad. She is a co-founder and the president of Mutual Images Research Association. Her latest publications include “Dressing the Mizuko Jizō: Materialising the Aborted Fetus in Japan” in *Representing Abortion*, edited by Rachel Alpha Johnston Hurst (London and New York: Routledge).