

PREFACE

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For the third collection in the Florientalia Asian Studies Series we have chosen the title *Trajectories* 軌跡 to celebrate how scholars can always draw new routes, paths and directions with their research, even when it seems that everything has already been said and written on a specific matter. Trajectories cannot exist alone, they need an action to move them and give them direction, they can draw a straight line but also a curved one; they can fall afar or return to the starting point. So does research work, and we believe the scholars hosted in this volume, can really enrich the field of Chinese and Japanese Studies with the trajectories they have chosen for their research.

This volume gathers articles by six contributors interested in different research areas within the field of East Asian Studies. The articles, organized in a Japanese and a Chinese section, use different approaches within humanities disciplines to explore topics ranging from classical and contemporary East Asian literature to the study of second language acquisition across European and Asian languages.

The Japanese section essentially follows a chronological line. The opening contribution by Claudia Iazzetta analyses a particular group of Buddhist religious plays of the Nō theater, where the protagonist is the spirit of a plant, focusing on how these plays, despite their apparent homogeneity, can have a different characters construction and Buddhist teaching approach. The second contribution, by Luca Capponcelli, takes into consideration the *Rōmaji Nikki* by Ishikawa Takuboku 石川啄木 (1886-1912) and examines how structural features and phonocentrism employed in this work contribute in constructing the complex self-representation of the author. Gala Maria Follaco closes this section with an article dedicated to Yoshida Shūichi 吉田修一 (b. 1968) and his literature, which mirrors the alienation and solitude of today's urban life and his influence on interhuman relationships.

In the Chinese section, the first two contributions are dedicated to contemporary Chinese literature. Lara Colangelo explores the early production of Li Er 李洱 (b. 1966), an author still not well known outside Asia, and focuses on the existential condition of the Chinese intellectual during the 1990s; Franco

Ficetola's contribution focuses on the contemporary phenomenon of "soccer fiction" and introduces it as a branch of online literature in China, trying to map its features and singularities in the present-day Chinese literary panorama. The last article takes on a different trajectory and falls within the field of linguistics focusing on the benefits of visualizing tones in improving Chinese Mandarin learners' pronunciation.

We are grateful to all the contributors and the referees who participated in the volume and helped us with ideas and suggestions, creating a fruitful climate of academic collaboration and exchange and we hope to contribute, explore and trace new trajectories within the field of East Asian Studies.