INTRODUCTION

This book is the result of our international research, entitled Representations of Japanese Popular Culture in Europe, supported by the Japan Foundation 2012-2013.

In 2007 we started analysing images of Japan from several points of view: images of Japan in tradition and modernity; images of Japan in comparison with the Korean case; images of Japan in several media; images of Japan from the historical point of view. In this issue, this research focuses on the acceptance of Japanese Popular Culture in Europe, which could be considered one of the most influential factors in constructing the image of Japan from the interdisciplinary point of view. How have images of Japan been constructed and developed through the reception of Japanese popular culture in Europe? Have they changed or been consistent before and after the boom in Japanese popular culture boom in Europe?

We are 8 researchers, specialists in image of Japan in several domains and in several countries, who try to answer these questions through our collective and interdisciplinary research.

Kristina Barancovaitė-Skindaravicienė discusses in, Construction of Gender Images in Japanese Pornographic Anime, exploring the most common means of gender image construction in hentai anime and how far these means represent the specific aspects of Japanese culture. She asks what message hentai animation presents to the world about Japanese culture and gender relations by showing that masculinity and femininity in the pornographic animation of the ‘fantasy’ subgenre are constructed using different means of body representation, which can be referred to as indexical signs of gender: size, age, race, genitals, dress, magical power attributes.

Agnese Haijima presents her perspective on Japanese Popular Culture in Latvia, Lolita and Mori fashion, and in particular mori (forest) fashion which corresponds to Country Lolita fashion. The author shows that Mori fashion displays common appreciation of nature, natural materials, practicality, casualness, interest in the old and traditional in the two countries of Latvia.
and Japan. The author shows that in the modern fashion form, which in the age of globalisation in the guise of Mori fashion has found appreciation in distant countries, can never be said to be mainstream, although even as alternative fashion forms they display many interesting features and will continue to develop.

Takashi Kitamura focuses on Takarazuka performances in European countries after World War II, which have been made in a considerable number of foreign countries more or less supported by the Japanese government since its first overseas performances given between October 1938 and March 1938 in 25 cities in Europe, a project designed to promote the Japanese relationship with Germany, Italy and Japan. In this paper, the author discusses on the history and examines the social and political background behind each performance after World War II.

Kyoko Koma explores in her paper, titled Kawaii Represented by the Wearers in France, how kawaii is represented by some Lolita fashion wearers through the interviews and analysis. The author challenges the reader to examine her hypothesis on kawaii taken from her previous media analysis, that is, if kawaii, one of the most important key words of Japanese contemporary culture is accepted in France, would it be culturally odourless fashion or an exotic/persistent stereotype (that of immaturity) in relation to Japan from the point of view of communication studies.

Nissim Otmazgin discusses in Meta-narratives of Japanese Popular Culture and of Japan in Different Regional Contexts: Perspectives from East Asia, Western Europe, and the Middle East, in order to conceptualise the relationship between the transnational dissemination and consumption of popular culture and state image through a focus on the acceptance of Japanese popular culture in different regional contexts. Built on the work of surveys conducted in East Asia, Western Europe, and the Middle East comprising, rather than comparing these three surveys in detail, this study examines the meta-narratives they offer in relation to the way popular culture shapes Japan’s image in the world.

Clothilde Sabre examines, in her article entitled New images of Japan in France: A survey of Japan the contemporary perception and image of Japan through a survey conducted among visitors to the Japan Expo in France, in comparison with the classical French repertoire of clichés and stereotypes about Japan: French exoticism of Japan began in the second part of the 19th century, with the opening of the country during the Meiji era. The authors also show the results as a portrait of a praised Japan, still comprehended
as essentially paradoxical, but with new references made to the contents of pop culture.

Aurelijus Zykas discusses the *Transforming Aims of Japan’s Post-Cold War Cultural Diplomacy* through his analysis from a diachronic point of view of the development of Japan’s Post-Cold War cultural diplomacy and by researching international contexts around Japan and Japan’s place in them. Based on previous research and his own empirical research using primary material documents and interviews, the author also makes clear the relations between Japanese image creation for foreign countries and Japanese public diplomacy aims/needs of each period.

Simona Vasilevskyte, doctoral candidate of Vytautas Magnus University, presents her research note in this journal, entitled *Discussing Soft Power Theory After Nye: The Case of Geun Lee’s Theoretical Approach*, in order to examine the possibilities of the theoretical approach to soft power theory introduced by Nye in 1990, in particular, its developed particular model shown by Geun Lee, in comparison with other theoreticians.

Each contribution on several domains on Japanese Popular Culture, such as manga, Takarazuka, Japan Expo, fashion, public diplomacy from several points of view shows readers some aspect of modern/contemporary images of Japan in Europe, influenced by several genres of Japanese popular culture. Through them, we also hope to show to our readers some way in which to reflect further on how Japan has been perceived through the reception of its popular culture and also how Japan has projected this culture in Europe.

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Editor