

Abstracts

Relazioni inaugurali

Modern Japanese Literary Men Abandon Pen and Paper and Take up Cycling: The Precarity of Being-in-the-Saddle-in-Urban-Space

SAKAKI ATSUKO

This paper examines three modern Japanese narratives about cycling lessons, taken by a Japanese man in late Victorian London (Natsume Sōseki, *Jitensha nikki* [Bicycle Diary, 1903]), a man in an unnamed city in the mid-1930s Japan (Hagiwara Sakutarō, *Jitensha nikki* [Bicycle Diary, 1936]), and a “man of no use” in air-raid prone 1940s Tokyo (Ishikawa Jun, *Meigetsushu* [Moon Gems, 1946]), to illustrate the volatile dynamic among the human body, the physically demanding yet potentially liberating machine, and (sub)urban space filled with strangers with diverse manners and hazardous obstacles. I show how modern masculine subjectivity in these first-person narratives is contested through physical challenges, unpredictable encounters, and the immersive environment to the effect of these novice cyclists losing narrative authority and gaining a new perspective by virtue of being-in-the-world.

What Should We Make of Yoshiwara’s Culture?

TANAKA YŪKO

From March 26 to May 19, 2024, the “Yoshiwara Exhibition” was held at the Museum of Tokyo University of the Arts (a national university). It was the first exhibition dedicated to Yoshiwara, the Edo-period red light district. Masterpieces of *ukiyo-e* by artists such as Chōbunsai Eishi, Kitagawa Utamaro, and Kitao Masanobu were gathered, and the streets of Yoshiwara were recreated within the venue, making it a highly refined art exhibition. However, since it was held at a national university, it attracted a great deal of criticism. Yoshiwara was a place where courtesans, that is, prostitutes, worked, and in today’s society, such criticism is understandable.

The courtesans of Yoshiwara were women who practiced calligraphy, and were educated in tea ceremony, flower arranging, classical Japanese poetry (*waka*), Chinese poetry, and incense appreciation. The geisha of Yoshiwara were also among the most skilled in Japan in *shamisen*, singing, and dancing. Seasonal events were actively held, and a refined Japanese culture was fostered in Yoshiwara. Many literary works were also born from this culture.

As people living in modern society, how should we confront both aspects of this history—the fact that these women were educated cultural figures, and that they were also prostitutes burdened with family debt? Prostitution, as a form of sexual exploitation, must be eradicated worldwide today. But how should we deal with the history that once accepted and institutionalized it? This exhibition poses that question and invites us to think together.

Relazioni incluse nel presente volume

Ise Priestesses and Love in Heian Literature. *Ise Monogatari*, *Genji Monogatari* and *Yoru no Nezame*

SAMANTHA AUDOLY

Ise priestesses are significant figures in Heian-period *Ise Monogatari* (9th-10th century) and *Genji Monogatari* (1008), as well as in *Yoru no Nezame* (1060-1080). This reflects their historical importance, yet these characters also serve a specific role in depicting distinctive relational dynamics between men and women in these *monogatari*. The depiction of Ise priestesses as characters associated with romantic themes seems to echo a trend that is both literary and historical. Indeed, based on biographical sources, Ise priestesses rarely abandoned the world of love relationships after their service concluded, suggesting that the conception of male-female relations shared and upheld within their community was a positive one.

Here I discuss the conception of love proposed in Ise priestesses' narrative portrayals. I refer specifically to the priestesses appearing in the aforementioned *monogatari*, as well as to their historical counterparts—Yasuko no Naishinnō (910-954), Saikū no Nyōgo (929-985), and Masako no Naishinnō (1001-1022).

The Ideal Ally. Elements for a Comparison between the Image of Japan in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany

NICOLA BASSONI

Recent studies on the Tripartite Pact have highlighted the relevant role played by cultural relations and the construction of mutual images of the allies in the origin and functioning of the military alliance. However, comparative approaches have so far been neglected. In order to lay the groundwork for a comparative analysis of the image of Japan in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, this paper examines the historical, institutional, and intellectual background in which the political narratives about Japan had been developed in both countries. The paper will analyse comparatively the differences in the German and Italian relations with Japan, the development of Japanese studies and cultural-political institutions in both countries, and the political discourses about Japan disseminated by German, Italian, and Japanese propaganda from 1940 to 1942.

Italian Legations and Consulates in Meiji Japan. History and roles of the first Italian diplomatic offices in Japan.

GIULIO ANTONIO BERTELLI

In this article, through the analysis of some newly discovered Italian and Japanese primary sources, the author aims to shed some light on the almost completely unknown history of the buildings that hosted the very first Italian Legations and Consulates in Japan from 1867 to the early 1870s. In particular, this article will focus on the first, temporary venue of the Legation and Consulate at the N.90 of the foreign settlement of Yokohama, on the buildings hosting the Italian diplomatic missions in the Benten area of Yokohama (near the French Legation), and on two sites that hosted the first Italian Legations in Tokyo: the Kōunji temple and the Ura-Kasumigaseki - Toranomom complex. Identifying the buildings, their position, appearance and architectural features is important to stress the effective and active presence of Italy in Japan in the delicate years around the Meiji Restoration.

The Development of Descriptive Grammars of Modern Japanese in the Meiji Period

PAOLO CALVETTI

Descriptive studies of modern Japanese grammar began during the Meiji period and the publication of books to be used for didactic and normative purposes began in the late 19th and early 20th century. Until then, the focus of the ‘study’ of the Japanese language was on the analysis of the so-called ‘classical language’, whereas the need for a description of the contemporary language had not been felt.

In this study, we examine a small selection of Japanese grammars of the time, analysing the organisation of the descriptions and the main terminological and conceptual innovations. While some of these grammars seem to have been conceived with what today we would call applied linguistics for language teaching purposes, others are true descriptive grammars – sometimes with normative intentions – which influenced the development of Japanese linguistics in later periods.

Construction and Stylometric Analysis of a Parallel Corpus of Japanese Translations of D’Annunzio’s “Triumph of Death”

GABRIELE CAMILLERI

This study examines the stylistic evolution of eight Japanese translations of Gabriele D’Annunzio’s *Triumph of Death*, published between 1913 and 2010. The translations have been encoded according to TEI-XML standards and divided into five sub-corpora: narration, protagonist’s dialogues, heroine’s dialogues, internal monologues, and epistolary correspondence. Using a set of 22 document-level features, principal component analysis (PCA) was applied for dimensionality reduction, followed by hierarchical clustering and analysis of variance (ANOVA) to identify distinctive features of each cluster. A second set of the relative frequencies of 20 token trigrams was further selected using a variant of Zeta analysis to highlight the most characteristic terms in each sub-corpus. Results highlight the elements that distinguish translations published before and after World War II, providing a basis for further comparative studies.

Old Traditions and Thriving Variations: The Spread of Nō Theatre in the Provinces between the Muromachi and Edo Periods

IVAN CROSCENKO

Five variations of Nō theatre called Regional or Provincial Nō were born between late Muromachi and Edo periods departing from Zeami’ style and the five major schools. Over the centuries they were inherited by farmers, villagers and townspeople in the Shōnai and Kaetsu regions as well as in Sado island and soon became central to their cultures. Furthermore, these traditions are preserved and performed even today during festivals by the locals and not professional actors. Their performances differ from the Nō Theatre usually known but are fascinating due the presence of old performative elements. This study aims to analyse the causes that led to the spread of Nō Theatre from Kyōto and Edo to the provinces and to understand through legends and documents the uprise of regional Nō, focusing on Kurokawa Nō, Yamato Nō, Matsuyama Nō, Ōsuda Nō and Sado Nō in Yamagata and Niigata prefectures.

**Morphosyntactic integration of Western loanwords in Japanese in missionary sources
in Latin characters: grammars, dictionaries and religious texts**

CORINNE D'ANTONIO

The article tackles the main strategies of morphosyntactic integration of loanwords within the texts printed by the Society of Jesus in Japan from 1591. Special attention is paid to texts in Japanese language in Latin characters.

First, the article analyses the morphological features of loanwords, that often conserve their native morphology, such as singular/plural alternations or gender distinctions. Then, two devices of morphosyntactic integration are examined: 1) nominal affixation via suffixes (*tachi, ra*) and prefixes (*go, von*), 2) syntactic integration of borrowed adjectives followed by borrowed or indigenous nouns.

My findings suggest that these conventions were adopted in the translation process in a previous phase, when manuscripts, instead of printed texts, circulated among Jesuits, and that they were likely superimposed uniformly by the Society of Jesus to its members.

**We Shall Overcome Someday (?) The Representation of Zainichi Koreans
in *Gaki Teikoku* and *Pacchigi!***

EUGENIO DE ANGELIS

Until the 1980s, films featuring zainichi Koreans often defined these characters in opposition to those of Japanese ethnicity, presenting their identity as a form of otherness. Izutsu Kazuyuki's *Gaki teikoku* (1981) is one of the earliest films to depict zainichi without emphasizing their ethnicity through victimizing stereotypes or reducing them to the 'Other.' While retaining elements of his earlier work, in the national hit *Pacchigi!* (2005), Izutsu offers a more conventional representation of zainichi characters as ethnically opposed to the Japanese through an interethnic love story. By means of a comparative analysis of the two films, I argue that *Gaki teikoku* is less concerned with constructing a zainichi identity and more focused on depicting a violent, multiethnic society, whereas *Pacchigi!* presents a more conciliatory view, turning the zainichi into a 'spectacle' for the Japanese gaze.

The Tanka Boom Phenomenon in Contemporary Japanese Poetry

DAMIANA DE GENNARO

Mainstream newspaper *Nikkei Shinbun* has recently published several reports on the "tanka boom," a phenomenon referring to the trend among younger generations of sharing their own *tanka* poems on social networks. What role do social networks play in shaping how this literary genre is read, written, and published today? Is it possible to view contemporary *tanka* as an expression of popular culture? Why are themes such as feminism and gender-based violence recurrent? This study aims to address the gap in our understanding of this phenomenon in contemporary Japan through the lens of Gender Studies and World Poetry theory.

**Diamonds in the Subway: An Analysis of Gender Identity and Gender Roles in
Contemporary Japanese Society through Kyoto Drag**

MARCO DEL DIN

This article investigates the phenomenon of drag in contemporary Japan by analyzing the longest-running drag show organized by Japanese people, Diamonds Are Forever. It first attempts to define the figure of the drag queen, eventually concluding that it is an entity that avoids definition and whose main defining characteristics are those of excess and

monstrosity. This monstrosity is evident not only in the inspiration behind their *personae*, but also in their performances, showing often disharmonic movements and always a body that is monstrous in itself. Their status as monsters allows them to question boundaries and categories, and informs the queens' identity in that they see themselves as part of a 'minority' possessing different, deviant morality and sensibility. Finally, drag and its monstrosity allow the artists to question gender roles and identities, and to envision new ways of being and identifying.

The Italian Fashion at the 1970 Osaka Expo

LAURA DIMITRIO

This article examines a small exhibition of Italian fashion that was organized in the Italian pavilion at the 1970 Osaka Expo. This exhibition was one of the first institutional opportunities for Italian fashion to be showcased in Japan. Thanks to unpublished documents and photos from the historical Archive of the Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana, it was possible to trace the evolution of the exhibition. Due to some organizational issues, this exhibition did not do justice to the Made in Italy brand in Japan. Nevertheless, it played an important role in helping Italian institutions and fashion houses recognize the enormous potential of the Japanese market, previously underestimated. On the Japanese side, in contrast, Italian fashion had been already appreciated for its colourful fabrics and affordable ready-to-wear clothing.

Modern Japanese Writers and *Ukiyo-e* Prints: Considerations on Edo Art in the Taishō Period

ELENA FABBRETTI

During the Meiji period, *ukiyo-e* prints, which had been mass-produced throughout the Edo period, gradually lost their value in Japan. It was not until the beginning of the Taishō period that some pioneers, such as the banker and alpinist Kojima Usui (1873-1948), the poet and literary critic Noguchi Yonejirō (1875-1947) and the famous novelist Nagai Kafū (1879-1959), began to show interest in *ukiyo-e* as an important Japanese art form. This paper presents their different approaches to Edo art taking into account the influence of Japanism abroad and the boom of the commercialization of Edo culture in Taishō Japan, and clarifies the motivations that led these intellectuals to write about *ukiyo-e*.

What does washoku taste like? Umami and the gastropolitics of taste in Japan

FELICE FARINA

This study explores the role of umami, commonly known as the 'fifth basic taste', in shaping Japan's national culinary identity. The link between food and identity is well recognized, with considerable political importance, as seen in the rise of 'gastropolitics', defined as the political attempt to establish, protect, and promote national culinary traditions. In Japan, this approach is epitomized by the inclusion of *washoku* on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2013. Unlike other countries with similar strategies, Japan has not only identified the ingredients, preparation methods, dining customs, and symbolic meanings tied to *washoku* but has also sought to define the specific taste of Japanese cuisine itself. In this context, umami transcends its flavor profile, becoming a unique cultural marker of *washoku*. This study focuses on the historical evolution of umami and examines its use in nationalistic terms within Japan's gastropolitics.

The poetics of *fūryū* in the early literary works by Kōda Rohan

BRUNO GUERINI

The aesthetic concept of *fūryū* in Japan has undergone numerous resemantizations throughout history since its introduction in classical times. Beginning in 1888, Meiji author Kōda Rohan (1867-1947) made *fūryū* one of the key elements of his literary production, as it served as a leitmotif in several early works, from the debut novel *Tsuyu dandan* (1889), in which this principle permeates much of the narration, to the masterpiece *Fūryū butsu* (1889), leading to a new meaning of the word. The purpose of this paper is therefore to analyze the influence of such a concept on Rohan's works as well as his personal interpretation of the term, after its many polysemous transformations well known to the author. Moreover, I also want to investigate the extent to which the emphasis on *fūryū* in Rohan's works gave new impetus to the use of the term, leading up to the 1937 essay on the subject by Kuki Shūzō.

The Debut of Women Playwriting in Kabuki Theatre: An Analysis of the Works of Hasegawa Shigure, Okada Yachiyo, and Kimura Tomiko

LUDOVICA MARINCIONI

This article explores the emergence of female playwrights in kabuki from the late Meiji to early Shōwa periods, focusing on how three plays—*Sakura Fubuki* by Hasegawa Shigure, *Tsuge no Kushi* by Okada Yachiyo, and *Tamagiku* by Kimura Tomiko—reshaped the genre's traditional conventions. It examines how these playwrights used kabuki as both an artistic medium and a platform to engage with societal issues like gender roles and women's autonomy. Through innovative narrative techniques and complex female protagonists, these works challenged conventional portrayals of women on stage. The paper further considers whether they truly transcended traditional boundaries or remained constrained by the canon, while highlighting the diversity of their works and critically reflecting on the terminology used to describe their contributions.

“Authentic Japan” in London? Strategic Narratives in Japan's Contemporary Public Diplomacy

RAFFAELLA MARINI

Since the 1950s, Japan has promoted itself as a peaceful, democratic nation committed to global development. However, recent security tensions in the Asia-Pacific region have complicated this image, prompting Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to strengthen its public diplomacy and strategic communication efforts. Central to this strategy are the Japan Houses in São Paulo, Los Angeles, and London, which aim to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of “authentic Japan” within the international community. Drawing on insights from international public relations, public diplomacy, media, and museum studies, this paper presents a preliminary analysis of Japan House London, focusing on how the concept of “authentic Japan” emerges as a strategic narrative shaped by interactions between state and non-state actors involved in organizing exhibitions and events within the facility spaces.

**Seinaru porunogurafia: homoerotic representation
in Takahashi Mutsuo's early poetic production**

EDOARDO OCCHIONERO

This contribution critically analyzes the early poetic production of Takahashi Mutsuo, focusing on *Bara no ki - nise no koibitotachi* (Rose Tree, Fake Lovers, 1964) and *Homeuta* (Ode, 1971), to trace the evolution of the representation of male homoeroticism in his early works. *Bara no ki* explores homoerotic desire through the *yōshin shinkō* (young god's worship), while *Homeuta* replaces the ideal of the androgynous youth with that of the Herculean man, marking the transition from feminised man to masculine-identified homosexual, and anticipating trends of the 1970s displayed by gay magazines such as *Barazoku*. Furthermore, *Homeuta* introduces the theories of *seinaru porunogurafia* (sacred pornography) and *homo penisistus*, in which Takahashi elevates the obscene through sophisticated rhetoric, demonstrating the effectiveness of religious allegory in cruising practices.

**Translation and translanguaging
in Japanese language learning: new research perspectives in Italy**

ALESSANDRO PAGANO

Globalization has made our societies more multilingual than ever. Consequently, language education needs to address multilingualism and promote intercultural communication. Based on research on Japanese pedagogy conducted in the United States, this study demonstrates the crucial role that translation activities and translanguaging practices play in effective interculturally oriented language teaching. It highlights how dynamic methodologies that integrate communication, translation, and translanguaging can facilitate students' development of greater awareness of linguistic-cultural diversity, as well as foster new forms of sensitivity and subjectivity that are shaped by different cultural contexts. The implication of this study is the need to explore more broadly and thoroughly the application of translation and translanguaging in interculturally oriented teaching of Japanese in Italy.

Vincenzo Ragusa's (1841-1927) collection of Japanese ceramics. A preliminary study

AGNIESZKA PUDLIS

This study examines the Japanese ceramics (*tojiki*) from Vincenzo Ragusa's collection at the Museo delle Civiltà in Rome, focusing on over 600 pieces, including porcelain (*jiki*), stoneware (*setsuki*), and mid-fired ceramics (*tōki*). Previously undocumented, the collection has now been partially cataloged, revealing its significance. Ragusa (1841–1927), an Italian sculptor, lived in Japan (1876–1882) and later established an art school in Palermo, assembling this diverse collection for educational purposes. The ceramics span the Edo (1603–1868) and Meiji (1868–1912) periods, featuring rare styles such as Arita-yaki, Nabeshima-yaki, Kutani-yaki, and Kyō-yaki, alongside traditional Rokkoyō wares. Unlike typical European collections of Japanese art, Ragusa's was driven by artistic rather than commercial interests, reflecting a unique cultural exchange between Italy and Japan. The study highlights the collection's artistic and historical value, comparing it to major European holdings like those at Musée Cernuschi in Paris.

Football and capitalist ‘resymbolization’: the case of the J.League

YOSRI RAZGUI

This article examines the historical and socio-cultural development of Japanese professional football, focusing on the capitalist ‘resymbolization’ process that accompanied the creation of the J.League. It begins by tracing the sport’s evolution in Japan, from its amateur roots to its professionalization in the 1990s. The article then analyses how neoliberal values have shaped fan behaviours, contrasting the structural “consumer-fan” with the anti-structural “ultras,” the latter influenced by European performative patterns. Using the case of Vissel Kobe, it explores how Japanese professional football emerged within a highly capitalistic framework, reflecting, and in some respects anticipating, broader global trends in the commodification of sports.

Popular, subversive, stereotypical: analysis of queer representations in Japanese comics between 1990 and 1999

CAMIL VALERIO RISTÈ

Over the past decade, scholars, especially in English-speaking regions, have begun analysing Japanese comics and animation through feminist and queer lenses due to their growing popularity. This interest is closely tied to concepts from visual studies like representation and appropriation, which describe Japanese pop art productions’ historical, social, and stylistic elements.

Given the current relevance of queer criticism and the lack of Italian academic research on this topic, this study aims to explore the evolution of queerness in Japanese comics and animation by comparing theoretical-critical analyses from both Euro-North American and Japanese perspectives. The research will start with a diachronic analysis of Japanese queer history and lexicon to examine how social and transnational factors have influenced LGBTQ+ community representation in comics and animation, focusing on works from the 1990s to the present.

This paper will specifically analyse the decade from 1990 to 1999, using the following works as case studies for different representations: *Wish* (Uisshu, 1995-1998) by CLAMP, *Gravitation* (*Gurabitēshon*, 1996-2002) by Murakami Maki, and *Double House* (*Daburu Hausu*, 1996-1997) by Haruno Nanae.

Towards a Pedagogical Description of the Japanese Interactional Particles *ne*, *yo*, and *yone*.

GIORDANO STOCCHI

This article explores the challenges students face acquiring the Japanese interactional particles *ne*, *yo*, and *yone*, which are essential for achieving fluency and naturalness in communication. Despite their importance, these particles are often underrepresented in textbooks, offering only limited explanations when given. Analyzing textbooks commonly used in Italian universities and abroad, this paper identifies pedagogical gaps and proposes an innovative approach drawing on Maynard’s (2002) Place of Negotiation theory. The theory introduces a framework that explores these particles’ cognitive, emotive, and interactional dimensions, supported extensively by literature. Based on this foundation, a refined teaching strategy is suggested to improve acquisition in the classroom, fostering a more comprehensive learning experience.

Fabling voice — Yumeno Kyūsaku's *Shiraga kozō* (Whitehair Boy, 1922)

GIUSEPPE STRIPPOLI

Literary scholars have identified orality as one of the fundamental features of Yumeno Kyūsaku's (born Sugiyama Yasumichi, 1889-1936) literary style, which is characterized by rhythmic sentences and the extensive use of onomatopoeias and dialogues. Yumeno's literary debut as a writer of fables confirms the influence of oral literature on his artistic formation. Yumeno began his literary career with a rich corpus of fables, among which stands out the novel *Shiraga kozō* (Whitehair Boy, 1922), printed in a self-funded edition and presented to the public as a "long fable" (*chōhen dōwa*). This article argues that *Shiraga kozō* is the first literary effort through which Yumeno expressed his interest in the orality of literature. It offers an analysis of the novel focused on the role played by the voice as a narrative instrument that shapes the complex structure of the novel.

The Reception of Italian Film Culture in Postwar Japan: neorealism and post-neorealism in the critical and theoretical reflection

GIULIO TOSI

Between the end of the 1940s and the first half of the 1950s Italian cinema achieved exceptional critical success in Japan and a good response from the audience. In particular, the arrival from Italy of the first neorealist films was greeted with enthusiasm by Japanese film critics. The films of directors such as Rossellini, De Santis or De Sica were praised for their ability to realistically depict a country that had emerged devastated from the conflict and was in the process of transformation and were seen as a possible model for a more mature and socially conscious cinema. In the following years, Italian cinema established itself as one of the most appreciated, discussed and analyzed foreign film productions in the Japanese specialized press.

The article aims to illustrate some of the main modes of reception of Italian film culture in postwar Japan from an analysis of archival documents and a perusal of the trade press and other publications of the period. Critical reception, impact on theory and some examples of encounters between the film culture of the two countries will be discussed.