NEW VOICES IN CLASSICAL RECEPTION STUDIES
Issue 12 (2018)

THERMAE ROMAE MANGA: PLUNGING INTO THE GULF BETWEEN ANCIENT ROME AND MODERN JAPAN

© Ayelet Peer (Bar-Ilan University, Israel)

INTRODUCTION[1]

'I can't just stand around staring! I must soak in as much of this bathing culture as I can before I go back to Rome…!!' (Yamazaki 2012, vol.I, ch.2: 57).

So proclaims Lucius Modestus, a fictional Roman architect in the time of Hadrian. Lucius is drawn through a mysterious hole in a Roman *thermae* building to a modern-day Japanese bathhouse. In Yamazaki Mari's manga, *Thermae Romae*, the Western classical past is not just referred to: it actually pays a visit.

This paper is divided into two parts. In the first part, I aim to analyse how the Roman setting and characters are introduced into the *Thermae Romae* manga, with regard to the author's attempt to form a cultural linkage between the two distinct cultures via a universal message of humanism and tolerance, as well as with respect towards one's own heritage and past. In the second part of this paper, I opt to examine how the concept of classical reception is embodied in one of the main characters of *Thermae Romae*, Satsuki. I argue that Satsuki reflects the author of the manga, Yamazaki Mari, and offers the perfect connection between East and West.

In my analysis, I follow Nisbet in using the English translated version of the manga.[2] Nisbet was interested in examining how *Appleseed* manga 'repackages and "teaches" Greek mythology.'[3] I wish to examine how *Thermae Romae* refers to its native Japanese audience as well as to the foreign one. Since the themes of the manga are universal, they appeal to all types of readers. Therefore, I shall also discuss the reception of the manga in its native Japan.

WHAT IS *THERMAE ROMAE*?

Manga enjoys a unique and special position in Japanese society. As Theisen (2011: 62) notes, 'manga is, in Japan, more properly a medium than a genre…'. The manga medium encompasses countless subjects.[4] From official guides and educational material to fantasy, sci-fi and adventure stories, manga is everywhere and for everyone in Japan (Brienza 2014: 469-70).

The nature and subjects of manga are often decided by the magazines that publish and serialize them. There are different magazines for different kinds of readership, according to gender and age: for example, ***shōnen*** manga consists of stories for young boys; ***shōjo*** manga is aimed at young girls; there are also manga for adults. Other subcategories refer to the *manga*'s genre or focus, such as sport or *mehca* (robotic machinery).[5]

The manga discussed in this paper, *Thermae Romae*, is considered *seinen*, that is, a manga aimed at young adult males, and was originally serialized in a Japanese monthly *seinen* magazine, *Comic Beam*, from 2008-2012. Later the work was published in collected volumes, in six *tankoubon*[6], that is six individual volumes for the Japanese market (from 2009-2013). In the USA, the manga was licensed by Yen Press, part of Hachette Book Group. It was translated by Stephen Paul and published in three large hardback volumes (each volume containing two of the original Japanese volumes). The English-translated volume I came out in 2012 (spanning chapters 1-10), volume II in 2013 (chapters 11-24) and the final volume III in 2014 (chapters 25-38).[7] As mentioned, the manga is categorized in Japan as *Seinen*, that is, the manga is 'characterized by mature story lines and by more graphic depictions of violence, sex, or nudity' (Drummond-Mathews 2010: 68). The fact that the original manga was published in such a magazine means therefore that *Thermae Romae* can portray naked people in the bathhouse (without explicitly showing male genitalia) and depict a fertility ceremony involving a giant phallus.

Despite, or rather because of, its quirky subject, the manga gained critical and commercial acclaim in Japan. In 2010, the manga received the manga Taisho award[8] and the 14th Osamu Tezuka Cultural Prize, Short Story Award. In 2012, a short animated TV series was made based on the manga, containing 3 episodes. This series was aired to an adult audience in a late-night slot (relating to the manga *seinen* demographic); it was distributed in the USA by Discotek Media.[9] However the real success came when a full-length, live-action movie was made in 2012, featuring the known Japanese actor Hiroshi Abe. The movie proved to be a hit in the Japanese box

office.[10] According to Box Office Mojo, the film grossed more than 74 million dollars in Japan (which is considered very profitable).[11] A less successful[12] sequel was produced in 2014.

The positive acceptance of the manga by the Japanese audience (both the manga and the movies) suggests that the themes of the story were understood and liked by the Japanese general public. The comic elements of the story no doubt appealed to a wide audience, and might explain its popularity. It is, however, notable that a movie about a fantastical encounter between ancient Rome and modern day Japan topped the Japanese box office.

When contemplating the interest the Japanese may have in Greek or Roman tradition, Yaginuma (1997: 316) notes: 'our answer is twofold: one is, of course, that classics attract us because they are interesting *per se*; the other is that we believe knowledge of classics is essential for the true understanding of European culture.' In *Thermae Romae*, Yamazaki offers her readers exactly that: an interesting and entertaining story and also a lighter history lesson about ancient Rome.

Although Yamazaki received a Western education, she deliberately chose to write in a very distinct Japanese medium aimed specifically at Japanese readers. The author did not translate her work into English, for example, despite living in Chicago. Furthermore, in the author's personal notes, which are located throughout the volumes, she emphasises her love for Japanese tradition and customs. Like Osamu Tezuka, a venerated manga artist who was also well-versed in Western history and mythology, the author's familiarity with Western culture does not preclude the work from being treated as an example of classical reception in the author's native country.

Classics In Manga

Classical themes too are no stranger to manga. Greek and Roman elements are not ubiquitous, but in several manga and anime there are references to different aspects of the classical world. Examples are a depiction of the Trojan War in Osamu Tezuka's *Phoenix: Early Works* manga or the Greek pantheon in *Appleseed* manga.[13]

It is difficult to establish the precise degree of Classical reception in manga. Theisen (2011: 62) argues: 'when a given manga makes use of Greco-Roman mythological or historical material, it has more to do with genre or the individual whims of the artist than its significance in or relevance to a larger history of reception.' This is a logical argument since the Japanese naturally do not share the long classical tradition of the Europeans.[14] However, it depends on our definition of classical reception. There are manga artists, as Theisen notes, who use elements from the Greek mythological world in order to ornament their story or make it stand out, without giving them any special consideration. Theisen refers to the work of Kurumada Masami, *Saint Seiya* manga to illustrate his argument. Masami uses elements from Greek mythology to create an action-filled space adventure story. In the story, five warriors seek to protect the reincarnation of the goddess Athena from the other Olympian gods who plot to control the earth. The names of constellations, Greek gods and mythological creatures also appear. In *Saint Seiya*, one might argue, the mythological references are used to make the story more mysterious and a part of a different universe, hence there is little regard for their proper ancient Greek origin. However, the fact that the author deliberately chose to use Greek mythology as the basis of his story, and to make Athena and Hades important figures in it, should be considered classical reception in the sense that it demonstrates the ability to reinterpret the classical source material into one's own culture.[15]

Among their various topics, many manga explore the history of Japan, and of the world, and offer a new (and visual) perspective on historical events. We should keep in mind that manga is a visual medium; thus the reader can perceive historical events as they are drawn on paper, with a strong sense of the ancient surroundings. In *Thermae Romae*, the mix of the ancient past and the present illustrates very clearly how one can learn from the past and how the past can also help us overcome different obstacles in our present lives. Furthermore, there are also similar problems in the past and in the present which result from common human experiences. The meticulous cultural blending of past and present has gained praise and literary prizes for the manga in Japan, but the accolades are not limited to Japan. Marshall and Kovacs (2016: xxv) praise it as 'truly spectacular'.

PART I: LUCIUS' TIME-TRAVEL AND CULTURAL CLASH

Let us return to our hero Lucius, who is drawn to the modern Japanese bath culture after almost drowning in a Roman bathhouse.

Thermae Romae is set during Hadrian's reign and tells the story of a Roman architect, Lucius Modestus, who specializes in building *thermae*. He is proud of his work and constantly tries to improve upon it. In a series of mysterious events, he travels into the future to modern day Japan in the year 2009 CE, usually by falling into a Roman bath and resurfacing in a Japanese hot spring, public bath or even private bath.

At first, these time travels are just a bit of fun. The astonished Lucius emerges into a hot spring filled with monkeys or in the middle of a Japanese sanitary store. Yet he soon realizes the advanced nature of the strange civilization he has fallen into, or as he terms it, the 'advanced civilization of the flat-faced men' (Yamazaki 2012, vol.I, ch.2: 55). As a true professional craftsman, Lucius is astounded by all of the technological advances of the Japanese baths (his encounter with the famous Japanese toilet is a particular highlight) and he tries to figure out how he can bring these innovations into his own time. This glimpse into the future allows Lucius to improve his skills and become the most renowned *thermae* architect in Rome. He is even summoned by Hadrian himself, who desires a special private bath.

The situation becomes more challenging for Lucius as he finds himself entangled with court politics at Rome and with greedy local developers in Japan, so he must find a way to help his friends, and himself, in both eras.

The uniqueness of Yamazaki's *Thermae Romae* lies in the author's attempt to create a realistic and almost documentary account of daily life in the Roman empire of the second century A.D. Yamazaki is meticulous in her depiction of ancient Rome and she pays great attention to detail, from the lavish architecture of the baths to the different foldings of the toga. In representing Rome through art, she educates her readers without burdening them with too many historical facts. At first Lucius' abrupt visits to modern-day Japan are comical as he struggles to understand his new surroundings. These visits accentuate the difference between the cultures, as each side views the other as strange and foreign. Lucius is frustrated to discover a more advanced culture than Rome, as he wonders: 'we Romans have been so proud of the development of our aqueducts and great works… and all the while these flat faces have created this fantastic, innovative outdoor bath with the simplest and most basic of principles!' (Yamazaki 2012, vol.I, ch.2: 61).

Still quite early in the unfolding of the story, these encounters assume a less adversarial tone as the Japanese are especially represented as benevolent and welcoming to foreigners. In contrast to the stereotypical representation of Japan as a conservative and closed society, Yamazaki portrays the Japanese as warm and welcoming (even to an ancient Roman). This narrative reflects Yamazaki's own real-life situation with her roots in the Far East but her present home in the West.

Lucius swallows his pride in order to better his work and he slowly discovers similarities between his Roman practices and the strange new culture. These examples show bit by bit the encroaching influence of the West on Japan, and how people can find traces of their own culture in different parts of the world as long as they are open-minded about their environment. In one of the Japanese hot springs, a local elderly woman offers Lucius boiled bamboo shoots flavoured with fish sauce. Her friends protest that he will probably not like the dish, but Lucius tastes it and immediately assimilates it to the Roman *garum* as he proclaims: 'It's a taste of Rome!' (Yamazaki 2012, vol.I, ch.5: 165). In another Japanese hot spring, he finds a statue of a winged boy whom he associates with *Amor***.** Musing over the resemblance he thinks that these strange people 'have taken much influence from Rome' (Yamazaki 2012, vol.I, ch.10: 349). Lucius also ponders the far-reaching nature of Greek influence when he sees a plate decorated with Greek Meander pattern in a Japanese restaurant. He then wonders, 'Does that mean these people have been influenced by the Greeks as we were?' (Yamazaki 2013, vol.II, ch.13: 54). Thus Lucius alludes to the continuing influence different civilizations had on each other over the years. He admits the Romans themselves have been influenced and inspired by the Greeks. In her story, Yamazaki accentuates how different cultures can learn from each other. Lucius repeats the notion that the Romans have learnt from the different peoples they have conquered, thus improving their own culture. He occasionally ponders on this theme: '…learning the best of other cultures is for the sake of Rome's future!' (Yamazaki 2012, vol.I, ch.2: 61); 'over nine hundred years, Rome has grown exponentially by learning from the culture of the Etruscans, Carthaginians, and Greeks…' (Yamazaki 2012, vol.I, ch.5: 126). Yamazaki here illustrates how each civilization continued to grow and evolve due to foreign influences. This is another sign of the author's liberal and open approach towards foreign influences, a non-traditional view in Japanese society.

The humanistic approach of Yamazaki is best exemplified in two parallel scenes in which Lucius encounters the same type of people in his native Rome as he does in Japan. Yamazaki here takes full advantage of the visual aspect of manga and even draws these specific people almost the same, thus the reader (together with Lucius) feels baffled by the coincidence, and the line between past and present is slowly starting to fade.

The first example is the portrayal of the Japanese *nouveau riche* who wish to build a Roman-style hot spring. Lucius and a local Japanese architect Yoshida share the same aesthetics and they find a mutual language in designing the new facility. The excited Lucius thinks, 'So the glory of the Roman Empire has indeed reached this place!!' (Yamazaki 2013, vol.II, ch.16: 150). The Roman equivalent of this garish Japanese man is the priest of the *Sodales Augustales*; both men have poor taste and an exaggerated affection for gold. To make the comparison even more noticeable, the Japanese man wears a shirt that reads 'VALENTINO Italy'. This Japanese millionaire is proud to show off his taste for Italian fashion and wants everyone to know that he is dressed in the finest brands. He misses the subtlety of Italian aesthetics and is only interested in big names. At the same time, all he wants in his pond are rare koi fish because of their price, not their nature. This person thus embodies Italian as well as Japanese tastelessness. The koi are a visible sign of status in Japan as Valentino is in Italy. The man also yells at the Japanese architect, stating: 'don't you know nothin' about ancient Rome? it's about glamour! Sparkling and shining! Koi fit perfectly into all that!' (Yamazaki 2013, vol.II, ch.16: 140). The old man combines in one sentence the splendours of Rome and Japan; he sees no problem in the mixture of cultures, of koi and Venus busts. Yamazaki here gently criticizes the materialism of society, highlighting its focus on extravagance and showing off instead of real beauty and moderation.[16] She also shows how this pretence overcomes real knowledge. This misconception of Rome as 'shining' and 'sparkling' is very common in people's minds. Yamazaki, who studied art in Florence, is also set to correct and rectify such misconceptions. The Japanese *nouveau riche*'s character is of course also well embedded in Roman literature, especially satire. Martial and Petronius were more than eager to criticize the ostentatious display of the *libertini*. Yamazaki here cleverly combines two traditions: Roman Satire's diatribe on the poor taste of the *nouveau riche* and the similar criticism of modern materialists who constantly chase luxuries and brands.[17]

A Roman-Japanese bond is expressed delicately through the amicable relations between Lucius and his Japanese counterpart, the architect Yoshida. After the construction is complete, the Japanese architect considers Lucius' skills, and says, 'It was all thanks to you…senpai' (Yamazaki 2013, vol.II, ch.17: 173). Calling the Roman Lucius by the special Japanese term *senpai* (senior) is a clear manifestation of the bond between the classical past and the Japanese present. The cultural boundaries have vanished, leaving two men who are willing to learn from and help each other. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word *senpai* carries more profound meaning in its general use. It is not just a senior, but a senior you admire, and hope will notice you.[18] Lucius helped Yoshida, thus recognizing his talent, and Yoshida is grateful, taking Lucius as his model. The present wishes to assimilate the past while the past is learning from the present.

The visible association of Italy and Japan that we saw in the Japanese man's shirt is picked up again when Lucius appears in Japan wearing a T-shirt which reads 'Kyoto' (Yamazaki 2013, vol.II, ch.176: 152). The shirt even proves valuable in the construction of the hot springs: simple tourist merchandise is treated as a source of inspiration and creativity. Yamazaki gently describes the transformation Lucius is going through. From an arrogant Roman who initially believed that the Japanese he met were slaves, he begins to show genuine interest in their baths and hot springs and even communicates with them. He so immerses himself into their world that even his clothing reflects his developing identity, and he feels obliged to help Japanese people in their time of need.

The second parallel in the story relates to proper conduct in the bath house. In these episodes, the peace of a Roman bathhouse is disturbed by a rowdy group of Germans, while a similar incident occurs with a group of Russians who visit a Japanese hot spring (Yamazaki 2012, vol.I, ch.7). If at the beginning of the volume the Romans and Japanese were depicted as alien to each other, now they are united against their mutual enemies: those who disturb the peace in the bathhouse. Their newfound bond is further strengthened by their appearance: Lucius and the Japanese are portrayed as clean-shaven with smooth bodies. The main antagonists—the Germans in Rome and the Russians in Japan—look identical: the leader of the German/Russian group has a beard, long unkempt locks, and body hair. They are so similar that the confused Lucius thinks that the *Germani* have come to the Japanese bath as well. Both groups of visitors are portrayed as loud and having poor manners. Their behaviour leads to a clash of civilizations in the bathhouse. It is interesting that even though the story revolves around the acceptance of others, nevertheless, some categories of the non-Japanese characters are still evaluated as uncivilized. It is hardly surprising that the Romans treated the *Germani* as barbarians; it is a

bit more intriguing to see a similar depiction of Russians in Japan. We can only assume that if Yamazaki decided to portray the Russians this way, she knew this description would strike a chord with her Japanese audience. We cannot ascertain if this is how the Japanese think of some Russians but manga is a popular medium so we may assume such sentiments do exist. We can assume that Yamazaki chose the Russians as the prototype for uncivilized hooligans since she knew this sentiment would resonate well with her Japanese audience. During the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905), as Mikhailova (2008: 156) explains, Japanese political cartoons 'incited passion among their readers, effectively stimulating anti-Russian sentiments. Second, they peddled a self-serving positive image of Japan.' The Japanese also treated the Russian Revolution harshly. As Mikhailova (2008: 172) continues, 'these cartoons created an unflattering image of Russia as a place of disorder and discontent. By contrast, Japanese propaganda of the time presented Japan as a country where the emperor and people coexisted in unity and harmony.' While I do not imply that Yamazaki's work was heavily influenced by the nationalistic views of 1905, nevertheless, such imbedded national sentiments are hard to refute; they often remain in a country's culture and literature, and so Yamazaki may have portrayed the Russians as barbarians almost subconsciously. Similar anti-Russian feelings still exist in modern-day Japan due to a history of hostility between the nations, as was revealed by a Japanese Cabinet Office survey from October-November 2016.[19]

This scenario is played out *ad absurdum* when Lucius fights the Russian leader in the Japanese hot spring (Yamazaki 2012, vol.I, ch.7: 240-45). During the fight each man is depicted in the military attire of his country: Lucius is portrayed dressed like a legionary, the Russian like a Cossack. In both instances their military attire presents an aggressive image and at the same time its differentiation along national lines accentuates the cultural gap between them. The matter is ultimately resolved by the Russian being shown the correct rules which are drawn on a sign on the wall (Yamazaki 2012, vol.I, ch.7: 246). This image delivers the message not only that cultural gaps can be bridged, but also, and this may seem more important to the author, that drawings are universal. The lesson is that conflicts arise and escalate sometimes due to simple misunderstanding or cultural difference, yet they could also easily be avoided entirely with the help of proper education, guidance and tolerance. The role of visual communication is also key. This modest scene of the illustrated instructions board could hint at the universal power and appeal of manga and illustrations. They are widely understood, even without comprehension of the language of the text. It may be stretching the point a bit, but we could see in this scene a hint of the globalizing power of manga throughout the world and its cultural humanistic value.

The universal closeness between people is also what enables Lucius to communicate in Japan. Yamazaki shows how Lucius' Latin is not understood by the Japanese he encounters, yet they can guess his intentions and try to help him using their own language. Only later does Lucius meet Satsuki, who knows Latin and can talk to him in his own language. But throughout the story, the language barrier does not hinder Lucius and the Japanese from communicating through shared values and concepts.

So far, we have highlighted specific elements within the manga itself. However, the subject of the manga is not the only thing that makes it stand out, the personal comments of the author also add another interesting aspect. The author's unusual background greatly contributed to her decision to explore a possible connection between ancient Rome and Japan, since she had personally experienced these two cultures. Yamazaki is Tokyo-born, and she went to Florence to learn art. She married an Italian and travelled the world (Europe, the Middle East), and eventually settled in Chicago. Her travelling is documented in the manga in the form of author's notes, titled 'Rome & baths: The loves of my life' (e.g. Yamazaki 2012: 36, 72, 104 *et passim*). In these personal musings, she shares her thoughts on her writing process and the different themes that are covered in the manga. She also inserts photos from her travels. It is particularly helpful to have the author's own thoughts regarding the work when we try to interpret the meaning and significance of particular episodes. It is also thought-provoking to compare Yamazaki's professed intentions with what the classicist reader might see in her work.

Yamazaki shares her knowledge with readers not only through her personal notes, but also through the manga itself which mirrors everything that she had learnt—from painting and art to European history. Even her frequent use of Latin (which is very rare in manga in general) shows how assiduously she makes her story as accurate as possible. In terms of classical reception, without doubt this author was deeply influenced by the classical world and she tries to bridge the worlds she loves: the Roman and her native Japanese.

In a way, we can even see how this manga employs a kind of opposite classical reception. This time, the classical (Roman) world is influenced by the new modern Japan and not only vice versa. There is a reciprocal influence through the time-travel element of the story.

A better understanding of Yamazaki's creative process is revealed in an interview with a French manga magazine from June 2016.[20] Here the author explicitly set out her intentions. Yamazaki explained that she found a resemblance between ancient Rome and modern Japan since no other people love public baths more than these two cultures.[21] She adds that the readers can relate to the characters, even to Lucius, the foreigner. She explains that through his character, her Japanese readers rediscover their love for their own culture.[22] She also notes that the Japanese are curious to know what foreigners think of them. Yamazaki refers to the similarities between the two peoples: these two cultures, neither of them monotheistic, have the capacity to assimilate the knowledge of other cultures to improve their own society.[23] In the interview, Yamazaki openly discusses the same themes which appear in the manga: loving your own country and culture while being open and tolerant to other cultures. National Japanese pride is accentuated in that it is the Japanese people who teach valuable lessons to the representative of the Roman West. It is true that they benefit from Lucius' experience; however, he is the one who ends up being more enriched by this inter-cultural encounter. Without trying to psychologically analyse the motivations of the author, we can clearly witness her love for her native land in the manga and perhaps a bit of an apology for forsaking it. Especially In an interview with a French magazine, Yamazaki is keen to act as a sort of cultural ambassador for Japan, emphasizing the wonderful things the Japanese could teach the West. She is basically telling the French (as a Western audience) that we are not that different from you.

Yamazaki respects Roman and Japanese cultures equally, with an emphasis on local traditions. As she notes in the interview, her work reminds Japanese readers of their love for their traditional culture, which they might have forgotten over the years. The manga addresses this subject as well, stressing how important it is to respect the past and learn from it. The manga presents a similar situation in Japan and Rome: the old establishments are being forgotten and left to disintegrate because of people's constant quest for novelties. As one of the ancient Roman *thermae* owners claims, 'But his [Hadrian's] taste for novelty is running the old ways out of business!!' (Yamazaki 2012, vol.I, ch.10: 338). Lucius himself is also to blame for adding such novelties to the Roman *thermae* so as to almost make the institution in its traditional form obsolete. His constant attempts to improve the concept of the *thermae* has nearly annihilated the traditional baths which he so admired. A clearer, visual manifestation of the crumbling of the old tradition is also presented in a scene in which Lucius sits in an old *thermae* and sees a pigeon on a bust of Apollo. Lucius quickly chases the pigeon away, saying, 'Old or not, Apollo is Apollo' (Yamazaki 2012, vol.I, ch.10: 345). He regrets that in his quest for innovation he has lost sight of the real importance of the *thermae*, which is an 'invaluable source of energy and life in our society. Even Pliny the Elder said as much' (345). Here Lucius refers to the old customs and their deeper meaning, but also to the ancient sources as justification. The old customs are worth preserving and it is important to listen and respect your elders and their writings. Yamazaki emphasizes how vital it is not to ignore the past even after its glory has faded. Lucius once again learns from the modern Japanese how it is possible to utilize the present with its progress and development to save the past. So far, Japanese advances have helped Lucius in the moment of the Roman past that he inhabits. This time, these developments also help him to save the past of his own era: the more ancient *thermae* in Rome. In an intriguingly article related to this topic, McMorran (2008) studies how heritage is being used as a commodity in the development strategy of the Kurokawa Onsen (hot spring). He concludes his finding thus (2008: 351): 'This study shows how heritage is often implemented as a flexible economic tool without concern for the kind of ideological problems discussed at length in much of the tourism literature. More importantly, the case of Kurokawa shows how heritage tourism in a rural setting can rejuvenate a local sense of place without the sort of creative destruction of the rural idyll which is often associated with this type of tourism development'. Our Lucius also makes use of 'heritage tourism' in his endeavours to improve the conditions of the old and less popular *thermae*.

PART II: SATSUKI

The remainder of this paper will be devoted to the character of Satsuki. She is an interesting character who combines the past and the present, East and West.

Although the main protagonist throughout the narrative is Lucius, whose viewpoint is prioritised, the manga also includes a love story and a strong heroine, Satsuki. Only later does Satsuki's part become bigger and more influential as she is given panels of her own without the presence of Lucius.

From our general discussion of the cultural clash and cultural connection which we have explored in the first part, through the escapades of Lucius, we now focus on the individual, a single character who symbolizes these influences by herself. In many ways Satsuki resembles the author Yamazaki. The similarities seem too great to be just a coincidence. Satsuki is the only daughter of a famous Geisha now deceased, and she performs the

traditional Geisha dances in a traditional hot spring. But apart from this very Japanese inclination, she has immersed herself from an early age in the ancient Roman world. We see how she decorated her room with posters of Roman emperors (she was even enamoured with Julius Caesar) and a hand-made Roman doll (Yamazaki 2013, vol.II, ch.20). Satsuki studied English, French and Italian, and then Latin, and in the end majored in archaeology. In a digging expedition in Rome, where she worked relentlessly, she said, 'I feel like if I keep on digging I might dig up a real live Roman someday' (Yamazaki 2013, vol.II, ch.20: 267). In the manga world she gets her wish in encountering Lucius, and in the end the two fall in love. Thus, Satsuki's fantastic childhood dream becomes a reality.

Satsuki is the embodiment of classical reception and its cultural challenges. She is from a foreign culture, she respects and even participates in her native traditions, yet she is very keen on learning about other cultures and is infatuated with the remote Roman world. This love of ancient Rome makes her stand out among her friends, as not many understand her passion for the strange culture. She is lonely, yet she does not forsake her studies and follows her heart. The one who silently supports her is her grandfather, who practices Eastern medicine and acupuncture.

One cannot escape the impression that the story and character of Satsuki is informed by, and reflects, elements of Yamazaki's own life. There is a lot in common between the two dedicated and independent women. Like her character Satsuki, Yamazaki also enjoyed learning about the ancient Roman world and travelled abroad, going to study in Florence at the age of seventeen. Yet although she lived abroad for many years, she remained attached to Japanese customs and she worked as an interpreter for an Italian orchestra which came to Japan (according to her own admission in the manga (Yamazaki 2012, vol.I, 330)). On a more personal level, like the character Satsuki, Yamazaki married an Italian man. Satsuki made a choice to forsake her native Japan and live with Lucius in Rome; Yamazaki also chose to live with her Italian husband abroad. Also, the author and the manga character both have a son. In the manga, the child is the fruit of the true reception of classical and Japanese cultures and symbolizes continuity, a new generation which will grow to appreciate the old traditions (he loves taking a bath as well (Yamazaki 2014, vol.III, final chapter: 368)).

At the beginning of the paper, I quoted Yaginuma's explanations for his interest in the classics in Japan. I would like to cite another point he makes. He writes (1997: 316), referring to Sir Kenneth J. Dover who visited Japan in the 1980s, that 'in cultural connection one can choose one's parent… in the same way the Japanese people can believe themselves to be descendants of the Greeks or the Romans, in so far as they (the Japanese) can find some cultural affinity or congeniality with them (the Greeks and the Romans).' Satsuki is the visualisation of this sentiment; she is biologically Japanese, but from a cultural point of view, she chooses a Roman family.

While at the beginning of the story it was Lucius who started as the alien character, as the story progresses we come to understand that it is Satsuki who is the misfit, the one who does not feel like she belongs, whereas Lucius manages to adapt to a Japanese lifestyle. The unique connection between Lucius and Satsuki is also manifested by their verbal connection: Satsuki is the only one who truly understands Lucius, because Satsuki can speak to Lucius in his own language. In order to get closer to Lucius, after he disappears again, Satsuki goes off to a dig in Baiae. During the dig, the story comes full circle when she excavates all the strange items Lucius modelled on those found in the Japanese hot-spring, including a shampoo hat and bottles (Yamazaki 2014, vol.III, ch.36: 300-305). She is the only one who can appreciate these oddities and understand their meaning. The English professor claims she is ridiculous, but Satsuki thinks 'they don't have a culture of bathing, they wouldn't understand.' (Yamazaki 2014, vol.III, ch.36: 305). Just as we saw in the episode of Lucius' fight against the Russian, here, once more, we see the expression of a common bond between Japanese and Romans. These cultures can fully appreciate and understand each other because of their common interest in bathing. Again, Yamazaki here pokes a bit of fun at the usual conventions: the esteemed professor from London does not understand the ancient Roman as much as he thinks, since he is oblivious to the daily habits of the culture. Satsuki has a strong connection to Lucius and finally she goes back in time to reunite with him.

CONCLUSION

The time travel that occurs in the opposite direction in the final volume of *Thermae Romae* brings the manga full circle, as the ending shows the union of the two cultures. In this unique manga, the author Yamazaki, using her own experience, has explored the idea that two cultures which at first glance seem completely remote from one another in fact share a strong connection. The Japanese and the ancient Romans share a bathing culture which has a more profound social meaning than just the love of hot water. They share similar behavioural codes and a love of leisure and nature. Yamazaki here advises us not to be deceived by mere appearance, not to be

too hasty to judge or refute things we do not understand at first (like the professor who arrogantly rejects Satsuki's findings in the dig). Yamazaki presents a wide humanistic approach in her work, asking for tolerance and acceptance.

Concluding his study of Japanese pop culture, Tsutsui writes regarding contemporary Japan: '…a history of imaginative dialogue between homegrown traditions and imported innovations contributed substantially to the energy and variety of Japanese popular culture' (2010: 69). This is exactly what Yamazaki's work aims at (from Lucius' perspective as well): the ability to build and rebuild a stronger nation by sharing thoughts and ideas, and by mutual respect for and communication with other cultures.

I would like to conclude with Yamazaki's musing about the past: '…in every age, there are people who come into contact with the records of the past and think that things were better back then...respect for the past not only instils humility, it also stimulates the productive drive' (Yamazaki 2014, vol.III, 132-3).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Interview with Mari Yamazaki. *Coyote Mag* from June 4 2016. Accessed on July 20 2016. http://www.coyotemag.fr/interview-mari-yamazaki/

Bouissou, J.-M. 2010. **'**Manga: A Historical Overview**'**. In Johnson-Woods 2010: 17-33.

Brienza, C. 2014. **'**Sociological Perspectives on Japanese Manga in America**'**. *Sociology Compass* 8/5: 468–47.

Bryce M. and Davis, J. 2010. **'**An Overview of Manga Genres'**.** In Johnson-Woods 2010: 34-61.

Budelmann, F. and Haubold, J. 2008. **'**Reception and Tradition**'**. In Hardwick and Stray 2008: 13-25.

Drummond-Mathews, A. 2010. **'**What Boys Will Be: A Study of Shōnen Manga**'** In Johnson-Woods 2010: 62-76.

Hackworth Petersen L. 2006. *The Freedman in Roman Art and Art History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hardwick, L. and Stray, C. (eds.) 2008. *A Companion to Classical Receptions*. Malden, Ma.: Blackwell.

Ito, K. 2005. 'A History of Manga in the Context of Japanese Culture and Society'. *The Journal of Popular Culture* 38: 456-75.

Ito, K. 2015. '*Manga* in Japanese History'. In MacWilliams 2015: 26-47.

Johnson-Woods, T. 2010. 'Introduction'. In Johnson-Woods 2010: 1-14.

Johnson-Woods, T. (ed.). 2010. *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives*. New York and London: Continuum.

Johnson S. R. 2016. 'Xerxes, Lost City in the Desert: Classical Allusions in *Fullmetal Alchemist*'. In Kovacs and Marshall 2016: 95-110.

Kovacs, G. and Marshall, C. W. (eds.). 2011. *Classics and Comics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kovacs, G. and Marshall, C. W. (eds.). 2016. *Son of Classics and Comics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

MacWilliams, M. W. 2015. *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime*. London and New York: Routledge.

McMorran, C. 2008. 'Understanding the 'Heritage' in Heritage Tourism: Ideological Tool or Economic Tool for a Japanese Hot Springs Resort?' *Tourism Geographies*, 10:3, 334-354**.**

Mikhailova, I. 2015. 'Intellectuals, Cartoons, and Nationalism During the Russo-Japanese War'. In MacWilliams 2015: 155-76.

Mouritsen, H. 2011. *The Freedman in the Roman World*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Nakata, H. 2008. 'Japan's hot springs part of social, geologic, historic fabric'. *The Japan Times,* January 22, 2008. Accessed August 1, 2016. http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2008/01/22/reference/japans-hot-springs-part-of-social-geologic-historic-fabric/#.V58PHfl95D8

Nisbet, G. 2016. '*Mecha* in Olympus: Shirow Masamune's *Appleseed*'. In Kovacs and Marshall 2016: 67-78.

Norris, C. 2009. 'Manga, Anime and Visual Art Culture'. In Sugimoto 2009: 236-60.

Ramsby, T. 2012. '"Reading" the Freed Slave in the *Cena Trimlachionis*'. In Sinclair and Ramsby 2012: 66-87.

Rosenbaum, R. (ed.). 2014. *Manga and the Representation of Japanese History*. London and New York: Routledge.

Schodt, F. L. 2012. *Manga! Manga! The World of Japanese Comics*. Tokyo and New York: Kodansha International.

Serbulea, M. and Payyappallimana, U. 2012. 'Onsen (hot springs) in Japan—Transforming Terrain into Healing Landscapes'. *Health & Place* 18: 1366-73.

Shero, L. R. 1923. 'The Cena in Roman Satire'. *CP* 18: 126-43.

Sinclair, B. and Ramsby, T. (ed.). 2012. *Free at last!: The impact of freed slaves on the Roman Empire*. London, UK : Bristol Classical Press.

Sugimoto, Y. (ed.). 2009. *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Theisen, N. A. 2011. 'Declassicizing the Classical in Japanese Comics'. In Kovacs and Marshall 2011: 59-71.

Theisen, N. A. 2016. '(Un)reading the Odyssey in Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind'. In Kovacs and Marshall 2016: 79-93.

Tsutsui, W. M. 2010. *Japanese Popular Culture and Globalization*. Ann Arbor, MI : Association for Asian Studies.

Yaginuma, S. 1997. 'A Brief History of Classical Studies in Japan'. *Kleos* 2: 311-18.

Yamazaki, M. 2009-2014. *Thermae Romae* I - III. New York: Yen Press.

[1] I would like to thank Trevor Fear, Cora Beth Knowles and the *New Voices* reader for their assistance with this article.

[2] Nisbet (2016: 67-8).

[3] Nisbet (2016: 67).

[4] On the myriad manga genres see Bryce and Davis (2010).

[5] Schodt (1983: 12-8); Norris (2009: 238-40); Johnson-Woods (2010: 8-9); Bryce and Davis (2010: 34-5).

[6] According to Anime News Network website: http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/encyclopedia/manga.php?id=12007.

[7] http://yenpress.com/thermae-romae/. The series was also translated into French (6 volumes), Italian (6 volumes) and Spanish (6 volumes) according to amazon.com website.

[8] The Taisho award is given by a committee comprised of booksellers who are very familiar with the manga in their stores. http://www.mangataisho.com/ (translated version by google: http://www.mangataisho.com/).

[9] http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2012-10-24/discotek-licenses-thermae-romae-tv-anime.

[10] See the Guardian review of the movie: https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2012/may/29/thermae-romae-japan-cinema.

[11] http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/intl/?page=&country=JP&wk=2012W30&id=_fTERUMAEROMAE01.

[12] http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/intl/?page=&country=JP&id=_fTHERMAEROMAEII01.

[13] For more examples see Bryce and Davis (2010: 35); Theisen (2011) and (2016); Nisbet (2016); Johnson (2016).

[14] On the complex meanings of the term 'classical tradition' see Budelmann and Haubold (2008).

[15] I follow Hardwick and Stray (2008: 1) who define 'receptions' broadly: 'By "receptions" we mean the ways in which Greek and Roman material has been transmitted, translated, excerpted, interpreted, rewritten, re-imaged and represented.'

[16] This is also a fine example of the unique feature of manga, which Schodt (2012: 21) refers to as valuing the unstated: 'the picture alone carries the story.' We do not need more than the picture of the man, with his Italian shirt and heavy necklace, in order to realize his character.

[17] This image of the rich, vulgar man is also familiar from Roman satire. I do not suggest that this was Yamazaki's inspiration; however, the Romans were also sensitive about such behaviour. The most obvious example is of course Petronius' Trimalchio, on whom see for example Shero (1923); Hackworth Petersen (2006: *passim*); Ramsby (2012). Petronius was not the only Roman satirist who ridiculed the rich and tasteless freedmen; Juvenal and Martial also saw them as an easy target. See also Mouritsen (2011: 66-119).

[18] https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/senpai-is-real.

[19] According to the Japan Times: http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/12/24/national/politics-diplomacy/japanese-feel-unfriendly-toward-russia-survey/#.WT1-vuuGOpo.

[20] http://www.coyotemag.fr/interview-mari-yamazaki/.

[21] 'Il n'y a selon moi pas d'autres peuples que les Romains de l'Antiquité et les Japonais d'aujourd'hui qui aient pratiqué les bains avec autant d'enthousiasme et de ferveur.' On the history of hot springs in Japan see Serbulea and Payyappallimana (2012: 1366-7). See also Nakata's (2008) article from *The Japan Times*.

[22] Les Japonais aiment THERMAE ROMAE car, à travers Lucius, ils redécouvrent pourquoi ils aiment leur culture du quotidien et qu'ils avaient peut-être oubliée.

[23] Ces deux sociétés ne sont pas monothéistes et elles partagent une étonnante capacité à assimiler les savoirs des peuples étrangers pour en faire quelque chose qui leur est complètement propre.