



## Introduction

*New Voices* has come to its fourth edition. Since its inception in 2006, the journal has played an important role in the field of Japanese Studies by offering Australian postgraduate students and junior scholars a venue for presenting their ongoing research to a broader audience, spreading it on the national and international level. Published online and distributed in printed form to universities and research institutions across the world, including but not limited to the Japan Foundation's overseas offices, the journal has been influential in promoting innovative scholarship in the field of Japanese Studies. Some of the students that had published in the previous three issues have moved on to doctoral programs or teaching positions; some of them have since then presented their work at other venues; others have moved on to different professional careers. For all, publishing in *New Voices* has been a stepping-stone in pursuing their passion for their topic and presenting their ideas to an informed audience.

In the movie *Solanin*, recently screened at the Japanese Film Festival in Sydney, the protagonist Meiko, a young woman who struggles to find her place in the world and to fulfil her aspirations, tries to convince her boyfriend Taneda that he should pursue his dream of being a musician by applying for an audition at a record company. In a moving scene, Meiko tells the reluctant Taneda that it is only by playing in front of an audience, and opening ourselves to their judgment, that we can achieve self-realisation. Our work will only mean something if others appreciate it too. But what if they don't like it, asks Taneda. Well, says Meiko, you will never know that if you don't give it a try. Scholarship resembles creative work that way. Presenting our work to the broader community is a challenging yet indispensable moment in our personal and professional growth. Turning an honours or masters' thesis into an article for an academic or non-academic audience is a difficult, at times frightening, yet highly formative operation. Whether the author pursues an academic career or moves to other professional fields, writing out their ideas in essay form will be for them a significant step, closing one chapter and simultaneously opening a new one.

Young Taneda's audition with the record company ends up being a frustrating one. After hearing his band's performance of their signature song "Solanin," a yuppie executive suggests that the young man shift to a more commercial genre, leave the other members of the band, and sing in pair with his girlfriend as an "idol couple." "Who wants to listen to that kind of music?" asks an angry Taneda. "Well, who wants to listen to *your* music?" coldly retorts the businessman. Fortunately, junior Japanologists of Australia and New Zealand have found in *New Voices* a much more open-minded and supportive venue to present the world with *their* music. And it is high-quality music that they have produced.

The essays in the current issue are a testament to the breadth and depth of graduate studies in the field of Japanese Studies in Australia and New Zealand, spanning as diverse topics as labour law reform, visual arts, linguistics and language pedagogy, popular culture, film, material culture, as well as encompassing a variety of historical periods, from the Tokugawa and Meiji eras to the very contemporary. They also showcase an impressive range of different methodological approaches, including literary theory, historical linguistics, pragmatics, language pedagogy, sociology, ethnographical research, art history, film theory, gender studies, and cultural studies.

Within such wealth of different themes and methods, a significant proportion of the essays approach Japanese culture through a transnational and intercultural perspective, an indication of the growing importance of such an approach in the field, as well as of the increasing internationalisation of Japanese culture itself. As the theme of this year's JSAA biennial conference, "Internationalising Japan: Sport, Culture and Education" testifies, this is a crucial dimension of the country's unique role within the context of globalisation. Interestingly, a number of the essays also focus on education, both by making pedagogy an object of study, and by pointing at possible pedagogical uses of the results of their research. But the most significant commonality among the essays is the insightfulness of their analyses, and the passion each author clearly has for her or his topic. This is a source of inspiration for all academics in the field, and a further reason to hope that these "new voices" be widely heard by the global intellectual community.

Rhiannon Paget's article is an excellent example of a fruitful examination of theories and practices of education, and of their broader social and political relevance. Paget, an MA graduate in Art History and Theory from the University of Sydney currently working as Curatorial Assistant at the Clark Center for Japanese Art and Culture in Hanford, California, analyses the representation of children and childhood in Meiji Japan. Through an in-depth study of the style and content of a series of woodblock prints on ethical themes produced by the newly formed Ministry of Education between 1873 and 1887, the essay probes into the formation of new notions of children and childhood in Meiji Japan and the way those were made part of the nation-building project. In so doing, it offers precious insight into the broader question of the role of education in prewar Japan, while also contributing to our understanding of the history of Meiji visual arts.

Daniel Curtis' article takes us deeper into the theme of internationalisation. Curtis, who graduated with a First Class Honours from the University of New South Wales, performs a linguistic analysis of the use of the word *gaijin* (foreigner) within the Japanese speech community in Sydney, Australia. After tracing the historical development of the term within and outside Japan, Curtis investigates the way in which native and non-native speakers of Japanese residing in Sydney utilise the word *gaijin*



through a combination of focus groups and follow-up interviews. The author should be commended for the clarity with which he explains his methodology as well as for the analysis of the results. Curtis' proposed model of two notions of "foreignness" within the Japanese language, the "absolute *gaijin*" and the "relative *gaijin*", is original and thought provoking, and opens new avenues for further research.

Kirsti Rawstron's paper, an analysis of removal of the Labour Standards Law's Women's 'Protection' Provisions in 1990s Japan and its impact on gender equality, is also an excellent example of scholarship. Rawstron, our first contributor from New Zealand (she graduated with First Class Honours from the University of Otago) and currently a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Wollongong, skillfully combines a close examination of the debates on the issue in Japanese mainstream newspapers and a quantitative analysis of the changes in gender equality since the removal of the provisions. This allows the essay to offer a perceptive analysis of the specific case study and use it as grounds for a broader reflection on the links between media perceptions of gender and legal change, particularly in the area of so-called 'protective' legislation.

Hitomi Yoshida, an MA graduate from the University of Tasmania, examines the adaptations of the renowned girls' comic *Hana Yori Dango* in Taiwan, Korea and Japan. Investigating the complex interplay of cultural distancing and cultural proximity in the reception of the *manga* in these different contexts and its social, political, and cultural impact, the essay is in conversation with recent developments in the field of postcolonial studies and scholarship on globalisation. At the same time, through a detailed study of recurrent themes and structures through the lens of Vladimir Propp's notion of the archetype, with close attention to gender norms, the article provides an original contribution to the field of Japanese popular culture studies and gender studies.

Esther Lovely, a First Class Honours graduate from the University of Queensland, takes us back to the fascinating world of linguistics, this time connecting it more closely with language pedagogy. Her study of Japanese language learners' strategies for transliterating English loanwords into *katakana* is firmly grounded in a survey of a significant sample of first-year Japanese language students at the University of Queensland, conducted through a threefold process involving a questionnaire, a written test, and a follow-up interview. This allows the author not only to present a comprehensive discussion of the strategies adopted by JSL learners but also to offer precious suggestions for innovative teaching methods that take these processes into account.

Fusako Ota's essay on social networking sites for learners of Japanese is another inspiring example of the opportunities opened by applying linguistic research to

language education. Ota, who received a Master's degree in Applied Japanese Linguistics from Monash University, examines the use of two social networking websites, Facebook and mixi, and their application to second language learning both inside and outside classrooms. By investigating in detail the effects of the networks' positive and non-threatening environment on language learning, Ota's article draws attention to the possible pedagogical uses of these new tools, and the communities that form around them, to promote and enhance current methods of language education in more academic environments.

Rie Yamasaki's analysis of intertextuality in the movies of Mitani Kōki is one of the articles in the collection that most clearly showcase this issue's general concern with the internationalisation of Japan and the "Japanisation" of foreign cultures. By tracing in detail the references to international film and literature in the cinematography of this renowned director, Yamasaki, an MA graduate from the University of Tasmania, complicates our understanding of contemporary Japanese cinema and its transnational dimension.

Rosa Lee, a First Class Honours graduate from the University of Sydney and currently a Monbukagakushō research student at Tokyo University, similarly explores notions of influence, reception, and rewriting, from a different perspective. Investigating the rise to pop icon status of the Shinsengumi, the famous private militia recruited by the Tokugawa government to protect Kyoto from radical Imperial House loyalists in the Bakumatsu period, the article raises wider questions regarding identity formation and validation in contemporary Japanese society. Combining a comparative textual analysis of two major works featuring Shinsengumi and a study of reader response through reviews on Amazon.co.jp, Lee investigates the reasons that lie behind the continuing popularity of these semi-legendary characters and their implications for sociological analysis.

Last but not least, Amelia Groom's essay investigates an intriguing contemporary cultural practice, namely the developments of Japanese street fashion. Through the framework of Roland Barthes' and Michel DeCerteau's theories of aesthetics and technologies of power, Groom highlights the way in which Harajuku fashion challenges gender and cultural norms, ultimately undermining fixed notions of identity and authenticity.

Overall, the collection represents both the diversity and the quality of Japanese Studies in Australia and New Zealand, and its promise of a bright future. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the students for their exciting ideas and for the effort they put into turning their theses into publishable articles. My gratefulness also goes to the panel of experts that refereed the papers, for their generosity with their time and for



detailed and insightful comments that were a great help to the authors in the revising process. My deepest thanks to Dr. Tomoko Aoyama, Prof. Nanette Gottlieb, Dr. Mats Karlsson, Dr. Christine de Matos, Prof. Tessa Morris-Suzuki, Dr. Jun Ohashi, Dr. Yuji Sone, Dr. Matthew Stavros, Dr. Carolyn Stevens, and Dr. Alison Tokita, for their time and their help. Many thanks also to Wakao Koike, for his precious support not only with this collection, but with the promotion of Japan-related cultural activities throughout his appointment as Deputy Director of the Japan Foundation, Sydney. His presence has really made a difference in the Japanese cultural scene in Australia. Finally, none of this would have been possible without Susan Yamaguchi's invaluable help with the correspondence with authors and referees, with editing, and with composing the final layout of the journal. Her efficiency and kindness are a true source of inspiration, and it has been a great pleasure working with her.

I believe I can speak on behalf of the authors, referees, and editors in saying that putting together this volume has been a long, at times difficult, always highly rewarding experience for all involved. I hope that you will enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed working on it.

Dr Rebecca Suter  
The University of Sydney  
Editor, *New Voices*, vol. 4

### **On the Journal's review process and format**

Submissions to this issue of *New Voices* were peer reviewed by an editorial board of independent academic experts to meet the HERDC requirements for refereed journal status. The successful submissions are published online and are universally accessible at: <http://www.jpjpf.org.au/newvoices>.

Several of the essays, however, were chosen by the editor and advisory board to also be published in a physical journal format, which was distributed to universities and libraries across Australia and to the Japan Foundation's 23 overseas branch offices. The selection of these essays was based not only on quality but on an attempt to provide readers with representative examples of Honours and Masters scholarship in several disciplines at a variety of Australian and New Zealand universities.