

EDITORIAL

New season(s) for Mutual Images Journal

Marco PELLITTERI ^{1*}, Maxime DANESIN ², Manuel HERNÁNDEZ-PÉREZ ³

¹ School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University; ORCID ID: 0000-0003-2622-567

² ATER (Etudes Culturelles), The University of Lorraine; ORCID: 0000-0002-5636-8141

³ School of Arts, Media and Creative Technologies, University of Salford, Manchester; ORCID ID: 0000-0001-9974-7056

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Dear readers,

Welcome to Mutual Images Research Journal, no. 12, our yearly collection of academic writings that in every issue focus on one or, sometimes, two themes, developed in an array of coordinated articles.

We enjoyed titling this instalment “New season(s) for Mutual Images Journal” playing on the fact that, on the one hand, this issue really marks a new beginning of sort for the journal, as we briefly explain in the following lines of this Editorial; and also because, on the other hand, the entire issue hosts the proceedings — duly turned into a solid set of research papers and full-fledged articles — of a 2022 workshop that was devoted to the study of how the year’s seasons are portrayed in a selection of exemplary cases from Japanese traditional and contemporary cultures.

Seasons are a beautiful example of the cyclical nature of time and our experiences. Seasonality teaches us to accept the changes that escape our control and to enjoy the different moments. Connected to this contemplative, though not necessarily passive, perspective, our journal defends this attitude from a critical perspective inspired by multidisciplinary approaches but with great respect for the knowledge that the Arts and Humanities contribute to academic knowledge.

This is not an arbitrary claim. It is well known that, in current times, the Humanities are not in their best moment. In Europe, particularly the United Kingdom but sadly a common situation across many European Union countries, universities and higher education institutions are closing departments due to the declining demand for students in these degree programs (The Guardian, 2024; Dixon, 2024). When cost-benefit arguments are the only ones that can save the work of scholars, it is then that we realize the value of initiatives like ours — Open Access scholars who, independently, allow for the exploration of human nature in a creative, rigorous, and free manner.

Thus, in this new issue, we delve into the symbolism of the seasons, alternating between cultural and spiritual readings through various media, with literature as the central axis that coordinates these interpretations. The writings in this issue, including both shorter papers and longer essays that form an organic ensemble, all stem from one of the annual workshops organized by the Mutual Images Research Association since its inception in 2014. This particular workshop took place in Bucharest, hosted and co-created with the JSCS (Sembazaru Centre for Japanese Studies) in November 2022. Its title: “Seasonal Imagery in Japanese Language, Culture and Literature.” You will find this collection starting on page 8. Mutual Images Journal (MIJ) is entering a new phase with the adoption of a refreshed visual layout. The new design draws inspiration from leading journals in the social sciences and serves as one of the cornerstones of our strategic plan

for the next three years. In the short term, a key objective will be also to improve the journal's indexation in major academic databases and to secure sponsorships that will support the long-term sustainability of the Mutual Images project.

We also believe that this redesign brings a welcome change—enhancing the reading experience by making it more visually engaging—while retaining core elements of our previous visual identity, including the original fonts and colour palette.

We hope you enjoy the new look!

References

Dixon, E. (2024, 31 October 2024). Humanities cuts 'harbinger' of bleak future for Dutch sector. *Times Higher Education* (online). <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/humanities-cuts-harbinger-bleak-future-dutch-sector>

The Guardian. (2024). The Guardian view on humanities in universities: closing English Literature courses signals a crisis. *The Guardian* (online). <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2024/dec/05/the-guardian-view-on-humanities-in-universities-closing-english-literature-courses-signals-a-crisis>