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*Japan and Asia: representations  
of selfness and otherness*

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VOL. 4 – SPRING 2018

JAPAN AND ASIA: REPRESENTATIONS OF SELFNESS AND OTHERNESS

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## Dedication

Vale Romit DASGUPTA

In the demanding world of academia, dear friends are precious. On 2 July 2018, the Australian and international Japanese/Asian studies communities lost one of their most loved and respected members, Romit Dasgupta.

Romit was a presenter at the April 2017 Mutual Images workshop, held at Nagoya University. His warmth, compassion, incisive analytic ability and his self-deprecating humour – which was never directed towards others – were all evident during the two days of that gathering. Presenting early in the programme, Romit generously shared comments and feedback with younger (and not so young) scholars, whose talks were scheduled later in the workshop. This he did in his signature positive and encouraging way.

Romit was awarded his doctorate in 2005 for a thesis entitled *“Crafting” Masculinity: Negotiating Masculine Identities in the Japanese Workplace*. The thesis was awarded the Best Doctoral Thesis Prize in 2006 by the Australian Association of Asian Studies. Published as a book by Routledge under the title *Re-Reading the Salaryman in Japan: Crafting Masculinities* (2012), this work established Romit as an international authority on gender in the context of corporate masculinities in Japan. Romit’s research reputation grew as he worked and published in associated areas that included expressions of gender and sexuality-based identities through popular and visual culture in Japan and across East Asia, and, indeed, in regional East Asian identity generally.

While maintaining an interest in these fields, Romit had recently expanded his research base to examine cultural and human interactions between Turkey and Japan. As the University of Western Australia website noted, Romit’s interest in this topic was part of a larger study with researchers from Australia, Turkey and Japan, considering the conceptualisation of “Asia” and “Asian Studies” from the fringes. This was the theme of his 2017

Mutual Images workshop presentation. Having published his presentation elsewhere, Romit did not contribute to the current collection. Nevertheless, an example of his writing on this topic can be found here in the Australian online collection, *Asian Currents*.<sup>1</sup>

Romit's contribution to academia was not confined to research. He was a dedicated teacher who supported and mentored students, and was Asian Studies Discipline Chair at the University of Western Australia. With funding cuts and the questioning of the value of humanities research, academic work has become difficult. Conferences present an annual circuit-breaker that provides participants with an opportunity to present and test research findings while also socialising with friends. Romit was one of the people that Australian Japanese and Asian studies conference participants very much looked forward to meeting each year. His uncompromising humanity, his erudite scholarship and his delightfully warm and even loving personality touched and moved both established and emerging scholars. He can never be replaced.

Romit had a deep and abiding love for his family. He was the very devoted son of Mihir and Mira (deceased) and the beloved brother of Arijit (Bapi). We send his family and friends our fondest thoughts and deepest condolences.

This edition of *Mutual Images* is dedicated to Romit Dasgupta, and the depth and value of the contribution that he made to that gathering. We join others who are closer to Romit in mourning his early and unexpected death.

Barbara HARTLEY (University of Tasmania, Australia)

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: <http://asaablog.tumblr.com/post/111049548726/pushing-boundaries-turkey-and-the-reframing-of>

## Editorial

Marco PELLITTERI (Kōbe University, Japan) &  
Aurore YAMAGATA-MONTOYA (MADE'IN, Sainte Marie-Lyon, France)

Welcome to the fourth volume of *Mutual Images*.

This is the output of our fifth yearly international workshop, which our research association organised and held at Nagoya University (Japan) on 22 and 23 April, 2017. This workshop was organised in collaboration with G30 Japan-in-Asia Cultural Studies Program (JACS) from Nagoya University, directed by Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt. This collaboration led to a geographical delimitation of both the workshop and this volume that differ from previous events and publications done by Mutual Images Research Association. In the previous volumes, the articles explored mainly the “images” bridging between Japanese and European cultures. For this volume, we seek to consider the representations between Japan and Asia. However, as it will become apparent with the articles that compose this volume, Europe is omnipresent. The relationship between Japan and Asia also goes through Europe as another “Other”. The concepts of Selfness and Otherness in and between Japan, other Asian nations and Europe are the common grounds that link the articles.

In breaking away from the binary coupling of “Self” and “Other,” what new visions and directions can be generated in the investigation of cultural processes and products? The essays hosted hereby explore these thematic areas keeping as their core framework and conceptual mindset a cross-cultural perspective, declining the two guiding concepts under multiple approaches. Rather than being confined within contested geographical definitions of Asia, the included papers consider “Japan” and “Asia” as imaginary, constructed spaces/notions.

What parts have colonialism, war, and contemporary transnational flows of people, goods and ideas played into the formation of Selfness, Otherness, and their conceptual, literary, visual and broadly cultural representations?

Beyond the geographical delimitation of the research area mentioned above, the collaboration between Mutual Images and JACS relied on a shared will to give an opportunity to

postgraduate students and early researchers to have an equal voice alongside established academics. Let us remind you that the creation of Mutual Images was an impulse by a Masters degree student and a first-year PhD student. Now it is our turn to give young academics the possibility to be part of this project. For the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the international workshop, postgraduate students of the JACS program, under the supervision of Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt, selected the theme of the workshop, redacted the Call For Papers and helped with the hands-in organisation, including chairing panels. One of the students, Kara Dischinger, also contributed a book review to this volume. Another review included here is by Christopher Hood. You will also find an exhibition review by Jamie Tokuno. The choice of the analysed works is perfectly suited to the notions of Selfness and Otherness we identified as the volume's *fil rouge*.

The four articles that compose this volume each explore in an innovative way the concepts of "Selfness" and "Otherness" applied to the geographical zone indicated above. The first two papers consider "mutual images" through the medium of cinema. Seán Hudson relies on film studies and political theory to survey the recurring narratives in films known as "victim's history". He analyses through examples how "selfness" is equated with victims for wartime Japan while Asia is actively erased. Hudson furthermore looks at construction of East Asia as Japan's Other and the material technologies through which this Othering (and/or erasure) takes place in the cultural sphere, which has received little attention.

Like Hudson, Fabio D. Palumbo's article relies on the political, as well as socio-historical, context that frame the cinematographic narrations. Palumbo focuses more specifically on Korean-Japanese relations. Japanese and Korean contemporary filmography seems to reflect people's present worries about a significant Other, geographically and historically linked to the Self, as well as to portray the ethnic and national identity rebuilding through a retelling of history.

The next two articles interrogate Self and Other through visual art. Barbara Hartley provides a detailed examination of three pre-1945 works of visual art and consider how these uncover the mutuality inherent in old notions of self and other in pre-war Japan. These images convey a sense of mutual subjectivity in which the agency of the 'other-ed' subject insists on asserting itself.



Finally, using the example of Avant-Garde in Japan during the 1920s and 30s, Olga Isaeva's paper will put these movements into the context of their inspiration by the European Avant-Garde and their struggle to define what Japanese modern art was in order to unpack uneven and complex legacy of Meiji in the early Showa period.

Before inviting readers to dive into this issue, we would like to make them aware of some useful information related to *Mutual Images*, both the journal and the association.

1. The next volume will appear in Autumn 2018 and will include papers from the workshop "Japan Pop Goes Global- Japanese Pop Culture on Aesthetics and Creativity" that was held at Aoyama Gakuin University on 25 November, 2017. A special section will also include some papers presented at the international workshop "Reflective Transitions of Politics in Japanese Art" organised by and at University of East Anglia on 24 August, 2017.
2. The volume after that will be published in Spring 2019 and will collect papers from the international workshop held at Cardiff University on 1-2 May, 2018.
3. *Mutual Images Journal* also accepts individual submissions for both articles and book reviews that can be sent through the Open Access website or by email.
4. One of the guiding intellectual criteria of *Mutual Images* is scholarly inclusiveness: whilst the journal is a strictly peer-reviewed publication, we consider it a place where young as well as senior scholars can experiment with new ideas and approaches, with some more intellectual freedom than that usually permitted in more institutional journals. Therefore, we invite readers to spread the word and forward information about *Mutual Images* to their undergraduate and graduate students, post-doc researchers, and colleagues at more advanced stages of their careers.
5. Mutual Images Research Association is an independent and international association. We partner with universities across the continents to organise the international workshops. To this day, Mutual Images is run entirely by volunteers. Academics of all stages of their careers and from all over the world contribute to this publication by editing, peer-reviewing, proof-reading, layout editing, building the website. We would like to thank them all for their time and energy without which Mutual Images would not exist.

Enjoy *Mutual Images*, Vol. 4.

Marco PELLITTERI, *Main Editor*

Aurore YAMAGATA-MONTOYA, *President of Mutual Images Research Association*