Constructing an "Authentic" Japan Online:

Examining Travel Vlogs by Ethnic Minorities in Japan

Kelly Chan

East Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts

McGill University, Montreal

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Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my friend Melissa Tan.

Abstract

In recent years, travel vlogs, due to their low barrier of participation and audiovisual dimension, have become a significant vernacular mass medium from which viewers can engage in a new level of armchair traveling. Travel vlogs are also a way for vloggers to establish themselves as vernacular, quoting communication studies scholars Mikah Lee and Younghan Cho, "transnational cultural intermediaries," translating the destination for domestic and international audiences. Japan is one country that travel vloggers often cover. Despite the amount of online videos about Japan as a travel destination, however, there has been little scholarship addressing Japan travel vlogs. This thesis fills this gap by examining travel vlogs produced by four vloggers who speak as ethnic minorities based in Japan: Ōkawa Yūsuke, Taiki Beaufils, Loretta Scott and Paolo de Guzman. Building upon poststructuralist critiques of area studies and critiques of hybrid vernacular discourse, this thesis argues that these four vloggers use hegemonic practices of knowledge production in an attempt to blur the problematic, gendered and ethnic boundaries the state and Japanese nationalists still tend to draw between "Japanese" and "foreigner," creating a place for themselves as "authentic" knowledge producers of Japan by asserting that they, as ethnic minorities, can also fit into the mold of "Japaneseness." This thesis begins with highlighting a longer history of domestic tourism in Japan, addressing gendered and ethnic constructions of Japanese ethno-national identity via tourism in vernacular print media. Afterwards, the thesis shifts towards discussing the vlog content of the four travel vloggers, highlighting how they, as vernacular content producers, utilize various means of knowledge production that reinforce banal Japanese nationalist sentiments to create places for themselves within Japan. From this analysis, this thesis contributes to a broader critique of area studies, and the study of Japanese media and ethnic and racial diversity.

Résumé

Les vlogs de voyage sont récemment devenus un type de communication de masse vernaculaire important à partir duquel les téléspectateurs peuvent s'engager en voyage virtuel, en raison de leur faible barrière de participation et de leur dimension audiovisuelle. Les vlogs de voyage sont également un moyen pour les vloggers de s'établir comme vernaculaires, citant les spécialistes des études de communication Mikah Lee et Younghan Cho, des « intermédiaires culturels transnationaux », traduisant la destination pour un public national et international. Le Japon est un pays que les vloggers de voyage couvrent souvent. Malgré la quantité de vidéos en ligne à propos du Japon comme destination de voyage, il y a eu peu d'érudition au sujet des vlogs de voyage au Japon. Cette thèse comble cette lacune en examinant les vlogs de voyage produits par quatre vloggers qui parlent en tant que minorités ethniques basées au Japon : Ōkawa Yūsuke, Taiki Beaufils, Loretta Scott et Paolo de Guzman. S'appuyant sur les critiques poststructuralistes des études régionales et les critiques du discours vernaculaire hybride, cette thèse soutient que ces quatre vloggers utilisent des pratiques hégémoniques de production de connaissances pour tenter de brouiller les frontières problématiques, genrées et ethniques que l'État et les nationalistes japonais ont encore tendance à tracer entre « Japonais » et « étranger », se créant une place en tant que producteurs de connaissances « authentiques » du Japon en affirmant qu'en tant que minorités ethniques, ils peuvent aussi s'intégrer dans le moule de la « japonité ». Cette thèse commence par souligner une histoire du tourisme intérieur au Japon, en abordant les constructions genrées et ethniques de l'identité ethno-nationale japonaise via le tourisme dans la presse écrite vernaculaire. Ensuite, la thèse s'oriente vers la discussion du contenu du vlog des quatre vloggers de voyage, soulignant comment, en tant que producteurs de contenu vernaculaire, ils utilisent divers moyens de production de connaissances qui renforcent les sentiments nationalistes japonais banals pour se créer des places au Japon. À partir de cette analyse, cette thèse contribue à une critique plus large des études régionales et à l'étude des médias japonais et de la diversité ethnique et raciale.

Introduction

On April 28, 2020, an independent media outlet called *The Smart Local* published a piece titled "10 Japan Travel Vloggers on YouTube To Follow So You Can Satiate Your Wanderlust for Free." Audrey Ng, the author of the article, lists the names of expat vloggers based in Japan, remarking that "[f]rom discovering an outdoor onsen in Ibaraki to salivating over pancakes drenched in egg yolk, Japan is merely a click away."[1] Throughout the article, the reader sees thumbnails of these travel vlogs, depicting delicious food and hidden places in Japan. Towards the end of the article, Ng states: "Watching these Japanese travel vlogs on YouTube is a surefire way to beef up your knowledge before making the trip itself," and even if physical travel is not an option, "you can satiate your wanderlust free-of-charge on YouTube, thanks to these Japanese travel vloggers."[2]

Such an article points to several key things: Japan as an object of knowledge, the role of the travel vlogger as a cultural ambassador who constructs and presents to viewers images of a purportedly "authentic," "unique" Japan, and more broadly, the centrality of travel vlogs as a new, vernacular means of knowledge production and dissemination about travel destinations. In the era of COVID-19, due to travel restrictions, travel vlogs—because of their audiovisual dimension as well as the seemingly more intimate relationship between the content creator and their audience—have facilitated a new, more "authentic" means of armchair traveling that radically differed from the travel blog, and older forms of travel writing. However, there is still much to be written about regarding the significance of travel vlogs as a vernacular genre that produces knowledge about travel destinations.[3] This thesis attempts to fill this gap by examining

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[1] Audrey Ng, "10 Japan Travel Vloggers on YouTube To Follow So You Can Satiate Your Wanderlust for Free," *The Smart Local*, April 28, 2020, https://thesmartlocal.com/japan/travel-vloggers-japan/.

[2] Ng, "10 Japan Travel Vloggers on YouTube To Follow So You Can Satiate Your Wanderlust for Free."

[3] While there has been little scholarship about travel vlogging and travel blogging about Japan, there is a rich body of scholarship addressing more "traditional" travel accounts in the form of travelogues, television, and photographs. *See* Christine M.E. Guth, *Longfellow's Tattoos: Tourism, Collecting, and Japan* (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 2004); Kate McDonald, *Placing Empire: Travel and Social Imagination in Imperial Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017); Kate McDonald, "War, Firsthand, at a Distance: Battlefield Tourism and Conflicts of Memory in the Multiethnic Japanese Empire." *Japan Review* 33 (2019): 57-85, https://nichibun.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=pages_view_main&active_action=repository_view_main_item_detail&item_id=7288&item_no=1&page_id=41&block_id=63; Tze M. Loo, "Paradise in a war zone: The U.S. Military and Tourism in Okinawa, 1945-1972," *Japan Review* 33 (2019): 173-193,

the work of four travel vloggers based in Japan: Ōkawa Yūsuke, Taiki Beaufils, Loretta Scott and Paolo de Guzman. Using and building upon poststructuralist theorizations of area studies, which are a series of disciplines in which the object of study is a particular "area" (for example, the "area" in Japan studies is Japan), as well as the critique of hybrid vernacular discourse, I will address the ways in which they use hegemonic practices of knowledge production to make places for themselves as ethnic minorities living in Japan and blur the boundaries between "foreigner" and "Japanese."

Travel, on the surface, seems to be a rather mundane activity, defined by purportedly innocuous, cosmopolitan pursuits of knowledge and discovery. In reality, it is riddled with ideological sentiments and defined by power dynamics among the traveler, the local and the state. Travel vlogs are no exception, as the travel vlogger makes specific choices on how to present the travel destination (the destination's "brand" is what scholar of tourism studies Dean Carson calls the "destination image"), and also, in producing and disseminating knowledge about the travel destination, they carve a place for themselves as what communication studies scholars Mikah Lee and Younghan Cho would call "transnational cultural intermediaries" (borrowing from sociologist Pierre Bordieu's term "cultural intermediaries") who work to "translate and interpret" the travel destination to their viewers.[4]

The social media platform YouTube has become a particularly key platform for the upload of travel vlogs. One of the main scholars who addresses YouTube as a platform is digital media studies scholar Jean Burgess. One key work of hers is the book *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*, published in 2009. According to Burgess and Joshua Green,

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https://nichibun.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=pages_view_main&active_action=repository_view_main_item_detail&item_id=7292&item_no=1&page_id=41&block_id=63; Ozawa Shizen, "Erasing Footsteps: On Some Differences between the First and Popular Editions of Isabella Bird's *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*," in *Asian Crossings: Travel Writing on China, Japan and Southeast Asia*, 87-98 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), https://muse.jhu.edu/book/5509; Mark Meli, "*World Journey of My Heart* and *Homestay in the World*: Travel Programming and Contemporary Japanese Culture," In *Asian Crossings: Travel Writing on China, Japan and Southeast Asia*, eds. by Steve Clark and Paul Smethurst, 193-208 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), https://muse.jhu.edu/book/5509.

[4] Dean Carson, "The 'blogosphere' as a market research tool for tourism destinations: A case study of Australia's Northern Territory," *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 14, no. 2 (2007): 111, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1356766707087518; Mikah Lee and Younghan Cho, "Banal Orientalism on YouTube: 'Eat Your Kimchi' as a New Cultural Intermediary and its Representation of South Korea," *Asian Communication Research* 18, no. 2 (2021): 69, https://doi.org/10.20879/acr.2021.18.2.69.

participatory culture is central to this platform.[5] It is important to note that vlogging is neither unique nor new to YouTube either.[6] However, social media studies scholar Chareen Snelson remarks that "YouTube, where many vloggers go to broadcast their opinions, ideas, and commentary, is ranked as the largest and most heavily visited video-sharing service."[7] In order to understand the vernacular appeal of travel vlogs, it is therefore necessary to pay attention to its reliance on YouTube as a participatory platform.

Looping back to Lee and Cho's point about "transnational cultural intermediaries," the vloggers whom Ng discuss act as transnational intermediaries for Japan. What they have in common is that they seem to depict a rosy image of Japan, branding it as a place with great food, scenic views, and seemingly untouched, "authentic," "hidden" places.

Such rosy destination images of Japan parallels the ways in which the Japanese state has instrumentalized tourism—referring to international inbound tourism as well as domestic tourism—to create an appealing brand image of the Japanese nation-state. In other words, the Japanese government's promotion of tourism is an example of their use of "soft power," referring to a country's attempts to, quoting American political scientist Joseph S. Nye, "get other countries to *want* what it wants" without using coercion.[8] To add a bit to Nye's definition of "soft power," it is also targeted towards domestic audiences in addition to other countries. Sociologist Iwabuchi Kōichi—one of the main scholars addressing the concept of Cool Japan and Japanese soft power—provides a detailed discussion about the significance of Japanese soft power in his 2015 article "Pop-culture diplomacy in Japan: soft power, nation branding and the question of 'international exchange.'" According to Iwabuchi, other examples of the Japanese government's use of soft power include the promotion of traditional Japanese culture (tea ceremonies could fall into this category), language education, exchange programs (which could also fall into the broader category of travel), and the export of TV shows, music, manga and

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[5] Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 6.

[6] Burgess and Green, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*, 53.

[7] Chareen Snelson, "Vlogging about school on YouTube: An exploratory study." *new media & society* 17, no. 3 (2013): 322.

[8] Joseph S. Nye Jr., "Soft Power," *Foreign Policy*, no. 80 (1990): 166, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1148580?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

anime.[9] That said, however, as I will show in this thesis, the promotion of tourism remains one of the key operations of Japan's soft power today. We see this, for example, in the Japanese government's promotion of the 2020 Go To Travel Campaign, which was a campaign that promoted domestic tourism in Japan due to the postponement of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and the sharp decline in international tourism as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.[10]

The deployment of soft power by the Japanese state aims to soothe anti-Japan sentiments, given Japan's history of militarism, colonialism and imperialism, and to promote, quoting sociologist Iwabuchi, "the international understanding of Japan through cultural exchange."[11]

Tourism itself is tied to a longer history of Japanese militarism, imperialism and colonialism. On the domestic level, we can look to the history of *shūgaku ryōko* (school excursions, as historian Soyama Takeshi calls them). These excursions "are educational trips involving overnight stays, organized by elementary and secondary educational institutions in Japan to take students on study and similar tours."[12] They have their origins in the 1880s, and normal schools—referring to teacher training schools—established these tours.[13] Naturalistic observation, school tours, and military training were all key elements of these excursions during the late 19th century when they first emerged.[14] The military training aspect, however, was eventually separated from these school excursions, and *shūgaku ryōko* became more focused on "educational tours of sites connected with the legacies of Japanese modernization and cultural heritage in metropolitan areas, such as Tokyo and Kansai."[15] Despite this shift, other elements of militarism were still quite prevalent in these tours, evident in the fact that common destinations included "military schools, troop camps and naval ports."[16] In his analysis, Soyama includes a detailed itinerary of an 1890 school excursion to Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto involving participants

[9] Iwabuchi Kōichi, "Pop-culture diplomacy in Japan: soft power, nation branding and the question of 'international cultural exchange,'" *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 21, no. 4 (2015): 420, 424, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10286632.2015.1042469.

[10] Rupakjyoti Borah, "Why Did Japan Suspend the 'Go To Travel' Campaign?" *The Diplomat*, December 22, 2020, https://thediplomat.com/2020/12/why-did-japan-suspend-the-go-to-travel-campaign/.

[11] Iwabuchi, "Pop-culture diplomacy in Japan,'" 420.

[12] Soyama Takeshi, "School Excursions and Militarism: Continuities in Touristic *Shūgaku Ryokō* from the Meiji Period to the Postwar," *Japan Review* 33 (2019): 29, https://nichibun.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=pages_view_main&active_action=repository_view_main_item_detail&item_id=7287&item_no=1&page_id=41&block_id=63.

[13] Soyama, "School Excursions and Militarism," 30.

[14] Soyama, "School Excursions and Militarism," 30.

[15] Soyama, "School Excursions and Militarism," 30-31.

[16] Soyama, "School Excursions and Militarism," 31.

from Tottori Prefectural Ordinary Normal School.[17] The students from this school visited "military-related educational institutions" such as the Imperial Japanese Army Tokyo Arsenal, the Naval War College and the Imperial Japanese Army Academy.[18] These institutions symbolized, first and foremost, modernization, contributing to discourses on *fukoku kyōhei* (rich country, strong army), and travel to such institutions reinforced the relationship between militarism and tourism.[19]

Tourism was not only significant for the modernization and militarization of the homefront, but was also, according to historian Kate McDonald, key to the maintenance of the Japanese Empire.[20] In her 2017 work *Placing Empire: Travel and the Social Imagination in Imperial Japan*, McDonald examines transcolonial archives, and addresses the significance of travelogues by Japanese tourists traveling to the colonies of the Japanese empires. According to McDonald, "Japanese subjects did not seem to care about empire," or, at least, "[t]hey did not care enough, anyway," "[a]nd when they did, they sometimes cared in the wrong way," specifically by pointing out the illegitimacy of the Japanese Empire's colonization of territory.[21] The aftermath of the 1905 Russo-Japanese War—a key conflict that symbolized Japan's full emergence as a military and imperial power on the world stage—speaks to Japanese imperial subjects' indifference towards and even criticism of the empire.[22] The war had resulted in the loss "of some eighty thousand (largely conscripted) Japanese lives," and despite celebratory expressions of Japan's victory in the war, "jingoistic press statements about the expedition contained elements of performance and coercion."[23]

In addition, individuals in the urban lower classes faced the brunt of the war effort, as they experienced massive tax increases during the war to support the war effort, and many, such as poet Yosano Akiko, had lost loved ones who were conscripted to fight in the war.[24] McDonald observes that "[t]he wartime debate over the legitimacy of the war coalesced around the question

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[17] Soyama, "School Excursions and Militarism," 39-40.
[18] Soyama, "School Excursions and Militarism," 39.
[19] Soyama, "School Excursions and Militarism," 31, 41.
[20] Kate McDonald, *Placing Empire: Travel and Social Imagination in Imperial Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 7.
[21] McDonald, *Placing Empire*, 27.
[22] McDonald, *Placing Empire*, 28.
[23] McDonald, *Placing Empire*, 28.
[24] McDonald, *Placing Empire*, 29.

of who the *kokumin*, 'national people,' were and what their best interests would be."[25] Furthermore, the Russo-Japanese War had also highlighted "tensions in the modern nation-state ideal itself," specifically concerning the morality of territorial expansion.[26]

Due to civilians' critiques of and indifference towards empire, colonial boosters in Korea and Manchuria as well as the central government became deeply concerned about "generating affective ties to these new territories of the state, and, through this process, producing 'good' national subjects."[27] Travel was one of their key efforts to construct said "affective ties" and produce so-called "'good' national subjects."[28] One main government initiative included the creation of two travel expeditions, which took place in July of 1906; "two ships departed Japan for Manchuria and Korea," with one ship being a 400 person "Manchuria Korea Travel Ship," and the other ship "carrying nearly six hundred students and teachers sponsored by the Ministry of Education and the army."[29] These two travel expeditions are significant in the sense that they symbolized "the birth of 'observational travel' *(shisatsu ryokō)* as a core component of the government's larger project of producing good national subjects," and also as a significant means of "position[ing] [the territory of the Japanese Empire] within a future global order of territorial nation-states."[30] We could see that the state's promotion of observational travel in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War is an example of soft power, as the state attempted to get the people to conform to their vision of empire and "good national subjects" without using coercion, but rather, using the typically leisurely activity of traveling to foster an affective connection to empire.

Overall, the purpose for travel was not simply for pleasure, but it was also for observing the natural land, as well as the purportedly "exotic" cultures of the colonized nations.[31] It gave Japanese travelers the power to observe the colonized Other, and assert their dominant positionality, whether directly or indirectly.

Imperial tourism continued throughout the first half of the 20th century, with the Japan Tourist Bureau (JTB)—the official tourist organization of the Japanese government—working

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[25] McDonald, *Placing Empire*, 29.
[26] McDonald, *Placing Empire*, 30.
[27] McDonald, *Placing Empire*, 31.
[28] McDonald, *Placing Empire*, 31.
[29] McDonald, *Placing Empire*, 31.
[30] McDonald, *Placing Empire*, 31.
[31] McDonald, *Placing Empire*, 32.

with "the empire's major transportation institutions" to offer new services to domestic travelers, opening offices throughout the empire, specifically in Osaka, Kyoto, Tokyo, Kōbe, Yokohama, Pusan, Taihoku, Keijō, Dairen and Hōten.[32] The JTB had also produced itineraries that "guided travelers through their observations of colonized lands with little emphasis on encounters with colonized cultures or peoples," emphasizing "sites that signified the success of the Governments General and the South Manchuria Railway Company at placing colonized lands within the space of civilization and the space of the nation" in an attempt to foster a stronger affective connection to the Japanese Empire.[33] Furthermore, in addition to JTB-produced itineraries and guidebooks, there were also travelogues produced by travelers. One of the main themes stressed by these travel accounts is Japanese travelers' ease of crossing borders within the empire, which contrasted with the experiences of colonized subjects, who could not cross such borders as easily (for example, while Japanese travelers such as Ōgi Zenzō wrote about the smoothness of border crossing in colonial Taiwan, indigenous peoples of Taiwan could not leave "the special administrative zone" without permission from the police).[34] Such smooth crossings, again, contributed to a unified image of the Japanese Empire, and thus attempted to strengthen Japanese people's affective ties to the empire.

The practice of imperial tourism to the colonies ended with the defeat of Japan in 1945. Despite this significant rupture, however, the state's heavy investment into tourism continued in the immediate post-WWII years up to today. McDonald addresses tourism in the immediate post-WWII era at the end of *Placing Empire*, noting that JTB worked with American Occupation authorities (Japan was under a period of American Occupation from 1945 to 1952) to reintroduce Japan as a tourist destination, particularly to international tourists, constructing a new brand image that emphasized a "peaceful Japan," thus erasing the country's colonial legacies.[35]

Given the state's efforts to erase Japan's colonial legacies, it is no surprise that Iwabuchi himself is skeptical about Japan's use of soft power. Specifically, he argues that the state's deployment of the "Cool Japan" brand image is a rather insincere gesture, as it does not effectively engage with dialogue across borders, especially concerning the legacies of Japanese

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[32] McDonald, *Placing Empire*, 57.
[33] McDonald, *Placing Empire*, 58.
[34] McDonald, *Placing Empire*, 97.
[35] McDonald, *Placing Empire*, 169-171.

colonialism, and also overlooks the presence of cultural diversity within the country.[36] To provide some context, Japan is home to a significant number of individuals who are not ethnically or fully ethnically Japanese, including but not limited to the Indigenous Ainu, Koreans, Filipinos, Black people, as well as multiethnic and multiracial Japanese.[37] Furthermore, there are also the *burakumin*, referring a group of individuals who are ethnically Japanese, but have faced and continue to face discrimination due to the work that they took part in during the Edo period as executioners, butchers, etc.

Despite the fact that Japan was never ethnically homogeneous, and the significant and increasing presence of individuals who are not ethnically Japanese in Japan, the state and Japanese nationalists more broadly continue to perpetuate the myth of ethnic homogeneity, making claims highlighting Japanese exceptionalism. The COVID-19 pandemic has sparked a heightened amount of xenophobia and racism, and has simultaneously also exacerbated jingoistic, nationalist sentiments. For example, LDP politician Aso Tarō has "attribut[ed] Japan's relatively lower COVID-19 mortality rate to 'the superiority of its people,'" specifically meaning those who are fully ethnically Japanese, which implicitly assumes Japan as an ethnically homogeneous nation, and indicates a violent erasure of individuals who are not ethnically Japanese or fully ethnically Japanese.[38] Also, the Japanese government had instituted a xenophobic travel ban for new foreigner arrivals while at the same time promoting the Go To Travel Campaign, a domestic tourism campaign for Japanese and foreign residents already living in Japan.[39] Foreign residents of Japan had taken to social media to condemn the travel bans. In light of this xenophobia as well as the state's simultaneous, continued assertion of Japan's uniqueness and ethnic homogeneity, it is important to further consider the ways in which ethnic

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[36] Iwabuchi, "Pop-culture Diplomacy in Japan," 419-420.

[37] Since I use the terms "multiracial" and "multiethnic" here, it would be important to distinguish between race and ethnicity. I follow Törgren's understanding of the distinction between race and ethnicity, in which she observes that "race" is a socially constructed notion based on visible phenotypical differences (this is evident in the use of the terms "white" and "Black" for example). "Ethnicity" is also socially constructed, and it is "an identification of cultural origin and heritage independent of whether the individuals engage in the cultural practices of that culture." *See* Sayaka Osanami Törngren, "Ethnic Options, Covering and Passing: Multiracial and Multiethnic Identities in Japan," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 46 (2018): 753.

[38] "Aso: low virus death rate thanks to Japanese superiority," *The Asahi Shimbun*, June 5, 2020, https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13432875.

[39] Isabel Reynolds, "Xenophobia Spills Into Japan's Covid-Era Debate on Immigration," *Bloomberg Politics + Equality*, December 26, 2021, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-12-26/xenophobia-spills-into-japan-s-covid-era-debate-on-immigration.

minorities in Japan, whether referring to those born and raised in Japan or came to Japan as adults, carve places for themselves in the country.

As hinted at before, the Japanese state also preaches the myth of ethnic homogeneity through their deployment of soft power. As Iwabuchi asserts in his own work, globalization does not necessarily entail the weakening of national borders.[40] However, in addition to these problematic ties between the myth of ethnic homogeneity and Japanese soft power, we also see that ethnic minorities in Japan, such as the ones whom Ng has listed in her article about travel vloggers based in Japan, have also adopted hegemonic, nationalistic narratives about the country, highlighting its desirability as a travel destination, and as a place to live, while also, for the most part at least, overlooking systemic issues of racism and other forms of discrimination in the country.

How may we make sense of such appropriations of hegemonic narratives by ethnic minorities of Japan? As I mentioned previously, I examine videos by four travel vloggers in the work that follows: Ōkawa Yūsuke, Taiki Beaufils, Loretta Scott and Paolo de Guzman, who all reinforce hegemonic narratives about an "authentic" Japan and Japanese uniqueness, perpetuating banal Japanese nationalist sentiments. While their perpetuation of these narratives can certainly be problematic and harmful, I also suggest that it is important to look beyond that and produce a more generative argument. Utilizing and building upon communication studies scholars Guo Lei and Lorin Lee's critique of hybrid YouTube-based vernacular discourse as well as poststructuralist critiques of area studies, I suggest that these four vloggers use hegemonic practices of knowledge production in an attempt to blur the problematic gendered and ethnic boundaries the state and Japanese nationalists still tend to draw between "Japanese" and "foreigner," creating a place for themselves as "authentic" knowledge producers of Japan by asserting that they, as ethnic minorities, can also fit into the mold of "Japaneseness."[41] I argue

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[40] Iwabuchi Kōichi, "Globalization, Digitalization, and Renationalization: Some Reflections from Japanese Cases," *Situations* 12, no. 1 (2019): 1.

[41] To provide some context, area studies refers to a series of disciplines in which the object of study is a particular "area" (for example, in the case of Japan studies, Japan is designated as an "area" to be studied and produce knowledge about). It has its roots in WWII era and Cold War era knowledge production, in which there was an emphasis on "knowing the enemy," and is based on specific power dynamics between a "native informant" (the known) and the non-native area studies scholar (the knower). There is much emphasis on the fetishization of native knowledge, and also becoming the "native" through knowledge of language and customs. The literature on travel vlogs often places them into conversation with Orientalism, but I would argue that we should also bring travel vlogs into conversation with the structures of knowledge production defining area studies, as vloggers incorporate hegemonic narratives that go beyond the scope of Orientalism.

that Ōkawa and Beaufils, who speak as ethnic minorities who were also born and raised in Japan, use hegemonic techniques of visualism—specifically in the form of drone footage—in an attempt to make masculinist claims to nationalistic symbols such as Mount Fuji and cherry blossoms, highlighting their broader claims to Japan as their home, and thus diversifying existing theorizations of the so-called "native informant." On the other hand, in contrast to Ōkawa and Beaufils, Scott and de Guzman speak as individuals who came to Japan as adults, and live there as long-term expats. They thus had to put in the work of learning the language and the customs. I thus argue that they create places for themselves as "authentic" knowledge producers through their reliance on local, "native" knowledge, their fluency in the language—which could encompass spoken language as well as body language—, and their participation in cultural events, specifically the donning of traditional attire, adding new insights to the scholarship on the gendering of Black residents of Japan, and Filipino residents of Japan. In my discussion of their work, I will incorporate and build upon poststructrualist critiques of the mechanisms by which non-native area studies scholars gather and produce knowledge about the "area." Such theorizations highlight non-native area studies scholars' fetishization of so-called "native" knowledge, as well as learning the language and culture of the "area." In incorporating these theorizations, I intend to shed light on the ways in which such an emphasis on "native" knowledge and acquiring knowledge about the "area" also goes beyond the realm of academia and extends to more vernacular content such as the travel vlog.

From my analysis, I also hope to contribute to the growing body of English language scholarship that addresses multiculturalism in Japan. Since the 2000s, there has been burgeoning scholarship addressing questions of ethnic and racial diversity within Japan, and establishing the fact that Japan has never been nor ever will be ethnically or racially homogeneous. As I had mentioned, there are non-Japanese ethnic groups who have lived in Japan for years, including the Zainichi Koreans, indigenous Ainu (whose land was stolen by the Japanese), and Ryūkyūans. In addition to that, since around 1975, there has been a significant influx of foreign residents (specifically, according to the Ministry of Justice, the number of foreign residents residing in Japan tripled).[42]

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[42] Sayaka Osanami Törngren and Yuna Satō, "Beyond being either-or: identification of multiracial and multiethnic Japanese," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2021): 748, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1654155.

The earlier scholarship—including the work of historian Tessa Morris-Suzuki (2003), Iwabuchi (2005), and anthropologist Nelson Graburn and archaeologist John Ertl (2008)—has effectively exposed the Japanese government and mass media's inability to fully address questions of ethnic and racial diversity in Japan. For example, Morris-Suzuki argues in her essay "Immigration and citizenship in contemporary Japan" that while there has been some work done towards addressing ethnic and racial diversity in Japan, such measures are rather limited, and that there are still continuities with the so-called "1899 System," referring to a system implemented in the Meiji period (1868-1912), which "defined Japanese citizenship as being based on *Jus Sanguinis*—the principle by which nationality is inherited, rather than being determined by the territory where an individual is born."[43] In the case of Japan, until 1985, this principle was primarily based on paternal lineage.[44] For example, a child with a Japanese father and a Chinese mother would be able to inherit Japanese nationality, while a child with a Chinese father and Japanese mother would not be able to inherit Japanese nationality unless the child was illegitimate, and a specific set of other circumstances applied.[45] The Meiji government's migration and citizenship policies "aimed to prevent a feared influx of unskilled labor, particularly from China, and to restrict access to Japanese nationality for those whose loyalty to the state might be seen as in any way 'suspect.'"[46]

We thus see here that the state has conflated ethnic identity with nationality and citizenship. Also, the 1899 system's emphasis on paternal lineage speaks to the broader issue of the state perpetuating patriarchal notions of "Japaneseness." As I mentioned, Morris-Suzuki states that such a system had remained in place, and despite some of the steps the government has taken, such as abolishing compulsory fingerprinting for permanent residents in 1992, there are still issues with structural discrimination, especially regarding employment and voting rights.[47] Iwabuchi's 2005 article "Multinationalizing the multicultural: The Commodification of 'Ordinary Foreign Residents' in a Japanese Talk Show" addresses the ways in which mass media commodifies so-called "ordinary foreigners, and concluding that there is still the need "to create

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[43] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, "Immigration and citizenship in Japan," in *Japan—Change and Continuity*, eds. Javed Maswood, Jeffrey Graham, and Hideaki Miyajima (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 165.
[44] Morris-Suzuki, "Immigration and citizenship in Japan," 166.
[45] Morris-Suzuki, "Immigration and citizenship in Japan," 177. Example is my own.
[46] Morris-Suzuki, "Immigration and citizenship in Japan," 165.
[47] Morris-Suzuki, "Immigration and citizenship in Japan," 167.

a more egalitarian and democratic public media space."[48] Graburn and Ertl also remark that "it would be a disservice to praise Japan as a model multicultural nation, as many forms of discrimination and structural inequalities continue to persist."[49]

In contrast to Morris-Suzuki, however, Iwabuchi (2005), Graburn and Ertl (2008), along with other scholars such as ethnic studies scholar Yamanaka Keiko (2008), cultural anthropologist Yamashita Shinji (2008), anthropologist Mitzi Uehara Carter and Aina Hunter (2008), sociologist Youngmi Lim (2009), sociologist Asia Bento (2020), and social anthropologist Yoko Demelius (2021) have approached issues of ethnic and racial diversity in Japan at the vernacular level.[50] In doing so, they effectively go beyond the ways in which larger entities such as the state respond to racial and ethnic diversity, and shed new light on multiculturalism on the everyday level.

Iwabuchi examines the depiction of foreign residents in the TV series *Kokoga hen dayo nihonjin* (which he translates to *This is So Bizarre, You Japanese*).[51] The show itself emphasizes

[48] Iwabuchi Kōichi, "Multinationalizing the multicultural: The commodification of 'ordinary foreign residents' in a Japanese TV talk show," *Japanese Studies* 25, no. 2 (2005): 117, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10371390500225987.

[49] Nelson Graburn and John Ertl, "Introduction: Internal Boundaries and Models of Multiculturalism in Contemporary Japan," in *Multiculturalism in the New Japan: Crossing the Boundaries Within*, eds. Nelson Graburn, John Ertl and R. Kenji Tierney (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 3.

[50] Iwabuchi, "Multinationalizing the multicultural"; Nelson Graburn and John Ertl, "Introduction: Internal Boundaries and Models of Multiculturalism in Contemporary Japan," in *Multiculturalism in the New Japan: Crossing the Boundaries Within*, eds. Nelson Graburn, John Ertl and R. Kenji Tierney (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 1-31; Keiko Yamanaka, "Transnational Community Activities of Nepali Visa-Overstayers in Japan: Governance and Transnationalism from Below," in *Multiculturalism in the New Japan: Crossing the Boundaries Within*, eds. Nelson Graburn, John Ertl and R. Kenji Tierney (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 151-170; Shinji Yamashita, "Transnational Migration of Women: Changing Boundaries of Contemporary Japan," in *Multiculturalism in the New Japan: Crossing the Boundaries Within*, eds. Nelson Graburn, John Ertl and R. Kenji Tierney (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 101-116; Mitzi U. Carter and Aina Hunter, "A Critical Review of Academic Perspectives on Blackness in Japan," in *Multiculturalism in the New Japan: Crossing the Boundaries Within*, eds. Nelson Graburn, John Ertl and R. Kenji Tierney (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 188-198; Youngmi Lim, "Reinventing Korean Roots and Zainichi Routes: The Invisible Diaspora among Naturalized Japanese of Korean Descent," in *Diaspora without Homeland: Being Korean in Japan*, eds. Sonia Ryang and John Lie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 81-106; Asia Bento, "How African American women experience hypervisibility in Japan and South Korea," *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 26, no. 4 (2020): 550-569, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13504630.2020.1783224; Yoko Demelius, "Thinking through Community Spirit: Zainichi Koreans in Post-Korean Wave Japanese Communities," *Japanese Studies* 41, no. 1 (2021): 93-112, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10371397.2021.1893673.

[51] Iwabuchi, "Multinationalizing the multicultural," 104.

the experiences of purportedly "ordinary" foreigners, and he adopts an ethnographic approach, interviewing the people who appeared on the show. Overall, Iwabuchi observes that the participants often highlight positive aspects of their home country. For example, the Chinese participant whom he interviewed said that while he acknowledges there are issues in China as well, he believes "[they] do not have to show such bad aspects of China on Japanese TV."[52] Graburn and Ertl co-edited the 2008 volume *Multiculturalism in the New Japan*, which, overall, seeks to shed new light on the centrality of the everyday when considering questions of racial and ethnic diversity in Japan. This volume also features the work of Yamanaka, Yamashita, and Carter and Hunter, whom I had mentioned earlier. Focusing on the everyday (and, as I argue later, the "vernacular" form of cultural production such as vlogging) is particularly effective since it provides a much more diverse view of the ways in which ethnic and racial minorities living in Japan negotiate with their own identities, straying away from essentialist notions of what defines ethnic minorities' experiences.

The focus on the everyday experiences of ethnic and racial minorities in Japan continues to be a central focus in more recent scholarship. We see this in the essays from the 2016 edited volume *Multiculturalism in East Asia: A Transnational Exploration of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan*, edited by Iwabuchi, cultural anthropologist Hyun Mee Kim, and sociologist Hsiao-Chuan Hsia. For example, Iwabuchi contributed a chapter titled "Multicultural Co-living (*tabunka kyōsei*) in Japan," in which he highlights the centrality of everyday multiculturalism due to the government's lack of engagement with ethnic and racial diversity.[53] He specifically focuses on the interactions between Japanese and non-Japanese residents in localities, arguing for the potential, though limited, of such everyday interactions.[54] In another essay from *Multiculturalism in East Asia*, scholar Kohei Kawabata addresses the lived experiences of Korean residents of Japan, highlighting the increased diversification of Zainichi Korean identities, and addresses how the phenomenon of the Korean Wave brought about a sense of coevalness between Koreans and Japanese.[55] More recently, Demelius examines the emergence

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[52] Iwabuchi, "Multinationalizing the multicultural," 115.

[53] Iwabuchi Kōichi, "Multicultural Co-living (*tabunka kyosei*) in Japan: Localized Engagement without Multiculturalism," in *Multiculturalism in East Asia: A Transnational Exploration of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan*, 57.

[54] Iwabuchi, "Multicultural Co-living (*tabunka kyosei*) in Japan," 61.

[55] Kawabata Kohei, "Living in Love and Hate: Transforming Representations and Identities of Zainichi Koreans in Contemporary Japan," in *Multiculturalism in East Asian: A*

of a so-called "community spirit" in the context of multigenerational Korean residents' integration into Japanese society after the Korean Wave.[56]

While all of these scholars provide incredibly valuable insight regarding everyday practices of multiculturalism, there is very limited scholarship that addresses how ethnic minorities in Japan create places for themselves in online media environments. Social media platforms that support and maintain such online media environments, I argue, have become a key place for questions of race, ethnicity and gender. Iwabuchi himself noted that digital media has played a central role in renationalization.[57] Bento's 2020 article, "How African American women experience hypervisibility in Japan and South Korea," similarly examines blogs by African American women living in Japan and South Korea in the short term, and highlights how they negotiate with their own hypervisibility as Black women living in these two countries (I will elaborate on this article when I discuss the work of Loretta Scott in chapter 3 of this thesis). However, her focus is exclusively on textual blogs. While this format is still important, I suggest that examining vlogs sheds new light on the ways in which ethnic and racial minorities in Japan attempt to cultivate an "authentic" image of themselves because, as I mentioned before, vlogs have an audiovisual dimension to them, which provides a new layer of realism. Specifically, in contrast to textual blogs, the new format of vlogs allows its producers to imbue a sense of authenticity and realism associated with certain audiovisual conventions, such as drone shots, on-location shooting and voice-over narration.

Another limitation to the existing scholarship on ethnic and racial diversity in Japan is the fact that there seems to be little focus on the ways in which some ethnic and racial minorities are also complicit in perpetuating Japanese nationalist sentiments. The existing scholarship tends to either focus on ethnic minorities' reclamation of their own native cultures (for example, Demelius and Kawabata address how Korean residents of Japan came to develop an interest in Korea through popular culture, and have also reclaimed their Korean ethnic identity through activities such as making kimchi), or the everyday discrimination that they face at the hands of Japanese residents (of course, I do not intend to deny that these are key topics to cover).

Transnational Exploration of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, eds. Kōichi Iwabuchi, Hyun Mee Kim, and Hsiao-Chuan Hsia, 226.

[56] Yoko Demelius, "Thinking through Community Spirit: Zainichi Koreans in Post-Korean Wave Japanese Communities," *Japanese Studies* 41, no. 1 (2021): 93, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10371397.2021.1893673.

[57] Iwabuchi, "Globalization, Digitalization, and Renationalization," 7.

It would be misleading to say that there is no scholarship at all about how ethnic and racial minorities perpetuate Japanese nationalistic sentiments, as scholars such as Chris Burgess (2008) and sociologist John Lie (2009) have certainly discussed this topic. Lie is a leading scholar who addresses the experiences of Korean residents of Japan, and in his conclusion to the 2009 edited volume *Diaspora Without Homeland: Being Korean in Japan*, he emphasizes the changing position of Korean-Japanese in Japanese society, and highlights the importance of recognizing the diversity in perspectives for these Korean residents of Japan.[58] He brings up the example of two Zainichi Korean intellectuals Kang Sang-jung and Tei Taikin, observing that while Kang emphasized the importance of ethnic Korean identity and being part of the Korean diaspora in Japan, Tei perpetuates Japanese nationalist sentiments, calling for Korean residents of Japan to assimilate and naturalize and also "castigat[ing] the victim mentality that harps endless on the enforced migration of Koreans to Japan and the ensuing lives of discrimination and oppression."[59] In mentioning Tei's perspective, Lie sheds new light on the diversity of Korean residents of Japan.

However, while it is certainly important to discuss the significance of individuals such as Tei, his focus on Tei is also limiting, as Tei's outlook is an example of a very explicit expression of Japanese nationalism and jingoism. In addition to these explicit, loud expressions of Japanese nationalism, I argue that it is also important to consider the ways in which racial and ethnic minorities perpetuate more "banal"—as political scientist Michael Billig would call it—forms of nationalism, referring to a continual reminder of nationhood that goes beyond jingoistic, fringe expressions of nationalism such as the displaying of flags, and other national symbols.[60] Burgess addresses this in his essay on female marriage migrants living in Yamagata Prefecture, whom he argues effectively challenge the categories between "Japanese" and "foreigner" through their simultaneous assertion of the cultures from their home countries, and their integration into Japanese society through their knowledge of the Japanese language and the customs (for example, the women whom Burgess interviewed mention that they "have great fun and laughter impersonating Japanese customs such as holding the rice bowl up to the mouth, loudly slurping

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[58] John Lie, "The End of the Road?: The Post-Zainichi Generation," in *Diaspora without Homeland: Being Korean in Japan*, eds. Sonia Ryang and John Lie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 168-170.

[59] Lie, "The End of the Road?," 172-175.

[60] Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: SAGE Publications, 2010).

noodles, or bowing on the telephone, admitting that they too do these things"), which, even though Burgess himself does not use such a term, could be seen as forms of banal nationalism.[61] In more recent scholarship, there is social anthropologist Rebecca Lynn Carlson's PhD dissertation, titled "'More Japanese than Japanese': Subjectivation in the Age of Brand Nationalism and the Internet" (2018). In her dissertation, Carlson examines the ways in which American *otaku*—*otaku* meaning people who are deeply interested in anime, manga, and other forms of Japanese popular culture—reinforce the dichotomy of "Japanese" and "foreigner," examining various forms of mass media such as blogs, vlogs and advertisements, as well as her personal interviews with them, and arguing for the role of modern technologies in exacerbating "national boundary maintenance."[62]

What is limiting about Burgess' and Carlson's discussions is that they do not go as in depth about the relationship between adopting these markers of banal nationalism and Japanese ethnic "authenticity," and specific ethnic positionalities, which are tied to longer, diverse histories of marginalization, imperialism and colonialism, primarily focusing on the broader dynamic of "foreigner" and "Japanese." Burgess does address these women's specific ethnic positionalities when discussing their desire to educate Japanese locals about their respective cultures. For example, he mentions that one of his interviewees, a Korean woman named Chin-ja, expressed her enthusiasm about educating young children to know more about Korea and the longer history of the Japanese colonization of Korea.[63] However, when addressing how these women have assimilated into Japanese society and adopted Japanese customs, there is not much mention about how their adoption of Japanese customs specifically relates to their ethnic identities, and the histories tied to those identities. In contrast to Burgess, Carlson goes into a bit more detail about the specific racialized and ethnic positionalities of the *otaku* on whom she focuses, discussing African Americans' experiences living in Japan, as well as briefly addressing the struggles that Asian Americans face.[64] However, regarding Carlson's discussion of African American experiences, there could be more discussion about the gendered ways in which African

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[61] Chris Burgess, "(Re)-Constructing Boundaries: International Marriage Migrants in Yamagata as Agents of Multiculturalism," in *Multiculturalism in the New Japan: Crossing the Boundaries Within*, eds. Nelson Graburn, John Ertl, and R. Kenji Tierney (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 69, 73-75.
[62] Rebecca L. Carlson, "'More Japanese than Japanese': Subjectivation in the Age of Brand Nationalism and the Internet" (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2018), iv.
[63] Burgess, "(Re)-Constructing Boundaries," 70.
[64] Carlson, "'More Japanese than Japanese,'" 199-200, 232.

American residents of Japan negotiate with their identities. Carlson mentions the misogynoiristic discrimination that an interviewee for a YouTube series called *Black in Japan* faced, with the interviewee recounting that she would get catcalled by men and they would call her Beyonce or Whitney Houston even though she resembled neither of these two women.[65] Such an experience raises key questions about the positionalities of Black women in Japan, and the centrality of gender in the discrimination they experience, and also in the mechanisms by which they carve places for themselves in Japan. Also, Carlson does not say much about the specific ethnic positionalities of the Asian Americans whom she discusses, which can inadvertently contribute to the overgeneralization of the mechanisms by which ethnic and racial minorities assimilate into Japanese society.

My analysis of the four travel vloggers reinforces the central role of ethnic and racial minorities in blurring the categories between "foreigner" and "Japanese," while also building on the scholarship by providing a more in depth, context-specific discussion—without reinforcing essentialist notions of what constitutes ethnic and racial minorities' experiences—of how exactly racial and ethnic minorities utilize markers of so-called Japanese ethnic "authenticity" to blur these constructed categories. For example, Ōkawa's incorporation of nationalistic symbols such as Mount Fuji and cherry blossoms is connected to a longer history of Japan's colonization of the Korean peninsula as well as the continued Othering of Koreans in Japan. Beaufils' depictions of cherry blossoms speaks to his ambiguous position as a multiethnic and multiracial Japanese living in Japan. Scott's demonstration of her fluency in Japanese language and customs relates to a broader attempt to combat what Black queer feminist scholar Moya Bailey would call "misogynoir" in Japan. Lastly, de Guzman's knowledge of Japanese language and customs and simultaneous assertion of masculinity sheds new light on the experiences of Filipino residents of Japan specifically, as the state has often worked to feminize Filipino migrants, and the existing scholarship has often focused on the experiences of Filipina migrants. As mentioned previously, it would be too simplistic to argue that we should simply dismiss the work of these four vloggers as jingoistic or racist, and highlight a more generative aspect to their content. Rather, I emphasize that we need to look carefully at the complex dynamics of these vloggers' ethnic and gendered positionalities and their historical contexts. In doing so, we can analyze the potentials and limits of the vlog as a vernacular form of cultural production.

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[65] Carlson, "'More Japanese than Japanese,'" 199-200.

How may we theorize these four vloggers' perpetuation of banal—meaning normalized, non-sensational, and quotidian, but not necessarily innocuous—nationalistic sentiments? I suggested earlier in the introduction that we can utilize and build upon theorizations of the critique of "hybrid vernacular discourse." I will further elaborate on the critique of hybrid vernacular discourse later on in the thesis when I start discussing the vloggers' content in Chapter 2, but just to provide a brief summary of this approach, it emphasizes the importance of looking at vernacular —and banal and based on lived experiences, I might add—discourses produced by groups who have historically experienced marginalization with a critical eye. The concept of critiquing vernacular discourse originates from communication studies scholars Kent Ono and John M. Sloop's 1995 article "The critique of vernacular discourse," in which they argue that there has been much critique about the discourse of the powerful, but not much on critiquing discourses produced by the oppressed. They assert that it is not enough to simply recover the discourses of the oppressed, but we must also critically examine such discourses, and that such discourses are not necessarily liberatory.[66] Ono and Sloop specifically focus on the ways in which Japanese Americans perpetuate hegemonic narratives about gender and race in the Japanese American run newspaper *The Pacific Citizen*.[67]

There are two layers to their theorization of vernacular discourse: firstly, the vernacular nature of *The Pacific Citizen* as a newspaper, and the minoritarian voices of Japanese Americans. At the same time, Ono and Sloop acknowledge that a danger to critiquing vernacular discourse is that it may reinforce the misconception that marginal discourses only function in relation to the hegemonic, when, in reality, "[v]ernacular discourses, even when primarily hegemonic, […] still emerge with interests of the vernacular community in mind."[68] This sentiment is what I hope to reinforce in my analysis of content by Ōkawa, Beaufils, Scott and de Guzman. The discourses they produce are not simply functioning in relation to hegemonic notions of Japanese nationalism, but rather, they also have their respective vernacular communities in mind.

It would be too limiting to use Ono and Sloop's theorization of the critique of vernacular discourse as my primary framework, however, as their analysis is limited to print media, and my analysis deals with the mass medium of online video, which entails different power dynamics.

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[66] Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, "The critique of vernacular discourse," *Communications Monographs* 62, no. 1 (1995): 21, 25, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03637759509376346.
[67] Ono and Sloop, "The critique of vernacular discourse," 19.
[68] Ono and Sloop, "The critique of vernacular discourse," 26, 40-41.

More recently, communication studies scholars Lei Guo and Lorin Lee have expanded on Ono and Sloop's theorizations of the critique of vernacular discourse to account for the medium specificity of online video, highlighting the more intimate nature of online video, and the role of YouTube as a social media platform in shaping the narrative. They specifically examine the work of two famous Asian American YouTubers Kevin Wu and Ryan Higa, and discuss their work through the lens of hybrid content, hybrid agency and hybrid subjectivity. I incorporate and build upon their framework into my analysis of vlogs by Ōkawa, Beaufils, Scott and de Guzman.

In order to develop my analysis of the vernacular and hybrid aspects of these travel vlogs in steps, this thesis is divided into three chapters. In Chapter 1, I provide a broader historical context concerning the construction of Japanese ethno-national identity through domestic tourism, specifically focusing on the "Discover Japan" and "Exotic Japan" travel campaigns of the 1970s and 1980s, respectively. I then transition towards an analysis of a special issue of a domestic travel magazine titled *Discover Japan*. I build on poststructuralist literary scholar Rey Chow's theorization of "coercive mimeticism" to argue, firstly, that performances of Japanese ethno-national identity are never truly "authentic," but rather, such performances are products of negotiations with the white Western gaze, and other ethnic groups. In addition, I also argue that these negotiations involve the deployment of a purportedly "depoliticized" sense of banal nationalism, particularly through the emphasis on cultural aesthetics and a purportedly unique national essence, which serve to create what historian Benedict Anderson calls an "imagined community." Such an "imagined community" is defined by a firm, gendered logic of inclusion and exclusion between those who are ethnically Japanese and those who are not.

In Chapter 2, I shift away from a discussion of print media to a discussion of online mass media, focusing on the work produced by two YouTubers who were born and raised in Japan: Ōkawa Yūsuke and Taiki Beaufils, who are ethnically Korean, and ethnically French and Japanese, respectively. I also shift from focusing on the perspectives of how Japanese authors reinforce masculine sentiments of a banal Japanese nationalism to how ethnic minorities themselves reinforce those same sentiments to make claims to Japan as their home. I argue that Ōkawa and Beaufils assert their authenticity as knowledge producers of Japan through their invocation of visual symbols associated with Japanese nationalism such as Mount Fuji and cherry blossoms. Their assertions of authenticity are also connected to a longer history of the marginalization of Korean residents of Japan, as well as multiethnic and multiracial Japanese,

who are deemed by some to not be "Japanese" enough, despite being born and raised in the country. My analysis of their content builds on existing poststructuralist critiques of visuality and visualism, as well as theorizations of the "native informant." The fact that Ōkawa and Beaufils use symbols that invoke the "beauty" of Japan provides a good segue from my previous discussion of the special *Discover Japan* issue "Nippon no bi."

In Chapter 3, I shift towards vlog content produced by YouTubers who were born and raised outside of Japan, but came to the country as adults, specifically Black American YouTuber Loretta Scott, and Filipino American YouTuber Paolo de Guzman. In this chapter, I continue to utilize the concept of critiquing hybrid vernacular discourse. In addition, I use Scott and de Guzman's work to build on poststructuralist theorizations of the non-native area studies scholars, to highlight how critiques of the non-native area studies scholar goes beyond the realm of academia. Specifically, I bring up key aspects of critique such as the fetishization of native knowledge, and the obsession with acquiring knowledge in the language and adopting a "native" positionality. I argue that the two vloggers use "native" knowledge, language, and the donning of traditional attire to assert their authenticity. Such a discussion also adds new insight to the existing literature on Black and Filipino residents of Japan.

Together, these chapters will explore the complex positionalities of vloggers through the critical lenses of vernacular cultural production, hybrid vernacular discourse, and banal nationalism in order to contribute to a broader critique of area studies, and the study of Japanese media and ethnic and racial diversity.

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Chapter 1

Performing "Japaneseness": Tracing the Histories of "Ethnic Authenticity" and Domestic Tourism in Modern Japan

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In April of 2020, the same month when the COVID-19 pandemic reached a new peak, the domestic travel magazine *Discover Japan*—a magazine that the editors claim would help with the revitalization of the Japanese nation-state through educating readers about a "lost," "authentic" Japan—released a special issue titled "Nippon no bi," meaning "Japan's beauty." If you were to open a copy of this issue, you would see colourful images of premodern and early modern Japanese art, articles extolling Japanese people's supposedly unique sense of resilience and connection to nature, and, more interestingly, a feature praising the beauty of traditional Ainu art, the latter of which suggests the (if rather superficial) acknowledgement of a multiethnic Japan. Depictions of Indigeneity in particular also serves to further legitimate Japanese nationalist claims to Japan as an object of knowledge and subsumes the Indigenous territory of Ainu Mosir within the boundaries of this "object of knowledge."

The four vloggers whose work I address in this thesis similarly are involved in the vernacular mode of knowledge production about "Japan," while all negotiate with questions of gender and ethnic authenticity in their travel vlogs. Since they are all speaking as individuals who are residents of Japan, it would be important to address a longer history of performances of ethnic authenticity in the context of Japanese tourism before transitioning towards an analysis of these vlogs. Gendered and ethnicized contestations of the boundaries of "Japaneseness"— referring to problematic discourses that reinforce the uniqueness of people who are ethnically Japanese—in modern Japanese tourism are, after all, not confined to online media environments. Rather, there is a longer history of offline mass media—drawing from media theorist Friedrich Kittler's definition of media as something that "record[s], transmit[s] and process[es] information"—in constructing and de-constructing these boundaries."[69]

Drawing from poststructuralist literary scholar Rey Chow's theorizations of coercive mimeticism, this chapter examines questions of gender and ethnic authenticity specifically in

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[69] Friedrich A. Kittler, "The City Is A Medium," trans. Matthew Griffin, *New Literary History* 27, no. 4 (1996): 722, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20057387?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

mass media that promotes domestic tourism in post-WWII Japan. Even though the vloggers whose work I discuss in this thesis do not exclusively target a domestic audience, I chose to focus on domestic tourism for this chapter to establish the context through which to analyze the inherent transnationality and multiethnicity in constructions and performances of Japanese ethno-national identity. Establishing the presence of such transnationality and multiethnicity provides an important segue towards my discussion of the four travel vloggers, who all speak as ethnic minorities based in Japan. In contrast to international tourism, where transnationality and multiethnicity may be much more explicit given that there is clear engagement with consumers from abroad, transnationality and multiethnicity in domestic tourism is more subtle, as it is targeted towards local consumers.

The argument that I set forward in this chapter has two layers. Firstly, I argue that constructions and performances of Japanese ethno-national identity as depicted in mass media promoting domestic Japanese tourism are never truly expressions of an "authentic" Japanese ethnic identity, but are rather, products of negotiations with the white Western gaze, and a non-Japanese ethnic Other. I also suggest that such negotiations entail the promotion of a supposedly depoliticized sense of banal nationalism, particularly through the emphasis on cultural aesthetics and a purportedly unique national essence. This serves to create what historian Benedict Anderson calls an "imagined community," specifically one defined by a firm, gendered logic of inclusion and exclusion between those who are ethnically Japanese and those who are not.

This chapter begins with sketching out how exactly we can apply the concept of coercive mimeticism to domestic tourism. I will first outline Chow's theorization of coercive mimeticism, and then transition towards a discussion of mass media and domestic tourism in post-WWII Japan, focusing specifically on anthropologist Marilyn Ivy's discussion of two key travel campaigns: "Discover Japan" and "Exotic Japan," which were introduced in the 1970s and 1980s, respectively. Throughout my discussion I will explain how Ivy's analysis both reinforces and builds upon the concept of coercive mimeticism, and also how these two campaigns take on supposedly "depoliticized" forms of aestheticization. Addressing this historical context is useful because it sheds light on the broader institutional, capitalistic logics at work in the construction of Japanese ethno-national identity in modern Japanese tourism. Finally, I turn towards discussing the April 2020 issue of the travel magazine *Discover Japan*, which, not coincidentally, bears the same name as the 1970s travel campaign, and the magazine brings

together elements evident in each of the travel campaigns.[70] I highlight the ways in which this issue's articulations of ethnic identity go beyond simply the reinforcement of an "authentic" ethnic self, but rather, actively negotiate with the Western gaze as well as with other ethnic groups in Japan.

In the aforementioned April 2020 issue of *Discover Japan* magazine, there is a simultaneous emphasis on a pure, masculine, unbroken national essence, but at the same time, the issue articulates an ostensible embrace of other ethnic groups, specifically highlighting elements such as artwork by the Indigenous Ainu, which further contributes to a depoliticized banal nationalism that perpetuates settler colonial structures. I chose this magazine in particular due to its simultaneous online and offline presence. Its liminal position between online and offline media environments, and its visual nature—which encompasses the amount of physical space dedicated to certain content, sizing of images, etc.—will provide a useful segue towards my discussion of travel vlogs. Furthermore, this magazine issue specifically deals with the beauty of Japan, which is a topic that Ōkawa and Beaufils address in their vlogs. However, of course, this is not to suggest that there is necessarily a direct connection between the travel magazine and the travel vlog.

How are print media such as magazines and advertisements crucial for historicizing the boundaries of Japanese ethno-national identity? They are crucial for historicizing these boundaries because of their central role in facilitating an imagined national community. Specifically, their ephemerality facilitates what historian Benedict Anderson would call "[an] extraordinary mass ceremony," referring to "the almost precisely simultaneous consumption" of print media that produces a shared sense of belonging to the nation as an imagined community.[71] To elaborate more on Anderson's theorization of the relationship between print media and the imagined community, he suggests that print media such as "the novel and the newspaper" helped facilitate the imagined community in the sense that they are "device[s] for the presentation of simultaneity in [philosopher Walter Benjamin's understanding of] 'homogeneous, empty time'" that is defined "by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar."[72] He brings up

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[70] To distinguish between the 1970s travel campaign and the magazine, I will refer to the travel campaign in quotations ("Discover Japan"), and the magazine in italics (*Discover Japan*).
[71] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 2016), 35.
[72] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 24-25.

the example of *The New York Times*, mentioning that if we look at a sample front page of the newspaper, we will see various, seemingly disconnected events juxtaposed with each other.[73]

Anderson notes that the linkage between these events is "imagined." One source of this "imagined linkage" comes from calendrical coincidence; in other words, the date connects these various events.[74] In a similar way, the magazine *Discover Japan* contains various articles about different events and individuals who may not know each other, but are partly connected by calendrical coincidence. The issues of the magazine come out every month, and the various events covered in each issue are connected by the specific month of the issue. Meanwhile, advertisements for "Discover Japan" and "Exotic Japan" were placed in train stations and on train, targeting daily commuters, and thus helped construct a "mass ceremony"—perhaps paralleling a religious mass at church—among these commuters in the imaginings of Japanese ethno-national identity.[75]

In addition to constructed notions of simultaneity, print media is also deeply connected to questions of vernacularism, which is a key topic for this thesis. In his discussion of print media and vernacular languages, Anderson uses examples pertaining to early modern European history. He notes that initially, printers catered to readers of Latin, which was a sacred language that had very few speakers.[76] However, when the market for Latin texts became saturated, printers turned towards the masses and printed cheap editions of texts in the vernacular languages that they spoke.[77] The distribution of cheap vernacular texts significantly contributed to the creation of "large new reading publics."[78] Issues from the *Discover Japan* magazine are clearly written in modern Japanese, and the publisher makes it clear that the magazine targets the masses, envisioning large, Japanese-speaking reading publics learning about Japan through this magazine, and facilitating the creation of the "imagined community" in that manner.[79]

Furthermore, another key aspect to the relationship between vernacular languages and the creation of the nation-state is the centralization of certain vernacular languages.[80] In the case of

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[73] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 33.
[74] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 33.
[75] Marilyn Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge: Trans-Figuring Japan," in *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity, Phantasm, Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 46.
[76] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 38.
[77] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 38.
[78] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 40.
[79] "About: Discover Japan とは？," *Discover Japan*, https://discoverjapan-web.com/advertising#aabout.
[80] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 40.

Japan, in addition to languages, part of the centralization comes from the prioritization of certain dialects over other dialects. Specifically, in the case of the Japanese language, we see the state's prioritization of what is known as "standard Japanese" (the Tokyo dialect). This is the dialect that is often taught in schools. Content from this magazine is written using this dialect, reinforcing the centrality of this dialect in relation to Japanese ethno-national identity.

Coercive Mimeticism in Conversation with "Discover Japan" and "Exotic Japan"

Having established the centrality of the vernacular print media for the formation of Japanese ethno-national identity, I now turn to Chow's theorization of coercive mimeticism. She develops this concept in her work *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, stating that it is one of the three levels of mimeticism scholars tend to overlook. Mimeticism is an existential and representational issue that is defined by human beings' mimicking—or perceived mimicking—of others "in order to exist as themselves."[81] It raises questions about who is more authentic, who is the copy, and also who was here first.[82] While the first two levels of mimeticism are about the mimicking of white Western man, the third level, that which we call "coercive mimeticism," is about the ethnic's—meaning those who are racialized and marked as non-white populations—performances of cultural stereotypes attributed to them.[83]

According to Chow, coercive mimeticism emerges from the marginalization of the "ethnic"—whom she often refers to as a "she" throughout the essay—from Western capitalist society, and the subsequent reduction of the ethnic to the stereotypes attributed to them by white Western capitalism, which speaks to problematic notions of ethnic authenticity.[84] Another important point that Chow makes about coercive mimeticism is the ethnic's complicity in perpetuating this process.[85] Specifically she notes that "ethnics' voluntary and involuntary manners of mimicking the ethnicity that is pre-scripted, pre-read, and pre-viewed in their utterances, attitudes, behaviors, and psychologies must now be seen as part and parcel of the

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[81] Rey Chow, "Keeping Them In Their Place: Mimeticism and Cross-Ethnic Representation," in *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 103.
[82] Chow, "Keeping Them In Their Place," 103.
[83] Chow, "Keeping Them In Their Place," 107.
[84] Chow, "Keeping Them In Their Place," 107.
[85] Chow, "Keeping Them In Their Place," 116.

fraught dynamic of coercive mimeticism.[86] Furthermore, rather than challenging Western categorizations of ethnicity, the ethnic's acts of coercive mimeticism reinforce them.[87]

The ethnic's role in mimicking purportedly "authentic" ethnicity is evident in the 1970s "Discover Japan" travel campaign.[88] Major Japanese advertising company Dentsū created this campaign in order to encourage domestic tourism using the newly expanded network of the Japan National Railway (JR). Dentsū put this campaign into place due to JR's anticipation of a drop in the use of the railway after Expo '70.[89] In this campaign, it emphasized self-discovery through travel to remote areas, and capitalized on the encounter with purportedly "authentic" origins of "Japan" as a nation. Specifically, the advertisements for "Discover Japan" invoked the concept of the *furusato*, depicting scenes such as an unnamed forest and a mountain temple, scenes supposedly, but not in reality, untouched by modernity and Westernization.[90] In addition, when they were planning this campaign, Dentsū pondered on the concept of "travel," specifically focusing on the word *tabi*, which, according to Ivy "is a non-Sinified Japanese lexeme (not a compound), and, as is true of many such indigenous terms, it portrays an aesthetic and affective concept Japanese feel is uniquely theirs."[91] In these instances, we thus see how the creators of the "Discover Japan" travel campaign engaged in coercively mimetic practices by tapping into appeals to so-called "ethnic authenticity."

In Chow's theorization of coercive mimeticism, she also highlights the feminization of the ethnic, referring to the ethnic who performs their ethnicity as a "she." This speaks to the idea

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[86] Chow, "Keeping Them in Their Place," 116.

[87] Chow, "Keeping Them in Their Place," 122-123.

[88] It would be useful to briefly outline the broader context of domestic tourism in the era of high economic growth (late 1950-1980s) in post-WWII Japan. Rapid urbanization as well as internationalization were some of the key defining aspects of this era. One key event in Japanese tourism that demonstrated both of these aspects was the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, which supposedly symbolized "Japan's return to international society." Although the event itself was an international event, the developments leading up to it also shaped domestic tourism. In preparation for the Olympics, Tokyo's urban space underwent massive transformations, including the construction of the Tōkaidō Shinkansen ("shinkansen" means Bullet Train) that connected Tokyo to Osaka, and, quoting historian Jessamyn Abel, "changed both patterns of mobility and the popular imagination of the space of the Tōkaidō." One major way in which transportation infrastructure such as the Shinkansen reshaped urban space was through connecting urban areas to "remote places." *See* Kate McDonald, "Olympic Recoveries," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 79, no. 3 (2020): 600, https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-asian-studies/article/olympic-recoveries/C585386EC3095DB3F48861FDA45426BC; Jessamyn R. Abel, "The Power of a Line: How the Bullet Train Transformed Urban Space," *positions: asia critique* 27, no. 3 (2019): 532, 543, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/736544.

[89] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 36.

[90] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 35.

[91] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 36.

that coercive mimeticism is also a highly gendered process. The "Discover Japan" travel campaign specifically targeted young, unmarried Japanese women living in urban areas. The fact that advertisers targeted young women in particular speaks to, as Ivy observes, "how female gender often emerges to close the disjunctures in consumerist discourses of authenticity," which runs parallel to Chow's suggestion that the burden of performing ethnic authenticity is placed on the female ethnic Other.[92] The advertisers render their targeted audience as "inauthentic" due to the fact that these women come from urban areas that were more heavily impacted by postwar Americanization compared to rural areas, which putatively preserved some more purportedly "authentic" lifestyles and landscapes. The trips that the "Discover Japan" campaign promoted gave women the opportunity to "perform as selves other than the everyday selves associated with 'home,'" referring to the Americanized, urban self.[93] It is also interesting to note that the "Discover Japan" posters depict the women wearing jeans, which emphasize their Americanization and purported "inauthenticity."[94]

Such a portrayal relates to Chow's theorization of coercive mimeticism because she addresses the need for the feminized ethnic Other to perform markers of so-called "ethnic authenticity." This pressure to perform "ethnic authenticity" has a longer history. At the end of the Second World War, there were anxieties within Japan about the encounter with arriving Americans, who were seen as a foreign contagion. According to historian Igarashi Yoshikuni, "many Japanese anticipated their encounter with the arriving Americans in sexual terms: Japanese womanhood was in peril of being violated by American troops."[95] Igarashi brings up the work of poet Kaneko Mitsuharu who wrote about "the village in which he and his family took refuge during the war," claiming that "even elderly women infested with lice fled to the mountains in fear of rape upon hearing the rumor that 'the Americans are beasts.'"[96] Such anxieties spoke to a broader feminization of the Japanese nation-state in the wake of its defeat in the Pacific War. Furthermore, such anxieties about American influence on Japanese women also go back to the early 20th century. We can look to representations of the modern girl for example (*moga* in Japanese). Historian Barbara Satō addresses this topic in her work, noting that the

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[92] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 35.
[93] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 40.
[94] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 49.
[95] Igarashi Yoshikuni, *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Popular Culture, 1945-1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 35.
[96] Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory*, 35.

modern girl resembled the American flapper, which made her "[stand] out from the crowd."[97] Many writers took the opportunity to disparage the modern girl, producing polemics that condemn the modern girl as "sexually depraved," and drawing connections between purported sexual depravity and love scenes in American movies.[98] In addition to this emphasis on ethnic authenticity, there is the masculine nationalist concern that the feminized ethnic Other is not "authentic" enough.

The "Discover Japan" travel campaign also further complicates Chow's theorization of coercive mimeticism, as she primarily focuses on the dichotomy between the white Western male gaze and the feminized Other, which obscures the more complex power dynamics associated with coercive mimeticism. The Discover Japan travel campaign was spearheaded by Fujioka Wakao, a Japanese man, and was intended for a domestic audience. Linking back to the topic of depoliticization, Fujioka had emphasized the concept of "deadvertising," claiming that the campaign did not intend to commodify an "authentic" Japan, but rather, he labelled the campaign as "the altruistic presentation of the Japanese spirit, divorced from any taint of the profit motive."[99] Furthermore, to add to Chow's discussion, it is important to note that the women who were targeted for this campaign also had agency, as they were seen by Fujioka as the leading consumers who "would demand tabi from their mates as well."[100]

Furthermore, in contrast to Chow's theorization of coercive mimeticism, where the ethnic is forced to perform markers of ethnic authenticity directly due to the white Western capitalist gaze, the "Discover Japan" travel campaign came out of concerns by Japan National Railway and other related industries about "maintain[ing] the level of travel and freight traffic [Expo '70] had stimulated," and Western influence is much more subtle[101] As Ivy points out, the "Discover Japan" campaign, despite advertisers' insistence of pure Japanese ethnic origins, was ironically inspired by the "Discover America" travel campaign.[102] In addition to that, the concept of the *furusato* echoes the American parallel of "hometown."[103] This echoes the process of coercive

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[97] Barbara Satō, *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, Media, and Women in Interwar Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 49.

[98] Satō, *The New Japanese Woman*, 62.

[99] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 45.

[100] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 37.

[101] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 36.

[102] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 42.

[103] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 31.

mimeticism, as Chow highlights the ethnic's complicity in reinforcing the idea of ethnic authenticity, specifically discussing constructions of Chineseness, and how the invocation of ethnic authenticity perpetuates Western categorizations rather than resists them.[104]

However, Chow's work primarily focuses on critiquing the dichotomy of the ethnic and the white Westerner. To be clear, I am not denying the connection between Western imperialistic categories and markers of ethnic identity. In my analysis, I intend to suggest that these dynamics are certainly relevant. However, in addition to that, I also would like to suggest that in the process of coercive mimeticism, other foreign influences also play a role in the constructions and performances of ethnicity. The "Exotic Japan" travel campaign—successor of "Discover Japan" that was created by the Japan National Railway is a prime example.

The campaign was established in the 1980s, and it was a departure from "Discover Japan" in the sense that it shifted away from "discovering" a purportedly "authentic" Japan towards discovering the non-Japanese elements of Japan.[105] Specifically, the advertisements for this campaign capitalized "on the continuing fascination with the non-Japanese Orient."[106] These posters would feature places such as "Nagasaki, with its Chinese-derived festivals, and Kyoto's Gion Matsuri, with its floats (*dashi*) of Persian provenance."[107] These speak to the fetishization of supposedly "depoliticized" aesthetics from the continent. At the same time, the name of the campaign "Exotic Japan" plays on "Japan as seen by Westerners," highlighting that there is still the presence and perpetuation of white Western categorizations.[108] Also, similar to the "Discover Japan" advertisements, women are depicted as the main consumers. However, the manner of depiction differs. The "Discover Japan" advertisements depict the encounter between the young woman and aspects of an "authentic" Japan.[109] It thus reinforces (and to some extent goes beyond) the role of the female ethnic Other in constructing and performing markers of ethnic authenticity. In contrast, the woman depicted in the inaugural poster for "Exotic Japan" is not at all meant to perform so-called "ethnic authenticity." She is depicted wearing avant-garde fashion, and appears as part of the montage of exotic objects depicted in the poster. [110] The

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[104] Chow, "Keeping Them in Their Place," 122-123.
[105] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 48.
[106] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 48.
[107] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 49.
[108] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 50.
[109] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 35.
[110] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 51.

young woman depicted in the inaugural poster, in fact, symbolizes "another boundary of desire for (young) Japanese," and her presence is "coupl[ed] with a stereotypically conceived domestic alterity that defines a more comprehensive vision of the exotic."[111]

It is also important to note that both "Discover Japan" and "Exotic Japan" took place during a major period of internationalization (*kokusaika*). Internationalization especially intensified in the 1980s, partly evident in the emergence of the so-called "ethnic boom" during this decade, in which, quoting literary scholar Nina Cornyetz, "ethnic commodities […] associated with varied regions and peoples, including Southeast Asians, Koreans, and urban African Americans, flooded Japanese markets."[112] "Exotic Japan" thus emerges from this context. Ivy remarks advertising, more broadly, "echoed and amplified" "[t]he growing cosmopolitanism and wealth of many Japanese."[113] On this topic of cosmopolitanism, however, how much does this internationalization and the interest in non-Japanese ethnic commodities actually contribute to productive discussions of racial and ethnic diversity in Japan? I argue that campaigns such as "Exotic Japan" fail to introduce meaningful change, and thus reinforces a logic of inclusion and exclusion in which we see the continued marginalization of ethnic minorities accompanying the superficial inclusion of the multiethnic and multicultural.

Examining the magazine *Discover Japan*

It is from this new framing of coercive mimeticism as a mechanism of marketing and reproducing self-exoticizing images of an "authentic" Japan that go beyond the binary of the West and a singular ethnic Other that I examine the April 2020 issue of the magazine *Discover Japan*. This magazine, not coincidentally, bears the same name as the 1970s travel campaign that Ivy discussed, and brings together elements evident in "Discover Japan" and "Exotic Japan." I will thus be drawing connections to Ivy's discussions of both the "Discover Japan" and "Exotic Japan" travel campaigns throughout my analysis, highlighting the magazine's simultaneous efforts to promote an "authentic" Japaneseness, while at the same time rendering Japanese ethno-national identity as multicultural in the sense that it is also influenced by other Asian cultures,

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[111] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 53.
[112] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 131.
[113] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 47.

specifically committing settler colonial violence by appropriating Ainu Indigeneity. I argue that the magazine's emphasis on a "depoliticized" sense of Japan's "beauty" thus serves to reinforce logics of inclusion and exclusion, entailing the implicit erasure of those who do not conform to ideals of a masculine Japaneseness.

To provide some context about *Discover Japan*, the magazine was founded in 2008, and it has a Japanese language version and an English language version. The former is targeted towards a more domestic audience, given the fact that it is in Japanese, and the magazine's website does not offer full digital issues for international readers to purchase. In addition, they only ship the Japanese issues domestically, indicating that this edition focuses on domestic tourism. In contrast, the English language version is targeted towards a more international audience, and it is more widely available online.

Furthermore, in the "about us" section for both editions of the magazine, the editors emphasize this magazine's usefulness as a guide to knowing more about a "traditional" side of Japan, and "discovering" "unknown" parts of the country, which connects to Ivy's discussion of the "Discover Japan" travel campaign, where advertisers construct the concept of a *furusato*, and capitalize on "discovering" this lost *furusato*.[114] This emphasis on knowing speaks to the broader dynamics between knowledge and power, in which knowledge is key to the dominance of the "other" place (in this case, I am referring to a lost, traditional, purportedly "authentic" Japan, which serves as a key foundation to the construction of Japanese ethno-national identity). Furthermore, this invocation of a "traditional" Japan taps into Chow's theorization of coercive mimeticism, as it speaks to the issues of ethnic and cultural authenticity."[115] Such a dynamic between knowledge and power is also relevant to Ivy's discussion of the "Discover Japan" travel campaign, in which she addresses the construction and "bounding of Japan as [an] object of knowledge, as an object that constantly threatens to over-run its borders and thus must be policed."[116]

In addition to this common emphasis on knowing more about Japan however, there is also a noteworthy difference between the English edition and the Japanese edition. The "about us" section of the English edition adopts a relatively more neutral tone compared to the Japanese

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[114] "About: Discover Japan とは?," *Discover Japan*, https://discoverjapan-web.com/advertising#aabout; Jens H. Jensen, "About us," *Discover Japan*, https://discoverjapan-web.com/worldwide/.
[115] Chow, "Keeping Them In Their Place," 107.
[116] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 31.

edition's equivalent section, as the editor for the English edition simply remarks that the magazine "is the insider's guide to Japan," and that they hope the magazine "will soon become [the reader's] preferred guide to a previously unexplored side of Japan."[117] It is significant that the editor uses the term "insider's guide" to describe the magazine, as it presumes that the ideal reader is someone who is already incorporated in and securely inside the ethno-national boundary called Japan, whether that be through officially obtaining Japanese citizenship or simply living in the country for years. Such readers have some knowledge about Japan, but, according to the editor, have yet to become well-acquainted with a deeper, unexplored side of a supposedly "authentic" Japan. The rhetoric that the editor employs flatters the reader for how much they "know" about Japan, while also providing a sense of exclusivity, as there is a boundary between these "connoisseurs" of Japan and the average layperson.

In contrast, the editor of the Japanese edition remarks that readers, "through the re-discovery of Japan" (日本の再発見を通して), can help revitalize the country (元気にする), which indicates a much more nationalistic tone, and this speaks to a connection between knowing about and embodying ethnic authenticity, and the well-being of the nation-state.[118] The editor's remarks suggest that Japan was not in an ideal state before, and thus, from the perspective of the magazine editor, there is a need to revive what has been in decline, and knowledge of a purportedly "traditional" Japan (a way in which Japan can perform its ethnicity) is key to achieving such a revival. This concern with the revitalization of Japan is relevant to Chow's framing of coercive mimeticism because similar to the ethnic Other whom Chow describes in her essay "Keeping Them in Their Place," the editor for the magazine feels that Japan is under a certain pressure to perform markers of ethnic authenticity, and to build on Chow's notion of coercive mimeticism, there is a connection between the performance of ethnic authenticity and health of the nation-state. There are also significant distinctions between ethnicity and nationality, as ethnicity speaks to a shared cultural heritage. Meanwhile, nationality speaks to an individual's belonging to a nation-state. Despite such distinctions, however, the Japanese government has often conflated the two things together, preaching the myth of ethnic homogeneity in Japan even though such a myth is far from reality.

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[117] "About us."
[118] "About: Discover Japan とは?"

Tellingly, the April 2020 issue of *Discover Japan*, which I analyze in detail below, is titled "Nippon no bi" (ニッポンの美), which translates to "Japan's beauty" in English. This issue, despite its insistence on the existence of a Japanese national essence and ethnic authenticity, does not simply perpetuate the aforementioned myth of ethnic homogeneity. Rather, there is a juxtaposition between a supposedly "authentic" Japanese national essence with depictions of a Japan that has been rendered foreign.

Such a juxtaposition is evident on the magazine's cover page (Fig. 1.01). On the one hand, we see nationalistic overtones in the magazine cover, evident in its use of the colours red and white, which are also the colours of the Japanese flag, and also the use of the reading "Nippon" rather than "Nihon" to refer to Japan. In contrast to "Nihon," "Nippon" is an older, less common way of referring to Japan, and it also has a more nationalistic overtone. This is evident in the fact that "Nippon" is used in the Japanese name for "Empire of Japan" (*Dai Nippon Teikoku*). In addition to that, there is the "Nippon Kaigi," which is a far-right group that many Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) politicians have ties to. On the other hand, it is also interesting to note that Nippon is written in *katakana*, a syllabary often used for foreign words. This bears similarity to the "Exotic Japan" travel campaign that Ivy examined because that campaign also made use of *katakana* in the advertisements. The use of *katakana* in this magazine has a similar effect to the use of *katakana* in the "Exotic Japan" advertisements, as it also has the effect of rendering Japan foreign, not necessarily making it "Western," but "foreign" more broadly. Also, as we can see on the cover, the words "Discover Japan" are written in English (it is important to note that this is evident on the cover of every single issue of this magazine), even though it is aimed towards a domestic, Japanese speaking audience. The use of the English phrase "Discover Japan" parallels the advertisements for the 1970s "Discover Japan" travel campaign that Ivy had discussed in her work. As I stated previously, Ivy mentions that in the advertisements for this campaign, advertisers often used the English phrase "Discover Japan" rather than transliterating it into *katakana*.[119] The magazine's similar use of the English phrase speaks to the fact that, reinforcing Chow's theorization of coercive mimeticism, the invocation of markers of ethnic authenticity is not necessarily resistant to the Western gaze, but rather speaks to an explicit engagement with and reification of the Western gaze.

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[119] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 43.

This juxtaposition between a supposedly "authentic" Japanese ethno-national identity and a Japan that is rendered "foreign"—meaning mediated through the Western gaze, which views Japan as exotic—is also evident within the pages of the magazine. On the one hand, there are articles that extol Japanese uniqueness, specifically highlighting the problematic idea that Japanese people are connected to nature and uniquely resilient (this is problematic because it reinforces essentialism and also obscures Japan's colonial past), as well as the purportedly unique beauty of premodern Japanese art. On the other hand, there is also content that acknowledges the fact that Japan is multi-ethnic. This is especially evident in the feature articles on indigenous Ainu art. This acknowledgement of other ethnic groups living in Japan, even though it challenges ethnic homogeneity, however, is ultimately not productive in challenging hegemonic discourses. Rather, it further exacerbates ethnic and gendered divisions between the Japanese self and the non-Japanese Other, and this is especially exacerbated by the employment of a depoliticized aestheticization of other cultures. Furthermore, such an embrace for other Asian ethnic groups echoes the colonial and imperial rhetoric defining the Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. In 1940, the Japanese imperial government established this ideal, and the sphere included China, Korea and Southeast Asia.[120] The imperial government had advocated for ideals of pan-Asianism among all these countries, which would serve as a bulwark against Western imperialism, while also committing horrific acts of colonial genocide throughout East and Southeast Asia.[121]

In the special issue "Nippon no bi," there are quite a few articles in this issue by male authors that emphasize Japanese uniqueness, specifically capitalizing on problematic tropes such as the supposedly unique resilience of Japanese people, and their connection to nature. For example, there is a story by Fujitani Ryōsuke of a sake brewery in Tochigi Prefecture being able to get back on its feet after a flood, and it features the perspective of the company's managing director Shimada Yoshinori.[122] The title of this article is 「栃木県内最古の酒蔵第一酒造の復活劇」. The English translation of this title would be: "The recovery story of Tochigi's oldest

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[120] Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 208.

[121] Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, 208.

[122] Fujitani Ryōsuke, "Tochigi kennai saiko no sakagura Daiichi Shuzō no fukkatsu geki," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 134.

sake brewery Daiichi Sake Brewery."[123] The immediate reference to the brewery's recovery places the theme of recovery and resilience front and center. It is particularly interesting that Fujitani uses "劇" (*geki*) in the title, which also means "drama" or "play," which perhaps speaks to the performative nature of such a story. Furthermore, Fujitani mentions that the owners of this sake brewery started out as farmers, and "for three and a half centuries, have led their lives alongside rice cultivation."[124] Shimada himself remarks that "upon their taking part in rice cultivation themselves [referring to Shimada and his team at the brewery], they are able to manage their work with care and develop a sense of reverence towards nature and sake brewing because they are able to experience the hardships a farmer endures."[125] It is here that we see this constructed connection to nature, as well as a rural, "authentic" Japan.

Another example from this issue includes an article featuring the perspective of a consultant named Ikejima Noriyoshi, who claimed that Japanese people are uniquely resilient.[126] He specifically focuses on how supposedly in touch Japanese people are with nature, in the sense that they are able to adapt in light of natural disasters, which is deeply problematic because it reinforces neonationalist notions of Japanese uniqueness, and also plays on Orientalist notions of Japan.[127] In addition to these two stories, this issue also includes an article by architect Tanaka Ryōhei, who mentions that getting into architecture allows one to learn how to rebuild things after a disaster.[128] Furthermore, earlier in the magazine, there is an article talking about an art exhibition for artwork inspired by premodern Japanese art, titled 「古典 x 現代２０２０ー時空を越える日本のアート」 (can be translated to "Classic and Contemporary 2020: Japanese art that has passed through space and time").[129] The author of this article Narita Miyu interviews

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[123] Translation mine.

[124] Original quote: 「…3世紀半にわたって米づくりとともに歩んでいた。」 Fujitani Ryōsuke, "Tochigi kennai saiko no sakagura Daiichi Shuzō no fukkatsu geki," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 135.

[125] Original quote:

「自分たちで米づくりに携わっていると、農家の苦労が体験できるので、大切に扱い、自然と酒造りも丁寧になる。」 Fujitani Ryōsuke, "Tochigi kennai saiko no sakagura Daiichi Shuzō no fukkatsu geki," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 135.

[126] Katō Takashi, "'Bi' no midashikata ni nihonjinrashisa no konkyo ga atta!: Gaikokujin ga odoroku, Nippon no 'biishiki' tte nani?" *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 66.

[127] Katō, "'Bi' no midashikata ni nihonjinrashisa no konkyo ga atta!," 66.

[128] Tamura Tanao, "G ARCHITECTS STUDIO: Tanaka Ryōhei," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 183.

[129] "Nihon no bijutsu ni wa ara to nigi, ryōkyokutan no seikatsu ga arimasu,"*Discover Japan*, April 2020, 29. The term "古典" translates to "classic," which is a rather broad term. Given the scope that this magazine covers regarding classical art (addressing Jōmon to Edo era art), I consider "古典" to specifically encompass the period before the Meiji period.

the exhibition's supervising director Kobayashi Chū, who remarks that Japan has been a country ravaged by disaster, and how Japanese people in particular were able to overcome all of these disasters, highlighting their wit and hard work.[130]

To build on this question of recovery that these Japanese male business owners, artists, architects etc. emphasize, it is, again, important to ask the question: recovery for whom? Although the magazine does not explicitly make racist, jingoistic comments, by focusing on the question of recovery mainly from the perspective of these Japanese male business owners, artists, architects etc., *Discover Japan* provides a very specific narrative of who is recovering and from what they are recovering—it speaks to the recovery of a masculine Japanese nation-state and the simultaneous marginalization of Japanese women, non-Japanese members of civil societies (including residential Koreans, both without citizenship and naturalized with citizenship) from this cycle of crisis and recovery. Also, these articles emphasize recovery from natural disasters in particular. Although, on the one hand, we cannot deny that Japan has been heavily ravaged by natural disasters, especially considering 3/11, various floods, and earthquakes, at the same time, this emphasis on how Japan has been so adept at surviving natural disasters contributes to Japanese exceptionalism, which, again, is part of this performance of ethnic "authenticity." It also emphasizes the narrative that the country has always been a victim of its circumstances, overshadowing its colonial past and continued marginalization of those who are not ethnically Japanese. Such marginalizations are reflected in how much space content like this occupies in the magazine.

Another problematic way in which the magazine exhibits ethnic Japaneseness is in its nostalgia for premodern Japanese art. As mentioned previously, this special issue addresses an exhibition that can be translated into English as "Classic and Contemporary 2020: Japanese art that has transcended space and time." As the title clearly states, the exhibition focuses on bringing together premodern art and contemporary art. With the premodern art, there is also a section that discusses art from the Jōmon period to the Edo period.[131] This section contains

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[130] "Nihon no bijutsu ni wa ara to nigi, ryōkyokutan no seikatsu ga arimasu," 29.

[131] "Jōmon no bi," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 30; "Yayoi no bi," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 31; "Kofun no bi," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 32; "Asuka no bi," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 33; "Nara no bi," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 36; "Heian no bi," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 38; "Kamakura no bi," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 39; "Muromachi no bi," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 40; "Azuchi-Momoyama no bi," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 42-43; "Edo no bi," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 50-51. The fact that the magazine includes art from before the Nara period is a particularly interesting choice, as the term "古典" refers to the post-Nara period. Including art from these

spreads that highlight the iconic art from each respective era, including images of such art, as well as descriptions of the historical contexts. Such a focus on premodern art emphasizes a sort of nostalgia for a Japan untouched by modernization and Westernization, the imaginary *furusato*, and also an overlooking of Japan's emergence as an imperial power in the modern era.[132] These nostalgic sentiments speak to the erasure of Japan's imperial history in the sense that they illustrate an unbroken sense of continuity with Japanese art from the prehistoric era to the present day. Also, in focusing on art that is seemingly "apolitical," the editors of the magazine avoid difficult conversations about Japan's political history.

Furthermore, this issue includes articles that feature the artists who are involved in this exhibition, and what is particularly noteworthy is that there is much more of an emphasis on the male artists involved in the exhibition compared to the women artists, highlighting, again, the masculinization of Japanese ethno-national identity. Several of the male artists—specifically artists Yokoo Tadanori, Suga Kishio, Tanada Kōji, Minagawa Akira and Shiriagari Kotobuki— involved in this exhibition get page length interviews that detail the premodern artists who inspired their work, their work in particular, their thoughts on premodern Japanese art, and what they think makes Japan "beautiful."[133] These pages also include photos of the artists themselves, with some of the photos taking up an entire page. Again, such discussions of art and aesthetics is an intentional way of obscuring the political history behind the construction of the modern Japanese nation-state, and the magazine instrumentalizes the depoliticized view of "art" and "beauty" to reinforce nationalism.[134]

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earlier periods, especially archaeological periods such as the Jōmon era, is a means of establishing a strong foundation for Japanese classical art.

[132] Modern Japanese novelists have also expressed nostalgia for a "premodern" aesthetic. For example, Kawabata Yasunari gave a Nobel Lecture in 1968 about the "beauty" of Japan, titled "Japan, the Beautiful and Myself" ("Utsukushii Nihon no watashi"). In this speech, he frequently quoted the work of premodern Japanese authors such as Dogen and Myoe whose work he anachronistically claimed spoke to the presence of a "Japanese spirit" due to their descriptions of nature. He also discusses the concept of Zen, which he distinguishes from Western notions of emptiness, drawing firm boundaries between "East" and "West." Similar to the *Discover Japan* magazine issue "Nippon no bi," this "depoliticized" nostalgia for a "premodern" aesthetic serves to erase Japan's colonial legacies, as well as the fact that nation-state and national identity are 19th century constructs. For a translated version of Kawabata's speech, *see* Kawabata Yasunari, "Japan, the Beautiful and Myself," ed. Sture Allén, *The Nobel Prize*, December 12, 1968, https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1968/kawabata/lecture/.

[133] "Reisei ga yadoru, me ni mienai utuskushisa ni hikaremasu: Yokoo Tadanori-san," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 34-35; "'Mono' o dō miru ka wa, hito sorezore no mondai da—Suga Kishio-san," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 37; "Nihon no zai ni yadoru, zotto suru yō na bi no kiseki—Tanada Kōji," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 41; "Seimei no yuragi o kanjiru 'yohaku' ni bi o midasu: Minagawa Akira-san," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 44-45; "'Kimatta!' Sono shunkan ni 'utsukushi do' ga masu: Shiriagari Kotobuki-san," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 52-53.

[134] Former Prime Minister Abe Shinzō wrote a book titled *Towards a Beautiful Country* (*Utsukushii kuni e*) (2006), in which he mentions widespread public support for the military during WWII, and questions "the legitimacy of [the

In contrast, the only two women artists involved in this exhibition (along with one male artist) do not get page length feature articles. Instead, their work occupies only a fraction of a spread that talks about the exhibition overall, and the magazine also does not include photographs of these women.[135] The names of these two women artists are Kawauchi Rinko, and Kōnoike Tomoko.[136] The fact that these women's work and voices only occupy a fraction of one spread in comparison to many of the male artists—who have, as mentioned previously received page length interviews and some even page length photos—, and the use of premodern male artists (such as Katsushika Hokusai, Ogata Kenzan, Enkū, Soga Shōhaku and Sengai) as templates (albeit to varying extents) speaks to the logics of inclusion and exclusion that *Discover Japan* promotes, subtly exhibiting and authenticating a display of masculine Japaneseness and marginalizing what falls outside that category. The relatively marginal position that women artists occupy in this issue speaks to broader expressions of male anxiety and insecurity regarding what constitutes Japanese ethno-national identity. Such a performance of an ethnic masculinity ties back to Ivy's discussion of how the "Discover Japan" campaign represented women. Specifically, Fujioka and his team pushed forward the idea that the women whom they were addressing for this campaign were "duplicitous," as "the figure of the young woman threatened to tip the rhetorical balance in the direction of falsity," and in the eyes of the advertisers, "it became necessary to authenticate her as truly Japanese by inducing her to travel domestically."[137] Furthermore, Fujioka's appeal to young women living in the urban areas is also a way for him and his team to appeal to male travellers as well because, quoting Ivy, "where women go, men follow."[138]

All of this content ties into Chow's theorization of coercive mimeticism because the authors in "Nippon no bi" tap into markers of ethnic authenticity in times of crisis. "Crisis" encompasses several things. The more immediate crisis refers to the ways in which the COVID-

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Tokyo Trials, which prosecuted Japanese war criminals]." In the book, he also defends his visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, a shrine that memorializes war criminals, by quoting a Roman Curia representative named Father Bruno Bitter, who argued for nations' rights and obligations to pay respects "to the warriors who died for the nation." This book, overall, speaks to the strong connection between Japan's "beauty," and the re-militarization of the modern Japanese nation-state. *See* Takahashi Kosuke, "Shinzo Abe's Nationalist Strategy," *The Diplomat*, February 13, 2014, https://thediplomat.com/2014/02/shinzo-abes-nationalist-strategy/.

[135] "Nippon no bi o taikandekiru tenji e GO!!," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 54-55.
[136] "Nippon no bi o taikandekiru tenji e GO!!," 54-55.
[137] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 41.
[138] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 38.

19 pandemic has impacted Japan. Specifically, it has contributed to a decline in the tourism industry, which was key to Japan's deployment of soft power, and it had also resulted in the postponement of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. This latter event is important because to Japanese nationalists such as former prime minister Abe Shinzō, the 2020 Olympics are symbolic of Japan's recovery from the 2011 Triple Disaster, which, according to historian Kate McDonald, both make up rhythms of crisis and recovery.[139] The 2011 Triple Disaster itself was another major moment of rupture that shook the foundations of Japanese ethno-national identity. Neonationalist and former governor of Tokyo Ishihara Shintarō claimed that the disaster "was 'divine punishment' for Japanese 'egoism,'" referring to what he sees as a concerning amount of materialism in Japanese society.[140] Furthermore, another "crisis" could be Japan's diminishing position on the international stage, which started becoming evident after the bursting of the economic bubble in the 1990s. Lastly, "crisis" can also refer to broader masculine nationalist anxieties about the influx of migrant workers into Japan.

In contrast to Chow's theorization of the ethnic Other, in which she refers to the ethnic as a "she," and also in contrast to the "Discover Japan" and "Exotic Japan" travel campaigns, in which Japanese women are the main focus, these articles demonstrate a masculinization of the ethnic. This masculinization of the ethnic can be explained by how this magazine issue conflates Japanese ethnic identity with Japanese nationality.[141] As mentioned previously, Chow acknowledges the complicity of the ethnic in using coercive mimeticism as a gatekeeping mechanism, in which the ethnic determines who is and isn't "authentic" enough. In the case of this magazine issue, the male Japanese authors and other Japanese men featured in these articles are both the symbols and the gatekeepers of ethnic authenticity. Their claims that establish Japan's relationship to nature and its purportedly unique sense of resiliency highlight their mimicry of the stereotype of an "authentic," "old" Japan that has a rich, artistic history, and has survived multiple moments of crises.

Lastly, it is important to note that this special issue of *Discover Japan* also features work by the Ainu, who are Indigenous peoples mainly living in what is now Hokkaidō (formerly Ainu

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[139] McDonald, "Olympic Recoveries," 599-600.

[140] Elaine Lies, "Shintaro Ishihara, Japanese politician who set off row with China, dies at 89," *Reuters*, February 1, 2022, https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/shintaro-ishihara-japanese-politician-who-set-off-row-with-china-dies-89-nhk-2022-02-01/.

[141] Furthermore, all these discussions of Japanese resilience and ability to recover from disasters relate to McDonald's discussion of the cycles of crisis and recovery in Japan.

Mosir before the Meiji government colonized this region and displaced the Ainu living there), and in other parts of Japan as well. This highlights, firstly, that performances of ethno-national identity go beyond simple dichotomies of Japan and the West. Furthermore, the specific focus on Ainu and the art that they produce is especially ironic given this issue's emphasis on "discovering" an "authentic" Japan. Firstly, including them in such an issue subsumes them within the category of Japanese settler culture, creating what anthropologist Iokepa Casumbal-Salazar would call a "fictive kinship" between the Japanese settlers and the Indigenous Ainu, and reinforcing structures of settler colonial violence and genocide.[142]

A key scholar who addresses the settler colonization of Ainu Mosir is historian Katsuya Hirano. He discusses this brutal history of settler colonialism in his essay "Settler Colonialism in the Making of Japan's Hokkaidō," noting that Japan has had a long history of encounters with the Ainu, but the Meiji period (1868-1912) was when the formal mechanisms of settler colonization truly took hold.[143] In 1869, the Meiji government claimed the entire region of Ainu Mosir as "public property," and utilized the concept of *terra nullius* (no man's land) to take control of the territory.[144] They encouraged the migration of poor former samurai to Ainu Mosir, displacing the Ainu who were living there.[145] The settler population brought over devastating diseases such as diphtheria and smallpox, which killed off many Ainu.[146] Furthermore, the Japanese government imposed hunting and fishing bans on the Ainu, which also contributed to a rapid drop in the Ainu population.[147] The Japanese government was also responsible for the endangerment of the Ainu language. Hirano states that "[b]y 1900, a mandatory assimilationist education policy meant that all Ainu children were prohibited from speaking their language at school."[148] Prominent Ainu activist Kayano Shigeru mentions in his memoir *Our Land Was a Forest* a story about an Ainu child who had difficulty learning the Japanese language. He "could

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[142] Casumbal-Salazar specifically uses the term "fictive kinship" in the context of settler encroachment on Mauna Kea, a sacred volcano in Hawai'i that is now the site of telescope observatories. "Fictive kinship" refers to the ways in which settlers construct familial ties between themselves and Indigenous peoples to justify the theft of Indigenous land and the desacralization of Indigenous spaces. *See* Iokepa Casumbal-Salazar, "A Fictive Kinship: Making 'Modernity,' 'Ancient Hawaiians,' and the Telescopes on Mauna Kea," *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 4, no. 2 (2017): 22-23, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/703400.

[143] Katsuya Hirano, "Settler Colonialism in the Making of Japan's Hokkaidō," in *The Routledge Handbook of the History of Settler Colonialism*, eds. Edward Cavanagh and Lorenzo Veracini (London: Routledge, 2016), 327.

[144] Hirano, "Settler Colonialism in the Making of Japan's Hokkaidō," 328.

[145] Hirano, "Settler Colonialism in the Making of Japan's Hokkaidō," 328.

[146] Hirano, "Settler Colonialism in the Making of Japan's Hokkaidō," 331.

[147] Hirano, "Settler Colonialism in the Making of Japan's Hokkaidō," 331.

[148] Hirano, "Settler Colonialism in the Making of Japan's Hokkaidō," 335.

not tell the teacher he wanted to go to the bathroom and so passed water on the floor, bursting into tears."[149] Even in recent years, there is still much work that needs to be done regarding the Ainu rights, as the Japanese government refuses to recognize their history of settler colonialism, and Japanese schoolchildren hardly learn about Ainu history in school.

Back to my discussion of "Nippon no bi," since this issue is very much focused on an "old," "authentic" Japan, the focus on traditional Ainu art also perpetuates the idea that Ainu are simply people who are stuck in the past, denying the existence of Indigenous survivance, and reinforcing a trope similar to Indigenous studies scholar Thomas King's concept of the "dead Indian," referring to clichés and stereotypes about Indigenous peoples perpetuated by settlers.[150]

To tie the magazine's depiction of Ainu and Ainu art back to Ivy's work on post-WWII domestic tourism campaigns, similar to the "Exotic Japan" travel campaign, there is an emphasis on purportedly "non-Japanese" origins. However, one major way in which this issue's depictions of "foreignness" differs from the "Exotic Japan" travel campaign is that while "Exotic Japan" focuses on the importing of cultures from places that were already sovereign countries, this special issue of *Discover Japan* focuses on, as I had mentioned previously, a group of Indgienous peoples—original inhabitants of the land—still under Japanese colonial rule. We thus see a major significance between the "foreignness" depicted in "Exotic Japan," and *Discover Japan*'s depiction of Ainu in "Nippon no bi." The "Exotic Japan" campaign emphasized the centrality of "domestic monuments to continental culture."[151] For example, Ivy mentions the significance of Mount Kōya, which was the "seat of the esoteric Shingon sect and great repository of Buddhist riches from Central Asia and China."[152] The posters for the travel campaign also depict a montage of objects, including "gilded phoenixes, wrathful bodhisattvas, brocades and pagodas."[153] On the other hand, representations of Indigeneity in *Discover Japan* deal much more extensively with claims to the land, evident in the magazine's subsumption of an Ainu settlement (Akanko Ainu Kotan) within the category of Japanese domestic tourism, and

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[149] Kayano Shigeru, *Our Land Was a Forest: An Ainu Memoir*, trans. Kyoko Selden and Lili Seldon (New York; London: Routledge, 1994), 61.
[150] Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2013).
[151] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 48.
[152] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 48.
[153] Ivy, "Itineraries of Knowledge," 49.

thus "Japan." This distinguishes the representation of Ainu from representations of cultures from the Asian continent.

As I mentioned, the "Nippon no bi" special issue has a feature that addresses the beauty of Ainu art, and includes several interviews with three Ainu artists Takiguchi Kengo, Shimokura Hiroyuki and Nishida Kayoko, who work and live in an Ainu village in present-day Hokkaidō called Akan-ko Ainu Kotan.[154] The inclusion of the work of Indigenous Ainu in a magazine about Japan's beauty also builds on Chow's idea of ethnic authenticity, in which the performance of ethnic authenticity, in addition to reaffirming Western categorizations, is also connected to perceptions of other ethnic groups. In addition, my analysis adds to Chow's theorizations of coercive mimeticism, as one limitation to her work is that it does not specifically focus on the power dynamics between settlers and Indigenous peoples, which as I had mentioned, differs from power dynamics between the white Western gaze and ethnic minorities. The concept of coercive mimeticism itself comes under question when specifically addressing the power dynamics between settlers and Indigenous peoples. In the case of "Nippon no bi," the inclusion of traditional Ainu art—an act that historian Tessa Morris-Suzuki would call "cosmetic multiculturalism"— enables editors and readers to vicariously claim Indigeneity, and thus, we see a shift from coercive mimeticism to voluntary mimeticism.[155] By "voluntary mimeticism," I mean the mimicking of other cultures by choice rather than the mimicry of pre-scripted notions of one's own ethnicity; the settler Japanese, rather than drawing on set notions of "Japaneseness," chooses to mimic a distinct Indigenous culture, claiming Indigeneity as part of their "Japaneseness."

These acts of mimeticism are gendered as well, specifically running parallel to my earlier discussion about the construction of a masculine ethno-national identity. We see this in how the magazine selects Ainu artists, determining who is more worthy to be in the framework of "Nippon no bi." The magazine focuses on three out of the 11 artists—there are 11 artists based on the Akan Ainu Arts and Crafts website, to which Ōishi provides the link—who live and work

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[154] Ōishi Hajime, "Ainu no biishiki ni sawareru," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 98; Ōishi Hajime, "Moyō no komakasa wa yutakasa: mokuchō sakka Takiguchi Kengo," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 98-99; Ōishi Hajime, "Shishū ni wa monogatari ga yadoru: shishū sakka Nishida Kayoko," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 100-101; Ōishi Hajime, "Akanko no fūdo ga unda mirai no kōgei: Shimokura Hiroyuki," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 102-103; Ōishi Hajime, "Ainu bunka o tēma ni Akanko o tabishiyō!," *Discover Japan*, April 2020, 104.
[155] Morris-Suzuki, "Immigration and citizenship in contemporary Japan," 171.

in Lake Akan village.[156] Out of the three artists they focus on, there is only one woman artist, despite the fact that women artists make up nearly half of the 11 artists living in Akan-ko Ainu Kotan. This highlights the simultaneous misogyny that accompanies the marginalization of the Indigenous Ainu in Japan, suggesting that the work of male Ainu artists are more worthy of being incorporated into the category of Japan's "beauty," and thus, in the eyes of the magazine, more worthy for the Japanese to "mimic." Furthermore, the focus on Ainu art specifically with no mention of Japanese settler colonialism speaks to the magazine's tendency to depoliticize art and aesthetics to avoid difficult conversations about Japan's political history.

The focus on male Ainu artists also builds on Chow's theorization of coercive mimeticism, because again, we see the focus on a masculine ethnic Other, rather than the feminized ethnic Other on whom she focuses. The magazine's focus on male Ainu artists also speaks to the intersectional nature of the colonial violence that the Indigenous Ainu experience. Black feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw originally coined the term "intersectionality," referring to the connection between gender and other factors such as ethnicity, race, class etc. in shaping privilege and discrimination. Gender studies scholar Jennifer Chan-Tiberghien addresses the intersectional violence that Ainu women experience, opening her essay with an Ainu woman named Ryoko Tahara's account of her own experience.[157] Tahara remarks that "the indigenous Ainu have continued to be invaded by the mainstream Japanese culture…," and Ainu women's situations are particularly severe partly due to "the strong patriarchal ideology" among the Ainu.[158] In addition, they face violence from Japanese men. She also notes that "[u]nder this harsh discrimination, some Ainu women chose Japanese men as their spouses, because they wanted to dilute the Ainu blood as thin as they could."[159] However, these women also experienced harassment from their Japanese husbands, who made disparaging remarks about the Ainu.[160]

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[156] "Akan Ainu Arts & Crafts NEXT," *Akan Ainu Arts & Crafts NEXT*, https://akanainu-next.jp/en/; "Artists," *Akan Ainu Arts & Crafts NEXT*, https://akanainu-next.jp/en/artists/.
[157] Jennifer Chan-Tiberghien, "Gender as Intersectionality: Multiple Discrimination against Minority Women in Japan," in *Changing Japanese Business, Economy and Society: Globalization of Post-Bubble Japan*, edited by Nakamura Masao (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 158.
[158] Chan-Tiberghien, "Gender as Intersectionality," 158.
[159] Chan-Tiberghien, "Gender as Intersectionality," 158.
[160] Chan-Tiberghien, "Gender as Intersectionality," 158.

In addition, back to my discussion about *Discover Japan*'s feature articles on Ainu art, it is also important to note how the photos are sized for each artist. For all three of these artists, the photos of their artwork are significantly larger than their own photos.[161] This may reinforce the idea that the author of this section on Ainu art Ōishi Hajime simply exhibits a shallow appreciation for the beauty of Ainu art, rather than the significance of these artists themselves as individual Ainu artists. It also speaks to the problematic depoliticization of art that I had mentioned earlier in my discussion, and plays into Morris-Suzuki's notion of "cosmetic multiculturalism," referring to "a vision of national identity in which diversity is celebrated, but only under certain tightly circumscribed conditions."[162]

Conclusion

Using and building on Chow's theorization of coercive mimeticism, this chapter has addressed the ways in which the construction of Japanese ethno-national identity in mass media promoting Japanese domestic tourism goes beyond a simple dichotomy of the white Western gaze, and a singular Japanese ethnic self. Instead, in addition to these two elements, there is also the negotiation with other ethnic groups in Japan. I first introduced the concept of coercive mimeticism, and explained how it was specifically relevant to domestic tourism. Afterwards, I transitioned towards a discussion of two post-WWII era Japanese domestic tourism campaigns: "Discover Japan" and "Exotic Japan," and highlighted how they reaffirmed and also built upon Chow's theorizations of coercive mimeticism in that they reaffirmed the presence of negotiation with Western categorizations, and also engaged with other ethnic cultures, and all of these engagements involved the construction of a purportedly depoliticized notion of aesthetics. The supposedly "depoliticized" aestheticization of Japaneseness, as depicted in the travel campaigns and also in "Nippon no bi," ties into the saying of "knowledge for knowledge's sake," which creates a feeling of innocence that helps legitimate Japanese nationalists' claims to the country as an object of knowledge. I start addressing this issue in-depth in a more recent example of domestic tourism in mass media, bringing up the April 2020 special issue of the travel magazine *Discover Japan* "Nippon no bi." I addressed this special issue's performance of ethnicity, and

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[161] Ōishi, "Moyō no komakasa wa yutakasa," 98-99; Ōishi, "Shishū ni wa monogatari ga yadoru," 100-101; Ōishi, "Akanko no fūdo ga unda mirai no kōgei," 102-103.
[162] Morris-Suzuki, "Immigration and citizenship in contemporary Japan," 171.

how, despite its acknowledgement of a multi-ethnic Japan, it reinforced logics of inclusion and exclusion through the emphasis on a masculine notion of Japanese uniqueness, and also displays of a cosmetic multiculturalism that, on the surface, show an appreciation for Ainu art and culture, but, in reality, reinforces the structures of settler colonialism on ethnic and gendered lines. We also see here that the erasure of imperial and settler colonial histories are inseparable from the "imagined community" buttressed by Anderson's theorization of print-capitalism and vernacular print media.

In highlighting the ways in which mass media promoting Japanese domestic tourism engages with the multiethnic, I set a key foundation for my discussion of the four YouTubers who are the main focus for this thesis. In this chapter, I began to engage with the centrality of multi-ethnicity in performances of Japanese ethnic authenticity, and the perpetuation of Japan's purportedly "unique," "depoliticized" beauty. In Chapter 2, I further build on this question of the multi-ethnic and performances of ethnic authenticity by focusing on how ethnic minorities born and raised in Japan—I do not intend to draw a direct connection between Indigenous Ainu, and Korean residents of Japan and multiethnic Japanese, as they have differing experiences of marginalization—negotiate with their positionalities, and utilize hegemonic means of knowledge production to make claims to Japan as their "home" as well as an object of knowledge to be consumed by their viewers. I specifically focus on the work of two vloggers for this chapter: Ōkawa Yusuke, who is a Korean resident of Japan, and Taiki Beaufils, who is ethnically French and Japanese, and build upon existing critiques of hybrid vernacular discourse in my analysis.

Chapter 2

Diversifying the Category of "Native Informant": Vlogs by Ōkawa Yūsuke and Taiki Beaufils

On June 20, 2021, YouTuber Ōkawa Yūsuke, who is ethnically Korean but was born and raised in Japan, released a video titled "Cinematic JAPAN - 日本の魅力を世界へ." The video is a compilation of footage he filmed on his travels around Japan in an effort to lift people's spirits in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.[163] It opens with an establishing, majestic shot of Mount Fuji, and a bit later in the cinematic sequence, also includes a drone shot of cherry blossoms and a pagoda, symbols of Japanese nationalism. He narrates: "I never knew. The amazing landscapes [in Japan], delicious food, rich culture, [the] warmth [of Japanese people], also [sic], the strength of Japan."[164]

Furthermore, another YouTuber, Taiki Beaufils, who ethnically French and Japanese, released two vlogs showing viewers the cherry blossoms in his hometown Ōkawachiyama, as a way of, similar to Ōkawa, lifting people's spirits in light of the pandemic. The thumbnails for both the videos vividly depict the beauty of the cherry blossoms.

What do these two YouTubers have in common? They both perpetuate nationalistic sentiments that reinforce the purported uniqueness of Japan's beauty, while also speaking as individuals from ethnic minority groups who have faced marginalization in Japan.[165] Similar to

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[163] Ōkawa Yūsuke, "Cinematic Japan - 日本の魅力を世界へ," June 20, 2021, video, 11:55, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RVoQdf3sFw.

[164] Ōkawa, "Cinematic Japan -日本の魅力を世界へ." Quote is from English subtitles.

[165] It is also important to address how Ōkawa and Beaufils identify themselves regarding their ethnic identities. As I mentioned, Ōkawa speaks as someone who is ethnically Korean but was born and raised in Japan. The umbrella term that academics use for Koreans living in Japan is "Zainichi Korean." However, it is important to note that not all Korean residents of Japan necessarily identify themselves as being "Zainichi Korean." Ōkawa himself does not talk much about his ethnic identity, but when he does bring it up, he calls himself a *kankokujin*（韓国人）, which means Korean person. In addition to that, in the context of Koreans living in Japan, the term *kankokujin* also denotes Koreans in Japan who align themselves with South Korean nationality, and in some of Ōkawa's videos, we can see that he has a South Korean passport, though at the same time, he expresses a sense of detachment from his Korean ethnic identity. For more on how Korean residents of Japan are labeled, see Sonia Ryang, "Introduction," 9. Beaufils is Japanese and French, and he mentions that in his videos. In addition to that, in his bio for his blog, he identifies himself as being *haafu*（ハーフ）, specifically a French *haafu*（フランスハーフ）. *See* Taiki Beaufils, "TAIKI B (たいき）のプロフィール," *Bangkokian Way*, https://bangkokianway.com/taikib_profile/.

the *Discover Japan* magazine issue that I discussed in the previous chapter, there is a common emphasis on the "beauty" of Japan as a means to lift spirits in times of crises.

The main focus for this thesis is addressing the ways in which travel vloggers based in Japan use hegemonic methods of knowledge production as a means of creating a place for themselves as ethnic minorities. In chapter 1, I had been quite critical of *Discover Japan*'s depictions of the purported "beauty" of Japan. Using and building on Chow's theorization of coercive mimeticism and Ivy's discussion of post-WWII domestic tourism travel campaigns, I argued that the emphasis on supposedly "depoliticized" art produced by both Japanese and Ainu artists serves to erase traces of Japan's imperial and colonial history, while also legitimating masculine, nationalist claims to Japan as an object of knowledge, and also highlighting how vernacular forms of media such as magazines facilitate this "imagined community" defined by a logic of inclusion and exclusion. I had primarily focused on the ways in which male Japanese authors working for the magazine perpetuated these hegemonic narratives about Japanese exceptionalism.

In this chapter, I shift towards making sense of the ways in which members of ethnic minority groups marginalized by these same narratives of Japanese exceptionalism are also complicit in perpetuating such narratives. In contrast to the previous chapter, I shift towards the mass medium of online video, which has a much lower barrier of participation compared to print media such as magazines, as well as an audiovisual aspect, contributing to new levels of authenticity and realism. Furthermore, I shift towards discourse produced by minoritarian content producers, and in doing so, I go beyond easy conclusions that simply state that these content producers are simply replicating narratives of Japanese exceptionalism.

Using and building on the critique of hybrid vernacular discourse, as well as poststructuralist theorizations of the so-called "native informant"—referring to, in the context of area studies, locals in the region of study who provide so-called "native" knowledge to the non-native knower—and visuality, I argue that Ōkawa and Beaufils' incorporation of hegemonic narratives—specifically, how they film iconic symbols of Japanese nationalism such as Mount Fuji and cherry blossoms—speak to their attempts to create places for themselves as "authentic," "native" (meaning born and raised in the country) knowledge producers about Japan on YouTube in light of nationalistic sentiments that associate such aesthetic symbols with an

ethnically homogeneous "Japaneseness," and resulting anxieties that they, as ethnic minorities, are not "authentic" enough to be producing knowledge about Japan.

It is important to note some of the limitations to my argument. Of course, in highlighting the ways that these YouTubers use hegemonic narratives reinforcing the "beauty" of Japan to create places for themselves as ethnic minorities, I am not suggesting that they are necessarily conveying liberatory messages about Koreans in Japan and multiethnic Japanese, as it is dangerous to automatically associate minoritarian discourse with explicit messages promoting liberation. I am simply attempting to provide a more generative, nuanced take on their content, rather than falling into the easy conclusion that they are simply replicating nationalist, colonialist sentiments. Also, I do not intend to suggest that Ōkawa and Beaufils' content is representative of all the ways in which Korean residents of Japan and multiethnic Japanese negotiate with their own gender and ethnic identities. Rather, they all have diverse experiences, and Ōkawa and Beaufils' work represents only a small fraction of such experiences. Furthermore, I also do not intend to provide an exhaustive analysis of all of their vlog content, as they deal with a wide variety of topics, including their travels outside of Japan, as well as topics not related to travel. Given the scope of this chapter, I will focus on the vlogs that they make about their travels within Japan. Even then, I will only focus on some aspects of their Japan travel vlogs, as their coverage of their travels inside the country are also quite extensive in themselves, especially Ōkawa's coverage of Japan in his "Around Japan" series.

Considering that I am transitioning from a chapter that addressed print media as the main object of study, I will begin this chapter by establishing the significance of online video as a form of mass media, highlighting its departures from print media such as magazines and advertisements. I will also outline the existing literature on online videos and also travel vlogs more specifically, and discuss how my analysis builds on this new and growing body of scholarship. After establishing the vernacular nature of online video, I will transition towards a discussion of the main methodological approaches that I draw from and build upon for this chapter. Lastly, I discuss Ōkawa and Beaufils' content, focusing on the videos that address their travels within Japan.

Background on Online Video Cultures and Travel Vlogs

As mentioned previously, this chapter shifts away from print media towards a discussion of online mass media, specifically online video. Online mass media such as travel vlogs are distinct from print media such as magazines and advertisements because they introduce a new level of authenticity and intimacy. They are also, I argue, much more vernacular in the sense that they require a significantly lower barrier of participation (for example, you do not need to be a professional videographer to take part in producing online videos, as you simply need access to a video camera, and Internet connection). This new level of authenticity, intimacy, and vernacularism is evident in the low barrier of participation, and the ability for viewers to directly comment on the videos, interacting with the video creator.

Travel vlogging, as I had hinted in my introduction, is a relatively new topic of research, and academics in tourism and hospitality studies, as well as academics in communication studies have addressed this phenomenon. The existing scholarship in tourism and hospitality studies has tended to focus on the potential of vlogs in the marketing of tourist destinations, given that they provide consumers with a perceived sense of authenticity and credibility that differs from other forms of mass media, and how they influence the choices that consumers make. One example of such scholarship is tourism studies scholar Rachel Peralta's 2019 article "How vlogging promotes a destination image: A narrative analysis of popular travel vlogs about the Philippines." In this article, Peralta examines travel vlogs about the Philippines by four non-Filipino vloggers, arguing that their vlogs "play a key role in creating an online destination of a place," and she makes some key points about the ways in which these vloggers create purportedly authentic images of the Philippines as a travel destination for consumption by foreign tourists.[166] However, in Peralta's article, there is not as much in-depth discussion about how these travel vlogs are also connected to deeper, hegemonic practices of knowledge production.[167]

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[166] Rachel L. Peralta, "How vlogging promotes a destination image: A narrative analysis of popular travel vlogs about the Philippines," *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 15, no. 4 (2019): 244.

[167] For more on travel vlogging and blogging, and their relationship to the marketing of the destination image and impacts on consumer choices, *see* Dean Carson, "The 'blogosphere' as a market research tool for tourism destinations: A case study of Australia's Northern Territory," *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 14, no. 2 (2007): 111-119, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1356766707087518; Cheng Yusi, Wei Wei and Lu Zhang, "Seeing destinations through vlogs: implications for leveraging customer behavior to increase travel intention," *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality* 32, no. 10 (2020): 3327-3248; Statia Elliott, "User-Generated Videos in Tourism Destination Marketing: Using Narrative Analysis to Deconstruct Video Travel Stories," *Tourism Travel Research Association: Advancing Tourism Globally*, 44; Mohammad S. Gholamhosseinzadeh, Jean-Michel Chapuis,

In the field of communication studies, there is more of an in-depth focus on the positionalities of travel vloggers, and connections to hegemonic practices of knowledge production. For example, we see this in the work of David C. Oh and Chuyun Oh (2017), and Mikah Lee and Younghan Cho (2021). These four scholars all examine travel vlogs about South Korea by white Canadian expats Simon Stawski and Martina Sazunic, who run the YouTube channel Eat Your Kimchi.

Oh and Oh highlight the ways in which Stawski and Sazunic reinforce divides between the West and South Korea, and gendered notions of white Western superiority.[168] They make excellent points about how these two vloggers reinforce gendered Orientalist ideals and white supremacy. Lee and Cho attempt to provide a more nuanced take compared to Oh and Oh, highlighting the ways in which Stawski and Sazunic "reproduce the discursive themes of infantilizing and othering South Korea, emphasizing cultural hierarchy, though in a subtle, everyday manner."[169] All four of these scholars also make crucial connections between the work of Stawski and Sazunic, and older Orientalist framings of the Other in travelogues, and do an excellent job in highlighting the potential of travel vlogs in producing knowledge about travel destinations[170]

However, there are several limitations to their analysis. Firstly, these scholars tend to focus on the dialogue in Stawski and Sazunic's videos and comments from their viewers. While these are certainly important points of focus when examining vlogs, what these scholars do not sufficiently address is the cinematic aspects of the videos, which also play an important role in shaping meaning, and heavily contributes to the realism that is so crucial to the medium of online video. The audiovisual details in Ōkawa and Beaufils' content, such as their use of drone shots, play a central role in constructing the narratives they convey, and this is what I hope to shed light on in my discussion of their work. Furthermore, while it is important to focus on how white expat vloggers reinforce Orientalist ideals about Asian countries, only focusing on the perspectives of white expats is limiting. This is because it obscures the agencies and experiences

and Jean-Marc Lehu, "Tourism netography: how travel bloggers influence destination image," *Tourism Recreation Research* (2021): 1-17, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02508281.2021.1911274.

[168] David C. Oh and Chuyun Oh, "Vlogging White Privilege Abroad: *Eat Your Kimchi*'s Eating and Spitting Out of the Korean Other on YouTube," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 10 (2017): 696.

[169] Lee and Cho, "Banal Orientalism on YouTube: 'Eat Your Kimchi' as a New Cultural Intermediary and its Representation of South Korea," 69.

[170] Oh and Oh, "Vlogging White Privilege," 699; Lee and Cho, "Banal Orientalism on YouTube," 74.

of, firstly, the locals, whose perspectives I will be touching on in this chapter, as well as expats who are POC (people of colour), whose vlogs I will be addressing in Chapter 3.[171]

Critiquing Hybrid Vernacular Discourse

It is from here that I introduce the concept of critiquing hybrid vernacular discourse. Communication studies scholars Lei Guo and Lorin Lee are the main scholars who extended the concept of critiquing "vernacular discourse" to online video cultures. They built on the work of communication studies scholars Kent Ono and John Sloop (1995), who first introduced the idea critiquing of vernacular discourse in their article "The critique of vernacular discourse." In this article, Ono and Sloop observed that there has been much critique on the discourse of the powerful, but insufficient critique on the discourse of the oppressed.[172] Using depictions of women in a Japanese American newspaper called *The Pacific Citizen* as an example, they argue that discourses produced by groups experiencing oppression are not necessarily counter-hegemonic, highlighting the fluid nature of the boundary between vernacular and mainstream.[173]

Guo and Lee make an important intervention, as they correctly point out that Ono and Sloop's theorization of critiquing vernacular discourse is limited to print media.[174] Depending on the media form, there are different power dynamics at play. For example, online mass media have allowed producers of vernacular discourse to reach a broader audience, and producers of online vernacular discourse have also achieved new levels of authenticity due to the seemingly spontaneous and personal nature of user-generated content. Using the term "hybrid vernacular discourse," Guo and Lee specifically examine content produced by prominent Asian American social media influencers Ryan Higa and Kevin Wu, arguing that these two YouTubers do, to some extent, challenge hegemonic discourses about Asian Americans.[175] However, they also

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[171] It is important to note that the term "POC" is a very North American centric term. However, it is still a useful umbrella term to refer to people who are not white.

[172] Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, "The critique of vernacular discourse," *Communications Monographs* 62, no. 1 (1995): 19-20.

[173] Ono and Sloop, "The critique of vernacular discourse," 22.

[174] Lei Guo and Lorin Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-based Vernacular Discourse: A Case Study of YouTube's Asian Community," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 30, no. 5 (2013): 394, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15295036.2012.755048.

[175] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 392.

argue that the revolutionary potential of Higa and Wu's content is limited, as their videos still perpetuate harmful stereotypes about Asian Americans.[176]

These scholars examine the videos through the lens of hybrid content, hybrid agency and hybrid subjectivity.[177] They define "hybrid content" as being the ways in which these two YouTubers remix mainstream mass media depictions of Asian Americans with their own takes on Asian American identity.[178] For example, Guo and Lee bring up the use of "hybrid content" in one of Wu's videos, titled "Asians just aren't cool enough?". In this video, they note that Wu includes "a headshot of William Hung, a former *American Idol* contestant whose popularity stemmed from his embodiment of a caricatured image of Asian immigrant stereotypes, such as speaking with an English accent and having a nerdy demeanor."[179] Such an image is "remixed" with Wu's critique of these harmful representations in the same video.[180] Specifically, Wu provides his own take on these mainstream mass media depictions, "warn[ing] his Asian audience that the mass media's distortions of Asian images is something that they as Asians are not and should not be happy with."[181]

It is important to note that when theorizing vernacular discourse within the context of online video, there are two distinct registers of vernacular discourse: one referring to minoritarian discourse more broadly (discourse produced by ethnic minorities for example), and another referring to online video as a form of vernacular discourse in itself. Guo and Lee's discussion above primarily focuses on this first register of vernacular discourse, as they specifically highlight the fact that Wu is speaking from his positionality as an Asian American. This register of vernacular discourse is also evident in Ōkawa and Beaufils' content, as they speak as a Korean resident of Japan and as *haafu* (as mentioned, Beaufils identifies himself as such on his blog "Bangkokian Way"), respectively, while also incorporating hegemonic narratives that emphasize the purported "uniqueness" of Japan's beauty. However, in contrast to Guo and Lee, whose theorization of "hybrid content" focuses more so on explicit statements that condemn and overturn stereotypes, Ōkawa and Beaufils employ more subtle, and not necessarily liberatory, ways to create places for themselves as producers of knowledge about Japan.

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[176] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 404.
[177] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 396-397.
[178] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 400.
[179] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse, 400.
[180] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 400.
[181] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 400.

Specifically, they utilize symbols—specifically Mount Fuji and cherry blossoms—that actually reinforce hegemonic narratives about Japanese nationalism to convey the idea that they, as ethnic minorities, can also conform to these masculine nationalist ideals.

The second register of vernacular discourse is the medium of online video, and online video is vernacular in the sense that it requires a much lower barrier of participation compared to older forms of mass media such as film and television. Guo and Lee briefly touch on this register of vernacular discourse in their discussion of hybrid content, observing that "Wu constructed his YouTube persona as an ordinary Asian American with whom his Asian audience could easily identify."[182] Specifically, his videos take place "in his slightly messy bedroom and [he is] dressed in casual clothing."[183] However, to add to Guo and Lee's theorizations, YouTubers such as Ōkawa and Beaufils emphasize the importance of the so-called "cinematic" dimension of videos and also employ hegemonic techniques of film production in their work, specifically evident in their use of drones, and they juxtapose the drone shots with more intimate close-up shots that are more reminiscent of what Guo and Lee discuss. These are both ways they use to simultaneously carve places for themselves as YouTubers, putting a face to the man behind the camera.

Furthermore, Guo and Lee examine Wu and Higa's videos through the lens of what they call "hybrid agency," referring to the entanglements between Wu and Higa's individual agencies as content producers (their ability to choose what kind of content they produce), and YouTube's own agency as an institution, the latter of which refers to the affordances and limitations YouTube provides as a social media platform. Agency refers to the power to act, and it can encompass many gestures. Guo and Lee note that it is important for both Asian and Asian American YouTubers "to win hits for their videos," and to do so, they have to be able to conform to the production logic of YouTube, which, according to them, prioritizes entertainment over "serious discussion of social issues."[184] This speaks to the significance of the social media platform in shaping content, despite platforms' (like YouTube's) ostensible emphasis on the freedom of expression. For example, the slogan for YouTube is "Broadcast Yourself," which, as communication studies scholar and leading scholar of social media platforms Tarleton Gillespie

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[182] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 399.
[183] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 399.
[184] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 402.

points out, conveys the utopian, egalitarian that everyone has easy access to the platform, and are able to freely produce content on this platform.[185] In reality, such promises of freedom for the amateur video maker are simply an illusion, and YouTube has also catered to mainstream, hegemonic media giants.[186]

YouTubers also each have specific audiences to target, which influences their content. Due to the pressure to create entertaining videos, Wu and Higa end up creating videos that actually reinforce harmful Asian American stereotypes.[187] In creating their content, Ōkawa and Beaufils have specific audiences in mind. They target both a Japanese audience, and audiences in the Anglosphere who are interested in traveling to Japan. Guo and Lee are not wrong in saying that there is a huge emphasis on producing entertaining videos on YouTube, and the entertainment factor is certainly evident in both Ōkawa and Beaufils' content. However, in addition to that, if we consider the content of travel vloggers, there is also the need to appeal to viewers' notions of ethnic authenticity, which ties into my earlier discussions about mimeticism. With Ōkawa, he is mimicking aspects of the colonizing country Japan, which speaks to Chow's theorization of the first level of mimeticism. On the other hand, Beaufils' work speaks more so to coercive mimeticism more specifically, as he himself is part Japanese, and taps into markers of purported Japanese ethnic authenticity. Thus, in order to sustain interest, vloggers such as Ōkawa and Beaufils must must tap into purported "markers" of Japanese ethnic authenticity, strongly evident in their depictions of a more purportedly "authentic" Japan embodied in cherry blossoms, Mount Fuji, and kimono.

Lastly, another crucial point of Guo and Lee's theorization of the critique of hybrid vernacular discourse is hybrid subjectivity. By subjectivity, they are referring to how rhetors construct their own identities, and "identities" can encompass their racial and ethnic identities, as well as other forms of identity such as gender identity.[188] By "hybridity," they are referring to the process by which these rhetors both address their own racial and ethnic identities, and also go beyond questions of race and ethnicity to address other so-called "vernacular communities."[189] In addition to addressing how Wu and Higa discuss Asian identities in their videos, Guo and Lee

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[185] Tarleton Gillespie, "The politics of platforms," *New Media & Society* 12, no. 3 (2010): 352-353.
[186] Gillespie, "The politics of platforms," 353.
[187] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 402.
[188] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 397.
[189] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 397.

also highlight that these two YouTubers go beyond questions of Asian American identities, and discuss the ways in which Wu and Higa address topics such as homophobia and commercialism.[190] Wu made a video titled "That's not gay!", in which he criticized people for the "overuse of the term 'gay,'" and such a critique implicitly "combat[ted] the misconceptions and biases against homosexual people and the notion of the effeminate Asian male."[191]

Regarding commercialism, Guo and Lee discuss Higa's video "The iPod Human," which is a parody of Apple's iPod product line.[192] Higa and his friend Sean Fujiyoshi perform as these "iPod humans," who "could 'hold up to six and a half songs,'" and sing said songs in an annoying manner.[193] Guo and Lee observe that such a video "insinuated that iPod products permeate into every aspect of our lives to the point that humans have become the product."[194] What is particularly noteworthy about Guo and Lee's theorization of hybrid vernacular subjectivity is their focus on how Wu and Higa address issues that explicitly concern questions of social justice. It is certainly important to highlight how POC content producers go beyond questions of racial justice, and address other questions of social justice. However, only focusing on issues that explicitly relate to questions of social justice is rather limiting and obscures a fuller range of so-called "vernacular communities." In contrast to Wu and Higa, Ōkawa and Beaufils do not explicitly address issues pertaining to social justice. Rather, the "vernacular communities" whom they reach are individuals who are interested in learning more about the process of vlogging.

There is also another layer to Guo and Lee's theorization of hybrid subjectivity; YouTubers also use their racial and ethnic identities as starting points to deconstruct essentialist notions of race and ethnicity. They bring up the example of how Wu portrays his father, known as Papa Jumba on YouTube. Papa Jumba is a first generation Chinese immigrant to the United States. Guo and Lee observe that in Wu's videos about his father, Papa Jumba sometimes "[exhibits] Asian-like behaviour, such as doing Tai Chi."[195] This feeds into essentialist notions about first generation Asian immigrants. On the other hand though, such "Asian-like behaviour" also acts as a starting point for the deconstruction of boundaries between "Chinese" and

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[190] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 401.
[191] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 401.
[192] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 401.
[193] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 401.
[194] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 401.
[195] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 401.

"American." In addition to Papa Jumba doing Tai Chi, there are "also scenes of him enjoying hip hop music [which has African American origins]."[196]

In contrast to Wu, Ōkawa and Beaufils, as I mentioned before, exhibit markers of their own ethnic identities much more subtly. Ōkawa does not say much about his ethnicity, though he briefly discusses it in one video, and in some of his other videos, we get glimpses of his South Korean passport.[197] At the same time, he engages in perpetuating Japanese nationalist sentiments, breaking down the barriers between "Korean" and "Japanese" (I will elaborate on the longer colonial history between Japan and Korea later in this chapter). Beaufils, as I mentioned, is ethnically French and Japanese. Quite a few of his videos feature his French father in addition to his Japanese mother, and his father would talk about the importance of "making people in France discover Kyūshū," which highlights that Beaufils' content also taps into French Orientalist sentiments.[198]

Videos by Okawa Yusuke and Taiki Beaufils

It is from my intervention into Guo and Lee's theorization of hybrid vernacular discourse that we can discuss the ways in which Ōkawa and Beaufils utilize hegemonic means of knowledge production to create places for themselves on YouTube as "authentic," local producers of knowledge. As mentioned before, Ōkawa speaks as a Korean resident of Japan, and his vlogs detail his travels, and the process of video making. Beaufils is a French and Japanese YouTuber who helps run his parents' lodging house. In my analysis, I highlight the ways in which they attempt to create places for themselves as ethnic minorities who were born and raised in Japan, through their use of visuality—e.g. drone shots—to emphasize Japan's purportedly "unique" beauty. They also have videos detailing their travels outside of Japan, and while those are also significant, they are beyond the scope of this chapter.

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[196] Guo and Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse," 401.
[197] Ōkawa Yūsuke, "My First Question Corner!!!," March 25, 2019, video, 13:11, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLLfSHmCX7U; Ōkawa Yūsuke, "3月に買って良かった物/ Good items to buy in March," April 27, 2019, video, 7:36, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Knp3YHj4H4.
[198] Taiki Beaufils, 「YOU は何しに大川内山へ？［２０１９］佐賀県 VLOG S2EP16」, April 5, 2019, video, 11:00, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhskGKv43Yg&list=PLDZJvJkoQ-03B7DlWPdlLqv33T4c0h8w8&index=15.

We could first bring Ōkawa and Beaufils' work into conversation with the first layer of Guo and Lee's theorization of hybrid subjectivity. As I had mentioned, a major part of Guo and Lee's theorization of hybrid subjectivity involves vernacular rhetors going beyond questions of racial and ethnic identity and reaching other vernacular communities. I mentioned that Guo and Lee tend to focus on how vloggers address social justice issues, which is limiting. I suggest that hybrid subjectivity can also go beyond questions of social justice and also relate to more mundane matters.

In the case of Ōkawa and Beaufils, they touch the vernacular community of online video makers. Ōkawa's channel has various behind the scenes videos explaining to viewers how he shoots his vlogs, and he also has tutorials, in which he explains to viewers how to edit photos and videos, and also gives viewers advice on what equipment to use when shooting the videos. In a vlog titled "[DJI OM 4] Thorough explanation of CINEMATIC video composition! / GIVEAWAY," Ōkawa announces that he will be giving away camera stabilizers to three viewers, and remarks that he wants to help enlarge the existing community of online video makers.[199] Hosting such giveaways helps with this because it improves (however marginally) viewers' access to the equipment needed to produce high quality online videos. In addition, Ōkawa also shows viewers how he edits his cinematic vlogs, and he uses footage he filmed from his "Around Japan" trip to demonstrate his editing process.[200] Showing viewers how he edits his videos provides a new level of transparency, and fosters intimacy between the video creator and their viewers, seemingly breaking down the barriers between these two groups, and establishing his own authenticity as a YouTuber. Beaufils' channel is not quite as extensive as Ōkawa's, but he also targets viewers who are interested in making online videos, evident in his video titled "VLOG! Beginners Guide to Vlogging." In this vlog, he explains what a vlog is as he walks around his neighbourhood in Ōkawachiyama, providing shots of scenic sites while explaining the process of vlogging.[201] The shakiness of the footage and use of selfie shots also establishes the vernacular nature of the online video.[202]

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[199] Ōkawa Yūsuke, "[DJI OM 4] Thorough Explanation of CINEMATIC video composition! / GIVEAWAY," August 28, 2020, video, 14:11, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0eDbafDO6M.

[200] Ōkawa, "[DJI OM 4] Thorough Explanation of CINEMATIC video composition! / GIVEAWAY."

[201] Taiki Beaufils, "VLOG! Beginners Guide to Vlogging," April 6, 2019, video, 6:00, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2qJCHYfsYN4.

[202] Beaufils, "VLOG! Beginners Guide to Vlogging."

Given that this is a form of *hybrid* subjectivity, the boundaries between the mission of spreading the power of online video seemingly detached from questions of ethnicity, and questions of ethnic identity are quite blurred. As I mentioned, Ōkawa explicitly uses footage from his travels throughout Japan in the video where he announces a giveaway for the camera stabilizer, and his "Around Japan" series overall reinforces hegemonic narratives that emphasize the beauty of Japan. Specifically, he had hoped that showing the "beauty" of Japan would help lift people's spirits in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, as Beaufils discusses vlogs, we see a shot of cherry blossoms, which is a typical symbols associated with Japanese nationalism.

It is from this context that I highlight the ways in which Ōkawa and Beaufils, as producers of vernacular discourse, utilize hegemonic narratives of Japanese uniqueness to carve places for themselves as YouTubers and as residents of Japan, unsettling hegemonic notions of what it means to be "native." As I suggested previously, the critique of hybrid vernacular discourse is the main overarching methodological framework that I will use in my analysis of these vloggers' content, and I have outlined the ways in which my analysis relates to, and also builds on Guo and Lee's framing of the critique of hybrid vernacular discourse. As suggested, there are two registers to this concept of "vernacular discourse." On the one hand, we can define them as being producers of vernacular discourse because they both speak as members of ethnic minority groups who have faced discrimination in Japan.[203] On the other hand, they also speak as YouTubers, and we also see another register of hybrid content in which Ōkawa and Beaufils borrow from hegemonic practices of film production and remix that with the more intimate and participatory medium of online video.

The first register is evident from the fact that they borrow from hegemonic discourses that emphasizes the supposed "uniqueness" of Japan's beauty. In Ōkawa's "Around Japan" series, there is a vlog titled "Cinematic JAPAN - 日本の魅力を世界へ"—a video I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter—, which is a compilation of footage from his travels throughout Japan. As I pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, the video opens with a drone shot of Mount Fuji, which has been an iconic landmark in Japan for centuries, and in the modern era,

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[203] Both Korean residents of Japan and multiethnic and multiracial Japanese have faced marginalization in Japanese society. For some key scholarship on the history of Zainichi Koreans, see the work of Sonia Ryang, John Lie and Yoko Demelius. For some key scholarship on *haafu*, see the work of Sayaka Osanami Törngren and Kaori Want.

became a key symbol of Japanese nationalism (Fig. 2.01). In addition, the symbol of Mount Fuji falls into Billig's theorization of banal nationalism, as it occupies a ubiquitous presence, especially in consumer culture (for example, we see Mount Fuji in postcards, on drink labels, souvenirs, etc.).

Historian H. Byron Earhart addresses the changing symbolism of Mount Fuji in his 2011 article "Mount Fuji: Shield of War, Badge of Peace." Before going into his main argument in this article, he remarks that "[f]or most of its history, Fuji has been viewed as a physical, aesthetic, and spiritual phenomenon," and it also appeared "in ancient Japanese poetry."[204] In the medieval period, "it eventually came to be seen by Japanese as the 'number one' mountain of the known world of the three countries of India, China, and Japan," and Mount Fuji's position as a symbol of Japan really solidified during the late Edo period via "the distribution of Hokusai's and Hiroshige's woodblock prints to Europe and the United States."[205] During the 1930s and 1940s, it became a symbol of Japanese militarism. The Japanese state used Mount Fuji to facilitate the "unifying, motiviating, and mobilizing" of Japanese citizens in the wake of the 1931 Manchurian Incident, and in 1938, Mount Fuji "was a stock feature both for the Japanese homefront and the colonies and occupied areas."[206]

In terms of Fuji's significance on the homefront, Earhart brings up a specific example of wartime propaganda from 1942, specifically a photograph titled "Bantam Tank Troop."[207] The photo depicts two male soldiers at the centre, with Mount Fuji in the background "as the crowning touch over this phalanx of boys in outsize uniforms, in front of tanks."[208] According to Earhart, Fuji is both a guardian, and also symbolizes the need for boy soldiers to protect not only this national icon, but also the Japanese nation-state "as the physical land and political entity nuanced by Fuji."[209] We thus see the deep connection between Mount Fuji, and masculine ideals of Japanese nationalism and militarism. Beyond the metropole, the imperial government also sought "to make Fuji the emblem of the vast territory of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," and had envisioned a "train route from Tokyo to Shimonoseki, on to Seoul, Muken,

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[204] H. Byron Earhart, "Mount Fuji: Shield of War, Badge of Peace," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 9, no. 20 (2011): https://apjjf.org/2011/9/20/H.-Byron-Earhart/3528/article.html.
[205] Earthart, "Mount Fuji: Shield of War, Badge of Peace."
[206] Earthart, "Mount Fuji: Shield of War, Badge of Peace."
[207] Earthart, "Mount Fuji: Shield of War, Badge of Peace."
[208] Earthart, "Mount Fuji: Shield of War, Badge of Peace."
[209] Earthart, "Mount Fuji: Shield of War, Badge of Peace."

Beijing, Canton, Hanoi, Saigon, Bangkok, and finally Singapore," though such a train route never came to fruition.[210] A magazine titled *Shashin Shūhō* featured photos of the proposed train, which was named the "Fuji Express," and had "a Mount Fuji-shaped emblem on the front of the locomotive."[211] After 1945, in the wake of Japan's defeat in WWII and its loss of status as an empire, "[t]he patriotic/nationalistic nuances of Fuji have been much more subdued."[212] In the post-WWII era, it became a symbol of pacifism; specifically, it had symbolized Japan's emergence from the ruins of the Second World War, and such symbolism also served to erase Japan's history of military aggression and colonialism.[213]

It is significant that Ōkawa, who is ethnically Korean, uses icon associated with hegemonic narratives of masculine notions of Japanese nationalism and colonialism as an example of the "beauty" of Japan, especially considering the acts of colonial violence that the Japanese Empire committed against Koreans, as well as the continued Othering of Korean residents of Japan by the state. Here, we see the presence of hybrid content because Ōkawa clearly borrows from hegemonic notions of masculine Japanese nationalist sentiments that invoke the uniqueness of Japan's "beauty," and remixes these hegemonic notions with his own positionality as someone who is ethnically Korean. Even though such borrowing is not necessarily liberatory, as it serves to further perpetuate problematic ideals of Japanese nationalism, we could also say that Ōkawa's use of nationalistic symbols raises key questions of who has the right to produce knowledge about Japan. He broadens the category of the so-called "native informant," and asserts that nationality is not necessarily interchangeable with ethnicity. We also see here that "hybrid content" goes hand in hand with the second part of Guo and Lee's theorization of "hybrid subjectivity." As I mentioned previously, Guo and Lee address the ways in which Asian American YouTubers use Asian identity as a starting point to deconstruct the essentialist notions that draw a firm boundary between being "Asian" and being "American." In a similar way, Ōkawa works to deconstruct the boundaries between "Korean" and "Japanese," demonstrating that he too, as someone who is ethnically Korean, can conform to ideals of masculinity that define Japanese nationalism. Such an assertion is especially significant due to the constant Othering that Korean residents of Japan continue to experience.

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[210] Earthart, "Mount Fuji: Shield of War, Badge of Peace."
[211] Earthart, "Mount Fuji: Shield of War, Badge of Peace."
[212] Earthart, "Mount Fuji: Shield of War, Badge of Peace."
[213] Earthart, "Mount Fuji: Shield of War, Badge of Peace."

There is a rich body of scholarship that addresses the history of Korean residents of Japan, and one key work of scholarship is sociologists Sonia Ryang and John Lie's edited volume *Diaspora Without Homeland: Being Korean in Japan*. Japan formally annexed the Korean peninsula in 1910, and Korea was under Japanese colonial rule until 1945. According to sociologist Sonia Ryang, who is a leading scholar on the topic of Zainichi Koreans, "Korea at the time of its colonial annexation was represented in Japanese public discourse in general and travel literature in particular as a deteriorated, dwindling, and corrupt kingdom, which could be saved only by the divine intervention of the Japanese emperor."[214] During the colonial era, many Koreans "traveled" and moved to Japan either by choice to pursue employment and education, or by force as drafted labourers or as comfort women, the latter of which refers to women from Korea and other parts of Asia whom the Japanese army forced into sexual slavery during the Second World War. Korean immigrants to Japan faced much discrimination, and colonial era literature such as Song Yŏng's 1925 short story "The Blast Furnace" vividly depicts their struggles.[215]

In the post-WWII era when Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial rule, there were over two million Koreans living in Japan.[216] It is during this time that we see the firm formation of Japan's Korean diaspora, though there was a drastic reduction in the number of Koreans living in Japan in the next several years after WWII ended.[217] In 1947, they, along with other residents in Japan who were not ethnically Japanese, "came to be subjected to alien registration," and Korean residents of Japan were rendered stateless after the signing of the San Francisco Treaty in 1951.[218] Under that treaty, "all of Japan's former colonies were freed from the colonial yoke, thereby freeing Japan itself from the burden of compensating Koreans and other former colonial subjects remaining in Japan and guaranteeing their human rights."[219]

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[214] Sonia Ryang, "Introduction: Between the Nations," in *Diaspora Without Homeland: Being Korean in Japan*, eds. Sonia Ryang and John Lie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 4-5.

[215] This short story takes place at a factory village called Ōjima, and it follows the experiences of Korean labourers working in a Japanese factory, specifically centering on a mute labourer named Kim Sang-dŏk. He and his fellow labourers are mistreated by their Japanese employer. At the same time, Kim also falls in love with a Japanese woman named Kimiko. *See* Song Yŏng, "The Blast Furnace," in *Rat Fire: Korean Stories from the Japanese Empire*, eds. Lee Jin-kyung, Sang-gyŏng Yi, Chae-yong Kim, and Theodore H. Hughes (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 15-39.

[216] Ryang, "Introduction," 6.

[217] Ryang, "Introduction," 6.

[218] Ryang, "Introduction," 7-8.

[219] Ryang, "Introduction," 7.

Korean residents of Japan have endured a status of statelessness for decades, as Japan had not formally recognized the two Koreas—the Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK)—that emerged in the post-liberation era.[220] This did not change until 1965 with the signing of the Japan-ROK treaty, under which "South Korean nationality became an official national identification under Japanese law."[221] On the other hand, Japan did not recognize North Korea (the DPRK). As mentioned, Ōkawa is part of the group of Korean residents who have South Korean nationality. Despite Japan's recognition of South Korea and Korean residents gaining rights however, they continue to be "treated as outsiders and their exclusion is justified on the basis that they do not have Japanese nationality."[222] For example, Korean residents of Japan have often been attacked by right-wing Japanese nationalists. Former Governor of Tokyo Ishihara Shintarō has referred to Koreans (as well as others living in Japan who are not fully ethnically Japanese) as *sangokujin*, which is a derogatory term that literally translates to "third country people."[223] In doing so, he draws a firm boundary between Korean residents of Japan, and those who are fully ethnically Japanese, and Ōkawa undermines such a constructed boundary.

In addition to Mount Fuji, Ōkawa also includes a drone shot of cherry blossoms at the beginning of his "Cinematic Japan" compilation (Fig. 2.02).[224] Cherry blossoms are another symbol of banal nationalism in Japan, as similar to Mount Fuji, they occupy a ubiquitous presence. For example, during sakura season, there is a proliferation of limited edition cherry blossom themed goods. In this shot, the drone is almost at the same level as the cherry blossoms, and also rises slightly above the cherry blossoms towards the end.[225] Similar to Mount Fuji, cherry blossoms also carry much symbolism that has changed over the centuries. One significant work that addresses the changing symbolism of cherry blossoms is anthropologist Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney's article "Cherry Blossoms and their Viewing: A Window onto Japanese Culture." Ohnuki-Tierney remarks that "cherry blossoms and their viewing have provided

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[220] Ryang, "Introduction," 9.

[221] Ryang, "Introduction," 9.

[222] Ryang, "Introduction," 11.

[223] Min Jeong Lee, "Koreans in Japan: Hate-Speech Case Forces Japan to Confront Workplace Racism," *Bloomberg Equality*, October 17, 2021, https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-10-17/koreans-in-japan-hate-speech-case-highlights-workplace-racism.

[224] Ōkawa, "Cinematic Japan - 日本の魅力を世界へ."

[225] Ōkawa, "Cinematic Japan - 日本の魅力を世界へ."

opportunities for various historical agents to re-create meanings of cherry blossoms and their viewing."[226] In modern Japan, one of the things that cherry blossoms symbolize is Japanese cultural nationalism. It is also a common symbol used in promotional materials about Japanese tourism, and is also associated with a form of masculine nationalism and militarism. Specifically, Ohnuki-Tierney remarks that "[t]he military government used the association between cherry blossoms and a short life as a symbolic weapon to urge soldiers to die for their country."[227]

Furthermore, cherry blossoms are also connected to Japanese colonialism due to the fact that Japan planted cherry trees as a means of desacralizing spaces in colonial Korea. Historian Todd A. Henry addresses this desacralization of space in his work *Assimilating Seoul: Japanese Rule and the Politics of Public Space in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*. He mentions that "the new Government-General building" was built on top of "the former palace grounds of Kyŏngbok Palace," which was the main royal palace during the Chosŏn period.[228] The colonial government also constructed a park on the grounds of the Government-General building, and they planted cherry trees in this park so that visitors would be able to "enjoy cherry blossoms, a cultural symbol of Japan found at many city parks and Shintō shrines."[229]

Similar to Ōkawa, Beaufils' videos also depict the beauty of cherry blossoms, evident in three videos: "佐賀県大川内山で桜が咲き始めた！［２０１９］佐賀県 VLOG EP14," "Cherry Blossom in Japan 2020 Virtual Tour at Home during Quarantine [Part 1]," "Cherry blossom in Japan 2020, Virtual Tour at Home during Quarantine [Part 2]," which I had mentioned earlier in my chapter. Like Ōkawa, he invokes cherry blossoms as a symbol of Japanese uniqueness, while also speaking as someone who is multiethnic and multiracial, which highlights a remixing of hegemonic narratives with the vernacular (by vernacular, I am, for now, referring to the first level of vernacular discourse, which refers to discourses produced by ethnic minorities). It is also important to note that Beaufils has French heritage, and therefore he also occupies a relatively more privileged position compared to other multiethnic and multiracial

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[226] Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, "Cherry Blossoms and their Viewing: A Window onto Japanese Culture," in *The Culture of Japan as Seen through its Leisure*, eds. Sepp Linhart and Sabine Frühstück (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 233.
[227] Ohnuki-Tierney, "Cherry Blossoms and their Viewing," 224.
[228] Todd A. Henry, *Assimilating Seoul: Japanese Rule and the Politics of Public Space in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 23, 51.
[229] Henry, *Assimilating Seoul*, 51.

Japanese.[230] However, multiethnic and multiracial Japanese who are white are still often subject to fetishization and Othering, and thus, we can say that they can be producers of vernacular discourse.

It would also be important to shed light on the longer history of multiethnic and multiracial Japanese (I use these two terms instead of *haafu* because as I mentioned earlier in the chapter, the term *haafu* has negative connotations, and thus, not all mixed race Japanese identify themselves as such) living in Japan. Scholar of mixed race studies Kaori Want addresses depictions of multiethnic and multiracial Japanese in advertisements, and also traces the longer history of representations of multiethnic and multiracial Japanese.[231] She observes that since the Taishō period (1912-1926), multiethnic and multiracial Japanese "have been considered attractive by the Japanese for their exotic appearance."[232] Want includes an excerpt from a newspaper article from the time period about mixed race actresses Okamoto Shizue and Oshima Eiko, whom the writer of the newspaper article called "exotic beauties," which speaks to the sexualization of mixed race women.[233]

At the beginning of the American Occupation of Japan, the visibility of multiethnic and multiracial Japanese rose.[234] Some of the American servicemen who came to Japan at the end of the Second World War "had physical relationships with Japanese women, resulting in the birth of *haafu* [a term that initially referred to people who are Japanese and white but has become a way of referring to multiethnic and multiracial Japanese more broadly] children."[235] Ethnic studies scholar Sayaka Osanami Törngren and sociologist Yuna Satō note that "[d]uring this time, mixed individuals were racialized as *konketsuji* (mixed-blood children) or *ainoko* (mixed-breed children) with negative connotations."[236] In the 1960s, however, there was a major shift in how Japanese people perceived people who were multiethnic and multiracial, which is something that Want, as well as Törngren and Satō mention.[237] During this decade, there was a

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[230] Törngren and Satō, "Beyond being either-or," 805.
[231] Kaori Want, "*Haafu* Identities Inside and Outside of Japanese Advertisements," *Asia Pacific Perspectives* 13, no. 2 (2016): 85.
[232] Want, "*Haafu* Identities Inside and Outside of Japanese Advertisements," 85.
[233] Want, "*Haafu* Identities Inside and Outside of Japanese Advertisements," 85.
[234] Want, "*Haafu* Identities Inside and Outside of Japanese Advertisements," 85.
[235] Want, "*Haafu* Identities Inside and Outside of Japanese Advertisements," 85.
[236] Törngren and Satō, "Beyond being either-or," 804.
[237] Want, "*Haafu* Identities Inside and Outside of Japanese Advertisements," 85; Törngren and Satō, "Beyond being either-or," 804.

"*haafu* boom," in which the generation of multiracial and multiethnic Japanese born during the era of the American Occupation came of age, and "became popular in show business as singers, models, athletes, and actors."[238] Multiracial and multiethnic Japanese have also been celebrated and admired in more recent years.[239] Despite such admiration, however, multiracial and multiethnic Japanese also continue to experience marginalization. Törngren and Satō have interviewed various multiethnic and multiracial Japanese, and such interviews provide much insight about the varied ways in which these individuals negotiate with their own racial and ethnic identities. Two of the people whom they interview are white American and Japanese, and their names are Daiki and Brittany. Both of them go into detail about how they identify themselves more so as being white American rather than Japanese because they constantly felt like they were outsiders in Japan.[240] Although Beaufils is not as explicit about expressing such feelings, the inclusion of nationalistic symbols such as cherry blossoms is a way for him to create a place for himself as a "native" producer of knowledge about Japan, and "prove" his "Japaneseness."

The second register of hybrid content has to do with the vernacular medium of online video, which goes hand in hand with Ōkawa and Beaufils' positionalities as producers of minoritarian discourse. Both of them use hegemonic methods of film production in the form of drone shots, which is juxtaposed with the vernacular medium of the YouTube video (it is vernacular in the sense that it is widely accessible and viewers can directly comment on said videos, cultivating a sense of intimacy between the video creator and the audience). What hegemonic narratives can drone shots enforce? I argue that it reinforces hegemonic narratives that we see in area studies about the targeting and capturing of knowledge from the so-called "other place," meaning an "authentic" Japan. The use of drone cameras speaks to a combination of Martin D. Heidegger's theorization of the modern world picture, and Chow's theorization of the world target. To provide a brief summary of the Heidegerrian modern world picture, it refers to the world as it is, rather than simply an imitation of the world.[241]

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[238] Want, "*Haafu* Identities Inside and Outside of Japanese Advertisements," 85.
[239] Törngren and Satō, "Beyond being either-or," 804.
[240] Törngren and Satō, "Beyond being either-or," 814.
[241] Martin D. Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977), 129.

This era of the world picture is also defined by man becoming *subiectum*, and thus dominating this so-called "world picture." The use of the term "picture" reinforces a sense of visuality, therefore, it is relevant to the very visual nature of Ōkawa and Beaufils' content, and these two vloggers play the part of the masculinized *subiectum* who tries to conquer and capture the "world picture," while also broadcasting this virtual form of conquest to a broad audience who wish to learn more about the "beauty" of Japan. Chow builds on the concept of the Heidegerrian world picture in her essay "The Age of the World Target." She discusses the militaristic origins of area studies—referring to a series of fields in which the primary object of study is an "area"—, and specifically points to the visuality underlying these militaristic origins, in which "other cultures are always viewed as the military and information target fields."[242]

Civilian drone cameras—like the ones that Ōkawa and Beaufils use to shoot their videos—are connected to the longer history of aerial warfare. Chow suggests in her work that the Second World War was a major turning point in warring activities, as we see the diminishing of "the actual physical warring activities," and a shift towards "the new age of relativity and virtuality."[243] We see the shift towards virtuality in the use of aerial bombing, which "destroyed once and for all those classic visual boundaries that used to define battle."[244] The example that Chow begins with is the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which was "pictorialized in the now familiar image of the mushroom cloud."[245] To Chow, it was a significant "epistemic event in a global culture in which everything has become (or is mediated by) visual representation and virtual reality."[246] She also brings up more recent examples such as the aerial bombings of Iraq.[247]

Such aerial bombings divided the world "into an above and a below in accordance with the privilege of access to the virtual world."[248] Furthermore, such a dynamic goes beyond warfare, and also extends to times of peace. Civilian drones also have a similar effect of creating such divisions between "above" and "below." Ōkawa and Beaufils' use of drones in particular is

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[242] Rey Chow, "The Age of the World Target: Atomic Bombs, Alterity, Area Studies," in *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory and Comparative Work* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2006), 41.

[243] Chow, "The Age of the World Target," 31-32.

[244] Chow, "The Age of the World Target," 32.

[245] Chow, "The Age of the World Target," 25.

[246] Chow, "The Age of the World Target," 26-27.

[247] Chow, "The Age of the World Target," 35.

[248] Chow, "The Age of the World Target," 35.

interesting to think about in this light because they, as ethnic minorities in Japan, end up taking on a privileged access to the virtual world.

The drone shot of Mount Fuji gives the illusion that Ōkawa himself is at eye level with the mountain, emphasizing his empowered positionality as the masculine *subiectum* taking control of the "world picture." Mount Fuji is viewed as a sort of "target field," though in contrast to Chow's theorization of the "world target," it is not meant to be destroyed, but rather captured for the sake of producing knowledge. The inclusion of Mount Fuji as the opening shot is particularly significant due to its connections to a long history of Japanese colonization, and also the violence that Koreans endured under Japanese colonial rule, as well as after the colonial era.

Ōkawa's drone shot of Mount Fuji provides an interesting contrast to older literature that addressed the relationship between Zainichi Koreans and Mount Fuji. Specifically, we can look to Kim Tal-su's 1951 short story "In the Shadow of Mount Fuji" ("Fuji no mieru mura de"). This short story is about a Korean man who, along with his fellow Korean friends, accompanies their Japanese friend, a *burakumin* man named Iwamura Ichitarō, to his home village to visit his family. Significantly, this village is near Mount Fuji, and the narrator remarks that on their way to this village, they constantly saw the mountain; it was either "on [their] right or [their] left or behind [them]."[249] Kim combines the imposing nature of Mount Fuji—a symbol of Japanese nationalism and militarism—with the marginalization that the narrator and his Korean friends experience, with Iwamura telling them to not use Korean in front of the family.[250] At the end of the story, after Iwamura's family shuns the narrator and his friends for being Korean, the narrator takes a gun, goes outside, and shoots at Mount Fuji.[251] Such a scene symbolizes the narrator's bitter resentment towards Japanese nationalism and the history of colonialism, as well as the continued marginalization of Korean residents of Japan in the post-liberation era. However, of course, his shooting at Mount Fuji proves to be futile. On the other hand, Ōkawa's drone shot of Mount Fuji speaks to a new way of "targeting" and "capturing" the image of Mount Fuji. In this case, the gun is replaced with a camera, and instead of a futile attempt to destroy this symbol of Japanese nationalism, Ōkawa uses the drone to capture the "picture" of Mount Fuji to assert his position as a knowledge producer who promotes tourism to Japan.

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[249] Kim Tal-su, "In the Shadow of Mount Fuji," in *Into the Light: An Anthology of Literature by Koreans in Japan*, ed. Melissa L. Wender (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 51.
[250] Kim, "In the Shadow of Mount Fuji," 63.
[251] Kim, "In the Shadow of Mount Fuji," 65.

In contrast to Ōkawa, Beaufils does not employ drone footage in his depiction of cherry blossoms, though he does include drone shots of his hometown Ōkawachiyama, and these shots depict buildings, trees and mountains (Fig. 2.03, Fig. 2.04). We see this in his video 「佐賀県大川内山で桜が咲き始めた！［2019］佐賀県 VLOG EP14」(English translation for this title would be "The cherry blossoms have started blooming in Ōkawachiyama in Saga Prefecture!").[252] The drone shots emphasize his positionality as a *subiectum* who targets and captures the town where he was born and grew up, effectively making claims to the area.[253] However, as I will elaborate later on in my discussion, there are limits to his claims to Ōkawachiyama as home, and this is evident in the contrast between the drone shots of his hometown, and how he shoots cherry blossoms, which, to him, add to the feeling of "Japaneseness" (Fig. 2.05).

Ōkawa and Beaufils' borrowing of hegemonic narratives that reinforce the "unique" beauty of Japan also speaks to the significant role of hybrid agency in shaping his content. As I mentioned before, "hybrid agency" refers to the tensions between the YouTuber's agency in shaping their content, and the platform's agency, the latter of which could severely limit the revolutionary potential of YouTubers' content. I mentioned that Guo and Lee's theorization of "hybrid agency" is limiting in the sense that they tend to focus on the pressure for YouTubers to produce entertaining videos. I argue that in addition to that, YouTubers such as Ōkawa and Beaufils also face the pressure of producing videos that cater to viewers' notions of ethnic "Japanese" authenticity. Even though they may have personally made the choice to incorporate hegemonic narratives about the "beauty" of Japan, there is also no doubt that they are aware of what the viewers expect of them.

Ōkawa in particular has expressed this concern about his authenticity as a producer of knowledge about Japan in a Tweet. He questions whether he even has the right to talk about Japan, as, according to him, some people have issues with the fact that he is an ethnically Korean individual pretending to be Japanese (日本人のフリをして), and "conveying to viewers the

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[252] Taiki Beaufils, 「佐賀県大川内山で桜が咲き始めた！［２０１９］佐賀県 VLOG EP14」, March 27, 2019, video, 2:14, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEZH_7cOx-E.

[253] Beaufils, 「佐賀県大川内山で桜が咲き始めた！［２０１９］佐賀県 VLOG EP14」.

beauty of Japan" (日本の魅力を伝える) (Fig. 2.06).[254] Even though he does not usually say much about his personal experiences being a Korean resident of Japan, such a Tweet speaks volumes about the broader marginalization of Korean residents of Japan, as well as the enduring legacy of Japan's colonization of the Korean peninsula, which I had discussed earlier in this section. It is from this context that we understand why Ōkawa has been concerned about talking about the beauty of Japan as someone who is ethnically Korean and holds South Korean nationality. He conveys the fear that he is not "authentic" enough to speak of Japan, as he does not fulfill imperialistic notions of the "authentic" native informant, thus highlighting his struggle to create a place for himself as an "authentic," local knowledge producer.

On the other hand, Beaufils does not use his drone when filming the cherry blossoms, which, as mentioned, are a symbol of Japanese cultural nationalism. Beaufils himself explicitly establishes the relationship between cherry blossoms and Japaneseness as well, as evident in a comment reply to one of his viewers, as I had mentioned before. Furthermore, in some of the shots depicting the cherry blossoms, he films at a low angle to highlight the dominant position of the cherry blossoms (Fig. 2.07). This perhaps represents a feeling of out of place-ness due to being half Japanese rather than fully ethnically Japanese. In addition to this video, as I mentioned before, Beaufils has posted several videos about cherry blossoms, telling viewers about the beauty of the cherry blossoms in Ōkawachiyama. In the thumbnail for one of the videos ("Cherry Blossom in Japan 2020 Virtual Tour at Home during Quarantine [Part 1]"), we see Beaufils placing himself at the center amongst the cherry blossoms, highlighting his central role as a producer of knowledge about cherry blossom viewing in Japan (Fig. 2.08). This highlights that he has, to some extent, created a place for himself as a multiethnic Japanese.

However, in his other video "Cherry blossom in Japan 2020, Virtual Tour at Home during Quarantine [Part 2]," the thumbnail depicts his Japanese mother wearing a kimono and standing amidst the cherry blossoms instead of himself, even though he is the main narrator of this video (Fig. 2.09). Such a decision is perhaps meant to appeal to viewers' notions of authenticity, implying that including himself in the thumbnail instead of his mother would not

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[254] Yusuke Ōkawa (@yusukeokawa), "日本の魅力を伝える動画を公開したものの、
韓国人である僕が日本人のフリをして日本の魅力を伝えるのが良くない
という意見があるようです。
そうなのでしょうか？," Twitter, June 27, 2021,
https://twitter.com/yusukeokawa/status/1409051499330641926.

provide the same level of "authenticity," as well as Orientalist notions about the feminized ethnic Other. Such a depiction also parallels posters targeted towards foreign travelers who want to come to Japan, as such posters also commonly depict a Japanese woman wearing a kimono to create a sense of feminized ethnic authenticity. This also ties back to my earlier discussion of Chow's theorization of coercive mimeticism, where the burden of performing ethnic authenticity is placed on women. Existing poststructuralist critiques about area studies often highlight the feminized position of the "native informant." Literary scholar Shu-mei Shih discusses the central role of so-called "native women" in fulfilling non-native experts' "exotic and erotic fantasies for re-identification."[255] Her observations focus on the academic context, and native wives specifically, but such observations are also relevant to the broader exoticization of the feminized ethnic Other. Beaufils' depiction of his mother in the thumbnail also speaks to his desire for reidentification. Also, at the beginning of this video, Beaufils wears clothing made by his mother that he says "looks almost like a *yukata*."[256] Such a remark is significant because, in addition to *kimono*, a *yukata*—a type of kimono that is more casual and is usually worn during the summertime at festivals and at *onsen*—is another form of attire that reinforces an image of Japanese ethnic authenticity. The fact that he remarks the clothing he is wearing is "almost like a *yukata*" symbolizes an ambivalence to his own ethnic identity.

In featuring these symbols of Japanese nationalism and also through their viewers' compliments about the authenticity of their content, Ōkawa and Beaufils also push us to rethink and broaden who is worthy of producing knowledge about Japan, thus complicating existing theorizations of the so-called "native informant." The position of the "native informant" is commonly discussed in poststructuralist critiques of area studies. For Japan studies in particular, scholars such as literary scholar Naoki Sakai and historian Harry Harootunian have highlighted the "native informant's" complicity in structures of knowledge production in Japan studies, specifically bringing up the concept of "bilateral narcissism." In the existing literature, there is the assumption that the "native informant" is fully ethnically Japanese. Sakai has addressed the ways in which the "native" has also benefited from the structure of knowledge production in Japan studies, as it has promoted Japanese nationalistic sentiments. It would be too simplistic to

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[255] Shu-mei Shih, "Racializing Area Studies, Defetishizing China," *positions: asia critique* 27, no. 1 (2019): 37, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/717706.

[256] Taiki Beaufils, "Cherry blossom in Japan 2020, Virtual Tour at Home during Quarantine [Part 2]," April 4, 2020, video, 6:59, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSbfo4VQw3g.

say that Ōkawa and Beaufils are simply internalizing and perpetuating these nationalistic sentiments. While it is the case, they also do so to create a place for themselves as ethnic minorities, and as YouTubers who vlog about Japan.

Conclusion

This chapter has shifted towards a discussion of online mass media, specifically focusing on the travel vlog and examining the work by two vloggers born and raised in Japan: Ōkawa Yusuke and Taiki Beaufils. Using and building on existing theorizations of the critique of hybrid vernacular discourse, I have argued that Okawa and Beaufils' utilize hegemonic narratives about the supposed "uniqueness" of Japan's beauty, and visuality in an attempt to create places for themselves as ethnic minorities who were born and raised in Japan, and also as YouTubers who act as producers of knowledge about the country. Specifically, they employ techniques of visualism to complicate the myth of ethnic homogeneity and unsettle the category of "native informant." The next chapter will shift away from vloggers born and raised in Japan, and examine videos by expats who have lived in Japan for years.

Chapter 3

The Expat as Knowledge Producer: The Vlogs of Loretta Scott and Paolo de Guzman

On October 23, 2021, Black American YouTuber Loretta Scott uploaded to her YouTube channel KemushiChan ロレッタ a vlog titled "How locals react to me in a traditional, Japanese wedding dress [4K]." In this video, she travels to Nanao, a city in Ishikawa Prefecture.[257] There, she learns about the local culture, and has the opportunity to try on a traditional bridal kimono. Although the scenes where she tries on the bridal kimono occupies a rather small portion of the vlog, the title of the video focuses on that experience alone, and the thumbnail of the video depicts her in the bridal kimono.

About three years before, on October 5, 2021, Filipino American YouTuber Paolo de Guzman uploaded a vlog titled "Top 10 Things to DO in NIKKO Japan | WATCH BEFORE YOU GO | Onsen Paradise."[258] In this video, he shows viewers some key places to go to and things to do when traveling to Nikko, one of which is going to a theme park called Edo Wonderland, which capitalizes on tourists' nostalgia for the Edo period (1603-1868). While in this theme park, de Guzman shows viewers that they can rent Edo era attire to wear, and significantly, he chooses to don the attire of a feudal lord. As he walks around, the locals bow to him.[259]

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[257] Loretta Scott, "How locals react to me in a traditional, Japanese wedding dress [4K]," October 23, 2021. Video, 24:24, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvSZm1t6xcc. I refer to Scott as Black American to denote that firstly, she is American, and also, she specifically identifies herself as being Black, rather than African American. *See* Loretta Scott, "28 Facts about Me & Japan // 私について 28 のこと," video, 13:00, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-YNkEMpH6w. This is important to note because the term "African American" refers to Black people in the United States who are "direct descendents of enslaved Africans." Black communities in the United States do not just encompass these individuals, but also include people who do not necessarily identify as African American, such as first and second generation Black immigrants. For more on the difference between "Black" and "African American," *see* Cydney Adams, "Not all black people are African American. Here's the difference.," *CBS News*, June 18, 2020, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/not-all-black-people-are-african-american-what-is-the-difference/.

[258] De Guzman identifies himself as being Filipino American on the "about" section of his website *Tokyo Zebra*. *See* "Meet the Zebras!," *Tokyo Zebra*, https://www.tokyozebra.com/about.

[259] Paolo de Guzman, "Japan Shrine Manners | DONT make FOREIGNER MISTAKES," July 7, 2017. Video, 3:14, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5F5M7Lei7yQ

What these two scenarios have in common is that they both speak to a way in which people of colour (POC) expats create places for themselves as ethnic minorities in Japan by tapping into markers of a purportedly "authentic" Japan. In chapter 1, I built on Chow's theorization of coercive mimeticism to examine the ways in which Japanese ethno-national identity as constructed and performed in the context of Japanese domestic tourism is not a product of a homogeneous ethnicity nor a simple dichotomy between Japan and the Western gaze, but rather, also involves engagement with other ethnic groups. In that chapter, I focused on print media as a form of vernacular discourse, examining Ivy's discussion of advertisements promoting domestic tourism campaigns within Japan, as well as constructions of Japanese ethno-national identity in a special issue from the travel magazine *Discover Japan*, which focuses on the purportedly "unique" beauty of Japan. I highlighted the ways in which the use of "depoliticized," banal nationalism erased Japan's history of colonialism and imperialism.

My discussion of the supposedly depoliticized aestheticization of Japan provided a foundation for chapter 2, in which I shifted towards online video as another, newer form of vernacular discourse, and built on existing critiques of hybrid vernacular discourse. I discussed the work of Ōkawa Yūsuke and Taiki Beaufils, who both wished to convey hegemonic notions of the "beauty" of Japan to their viewers. At the same time, however, they speak as ethnic minorities who were born and raised in Japan, and come from groups who have historically faced marginalization. I go beyond simply condemning their perpetuation of hegemonic narratives about Japanese nationalism to highlight a more generative aspect to their content: they utilize hegemonic notions of knowledge production (specifically techniques of visualism and visuality) to create places for themselves as "authentic," "local" knowledge producers about Japan online, complicating the existing category of the "native informant."

In this chapter, I move towards a discussion about vloggers who were not born and raised in Japan, but rather, chose to move to this country as adults. I examine the ways in which Scott and de Guzman make claims to Japan as their home, and the mechanisms by which they do so differ from the approaches of Ōkawa and Beaufils because there is also the added layer of learning the language and the culture.

I will continue to incorporate Guo and Lee's theorization of the critique of hybrid vernacular discourse, and also introduce and build upon poststructuralist theorizations of the non-native area studies scholar in my analysis of Scott and de Guzman's content. I argue that

Scott and de Guzman's videos provide a more nuanced, generative take on the expat as a non-native knowledge producer, going beyond simplistic notions that expats are merely replicating Orientalist, imperialistic sentiments. I do not deny that Scott and de Guzman are complicit in perpetuating these ideals, but rather, I am primarily focusing on how the perpetuation of these ideals, combined with their explicit efforts to challenge the hegemonic narrative of ethnic homogeneity perpetuated by the Japanese state, speaks to their own desire to carve a place for themselves both online and offline as "authentic" knowledge producers. I argue that Scott and de Guzman attempt to create a place for themselves as expats living in Japan through the reliance on so-called "native knowledge," demonstrating their fluency in the language (whether that be the Japanese language or body language pertaining to etiquette), and their participation in cultural activities, specifically the donning of traditional attire.

As Scott and de Guzman are speaking as expats, this chapter begins with a discussion of the figure of the expatriate, or "expat" for short, outlining the existing scholarship about the expat, and bringing the figure of the expat into conversation with poststructuralist theorizations of the non-native area studies scholar. From here, I transition towards a brief discussion of the critique of hybrid vernacular discourse, which is a concept that I introduced in the previous chapter, and discuss how I will be incorporating the critique of hybrid vernacular discourse for this chapter. Afterwards, I will discuss the content produced by Scott and de Guzman in relation to my take on these theorizations, highlighting the three ways in which they attempt to make a place for themselves. I will first begin by discussing Scott and de Guzman's reliance on the perspectives of Japanese locals, highlighting how their use of native informants in the videos contributes to their authenticity as non-native producers of knowledge. I will then go beyond the significance of the so-called "native informant," and transition towards how Scott and de Guzman carve a place for themselves more so on their own terms through the use of language (which encompasses both the Japanese language as well as body language), and also their participation in cultural activities, specifically focusing on their donning of "traditional" clothing. Similar to my chapter on Ōkawa and Beaufils, I do not intend to suggest that this chapter is a comprehensive analysis of all the videos that Scott and de Guzman post on their respective channels. Both of these YouTubers produce much vlog content about their lives in and outside of Japan, and it would thus be impossible to cover all the different themes that they explore in their channels.

The Expat as a Producer of Knowledge

As mentioned previously, in contrast to the two vloggers—Ōkawa and Beaufils—whom I discussed in the previous chapter, Scott and de Guzman were not born and raised in Japan, but rather, they are speaking as expatriates, which is a term that refers to individuals who reside outside of their native country.[260]

Firstly, I will provide some background information on these two vloggers. Scott is originally from Virginia, and she had been learning the Japanese language since she was in high school.[261] She moved to Japan to pursue graduate studies and continues to work there to this day. De Guzman has lived in Japan for 15 years, and became interested in living in Japan as a university student. Both Scott and de Guzman produce vlogs primarily directed at English-speaking foreigners who are interested in travelling to and/or living in Japan, although they also cater to Japanese-speaking viewers, evident in their use of Japanese subtitles, and in Scott's case, occasionally making Japanese language videos without English subtitles. They each have more than one channel on YouTube. Scott's two channels are KemushiChan ロレッタ, which she runs by herself and focuses on her travels throughout Japan as well as her experiences learning about Japanese language and Japanese culture, and Boomlore, the latter of which she runs with her partner Boomer. De Guzman also has two channels: Paolo fromTOKYO, which focuses on his travels throughout Japan and his life in Japan, and Tokyo Zebra, which is primarily about his life with his partner Maiko and their son. I chose to focus on KemushiChan ロレッタ for Scott and Paolo fromTOKYO for de Guzman because these channels provide more insight about their individual positionalities as expats.

Expats occupy a liminal position between more short-term foreign tourists, and locals. There is a growing body of scholarship on them, especially concerning expat travel vloggers and travel bloggers. One early work of scholarship that addresses expat travel bloggers is communication studies scholars Qi Tang and Chin-Chung Chao's 2010 article "Foreigners' archive: contemporary China in the blogs of American expatriates." They examine three blogs (two male bloggers and one female blogger) produced by "ordinary American travelers," and

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[260] In some respects Ōkawa himself may be considered an expat as he has South Korean nationality, but it is more complicated because he was born and raised in Japan, has a Japanese name and speaks Japanese.

[261] Loretta Scott, "Why I Speak Japanese," May 6, 2018. Video, 10:46, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PGgeIh18_A; Loretta Scott, "Meet Loretta Scott: Founder of KemushiChan," *KemushiChan*, http://www.kemushichan.com/en/about.html.

bring them into conversation with older Euro-American travel writings, highlighting points of continuity and points of change.[262] Tang and Chao observe that the two male bloggers whose blogs they examined "treated China either as a thrilling game to play or an exotic Wild West in the East to conquer."[263] On the other hand, the one female blogger whom Tang and Chao discuss (a woman named Jocelyn) "looked at the country as if it were her home," "[making] it very clear in her blog that it was much easier for her to find more soulmates and lead a far more social life in China than in the US because most Chinese people treated her as one of their own kind."[264] By going beyond simplistic connections between travel blogs and Orientalist travel writings, Tang and Chao provide a fruitful point of departure, though their discussion of Jocelyn's claiming of China as her home leaves a bit to be desired. Even though Tang and Chao provide some excellent points about the gendered positionalities of these bloggers, there is not as much discussion of the simultaneous significance of ethnicity and race in shaping claims to the host country as "home." This is problematic because—without reinforcing essentialist notions of race and ethnicity—, these two factors, in addition to the role of gender, contribute to the contexts under which these expat bloggers and vloggers produce knowledge and make claims to the host country as their "home."

The more recent scholarship on expat travel vloggers and bloggers does address their racial, ethnic and gendered positionalities. However, there tends to be more of a focus on white expats rather than POC expats, although there is a growing body of literature on the latter. Regarding the latter, we can look to Jaya Z. Powell's 2015 undergraduate thesis titled "Denying Difference: Japanese Identity and the Myth of Monoethnic Japan," and sociology doctoral student Asia Bento's 2020 article "How African American women experience hypervisibility in Japan and South Korea," which focuses on blogs by African American women who are living as more short-term expats in Japan and South Korea. Bento argues that they respond to hypervisibility in four ways: "(1) they do nothing, (2) they stare back, (3) they downplay stigma, and (4) they become racial ambassadors."[265] The limitation to Bento's work is, as she points out,

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[262] Tang Qi and Chin-chung Chao "Foreigners' archive: contemporary China in the blogs of American expatriates," *Chinese Journal of Communication* 3, no. 4 (2010): 392, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17544750.2010.516574.

[263] Tang and Chao, "Foreigners' archive: contemporary China in the blogs of American expatriates," 395.

[264] Tang and Chao, "Foreigners' archive: contemporary China in the blogs of American expatriates," 395-396.

[265] Asia Bento, "How African American women experience hypervisibility in Japan and South Korea," *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 26, no. 4 (2020): 550, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13504630.2020.1783224.

that she focuses on expats who were living in the two countries for a shorter period of time, and who were thus not necessarily fluent with the language or the customs.[266] On the other hand, Powell also addresses the experiences of African American women who have lived in Japan for a long time, bringing up, for example, the work of a blogger named Nandie Taylor.[267]

Using the methodology of Black feminist autoethnography, Powell provides important insights about the discrimination that Black women (primarly African American women) face in Japan as well as their struggles negotiating with their racial identities, incorporating her personal experiences as well as those of other Black women, and also discussing blogs and vlogs by these Black women expats. She primarily focuses on the discrimination that Black women face, and while that is certainly an important topic to address, *in addition* to that, it is also important to more deeply address the ways in which Black women residents of Japan utilize their knowledge of Japanese language and culture to assert their agencies, and carve places for themselves, highlighting how it connects to broader area studies objectives of "knowing" the Other. Powell touches on her and other Black women's knowledge of Japanese language and culture, noting that despite their fluency in both the language and the culture, locals still marginalize them, expressing surprise at their abilities.[268] In my analysis, I intend to go into more detail about the ways in which Black American women expats assert their agencies via instrumentalizing their knowledge of Japanese language and culture to blur the boundaries between "foreigner" and "Japanese." Powell discusses Ariana Miyamoto—winner of the Miss Universe Japan title—at the beginning of her thesis, and how she has adopted "markers" of a purportedly "authentic" Japaneseness such as donning a kimono.[269] Discussing Miyamoto's positionality and her efforts to blur the boundaries between "Blackness" and "Japaneseness" is certaintly important. However, *in addition* to Miyamoto, who speaks as a celebrity, it is also important to focus on the work of microcelebrities to further shed light on the vernacularity of identity construction. Again, this is not to invalidate Powell's experiences, nor the experiences of the other women whom she talks about in her thesis. By introducing this new perspective, I intend to shed more light on the diversity of Black women's experiences in Japan. In contrast to this growing body of

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[266] Bento, "How African American women experience hypervisibility in Japan and South Korea," 564.
[267] Jaya Z. Powell, "Denying Difference: Japanese Identity and the Myth of Monoethnic Japan," (bachelor's thesis, Duke University, 2015), 49.
[268] Powell, "Denying Difference," 76-77.
[269] Powell, "Denying Difference," 91.

scholarship about Black women's experiences in Japan, there is little scholarship about Filipino residents of Japan on the other hand, especially that of Filipino expat bloggers and vloggers.

Scott and de Guzman have lived in Japan for years, and have become very well-acquainted with the language and the culture, and they use their familiarity with Japanese language and culture to establish their authenticity as knowledge producers. Again, in saying so, I do not intend to discount the experiences of the bloggers whom Bento and Powell address in their work. Rather, Scott and de Guzman's experiences should be examined *in addition* to the experiences of these expats. This sheds new light on how expats negotiate with their own positionalities because long-term expats can use their abundant knowledge of languages and customs to prove their "authenticity" as producers of knowledge on YouTube.

How can we make sense of Scott and de Guzman's positionalities as long-term expats? I suggest that we can build upon poststructuralist critiques of the non-native area studies scholar.[270] To provide some context, area studies is a broad category that encompasses a variety of fields, which all emphasize the gathering of knowledge about a specific "area" (for example, Japan studies focuses on compiling knowledge about Japan as an "area"). One of the key

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[270] Some of the main scholars who address the positionalities of non-native area studies scholars include historian Harry Harootunian, and literary scholar Shu-mei Shih. In his 2017 article "Other people's history," Harootunian reflects on his own position as a historian of Japan, remarking on the implications of writing about "another's national history and retailing its national *amour propre*," and deeming it "a poor career choice." In other words, he is sharply critical of those who peddle another country's national history, and reflects on his own positionality as a Japan studies scholar. Harootunian voices valid concerns about the claiming of another's national history, given the militarist and imperialistic roots of area studies. In his critique, Harootunian draws from Miyoshi Masao's essay "Japan is not Interesting," in which he laments the lack of critical thought in Japan. Specifically, "Miyoshi turned his sights on the Japanese themselves and whatever shortcomings he charged against them would rebound to the second order of practitioners of Japan-related studies, the foreign Japan specialists and what might be called their single-minded dedication to the janitorial care of an untroubled image of Japanese society." *See* Harry D. Harootunian, "Other people's history: some reflections on the historian's vocation," *Japan Forum* 29, no. 2 (2017), 146, 151. In addition, Shih also touches on representations of non-white, non-native area studies scholars, discussing the concept of fetish and the significance of considering the role of race in area studies. She specifically focuses on literary depictions of Malaysian Chinese, and Japanese scholars of China, examining the work of Malaysian Chinese author Ng Kim Chew, and Chinese American author Ha Jin. Ng's work specifically focuses on the non-native area studies scholar, a Japanese scholar named Takatsu, who is interested in "collect[ing] any 'remains' of the famed Chinese writer Yu Dafu, who was exiled to Malaya (1938-42) and Indonesia (from 1942 until his death) and presumed to have been executed by the Japanese military in Sumatra at the end of the Pacific War in 1945." She also mentions that in the story, Takatsu works with Taiwanese filmmakers. Shih makes some excellent points in discussing the non-white non-native area studies scholar. However, she primarily focuses on the colonizer positionality by discussing literary depictions of an ethnically Japanese area studies expert. Shih could have elaborated more on the positionalities of the Taiwanese filmmakers, who are depicted as simply following along with Takatsu. The depiction of the Taiwanese filmmakers in collaborating with Takatsu is also important because Taiwan was also colonized by Japan, which speaks to the traces of the colonial legacy of collaboration. *See* Shu-mei Shih, "Racializing Area Studies, Defetishizing China," *positions: asia critique* 27, no. 1 (2019): 48, 53, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/717706.

defining elements of area studies is the racialized, ethnic and gendered power dynamics between the local or so-called "native informant," and the non-native area studies scholar, with the latter being seen as the one who gathers knowledge about the "area." Although the existing scholarship critiquing area studies has, naturally, primarily focused on power dynamics within or adjacent academia, I argue that we can extend these existing critiques of area studies beyond academia, as travel vlogs share a similar objective of gathering knowledge about a so-called "other place." The travel vlogs by Scott and de Guzman are no exception, as we will see through their use of "native informants," the significance of language in their vlogs, and their donning of traditional attire.

Much of the critique about the non-native area studies scholars also tends to focus on how the power dynamics between the non-native and the native, and the desire to become the "native" are the major systemic issues in area studies. For example, historian Harry Harootunian himself remarks that "whatever the nature of attachment to somebody else's culture, traditions and history, whatever emotional or material relationship bind one to Japan (for those who are not Japanese), it makes them unwitting patriots of another's history, or simply self-directed opportunists, who like any mercenary, have freely put up their service for sale to the highest, or just any, bidder."[271] I do not deny that this is the case, and that there are imperialistic sentiments behind this obsession with Japan as an object of knowledge. However, in addition to that, could there be something generative to such production of knowledge? Scholars Mitzi Uehara Carter and Aina Hunter reflect on their experiences as Black women scholars of Japan in their essay "A Critical Review of Academic Perspectives on Blackness in Japan." In this essay, they challenge essentialist notions of Blackness and expose the marginalization of Black women's experiences living in Japan, and discuss how they, as Black American women, have managed to create places for themselves living in Japan and feel a sense of belonging.[272] Carter and Hunter also go a bit beyond their positions as academics, and briefly point to the work of other Black women who have lived in Japan, though they tend to focus mainly on offline mass media, and I hope that my discussion of online mass media adds further to these conversations about highlighting the

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[271] Harootunian, "Other people's history," 149.
[272] Mitzi U. Carter and Aina Hunter, "A Critical Review of Academic Perspectives on Blackness in Japan," in *Multiculturalism in the New Japan: Crossing the Boundaries Within*, eds. Nelson Graburn, John Ertl, and R. Kenji Tierney (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), 190-191.

diversity of ethnic minorities' experiences living in Japan, as online mass media constructs new forms of authenticity and intimacy.

As mentioned previously, compared to the literature on how Black residents of Japan carve places for themselves, the literature on Filipino residents of Japan is relatively scarce. The scholarship—we can look to the work of anthropologists Suzuki Nobue and Mario Lopez for example—typically addresses the experiences of Filipina migrant labourers, focusing on the ways in which the Japanese state has feminized Filipino residents of Japan. Suzuki states that this feminization of Filipino residents has its origins in the 1970s, with the arrival of female entertainers to Japan (known as Japayuki).[273] The state reinforced a binary depiction of these entertainers: they were either seen as victims of exploitation or opportunists, and faced criminalization.[274] In more recent years, however, while there continues to be the feminization of Filipino residents of Japan, there is a huge shift in the nature of this feminization, as the state began to view Filipino migrants as caregivers.[275] The problematic rhetoric that "'Filipinos are suited for carework'" works to feminize both Filipino men and Filipino women.[276] Furthermore, it is also important to note the agency of these Filipino careworkers. Lopez interviews Filipina careworkers, and notes that these careworkers also make a choice to go into the jobs they work.[277] While it is important to address the experiences of Filipina residents of Japan and the Japanese state's feminization of the country's Filipino residents, I suggest that it is also important to focus on a wider range of Filipinos' experiences of living in Japan. This is where my analysis of de Guzman's vlog fills the gap in the scholarship, as in contrast to the state's feminization, he creates a place for himself through reinforcing specific ideals of masculinity. I will further elaborate on this later in my chapter.

It would be too limiting to simply focus on the poststructuralist theorizations of the non-native area studies scholar, especially considering that the YouTube video is a more vernacular medium that goes beyond the bounds of these poststructuralist theorizations. In addition to that, another way in which Scott and de Guzman are producers of vernacular discourse is because

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[273] Nobue Suzuki, "Filipino Migrations to Japan: From Surrogate Americans to Feminized Workers," *Senri Ethnological Reports* 77 (2008): 71.

[274] Suzuki, "Filipino Migrations to Japan: From Surrogate Americans to Feminized Workers," 71.

[275] Suzuki, "Filipino Migrations to Japan: From Surrogate Americans to Feminized Workers," 73.

[276] Suzuki, "Filipino Migrations to Japan: From Surrogate Americans to Feminized Workers," 75.

[277] Mario Lopez, "Reconstituting the affective labour of Filipinos as care workers in Japan," *Global Networks* 12, no. 2 (2012): 264.

they speak as ethnic minorities. I will thus continue to incorporate my theorization of critiquing hybrid vernacular discourse as well.

As mentioned earlier in my thesis, I build upon Guo and Lee's theorizations of the critique of hybrid vernacular discourse, which they divide into three elements: hybrid content, hybrid agency and hybrid subjectivity. Hybrid content refers to the ways in which vernacular rhetors borrow from mainstream discourse through techniques of remixing and pastiche, and this is the definition that I will reinforce in my analysis of Scott and de Guzman's work.[278]

On the other hand, Guo and Lee's theorizations of hybrid agency and hybrid subjectivity, as I mentioned in chapter 2, leave a bit to be desired. I had mentioned in Chapter 2 that Guo and Lee tended to focus on the role of entertainment in restricting the revolutionary potential of YouTubers' content, and stated that in addition to entertainment, the pressure for authenticity also plays a major role in shaping the content of vlogs. Similar to Ōkawa and Beaufils, Scott and de Guzman must conform to viewers' expectations of an "authentic" Japan.

Lastly, Guo and Lee also discuss the concept of "hybrid subjectivity," which, as I had mentioned in Chapter 2, partly refers to the ways in which YouTubers go beyond discussions of their racial and ethnic identities, and also address other vernacular communities. In the previous chapter, I had noted that the limitation to Guo and Lee's theorization of hybrid subjectivity is that they tend to focus on other issues that are explicitly tied to social justice, and that with YouTubers such as Ōkawa and Beaufils, the topics they address are more mundane in nature. Specifically, they appeal to the power of online video. Scott and de Guzman do not appeal to the power of online video as much as Ōkawa and Beaufils, but they do appeal to the community of people who are interested in learning more about Japanese language and culture, and they work to depoliticize the learning of such topics, and attempt to detach it from questions of race and ethnicity. The second part of Guo and Lee's theorization of hybrid subjectivity refers to the ways in which YouTubers deconstruct essential differences between Asians and Asian Americans, as I had mentioned in Chapter 2. Guo and Lee focus on how first generation Asian immigrants specifically undermine essentialist boundaries between their Asian identity and their home in the United States. In a similar way, Scott deconstructs essentialist boundaries between "Black" and

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[278] Guo Lei and Lorin Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-based Vernacular Discourse: A Case Study of YouTube's Asian Community," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 30, no. 5 (2013): 396, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15295036.2012.755048.

"Japanese," and Japan is her newfound home. Meanwhile, de Guzman does not say much about his positionality as a Filipino American man, but rather, focuses on the broader category of "foreigner," and works to deconstruct the boundaries of "foreigner" and "Japanese."

"Native Knowledge" in Scott and de Guzman's Vlogs

Shih notes that one defining aspect of area studies is the fetishization of the so-called "native informant," and to some extent, we see this fetishization of so-called "native knowledge" in both Scott and de Guzman's videos. Some of Scott's videos feature her Japanese friends and conversations with other locals, with whom she discusses Japanese language and culture. De Guzman's videos also feature locals' perspectives. However, in contrast to Scott, he is also married to a native, specifically a Japanese woman named Maiko. On the one hand, these dynamics seem, on the surface, to validate Harootunian's concerns about how the non-native is held hostage by "the authoritative claims about native knowledge."[279] The fetishization of "native knowledge," in addition to fulfilling Western colonialist fantasies, also validates Japanese nationalistic sentiments. Therefore, the use of so-called "native knowledge" in these videos illustrates another case of banal nationalism.

Harootunian is specifically talking about foreign scholars of Japan, but this issue of being held hostage to native knowledge is evident in Scott and de Guzman's videos to some extent as well, as they often rely on the perspectives of Japanese locals for their vlogs. Firstly, we can discuss the positions of "native informants" in Scott's videos. We can look at the video "How Japanese Guys ACTUALLY Speak (STOP SOUNDING CRINGY)." In this video, she speaks with her Japanese friend Hitoki, and relies on him to give a detailed explanation of masculine Japanese speech patterns.[280] Similarly, de Guzman also relies on the perspectives of Japanese locals for his videos. For example, in the video "Must Know Japanese Phrases for EATING at Restaurants in Japan Watch Before You Go," de Guzman explains to viewers what to say at restaurants in Japan, and he gets Maiko, who is a native Japanese speaker, to pronounce the phrases for him.[281]

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[279] Harootunian, "Other people's history," 150.
[280] Loretta Scott, "How Japanese Guys ACTUALLY Speak (STOP SOUNDING CRINGY)," December 27, 2020. Video, 27:44, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SLtJO87RtMg.
[281] Paolo de Guzman, "Must Know Japanese Phrases for EATING at Restaurants in Japan | Watch

This reliance on local, "native" knowledge speaks to the need for Scott and de Guzman to create a place for themselves as non-native knowledge producers. This is where "hybrid agency" plays a significant role, as they, as YouTubers, must be able to gain hits for their videos. As I mentioned before, this goes beyond merely the question of making entertaining videos. This is not to say that entertainment did not play a significant role in both of these videos, as they certainly did, evident in viewers' amusement at the conversations Scott had with Hitoki, as well as Maiko's exaggerated pronunciations of Japanese phrases in de Guzman's video. However, in addition to entertainment, authenticity also played a key role. Regardless of the fact that both Scott and de Guzman have become incredibly accustomed to life in Japan and present themselves as being knowledgeable about the language and the culture, they also have to adhere to their viewers' notions of authenticity, which includes the fetishization of so-called "native knowledge." We see this in some of the comments for both of these videos. With Scott, one commenter thanked her for inviting Hitoki for this video, and remarks that it is nice to hear Japanese people like Hitoki have a presence on YouTube and are speaking Japanese (see Fig. 3.01). With de Guzman, a commenter had pointed out that having Maiko in particular walk viewers through the pronunciations of the different phrases is helpful for them to become accustomed to Japanese customs and "to avoid being 'that rude foreigner'" (see Fig. 3.02).

It is also too simplistic to say that the reliance on local, native perspectives is the only way in which Scott and de Guzman are carving places for themselves as expats. They also assert their own agency, and borrow from mainstream discourses that valorize the authority of native knowledge, and remix that with their own positionality as knowledge producers. Many of the thumbnails feature both Scott, and her guest, and both of them occupy the same or almost the same amount of space in the frame. Thumbnails are significant because they provide viewers with a visual idea about the main contents of the video, and YouTubers make deliberate choices on which scene to select as their thumbnail. The fact that Scott and her guests occupy approximately the same space in the frame speaks to the way in which Scott herself is also creating her own place as a producer of knowledge alongside her guests (see Fig. 3.03). This also

Before You Go." June 28, 2019. Video, 11:30,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03-NQk__zNI.

reinforces Carter and Hunter's emphasis on the agency of Black women in Japan, and their ability to create places for themselves as expats living in Japan.[282]

De Guzman also combines this valorization of native knowledge with his own agency as a non-native expat. What is noteworthy about this vlog is the film techniques that de Guzman employs. In the scenes where he is talking about the restaurant etiquette, de Guzman employs the use of shallow focus; he is in focus while the background, which seems to be in a traditional Japanese room, is blurred (see Fig. 3.04). This highlights his centrality as a speaker in spite of his surroundings. In contrast, in the scenes depicting Maiko speaking Japanese, we see the use of deep focus; both her and the background are in focus, which highlights the essentialization of her positionality, which is tied to a purportedly "traditional," "Japanese" setting (see Fig. 3.05).[283]

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[282] Some of the main scholars besides Carter and Hunter who address the experiences of Black Americans in Japan are anthropologist John G. Russell and Nina Cornyetz. However, as Carter and Hunter point out, Russell and Cornyetz tend to focus on the experiences of Black American men, which ends up marginalizing the experiences of Black American women. This is not to dismiss the importance of Russell and Cornyetz's work, however. Russell's work provides a longer history of anti-Blackness in Japan, noting Japan's positionality as an honorary white nation, and the influence of anti-Blackness in the West on Japanese depictions of Black people. *See* John G. Russell, "Race and Reflexivity: The Black Other in Contemporary Japanese Mass Culture," *Cultural Anthropology* 6, no. 1 (1991): 4, https://www.jstor.org/stable/656493; John G. Russell, "Narratives of Denial: Racial Chauvinism and the Black Other in Japan," *Japan Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (1991): 421-422. We also see the association of Blackness with criminality, which continues to this day. For example, Cornyetz recalls her experience "as a production coordinator for Japanese television and commercials," in which "[she] would be asked to find American extras to appear in various minor roles." She remarks that in these productions, "Black extras were reserved to illustrate criminal activities." *See* Cornyetz, "Fetishized Blackness," 122. Also, it is important to note that perceptions of Blackness in Japan are not completely static. In fact, Russell has acknowledged the shift in how Blackness is perceived in Japan, observing that younger generations "[rely] heavily on the value of the black other as a metaphor for rebellion against the stifling, jejune values of bourgeois Japanese society." Although there is this ostensible embrace for Blackness, however, this embrace speaks more so to the commodification of the ethnic Other rather than effecting actual change to dismantle anti-Blackness in the country. *See* Russell, "Narratives of Denial," 424. Anti-Blackness continues in Japan into the present day, especially evident in the Japan Broadcasting Corporation's (known as NHK) video about the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests from the summer of 2020, and mass media depictions of Black and Japanese tennis player Naomi Osaka. I will firstly discuss the NHK video about the BLM protests. According to *Japan Times* staff writer Magdalena Osumi, this video was a part of NHK's series "Kore de Wakatta! Sekai no Ima," which she translates as "Now I Understand What's Going On in the World." This series is a part of the broadcasting corporation's Sunday news program, and it "targets younger audiences." The video depicts African American protesters led by an aggressive African American man, who angrily shouts about the marginalized position of African Americans in the United States. Even though this was intended to be an anti-racism video, it, in fact, perpetuated problematic stereotypes about Black Americans, especially Black American men, and has thus sparked a lot of critiques. The video reinforces the racist narrative that Black Americans are loud, aggressive and overly masculine. The focus on a Black American male leader also perpetuates what Black queer feminist scholar Moya Bailey would call misogynoir due to the marginal position that Black American women occupy in this video. In highlighting the racist depictions of African American men and Black American men more broadly, it is also important to acknowledge the ways in which Black American women specifically are marginalized, especially since Scott is speaking specifically as a Black American woman. *See* Magdalena Osumi, "Japan broadcaster NHK under fire over flawed video on anti-racism movement," *The Japan Times*, Jun. 10, 2020, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/06/10/national/nhk-video-black-lives-matter/.

[283] De Guzman, "Must Know Japanese Phrases for EATING at Restaurants in Japan | Watch Before You Go."

Also, when de Guzman introduces her at the beginning of this video, they are depicted as being in separate rooms, and the frame depicting Maiko is much smaller than the main frame in the video, which depicts de Guzman himself (see Fig. 3.06). This emphasizes his central position in the video, as the main person discussing the restaurant etiquette.[284]

We also see the presence of the first layer of "hybrid subjectivity" in these videos, as de Guzman and Scott both go beyond issues concerning their own ethnic and racial identity, and they also reach other vernacular communities. As I mentioned, we must broaden Guo and Lee's take on "vernacular communities," and also go beyond issues explicitly tied to social justice. Specifically, as I mentioned, they target audiences who are just getting started on learning the Japanese language, and by having guests who are local, they believe that they are able to provide a clearer, more easily understandable image to viewers about the Japanese language and customs.

Producing Knowledge through Language

In addition to reliance on and fetishization of so-called "native knowledge," Scott and de Guzman also establish themselves as individuals who have adopted a "native" positionality. One of the ways in which they have done so is through language. In a conversation between Harootunian and literary scholar Naoki Sakai about the state of area studies, Harootunian notes that "[Japan studies scholars] were led to believe that Japanese culture can be grasped as a unity, a coherent unity, and that it can be described in detail if one possesses the right kind of knowledge (language)."[285] This, again, can also validate sentiments of a banal nationalism, as language is spoken in the everyday context, and learning the language to know Japan is also normalized. Furthermore, the ability to grasp Japanese culture "as a unity" feeds into Japanese nationalistic sentiments that preach the myth of ethnic homogeneity. Similarly, in Scott and de Guzman's videos, we see the fetishization of learning and knowing the Japanese language as the key to understanding Japan and making a life there. Much of Scott's content focuses on Japanese language learning. In contrast, while de Guzman has some videos on language learning, it is not

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[284] De Guzman, "Must Know Japanese Phrases for EATING at Restaurants in Japan | Watch Before You Go."

[285] Harry D. Harootunian and Naoki Sakai, "Dialogue: Japan Studies and Cultural Studies," *positions* 7, no. 2 (1999): 601.

as extensive as Scott's, and the significance of language is more so evident in his use of subtitles. Also, as I will elaborate later in my discussion, he makes use of body language, which further elaborates on these existing poststructuralist critiques about learning the language of the "other place." At the same time, in addition to reinforcing imperialistic fetishizations of so-called "native knowledge," we can also see Scott and de Guzman's use of language as another means of making a place for themselves as expats.

Scott has many videos that detail the struggle of learning Japanese. In some of these vlogs, she would stage skits in which her Japanese friend Natsumi (Fig. 3.07) would test her on her Japanese skills, and would remark on Scott struggling with remembering key Japanese phrases.[286] These skits are significant because Scott, who, as mentioned previously, is not ethnically Japanese, plays Natsumi in addition to playing herself. Also, she uses a split screen technique in these skits, which allows an actor to make an appearance twice within the same shot (Fig. 3.08). The use of the split screen to highlight the simultaneous presence of Scott and Natsumi speaks to an uncanny, hybrid positionality that Scott has come to adopt (she occupies a liminal position between a a foreigner who is struggling to learn the language, and someone who has become the "native," evident in her fluency in the language and her Japanese name), and speaks to the theorizations of hybrid content, hybrid agency and hybrid subjectivity that I have discussed thus far.

Scott's performance of Natsumi speaks to Guo and Lee's theorization of "hybrid content," as such a performance borrows from mainstream discourse. When Scott is playing Natsumi, she speaks in a very high-pitched voice, and also uses a heavy Japanese accent when she speaks English. In doing so, Scott specifically borrows from hegemonic narratives that reinforce the image of the overly feminized, racialized native Other. By adopting a "native" positionality, she conveys that she, as a Black woman, can conform to constructed notions of "Japaneseness" and also exaggerated notions of femininity, challenging problematic myths of ethnic homogeneity, and the conflation of nationality with ethnicity and race. In addition to that, it is also significant that she adopts the Japanese name Natsumi; names are significant because they can act as a marker of ethnic identity and ethnic authenticity. She also deliberately picks a feminine sounding name, which speaks to the borrowing of hegemonic notions of gender. This is

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[286] Loretta Scott, "Forgetting Japanese?! 日本語を忘れる外国人の反応［英会話 05］［KCTV　01］." January 15, 2015, video, 4:15, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MSITAMs9-Y.

especially significant due to misogynoiristic discourses that depict Black women as being overly masculine.[287] Furthermore, it is also important to highlight the broader issue of misogynoir in Japan. We can bring up the example of Ariana Miyamoto, whom I mentioned earlier. Miyamoto is African American and Japanese, and she has faced much racism prior to and after winning the title. People have criticized her because they believe she is not "Japanese" enough due to her being multiracial.[288] We thus see how in Japan, there is still the issue of drawing firm boundaries between "Blackness" and "Japaneseness," denoting them as being mutually exclusive, and in Scott's performances of Natsumi, she breaks these misogynoiristic barriers. Scott, speaking as a microcelebrity, in contrast to Miyamoto, also adds a new layer of vernacularity to her performance.

Secondly, Scott's skits about Natsumi speak to the concept of "hybrid agency," again referring to the tensions between the YouTuber as an individual agent, and YouTube as an institutional agent. It is significant that there is a depiction of both Scott as the foreigner, and Scott as someone who has adopted a "native" positionality. We see that the boundaries between the two are quite tenuous, emphasized in the effect of simultaneity perpetuated by the split screen technique. Similar to Wu and Higa whom Guo and Lee discuss in their article, Scott, as a YouTuber, must be able to appeal to specific audiences (in her case, it is primarily individuals living in the Anglosphere who are interested in traveling to and studying in Japan). Her dressing up as Natsumi contributes to the entertainment factor of the video. In addition to that,

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[287] Bailey's 2021 monograph *Misogynoir Transformed: Black Women's Digital Resistance* examines the ways in which Black women, and Black non-binary, agender and gender-variant individuals based in the United States have worked to mitigate the harms of misogynoir—referring to the unique gendered and racial violence that Black women face—online. For example, in online media environments, there are issues such as the "dragging" of Black women on social media platforms such as Twitter through hashtags such as #RuinaBlackGirlsMonday, and the video "Shit Black Girls Say."# In addition, she highlights the problematic stereotypes that people continue make about Black women, in which they reduce Black women to stereotypes such as the "Sapphire," the "Jezebel" and the "Mammy," highlighting the binary of Black women as submissive, and Black women as hyper-sexualized, overly masculine individuals.What makes Bailey's work compelling is that she also acknowledges that the work of Black social media users does not fully overturn misogynoir, providing examples of ways in which they perpetuate hegemonic discourses about gender and race at the same time that they work to mitigate the harms of misogynoir. *See* Trudy, "Explanation of Misogynoir," *Gradient Lair*, April 28, 2014, https://www.gradientlair.com/post/84107309247/define-misogynoir-anti-black-misogyny-moya-bailey-coined; Moya Bailey, *Misogynoir Transformed: Black Women's Digital Resistance* (New York: NYU Press, 2021), 23, 37-39.

[288] Matthew Hernon, "Universal Beauty: Ariana Miyamoto Strikes a Blow for Racial Diversity," *Tokyo Weekender,* May 2, 2015, https://www.tokyoweekender.com/2015/05/universal-beauty-ariana-miyamoto-strikes-a-blow-for-racial-diversity/.

authenticity plays a factor as well. The use of the split screen shows that Scott has not fully adopted the "native" positionality, and balances out her uncanny performance of Natsumi.

Here, we can also address the significance of hybrid subjectivity, as in simultaneously reasserting the fact that she is still a foreigner trying to learn the language, she conveys the relatable fact that she too struggled and continues to struggle with the Japanese language, reaching people who are still struggling to learn Japanese, and highlighting the vernacularism of her performance.

De Guzman's vlogs also address the significance of language in allowing the traveler to "go native." In contrast to Scott, however, his videos don't focus as much on learning the spoken language. Of course, there is the video about key phrases to know in Japanese restaurants that I had discussed earlier in the chapter, but in contrast to Scott, discussions of himself speaking the Japanese language, and struggling with maintaining fluency is not as extensive. Rather, he has made videos about body language, though the Japanese language still occupies an important albeit more subtle position. Specifically, we can look to his video "Japan Shrine Manners | DONT make FOREIGNER MISTAKES," in which de Guzman explains to viewers proper shrine etiquette. This video also adds a new layer to poststructuralist theorizations about language, as the vlog highlights the significance of body language in addition to the Japanese language in becoming the "native." Similar to Scott's videos, we see the presence of hybrid content, hybrid agency and hybrid subjectivity in this video.

Regarding de Guzman's video, we see the presence of hybrid content through the juxtaposition between him performing the incorrect shrine etiquette and him performing the correct shrine etiquette.[289] This is an example of hybrid content because, adhering to Guo and Lee's theorization, de Guzman borrows from mainstream discourse. Specifically, he invokes problematic stereotypes about foreigners often perpetuated by social media users about how loud and obnoxious foreigners are, and the idea that they are unable to follow the rules. What is particularly interesting is that he does not explicitly bring up his identity as a Filipino American that often, though his viewers often ask him about his ethnic identity in the comments. This highlights a sense of detachment he feels from his own ethnic identity. However, the fact that he is performing these incorrect gestures may also contribute to harmful stereotypes about Southeast

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[289] De Guzman, "Japan Shrine Manners | DONT make FOREIGNER MISTAKES."

Asians living in Japan, as there is a history of the Japanese state associating them with criminality.

In contrast to Scott's videos about Natsumi, de Guzman does not use a split screen technique to demonstrate the simultaneity of his foreigner positionality and his positionality as someone who has "gone native," which highlights a firmer divide between these two positionalities (see Fig. 3.09 and 3.10). The body language is also accompanied by subtitles. The Japanese subtitles that de Guzman uses in this video, as well as his other videos are in a casual, masculine speech pattern, which also speaks to the hegemonic gender norms. To provide some context, the pronoun "I" comes in various forms in Japanese, and it can be quite gendered. The word 「僕」 (*boku*) is generally used by men. However, instead of that, de Guzman uses 「おら」 (*ora*) when referring to himself. Compared to *boku*, *ora* is much more colloquial. In addition, in the subtitles, de Guzman ends his sentences with the particle ぞ, which is another masculine speech pattern. The use of casual form also speaks to the intimacy he seeks to cultivate with his viewers. His use of gendered speech patterns speaks to an attempt to create a place for himself on gendered terms, and this is particularly interesting to note because Filipino residents in Japan have often been feminized by the state.

On the topic of hybrid agency, entertainment does play an important factor in this video on shrine etiquette, as seen in the exaggerated effects that de Guzman uses while showing viewers how to perform the proper etiquette at shrines, and we cannot deny that his resorting to entertainment fails to fully achieve revolutionary potential. But again, there is also the emphasis on de Guzman's authenticity as a producer of knowledge about Japan. Similar to Scott, there is the element of uncanniness, in which we see two positionalities. However, the desire for detachment is much more explicit in de Guzman's videos. He is also targeting primarily audiences in the Anglosphere, and is also thus attempting to make a place for himself. There is the expectation among his viewers that he show his astute knowledge in Japanese customs, but also the expectation that he does not quite measure up to the so-called "native."

There is also something vernacular to his doing the incorrect gestures, as, similar to Scott, it lends him a degree of relatability and authenticity (it also provides an instructional aspect to the video on what not to do). Regarding hybrid subjectivity, de Guzman also goes beyond questions of race and ethnicity, and speaks to the vernacular community of foreigners more broadly who are interested in learning more about Japanese customs and etiquette. His

performance also speaks to the idea that anyone can easily learn such etiquette, making it more accessible to his audience, and also legitimizing his claim to Japan as his home. In addition, we can consider the second layer to Guo and Lee's theorization of hybrid vernacular subjectivities, in which they focus on the deconstruction of boundaries between Asian and Asian American subjectivities. Scott blurs the boundaries between being a Black American woman and adopting the positionality of the "native," and de Guzman also does the same regarding being a Filipino American man and someone who has adopted a "native" positionality.

Donning Traditional Attire and the "Re-writing" of History

Lastly, another way in which Scott and de Guzman carve places for themselves and claim Japan as "home" is through their participation in cultural activities, particularly in the donning of traditional attire. What Harootunian refers to as "the mastery of the native pulse" also goes beyond mastering the language of the native. It is also about looking the part.

Scott posts various videos in which she travels outside of Tokyo, and there is a series of vlogs documenting her interactions with locals and also her participation in cultural activities. The fact that she travels to these purportedly "remote" regions in Japan resonates with the banal, nationalistic nostalgia associated with the "Discover Japan" travel campaign that I had discussed in my first chapter. In one vlog, titled "How locals react to me in a traditional, Japanese wedding dress [4K]," she travels to Nanao, which is a city in Ishikawa Prefecture. This vlog is a part of a series in which Scott learns about different types of traditional festivals throughout Japan. In one part of the video, she talks to an expert about the history of kimono and weddings, and has the opportunity to try on a traditional bridal kimono.[290] The part where she tries on the bridal kimono occupies such a small portion of the vlog, but despite that, it makes up the title of the video, and the thumbnail is of Scott wearing the bridal kimono.[291]

It is important to note the film techniques Scott uses in the scenes pertaining to the bridal kimono she tries on. There is a scene right before she puts on the kimono, and this scene is shot from a high angle, which could suggest a sense of vulnerability before Scott puts on the kimono (Fig. 11). The high angle shot also emphasizes a size difference between Scott and the white

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[290] Scott, "How locals react to me in a traditional, Japanese wedding dress [4K]."
[291] Scott, "How locals react to me in a traditional, Japanese wedding dress [4K]."

bridal kimono; the kimono—a marker of so-called ethnic authenticity as well as specific ideals of femininity—that is hanging there is depicted as being larger than Scott herself, which may symbolize the consuming nature of viewers' expectations for the performance of ethnic authenticity, which speaks, again, to the notion of hybrid agency, as Scott must appeal to viewers' expectations in order to gain hits for her videos. In a reply to a viewer's comment on this vlog, Scott has even mentioned that viewers have criticized her wearing traditional dress before, remarking that she once wore a *hakama* to her graduation ceremony and some viewers criticized her for doing so, as she is a married woman (see figure). In addition, she states that "there's still an alarming amount of young girls who regularly ask [her] about identity and black identity issues in Japan."[292]

In the next scene, after she puts on the bridal kimono, we see a change in the shooting angle, which reinforces Scott's empowerment after she puts on the bridal kimono (Fig. 3.12). There are also close up shots of Scott wearing the kimono, and here, we see the use of deep focus, which places equal emphasis on both Scott in the kimono, and the significance of the space behind her (Fig. 3.13).[293] In these scenes, we see the presence of "hybrid content," in which Scott borrows from hegemonic notions of Japaneseness (specifically the nostalgia for the *furusato*) and specific notions of femininity (symbolized in the bridal kimono). The donning of the bridal kimono may fit into area studies scholars' theorizations about becoming the "native," but it is also important to avoid the easy conclusion that she is simply replicating Orientalist fetishizations. This "borrowing" of hegemonic narratives is also empowering, and speaks to another way in which Scott carves a space for herself as a Black woman (as well as for other Black women) living in Japan, and conducts what Bailey would call "digital alchemy." By putting on the bridal kimono, which is tied to nostalgic longings of a Japan purportedly untouched by modernity, she undermines the myth of ethnic homogeneity, and emphasizes the inherent transnationality of constructions of the *furusato*, which relates to my previous discussion of the "Discover Japan" travel campaign.

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[292] These concerns that Scott's viewers have are valid. Anti-Blackness in Japan is particularly prominent. For example, there are also racist depictions of Black American women in Japanese mass media. One of the most prominent examples is depictions of famous tennis player Naomi Osaka, who is Japanese, American and Haitian. She was born to a Japanese mother and a Haitian father, and initially had American citizenship and then changed to Japanese citizenship in 2019. *See* Jaelen Ogadoh, "Naomi Osaka opens up about receiving racist backlash for representing Japan in the Olympics," *Yahoo! News*, July 17, 2021, https://news.yahoo.com/naomi-osaka-opens-receiving-racist-011448907.html.

[293] Scott, "How locals react to me in a traditional, Japanese wedding dress [4K]."

Lastly, "hybrid subjectivity" plays an important role as well, as she navigates between several vernacular audiences: her concern about the questions she receives from Black women viewers speaks to her attempts to specifically address Black women who are interested in Japanese culture and living in Japan, and also a broader audience who wants to know more about local Japanese traditions. Furthermore, in donning the bridal kimono, she also works to, as Guo and Lee put it, re-construct notions of Blackness and Japaneseness.

Similar to Scott, there are also videos of de Guzman donning traditional attire. This is especially evident in his Nikko vlog, titled "Top 10 Things to DO in NIKKO Japan | WATCH BEFORE YOU GO | Onsen Paradise."[294] One of the places that he goes to in Nikko is a theme park called Edo Wonderland, which reconstructs the Edo era (1603-1868) for tourists.[295] De Guzman mentions that at the theme park, visitors can put on Edo era attire.[296] He chooses to don the attire of a feudal lord. As he walks through the theme park while wearing this outfit, the locals bow to him because of the rank he chose to dress as (Fig. 3.14).[297] There are some points of the scene where de Guzman's partner Maiko, who helps de Guzman film, uses a following shot so that de Guzman is always at the center of the frame (Fig. 3.15).[298] There are also scenes in which Maiko employs low angle shots of de Guzman. Both of these cinematic techniques emphasize de Guzman's dominant positionality over the locals. Similar to Scott, it would be too simplistic to say that these shots of de Guzman wearing traditional attire merely replicate Orientalist tropes. Again, I am not denying that is a factor, but in addition to that, similar to Scott, wearing such attire is a way of claiming authenticity and also claiming Japan as "home."

We can thus use the framework of "hybrid content," as I did in my analysis of Scott's Nanao vlog. In this case, de Guzman borrows from hegemonic narratives that convey a nostalgia for a Japan purportedly untouched by modernity. The Edo era in particular (1603-1868) is a target for such nostalgia. According to historian Jordan Sand, "Edo had become a site of

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[294] To provide some context, Nikko is a city in Tochigi Prefecture, and it is a popular tourist destination. It is the home of a Shintō shrine called Toshogu, which memorializes the first shogun of the Edo period Tokugawa Ieyasu. It also has Edo theme parks, and tourists can take part in many other purportedly "traditional" activities.

[295] Paolo de Guzman, "Top 10 Things to DO in NIKKO Japan | WATCH BEFORE YOU GO | Onsen Paradise," October 5, 2018, video, 14:25, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PgQjlKi5u48.

[296] De Guzman, "Top 10 Things to DO in NIKKO Japan | WATCH BEFORE YOU GO | Onsen Paradise."

[297] De Guzman, "Top 10 Things to DO in NIKKO Japan | WATCH BEFORE YOU GO | Onsen Paradise."

[298] De Guzman, "Top 10 Things to DO in NIKKO Japan | WATCH BEFORE YOU GO | Onsen Paradise."

nostalgic return as early as the 1880s, when a group of former Tokugawa officials formed the Edokai (Edo Society) and began publishing a journal of reminiscences and chronicles of the old regime's last years."[299] The nostalgia for the Edo period is evident in more recent years as well. We see examples of a nostalgia for a premodern Japan in mass media such as the *Discover Japan* travel magazine I had discussed in chapter 1. As I mentioned in that chapter, the special issue valorizes premodern and early modern Japan, and one of the ways in which they do so regarding the Edo era is the depiction of the clothing worn by men in the Edo period. Nostalgia for the Edo period thus partly encompasses a nostalgia for a "traditional," "Japanese" form of masculinity. Anthropologist Millie Creighton addresses the presence of Edo in domestic travel campaigns in Japan, noting that "Edo as hero is not just an historic epoch, but a pre-eminent ingredient in modern Japanese identity constructions."[300] In putting on the traditional Edo era attire, another symbol of banal nationalism, De Guzman also challenges this sense of ethnic homogeneity by donning the attire. Similar to Scott, this, in a sense, serves to "re-write" history, as we see someone who is not ethnically Japanese making claims to these invented traditions of Japaneseness and masculinity. We can also bring this into conversation with the ways in which the Japanese state views Filipino residents. As I had mentioned previously, Filipino residents have often been feminized.

Filipinos have been migrating to Japan since the 1880s, and some of the main scholars who address the experiences of Filipino communities in Japan, as I mentioned earlier in my chapter, are anthropologists Suzuki Nobue and Mario Lopez. Suzuki argues that there is a major shift in how Filipinos have been perceived in Japanese society. During the early 1900s, due to the colonization of the Philippines by the U.S. Empire, Japan saw Filipinos as a masculine, Westernizing and civilizing influence.[301] However, this perception of Filipino migrants to Japan shifted starting in the 1970s with the influx of female entertainers known as Japayuki.[302] During this period, we see a much more feminized depiction of Filipino migrants to Japan, and also the

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[299] Jordan Sand, *Tokyo Vernacular: Common Spaces, Local Histories, Found Objects* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 21.

[300] Millie Creighton, "The Heroic Edo-ic: Traveling the History Highway in Today's Tokugawa Japan," in *Japanese Tourism and Travel Culture*, eds. Sylvie Guichard-Anguis and Okpyo Moon (London; New York: Routledge, 2009), 37.

[301] One of the main factors that contributed to such an image was the fact that they made significant contributions to jazz and boxing in Japan. Suzuki Nobue, "Filipino Migrations to Japan: From Surrogate Americans to Feminized Workers," *Senri Ethnological Reports* 77 (2008): 68.

[302] Suzuki, "Filipino Migrations to Japan," 71.

emergence of a binary depiction of Filipina entertainers: they were seen as being both victims of exploitation and as opportunists.[303] There were many problematic assumptions that these entertainers were trafficked illegally, thus reinforcing the narrative of these women as merely being victims of exploitation.[304] As we can see in both Lopez and Suzuki's work, there is much focus on Filipino residents as migrant workers, specifically women migrant workers.[305] I do not intend to deny their experiences nor their agencies. However, I suggest that there must be a more diverse view of Filipino residents living in Japan.

We also see the significance of hybrid agency and hybrid subjectivity here as well. De Guzman is also appealing to viewers' desire for ethnic authenticity, and he has received compliments on the traditional attire from several of his viewers. Interestingly, in addition to these comments, there are also comments asking about his ethnicity, specifically asking whether he is Filipino. Regarding hybrid subjectivity, de Guzman himself does not speak as much about his ethnic identity in particular, but rather addresses the broader vernacular audience of those in the Anglosphere who are interested in knowing more about Japanese culture. In this case, he discusses the various things to do in Nikko, and gives viewers advice on how to navigate the place, and highlights places to explore.

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[303] Suzuki, "Filipino Migrations to Japan," 71.

[304] Suzuki, "Filipino Migrations to Japan," 72. The Japanese government also restricted the legal entry of these entertainers, and "many aspiring entertainers currently seem to have gone underground in order to work in Japan, by forging documents, marrying Japanese, or any other method they could think of." *See* Suzuki, "Filipino Migrations to Japan," 73. Precarity thus defines their lives in Japan. This treatment of Filipina migrants also speaks to the broader issue in Japan about the association of Southeast Asian women with sexual promiscuity and criminality. *See* Ayaka Yoshimizu, "Bodies That Remember: Gleaning scenic fragments of a brothel district in Yokohama," *Cultural Studies* 29, no. 3 (2015): 450-475, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09502386.2014.937948.

[305] For more on the experiences of Filipino residents of Japan more broadly, *see* Jefferson R. Plantilla, "Filipinos in Kansai: Living Within Japanese Society," *FOCUS* 90 (2017): https://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/focus/section3/2017/12/filipinos-in-kansai-living-within-japanese-society.html. In comparison to Suzuki and Lopez, this article focuses on Filipino communities more broadly and not just the experiences of Filipina women, though this is not to dismiss the importance of their experiences. Plantilla mentions that the 1990 revision of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act facilitated the arrival of Filipino technical intern trainees and *nikkeijin* Filipinos to Japan "to supply labor to the industries in increasing number [sic]." He also highlights the struggles that Filipino communities face in Japan, mentioning issues with child custody, domestic violence, divorce and poor labour conditions. In addition, the jobs that Filipino residents of Japan are in are part-time and low paid work. Filipino residents who face divorce may be deprived of custody over their children, and also financial support from their former partners. Japanese-Filipino and Filipino children also face bullying and discrimination in schools due to the culture shock, language barrier, and prejudices held by other students. Those who come to Japan to study Japanese also face abuse from school administrators.

Conclusion

  This last chapter has examined vlogs by non-Japanese POC vloggers Paolo de Guzman and Loretta Scott, highlighting the ways in which their work provides a more nuanced take on the expatriate as a producer of knowledge. Incorporating poststructuralist critiques of the non-native area studies scholar along with Guo and Lee's theorization of the critique of hybrid vernacular discourse, I have argued that Scott and de Guzman incorporation of hegemonic narratives do not merely replicate Orientalist, nationalistic tropes about Japan. Rather, their use of the native informants' perspectives, language and the donning of traditional clothing speaks to new ways in which they make places for themselves at the intersection of race, gender and ethnicity.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the ways in which travel vloggers who speak as ethnic minorities living in Japan utilize hegemonic practices of knowledge production that emphasize banal Japanese nationalism to assert themselves as "authentic" knowledge producers about Japan. I built on existing poststructuralist critiques of the structures of knowledge production in area studies, as well as the critique of hybrid vernacular discourse, as theorized by Lei Guo and Lorin Lee. I have also built on the existing scholarship on travel vlogs, which, even now, has tended to focus on content produced by white expats, obscuring the perspectives and agencies of locals and expats who are POC.

I firstly established the inherently transnational and multiethnic nature of the construction of Japanese ethno-national identity in my first chapter. Building upon Rey Chow's theorization of coercive mimeticism, I examined the post-WWII domestic tourism campaigns "Discover Japan" and "Exotic Japan." I then transitioned towards a discussion of the travel magazine *Discover Japan*. I highlighted the ways in which the construction of ethno-national identity and the mimicking of so-called "ethnic authenticity" went beyond the dichotomy of Japan and the West. Rather, we also see engagements with ethnic groups whom Japan perceives as Other. In addition, we see the masculinization of the ethnic Other, while Chow tends to focus on the feminized ethnic Other. I argued that the negotiations involved in the construction of Japanese ethno-national identity involved the deployment of a purportedly "depoliticized" sense of banal nationalism, particularly through the emphasis on cultural aesthetics and a purportedly unique national essence. After addressing Ivy's analysis of the "Discover Japan" and "Exotic Japan" travel campaigns, I shift towards discussing a more recent example, focusing on a special issue from the travel magazine *Discover Japan* called "Nippon no bi," meaning "Japan's beauty," highlighting how this issue has a simultaneous depiction of a masculine, authentic sense of Japanese uniqueness, as well as a supposed embrace for ethnic diversity, evident in the inclusion of Ainu artists' perspectives. However, at the same time, this reinforces settler colonial paradigms, as the editors of the magazine attempted to make claims to Ainu art, making it a part of Japanese settler culture, and also reinforcing a gendered logic of inclusion and exclusion due to its primary focus on male Ainu artists, and only one female Ainu artist.

In Chapter 2, I shift from a discussion of print media to a discussion of online video, specifically focusing on the work of two vloggers who speak as ethnic minorities who were born and raised in Japan: Ōkawa Yūsuke and Taiki Beaufils, who speak as an ethnically Korean resident of Japan, and *haafu*, respectively. It is in this chapter that I introduce the critique of hybrid vernacular discourse for online video, highlighting the work of Guo and Lee, and introducing their framings of hybrid content, hybrid agency and hybrid subjectivity, as well as explaining how I build upon their concepts. I argue that Ōkawa and Beaufils employ strategies of visualism as well as seemingly banal, nationalistic symbols (such as Mount Fuji and cherry blossoms) in an attempt to create a place for themselves as ethnic minorities, who, despite being born and raised in Japan, feel a sense of out of place-ness. I also build upon poststructuralist critiques of visualism, specifically drawing on Chow's works, and expanding the notion of using the world as target beyond the context of U.S. militarism and more so towards a civilian, vernacular context.

In Chapter 3, I focus on the work of travel vloggers who were not born and raised in Japan, but chose to move to Japan and make a life for themselves there as adults. Specifically, I focused on vlogs produced by Black American vlogger Loretta Scott, and Filipino American vlogger Paolo de Guzman. I continue to use the concept of hybrid vernacular discourse in this chapter. I argue that Scott and de Guzman attempt to create places for themselves as expats through employing techniques associated with the non-native area studies scholar, such as the reliance on "native" knowledge, language and the donning of traditional attire. They do so to attempt to assert their authenticity as knowledge producers on YouTube, and also attempt to challenge the myth of ethnic homogeneity in Japan. Their work also adds new contributions to the existing scholarship on Black women residents of Japan, and Filipino residents of Japan.

This thesis has highlighted the ways in which travel vlogs by vloggers who speak as ethnic minorities in Japan have become new ways in which people have produced knowledge about the "other place," going beyond easy critiques of the structures of knowledge production in area studies, and providing a more nuanced take on these means of knowledge production.

In doing so, my analysis has critically examined and broadened, firstly, the often taken for granted notion of travel. As I mentioned in my introduction, travel appears on the surface to be a mundane activity defined by cosmopolitan pursuits of discovery and knowledge, speaking to

what historian Mary Louise Pratt would call an act of "anti-conquest."[306] She uses this term in the context of European travel writing, remarking that it refers "to the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony."[307] In a similar way, the Japanese state's promotion of domestic and international tourism to Japan emphasizes a purportedly "innocent" pursuit of knowledge about the country, while at the same time asserting masculine, hegemonic notions of Japanese ethno-national identity. Overall, despite the illusion of innocence and cosmopolitanism, travel as well as travel accounts that travelers produce raise key questions about ownership: who has the right to make claims to the land? Such a question is tied to both colonial and postcolonial contexts.

As I had mentioned in the introduction, during the colonial era, the Japanese government had used travel in an attempt to strengthen Japanese citizens' affective ties to the empire, and also to solidify the state's claims to the colonized regions. Japanese travel writers during this time had also reinforced the power disparity between themselves—who were able to freely cross borders within the empire—and colonized subjects, for whom borders were heavily policed. Furthermore, as I mentioned in chapter 1, in the present day, vernacular media such as the travel magazine *Discover Japan* construct fictive kinships with the Indigenous Ainu—who, it is important to note, also have agency and have been simultaneously pushing the Japanese government to more fully recognize their rights as Indigenous peoples as well as acknowledge Japan's history of settler colonial genocide—to legitimate settler colonial claims to stolen land.

In addition, travel is not only a way for colonizers to make claims to the land, but it is also a way for ethnic minorities residing in the country to make gendered and ethnic claims to Japan, challenging the state's frequent conflation of nationality with ethnicity, and its assertion of a homogeneous, "authentic" "Japaneseness." My analysis of how these four travel vloggers utilize strategies that emphasize Japanese exceptionalism thus also serves to broaden the concept of "native knowledge," which is another often taken for granted category in travel, as well as the academic field of area studies.

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[306] Mary L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), 9.
[307] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 9.

Appendix

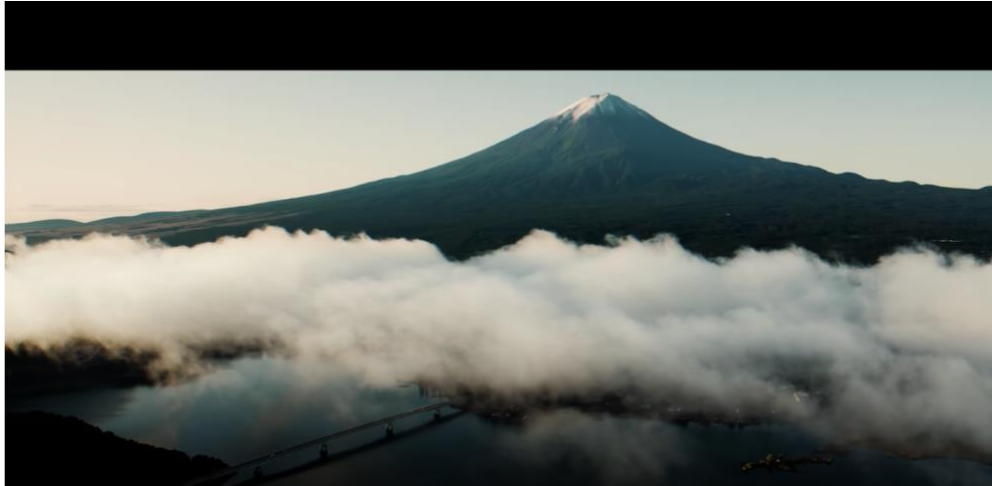Fig. 1.01: Cover of the April 2020 special issue for *Discover Japan.*

Fig. 2.01: Drone shot of Mount Fuji from Ōkawa's "Cinematic Japan" video. We see here that Ōkawa is almost at eye level with Mount Fuji, an iconic nationalistic symbol of Japan.
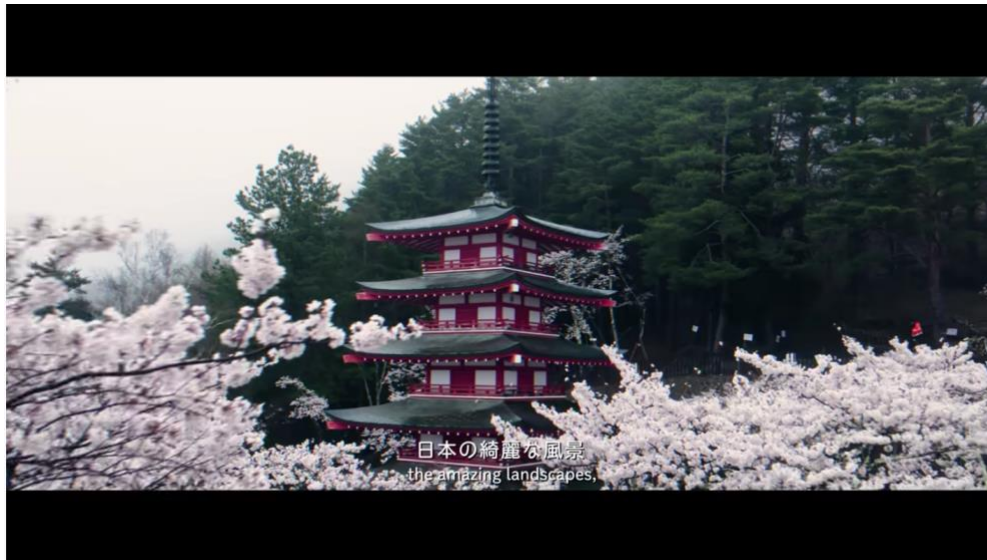

Fig. 2.02: Drone shot of cherry blossoms and pagoda in Ōkawa's "Cinematic Japan" video. In the modern era, cherry blossoms have come to symbolize Japanese nationalism, militarism, imperialism and colonialism.

Fig. 2.03: Drone footage depicting Beaufils' hometown in Ōkawachiyama. The shot depicts trees and buildings.
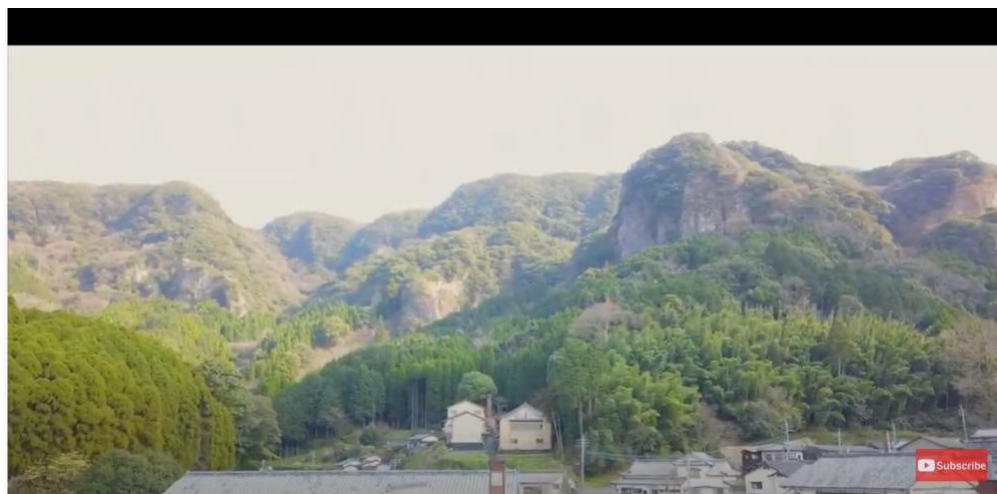
Fig. 2.04: Another example of drone footage depicting Ōkawachiyama.
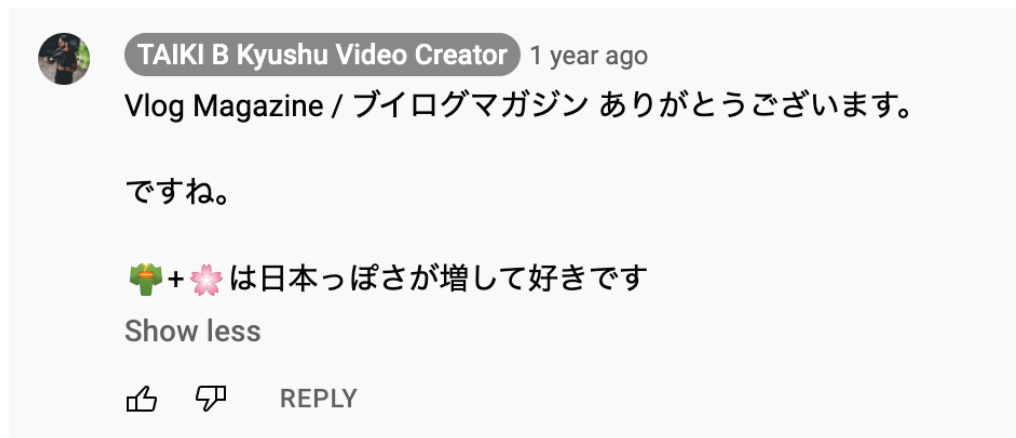
Fig. 2.05: Beaufils, using emojis, comments on how kimono and cherry blossoms contributes to "Japaneseness."

Fig. 2.06: Ōkawa Tweets about his doubts regarding whether it is right for him to "pretend" to be Japanese (日本人のフリ) and convey the beauty of Japan to people.

Fig. 2.07: Low angle shot of cherry blossoms, which contrasts with the drone shots Beaufils used in the same video.

Fig. 2.08: Thumbnail of the video "Cherry Blossom in Japan 2020 Virtual Tour at Home during Quarantine [Part 1]." We see that Beaufils places himself at the centre.

Fig. 2.09: Thumbnail of the video "Cherry blossom in Japan 2020, Virtual Tour at Home during Quarantine [Part 2]." The thumbnail depicts his Japanese mother instead of himself, and she is wearing a kimono, which contributes to notions of an "authentic" Japan.
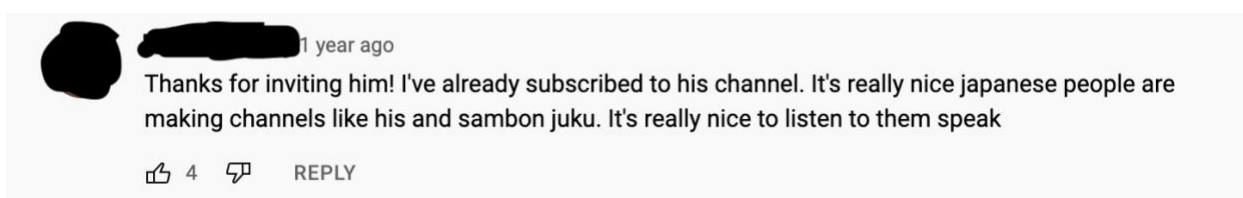

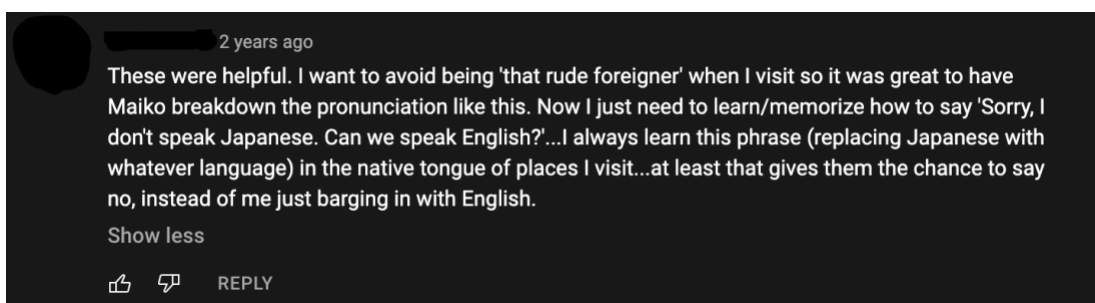Fig. 3.01: One of Scott's viewers expresses gratitude for featuring Hitoki in the video.

Fig. 3.02: One of de Guzman's viewers talking about how nice it is that he featured Maiko's perspective in the video on restaurant etiquette.

Fig. 3.03: Thumbnail of Scott's vlog "How Japanese Guys ACTUALLY Speak (STOP SOUNDING CRINGY)."

Fig. 3.04: Use of shallow focus in this scene places de Guzman at the center.

Fig. 3.05: Use of deep focus in Maiko's scenes shows her blending in with the surroundings.

Fig. 3.06: De Guzman introduces viewers to Maiko.

Fig. 3.07: Introducing Scott's "friend" Natsumi.

Fig. 3.08: Scott using split screen technique to show her and Natsumi in the same frame.

Fig. 3.09: De Guzman performing the correct etiquette.

Fig. 3.10: De Guzman performing the wrong etiquette. This is in a separate frame from the correct etiquette.

Fig. 3.11: Use of high angle shot before Scott puts on the bridal kimono.

Fig. 3.12: Change in shooting angle from the previous scene highlights Scott's empowerment after putting on the bridal kimono.

Fig. 3.14: Locals bowing to de Guzman, who chose to dress as a feudal lord.

Fig. 3.15: De Guzman is always at the center of the frame.

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　　　　03B7DlWPdlLqv33T4c0h8w8&index=30.

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