

Many of the strengths of this issue reflect recent developments in the journal's scope coming to fruition, which invites some reflection and congratulations on the way this project has evolved. In Volume 7, Series Editor Elicia O'Reilly and Guest Editor Dr Shelley Brunt outlined changes to the journal's title, format and scope of submissions, which broadly sought to make it more robust and more responsive to the field. Integral to this was the academic rigour with which papers would be peer reviewed, as well as the interdisciplinary breadth of research that would be pursued under an updated title. As reflected in this issue, contributions are now welcomed from PhD candidates and recent graduates (including those currently undertaking research in Japan), for whom opportunities to publish remain vital—not only for their resumes, but so as to share developments in the field, and to expose such new research to a critical community of colleagues.

There is an element of mystery when a call for papers goes out, particularly for a journal with as generous a brief as this. What kinds of research are emerging scholars pursuing? Are there clear trends or popular biases that might shape or even limit the field? As Guest Editor for Volume 9, it is a pleasure, then, to present another diverse set of papers, reflecting the strength and scope of emerging scholarship in Japanese studies, broad both in historical range and research interest.

Madeleine Sbeghen presents a detailed study of community engagement in conservation for a critically endangered bird described to science only in 1981, the Okinawa Rail. Sbeghen tracks the way local communities have developed a strong relationship with this species, making it a symbol of regional cultural identity, leveraged not only for tourism but also for community events and wider conservation goals. This has led to investment by government and community stakeholders in conservation education, dedicated facilities and public awareness campaigns. Intensely urbanised communities place significant pressures on local environments, and the shift from rural living also means the loss of previous forms of land management. This issue is particularly complex in northern Okinawa, where the symbolic value of this unique local asset has even seen the bird enlisted in the community's struggles against the activities of the local US military base. Yet, many of the immediate threats to the bird's survival stem from the local community itself. This study thus demonstrates the role of community cooperation in conservation and the value of interdisciplinary approaches to navigate a complex range of stakeholders.

Marie Kim writes about the portrayal of girls' rebellion in *kētai shōsetsu*—novels typically written and shared on mobile phones by young women. While the phenomenon seems to reflect the coming of age of a generation raised with mobile devices and internet access, Kim looks beyond the hardware to the history of women's fan literature and amateur publications since the Meiji period, as well as considering rebel characters and narratives from American cinema and their influences on postwar Japanese youth cultures. Some writers consider mobile phone novels as simply an example of the reemergence of *yankī* culture, with their rebellious tales of 'good bad boys' in motorcycle gangs rescuing damsels-in-distress from family and school pressures. Yet, by examining the Wild Beast series [2009–2010], Kim shows such stories play with traditional gender hierarchies, even casting young women as gang leaders. Indeed, these stories serve as a vehicle for sharing experiences of loss, love, peer pressure and family, alongside the excitement of vicarious rebellion. As such, mobile phone novels reflect the agency of their young women writers and readers—which, Kim notes, may be one reason they remain generally overlooked by a male-dominated literary establishment.

A. K. Byron reconsiders the critical development of Haruki Murakami, arguably Japan's best-known living author. While Murakami's work is described, even by the author himself, as a development 'from detachment to commitment', Byron revisits his three earliest novels, known informally as the Rat Trilogy (*Hear the Wind Sing* [1979], *Pinball, 1973* [1980] and *A Wild Sheep Chase* [1982]), arguing that the detachment associated with these works is due to critical focus having to date centred on the narrator, Boku, rather than his friend, known as Rat. Considering the experience of this one-time student activist turned writer prompts Byron to read the novel against the history of Japan's late-1960s student movement, tracing how these novels address *shutaisei* (individual agency or subjectivity), an issue hotly debated within the movement at that time. Byron argues that, in this sense, Murakami already engages here with a political and historical awareness amounting to the kind of 'commitment' typically associated only with his later works. While this observation invites a new understanding of Murakami's critical development, it also suggests ways in which the social politics of the *Anpo* generation may be woven, in unrecognised ways, into the cultural life of later decades.

Daniel J. Wyatt analyses representations of the *shōjō* in Meiji literature and print media. Originally known as a mythical creature of folklore, in the Meiji era real-life *shōjō*—i.e., orangutans—started to appear in Japan, initially as curious spectacles in the popular *misemono* sideshows that harked back to pre-Meiji public entertainment. The opening of Japan's first modern zoo at Ueno, in 1882, signaled a shift in the way the natural world was framed for public consumption. When an orangutan was acquired for public display in 1898, people grappled to make sense both of the familiar myth and the modern specimen, revealing contesting systems of knowledge that seem particularly reflective of the Meiji period. By considering depictions of the *shōjō* in translated literature of the era—including a translation of Edgar Allan Poe's 1841 short story "The Murders in the Rue Morgue", which suggestively

features an orangutan loose in the streets of Paris—Wyatt demonstrates that the act of translation, as the movement and manipulation of language, was a key contributor to the creation of new knowledge and transition to modern systems of thought in Meiji Japan. Just as Poe’s translation drew on an existing vocabulary of *kaidan* ghost tales, Wyatt draws attention to the ways modern systems of thought may have been constructed and reflected through earlier, even supernatural, vocabularies of experience.

Laura Emily Clark also writes on the work of Haruki Murakami, though from the field of masculinity studies, undertaking a discourse analysis of the author’s first major novel, *A Wild Sheep Chase* [1982]. Clark argues that while gender studies of masculinity in Japan, influenced by the work of R.W. Connell, have proposed the plurality of masculine performances across different contexts, there is scope to further complicate our understanding of individual masculine performances. To do this, Clark adapts Francis’ interpretation of Bakhtinian heteroglossic (i.e., ‘many voices’) gender performance, to illustrate that in a single gendered performance there can be a multitude of distinct masculinities engaged and changed according to contextual needs—even if these performances occur in a context dominated by an apparently simpler, ‘monoglossic’ (i.e., ‘single voice’) gender ideal, such as the salaryman masculine ideal in postwar Japan. Francis originally observed gender plurality in the guise of monoglossic performances by children in a classroom setting, where there remains a peer group expectation to present legible gender types. Having demonstrated the multiple masculinities engaged even in brief exchanges in Murakami’s novel, Clark suggests that far from being unstable or exceptional, such heteroglossic masculinity might be considered commonplace, even if unrecognised. While fictional, Clark treats the text as reflective of its cultural context, thus pointing to the potential of these ideas for real-world masculinity studies on Japan.

There is much to commend about the kind of support that brings a journal such as this together; it is never about the glory. Many well-established scholars, with demanding teaching and travel schedules, gave careful and constructive feedback to these papers, as well as some which will appear in future issues. Their generosity was much appreciated and heartening, underlining, in this age of competitive metrics, the strong collegial support that remains essential—particularly in this region—for the sustenance and development of this field.

I wish to applaud the scholars whose papers are published here, for their patience and commitment. It has perhaps never been more challenging to pursue advanced or specialist research in the kinds of subjects undertaken here, with high-level Japanese language acquisition being but par for the course. I encourage those who have received feedback on previous submissions, as well as those with new submissions, to contact the series editors, who, I can assure you, welcome enquiries as much as draft papers. Having your work edited is just as much about critical feedback and learning how to communicate research effectively, and it is unfortunately an experience that is often

outside the scope of graduate programs. This underlines the important role that a publication such as this plays.

For this reason, I look forward to future issues of *New Voices in Japanese Studies*. The actual work of producing such a volume—from the initial call and mustering a guest editor, to the final edits and layout—remains an often-thankless task. To the Japan Foundation, Sydney team, a special thank you to Series Editor Elicia O'Reilly, who was from the beginning a model of convivial professionalism and sheer organisation; her diligence made it impossible for this editor to fall behind. She managed to steer this issue well on its way before taking her happy leave to become (a no doubt equally well-prepared) parent. おめでとうございます! My thanks to her able successor, Acting Series Editor Leah Sourris, for her dedicated patience and humour, and my appreciation also to Supervising Manager Ayusa Koshi, for the initial conversations which led to this invitation and much behind-the-scenes consultation on all aspects of the journal's production.

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