Welcome to the third April edition of the CJS e-Newsletter. This week we bring you the latest developments in Japan both on the ground and online. In this issue, we provide updates on how Japan is responding to the COVID19 virus, a new report from Nadine Willems in Tokyo, a starter selection of manga by UEA’s resident expert Rayna Denison in ‘A Piece of Japan’ and an announcement of digital research conference Before & Beyond Typography hosting colleague Eugenia Bogdanova-Kummer. You can find a message from CJS Director Professor Simon Kaner on the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures website and hear more from our SISJAC colleagues on their monthly e-bulletin.

Eye on Japan – state of emergency without the urgency

Seven prefectures (Tokyo, Ōsaka, Kanagawa, Saitama, Chiba, Fukuoka and Hyōgo) have been granted permission by the Japanese government to enter a state of emergency, although as mentioned in last week’s issue it falls far short of the lockdown measures seen across the world. Government public service messages continue to associate the virus with cold symptoms, only encouraging those with such symptoms to stay at home which ignores asymptomatic carriers of COVID19. Another ineffective measure has been urging, but not forcing, people to stay at home, which saw many return to work on Monday for various reasons including inability to telework or simply being unable to afford taking time off work. This has caused medical experts to send out a stark message warning 400,000 could die in Japan without serious government efforts to contain infections. Inspiring stories are coming out of Japan though, including efforts made by the government to house the homeless during this crisis after the often-used refuge of internet cafes were closed by the crisis and initiatives by prefectural governments to hire those put out of work. In a cultural twist, a 19th century yōkai named Amabie has seen a resurgency on social media after her qualities as a
guardian against epidemics came to light and veteran polka-dot artist Yayoi Kusama has sent out an inspiring message of defiance against the virus.

Written by the editor

Source material can be found in the ‘News from Japan’ section

Tokyo Days – Report by Nadine Willems

Quiet Days in Tokyo

The cherry trees along the Meguro River are shedding their last blossoms. The petals gather into a thin layer on the surface of the water before being carried away by the current. And with them, it seems, evaporate the hopes that Japan would swiftly circumvent the global pandemic mayhem.

My escape to Tokyo has taken a new turn. The city has gone quiet, very quiet, and I now look around in puzzlement as the metropolis reluctantly grinds to an apparent standstill. The state of emergency declared last week on Tuesday concerns Tokyo and six densely populated prefectures and should last until 6 May. Osaka, Yokohama, and Fukuoka are also amongst the targeted cities.

The rise in coronavirus infections – and especially worries about the non-traceability of the routes of infection – motivated the Abe government to act. Even so, because of the need to respect the civil liberties enshrined in the constitution, the declaration is much less binding than in the UK. It merely gives power to local governors to request (yōsei) that citizens refrain from non-urgent and unnecessary outings and that businesses show appropriate restraint.

Officially it is thus not a lock-down, even if the level of compliance is noticeable. The press has reported an above 70% reduction of activities at the weekend, and the trend has been broadly persisting over the working week. The city that has always elicited in me images of thriving commercialism and bustling nightlife has now the allure of a sleepy provincial town. Yōko, the owner of my usual evening hang-out, has closed shop until early May. Most restaurants that remain open – perhaps about a third of them – are shut by 8pm, as requested by the governor. The alleys of the local supermarket are almost entirely empty of people when I visit in mid-afternoon – but I notice that a see-through vinyl screen in place as anti-virus protection now separates the customers from the cash machine attendants. The virus is lurking, if not in the streets, in the minds of the population.

There is a sense, however, that life – and Tokyo – must go on. Cherry blossoms viewing may have been a flop this year, as the virus kept away hordes of income-producing visitors, but there is room for creativity and perhaps some level of profitability. All around my neighbourhood, eateries are undergoing quick conversions into take-away and delivery joints. From before noon, waiters stand outside on the pavement next to a pile of lunchboxes and wait for customers. Like everywhere else, the fashion business is taking a hit. But in Daikanyama, one of the trendy areas of the capital, one shop at least is open. I am let in, although not before a young attendant checks my temperature with a non-touch thermometer.
Some workers keep commuting, because they want or need to, on what is usually known as one of the most crowded transportation networks in the world. I am told that these days all windows are open so as to keep carriages well ventilated. Schools are closed, but children play in the local park – to them, staying indoors all day long in a 3 LDK apartment is no enticing proposition. Hopeful rugby athletes, dutifully wearing a mask, pass each other the ball. Only the central lawn is fenced off to discourage picnics on sunny days.

Japan is one of the countries in the world where the spread of the coronavirus has so far been remarkably well contained and fatalities kept to a minimum. Yet, its population mostly complies with the crippling restrictions imposed on daily life. As I walk the city, watching spring explode along the Meguro River, I wonder how long this spirit of *gaman* (dignified endurance) will hold.

Written by Nadine Willems, Lecturer of Japanese History at UEA. All photos taken by the author.

A Piece of Japan

Each week, we will bring to you some fresh recommendations from CJS members to help bring a piece of Japan to you at home through film, books, anime, manga and more. This week we bring a bumper manga starter pack for all of you curious about the genre and eager to get started over the lockdown. If you have any suggestions for themes or other recommendations, send us an email at cjs@uea.ac.uk.

Editor’s note: English e-books and Japanese e-books on Amazon can largely only be purchased on amazon.co.uk and amazon.co.jp respectively, meaning that English and Japanese ebooks cannot be purchased on one account. You can read in both languages on your computer, but it is necessary to have two accounts. Furthermore, if you wish to read on a Kindle you must log in with either an English or Japanese account. Switching accounts on a Kindle will delete any content already stored on the device, so choose wisely!

Manga

Recommended by Rayna Denison, Senior Lecturer in Japanese Film at UEA

Stuck in the house and looking for things to do? Here are some suggestions for manga reading that will be popular with the whole family!
Astroboy by Osamu Tezuka
鉄腕アトム 作者：手塚治虫
Ages 8 and up

The classic starting point for manga readers. Astroboy by “God of Manga” Osamu Tezuka follows the Pinocchio-meets-robots story of Dr Tenma, who attempts to create a replacement after the death of his son, Tobio. What he creates is Astroboy, a superhero-like robot who works diligently to solve humanity’s problems. The manga started in the 1950s and helped to popularise both manga and anime in the postwar period.

Astro Boy is available in English and Japanese e-books on Amazon.

Princess Knight by Osamu Tezuka
リボンの騎士 作者：手塚治虫
Ages 8 and up

A second Osamu Tezuka classic, this time one of the starting points for girls’ manga. It follows the adventures of the cross-dressing princess, Sapphire, who is raised as a boy so that she can inherit her father’s throne. This leads to lots of romantic confusion, quests, fights against evil witches and the interventions of a magical cherub.

Available in English and Japanese e-books on Amazon.

Showa: A History of Japan by Shigeru Mizuki
昭和史 作者：水木しげる
Ages 15 and up

Looking for something educational? Shigeru Mizuki is one of the most significant manga authors working in biography and non-fiction, as well as being the creator of the famed Graveyard Kitaro manga. A soldier in WWII who lost his right arm, Mizuki then relearned to draw in the postwar period and created thought-provoking records of Japanese history and folklore.

Available in English paperback and Japanese e-book on Amazon.

Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind by Hayao Miyazaki
風の谷のナウシカ 作者：宮崎駿
Ages 12-15 and up

Drawn by famed animator, Hayao Miyazaki, this is the epic tale of the Princess Nausicaa, who lives in a land on the brink of environmental disaster and war. The manga is worth reading for any Miyazaki fans because it is full of lush details, great storytelling and has a different ending to the film version.

Available in English and Japanese paperback only
**My Hero Academia** by Kōhei Horikoshi
僕のヒーローアカデミア 作者：浩平堀越
Ages 10 and up

One of the hottest anime right now, and a breakout hit for author-artist Kōhei Horikoshi, this manga is a great choice for any children (or adults) who love Marvel movies. The story follows Izuki Midoriya, who is born into a world where everyone has superhero “quirks”. Except for him. When he meets his favourite superhero, All Might, Midoriya learns a secret that allows him to embark on a quest to become Earth’s greatest hero. Full of positive messages, exciting fight scenes and some absolutely bonkers characters designs.

Available in English and Japanese e-books on Amazon.

**Film**

Recommended by the editor

**After Life** by Hirokazu Kore-eda
ワンダフルライフ 作者：是枝裕和

*After Life* is a wonderfully tender, if not bureaucratic, imagining of what lies beyond our mortal lives. A small mid-20th century social-service-style office serves as a waystation for the souls of the recently deceased, where they are processed before entering their personal heaven — a single happy memory re-experienced for eternity. Every Monday, a new group of recently deceased people check in, and the “social workers” in the lodge explain the situation. Once the souls have chosen their happiest memories, workers design and replicate each person’s chosen memory, which is staged and filmed. At the end of the week, the recently deceased watch the films of their recreated happiest memories in a screening room. As soon as each person sees his or her own memory, he or she vanishes to whatever state of existence lies beyond and takes only that single memory with them. A beautiful example of how deep and abstract concepts of memory and the afterlife can be powerfully portrayed through minimal props and superb writing and acting.

Available to rent online on the British Film Institute’s BFIPlayer – free 14 day trial available!

**Upcoming Events**

**Before & Beyond Typography**
April 24/25
[www.bbtypo.com](http://www.bbtypo.com)

Eugenia Bogdanova-Kummer, Lecturer in Japanese Arts, Culture, and Heritage at the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures, will be presenting at Stanford University’s *Before & Beyond Typography* conference which has moved online due to recent events. She will be presenting on “Japanese Printed Calligraphy and Postwar Avant-Garde”. The event is free and open to all.
Conference Overview

What becomes of our understanding of “-graphics” when we dislodge the prefix “typo-” from its long-dominant position and place it alongside those of “chiro-,” “xylo-,” “litho-,” “mimeo-,” “xero-,” “seri-,” and other methods and technologies that have shaped the early modern and modern eras in profound ways? This conference will track the dynamic interplay between technological change and non-typographic printing in those parts of the world where typographic printing was considered ill-suited to local writing systems and script cultures, including South Asia, East Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. Conference speakers will examine the vitality of non-typographic publishing networks from the early modern era to the present.

REGISTER HERE

The conference is free, open to the public, and does not require registration. However, we highly recommend pre-registration. Benefits of pre-registration are:
- early access to full conference schedule
- early access to potential hands-on workshops
- additional information about the speakers and event

News from Japan

For a running number of reported COVID19 infections, victims and recoveries in Japan, see the Asahi Shimbun homepage (Japanese only): [https://www.asahi.com/](https://www.asahi.com/)

BBC: Coronavirus: Japan rushes to house thousands of homeless people

For a Japanese government public service video on coronavirus (Japanese only):

3つの密を避けよう！

NHK reports on the warning by medical experts:

Experts warn 400,000 coronavirus deaths in Japan

Japan Times reports on government requests to stay at home and the lack of public response:

Japan urges 70% commuter cut in emergency zones and asks nation to avoid nightlife

Many in Japan head for work despite Abe’s call to stay home in pandemic

The New Yorker writes on the resurgence of Amabie:

From Japan, a Mascot for the Pandemic

The Guardian relays Yayoi Kusama’s message to COVID19:

Yayoi Kusama's message to Covid-19: 'Disappear from this earth'

For Japanese speakers, here are two articles in English from the Japan Times laying out vocabulary coming out of the crisis:

The Japanese words used to encourage self-restraint
Cancellations, postponements, suspensions — words that define the times

Click here for a comprehensive online document on Japanese universities adopting distance learning.

For more information on Japanese universities see this twitter thread by Rochelle Kopp, professor at Kitakyushu University, for resources.

General Links

Embassy of Japan: http://www.uk.emb-japan.go.jp/
Japan Foundation: http://www.jpf.org.uk/
JSPS: http://www.jsps.go.jp/english/
British Association for Japanese Studies: http://www.bajs.org.uk/
Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation: http://www.daif.org.uk/
Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation: http://www.gbsf.org.uk/
Japan Society: http://www.japansociety.org.uk/
EU-Japan Centre: http://www.eu-japan.eu/
Canon Foundation: www.canonfoundation.org
Applications for JET Programme: http://www.jetprogramme.org/
Japanese Language Proficiency Exam: http://www.jlpt.jp/e/index.html
UEA Japan Society: ueajapansociety@gmail.com
Taiko Centre East: http://www.taikocentre.org.uk/
Career Forums: http://www.careerforum.net/event/?lang=E

Contact Us

If you have any contributions for the next issue of the e-newsletter, please send them to us by Wednesday to make the next issue.

The CJS office is located in the Sainsbury Centre for the Visual Arts (the mezzanine floor), although the office is temporarily closed as per university guidelines. You can always email us at cjs@uea.ac.uk.

To keep up with goings-on at CJS, follow us on social media:

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Or visit our website: www.uea.ac.uk/cjs
Left: CJS Director Professor Simon Kaner
Right: CJS Project Coordinator Oliver Moxham

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