

RE-MADE IN JAPAN:

NIKKEIJIN DISRUPTIONS OF JAPAN'S ETHNO-SPATIAL BOUNDARIES¹

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Abstract: Working to envisage a more hospitable Japan—one that can responsibly accommodate difference through acts of tolerance, plurality, and non-violence—this paper seeks to reformulate the nation's ethno-spatial hierarchy. By interjecting Deleuze and Guattari's "minoritarian" position into the majority/minority dialectic, a move instantiated by the incommensurability of Japan's Nikkeijin populations (i.e. neither resolutely "foreign" nor essentially "native"), this paper works to loosen the ubiquitous *uchi/soto* ("inside/outside") distinction in a manner that moves beyond the barriers typically encountered by conventional approaches to Japan's minority issues. Insofar as the investigation is advanced through a series of engagements from a variety of genres—SMAP's 2003 "MIJ" advertising campaign, Kurosawa Akira's 1991 film *Rhapsody in August*, and NHK's 2002 *asadora* ("morning serialized drama") *Sakura*—the analysis will not only demonstrate how popular fictions participate in the dramaticization of the nation's ethno-spatial boundaries, it will also afford new ways of *thinking about* and *interceding in* Japan's so-called immigration "problem."

INTRODUCTION

In July 2003, the *New York Times* ran a three-part series titled, "Can Japan Change?" In the second installment, "Japan Needs, but Resists, Immigration," columnist Howard W. French stages Japan's so-called "immigration problem" by drawing upon the country's oft-noted population decline: "Japan is at the leading edge of a phenomenon that is beginning to strike many advanced countries: rapidly aging populations and dwindling fertility" (French 2003: A1). As a result, the size of Japan's work force, which peaked in 1998, has entered a decline that experts predict will continue to accelerate. The potential consequences of this decline, writes French, include "not only a scarcity of workers and falling demand, but also a col-

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lapse of the pension system as the tax base shrinks and the elderly population booms" (ibid.).

After first noting that a more thorough integration of women into the workplace could provide temporary relief, French asserts that Japan's "only hope" is to accept a massive influx of foreign labor. Citing a March 2000 United Nations study, the columnist argues that in order to "stave off disaster," Japan will need to admit seventeen million new immigrants by the year 2050—an eighteen percent increase in a country whose current immigrant population constitutes a mere one percent.

An influx of this magnitude would have a dramatic impact on any nation. But Japan, as French dutifully notes, remains the "most tenaciously insular of all the world's top industrial countries" and "deeply conservative notions about ethnic purity make it hard for [Japanese] experts to envision large-scale immigration" (ibid.). One such expert, Komai Hiroshi of Tsukuba University, responding to forecasts similar to the United Nations', has argued that "[t]he kind of figures the demographers talk about are [sic] unimaginable for Japan" (ibid.). Furthermore, when pressed to envision Japan's future in light of a growing tension between the nation's historical resistance to immigration and demands for foreign labor from the industrial and service sectors, Komai declared:

Societies have always risen and faded, and Japan will likely disappear and something else will take its place, but that's not such a problem. Greece and Rome disappeared too. (French 2003: A1)

While Komai's fatalism is arresting, it succinctly replicates the convergence of social science thinking and popular opinion in regards to the nation's immigration "problem." "From its inception," comments Yoko Selleck, "the issue of foreign migrant workers has assumed the existence of an absolute distinction between Japanese and foreigner" (Selleck 1997: 202). Thus, because Komai's statement instantiates both Japan's current national anxieties and the normative belief in a homogenous space of citizenship, I want to use his utterance to launch a larger critique.

Komai's outlook rests upon a belief in watertight unities and incommensurable differences, a position that resonates with the sentiments expressed by Samuel P. Huntington in his controversial essay, "The Clash of Civilizations?" (Huntington 1993). One of Huntington's central arguments asserts that "cultural characteristics and differences are less mutable and hence less easily compromised and resolved than political or economic ones" (ibid.: 27). In this sense, Komai's "societies" are homologous to Huntington's "civilizations," since both are presented as "shut-down, sealed-off entities that have been purged of the myriad currents and countercurrents that animate human history" (Said 2001: 1). This historical

purging is evident in Komai's descriptions of Greece and Rome as "faded" and "disappeared." Such declarations are founded upon a static conception of culture, one that conjures away the dynamic attributes of transboundary encounters. As a result, the possibility for a hospitable integration of foreign workers in Japan is rendered simply "unimaginable."

When read in this manner, Komai's remark can be taken as an ingenuous "solution" to Japan's immigration "problem." By attempting to consolidate a cultural singularity in the face of an impending multiplicity, it appears that the "disappearance" of Japan is a more viable option than a genuine engagement with pluralization. The desire to leap forward to Komai's "something else," wherein somehow, for better or worse, Japan's immigration "problem" has already been worked out, enacts a discursive closure that not only conceals national anxieties, but more importantly, obscures the multiple forms of discrimination currently inflicted upon the thousands of immigrants *already* living in Japan.

Rather than contributing to French's sensationalism or Komai's intolerance, this paper seeks to reformulate Japan's immigration "problem." Specifically, I want to pursue ways of envisaging a more hospitable Japan, one that can responsibly accommodate intra-national difference through acts of tolerance, plurality, and non-violence.² Those working to bring fairness to Japan's marginalized populations have struggled with this question for years. However, as Japan's latest free trade negotiations with other East Asian countries have continued to involve discussions on the bilateral movement of labor, the need for this sort of critical engagement has become even more pressing.³ Responding to this urgency, the present study seeks to move beyond the barriers typically encountered by conventional approaches to Japan's minority issues. By examining the scripting of *Nikkeijin*⁴ identities in Japan, this paper aims to loosen the ubiquitous *uchi/soto* ("inside/outside") distinction in a manner that affords new ways

² This question was influenced by Sankaran Krishna's work on Indian-Sri Lankan relations in his *Postcolonial Insecurities* (Krishna 1999: xxix).

³ At the time of this writing, Japan is entering a fourth round of FTA negotiations with the Philippines. As a condition of this agreement, it seems likely that Japan will extend "residential status" to those Filipino nurses who obtain Japanese qualifications. Similarly, the Japan-Thai Economic Partnership Agreement (JTEPA) is nearing completion. A key point of contention, however, is the discrepancy between Japan's preference for an exchange of "qualified personnel" versus Thailand's wish to also include service workers (Miyagawa Makio, Director of the Regional Policy Division, Asian and Oceania Division in the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, interviewed July 20, 2004).

⁴ In this paper, I will use *Nikkeijin* and *Nikkei* interchangeably to refer to foreign-born people of Japanese descent.

of *thinking about* and *interceding in* the so-called immigration “problem.” Insofar as my investigation proceeds by engaging with texts from a variety of genres—SMAP’s 2003 “MIJ” advertising campaign, Kurosawa Akira’s 1991 film *Rhapsody in August*, and NHK’s 2002 *asadora* (“morning serialized drama”) *Sakura*—my analysis will explore the ways in which popular fictions participate in the dramaticization of Japan’s ethno-spatial boundaries. But first, it is necessary to include a brief account of the Nikkeijin “re-migration” phenomenon.

JAPAN’S NIKKEIJIN “RE-MIGRATION” PHENOMENON

The economic boom of the 1980s depleted Japan’s domestic source of unskilled and semi-skilled labor as the younger generation, having been raised in the relative comfort of a vast middle class, became averse to the low wages and lower prestige of factory work (Lie 2001: 10; Linger 2001: 22). Having already recruited the maximum number of *dekasegi* [seasonal migrants] from Japan’s less affluent provinces, second- and third-tier employers began hiring undocumented workers from Pakistan, Iran, Bangladesh, and a number of other Asian countries (Linger 2001: 22). As the number of foreign laborers grew, some within Japan’s business and political sectors expressed concerns about a perceived threat to the nation’s cultural and ethnic “harmony.” Pressured by several factions, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs proposed a restructuring of the nation’s immigration regulations to allow *Nikkeijin* to enter as unskilled laborers. An oft-quoted article from the Liberal Democratic Party’s monthly magazine, states:

Admitting *Nikkeijin* legally will greatly help to ameliorate the present acute labor shortage. People who oppose the admission of the unskilled are afraid of racial discrimination against foreigners. Indeed, if Japan admitted many Asians with different cultures and customs than those of Japanese, Japan’s homogenous ethnic composition could collapse. However, if *Nikkeijin* were admitted, this would not be a problem ... *Nikkeijin*, as relatives of the Japanese, would be able to assimilate into Japanese society regardless of nationality and language. (Nojima 1989: 98–99 quoted in Linger 2001: 23)

The logic of this proposal evolved into the 1990 Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act. And, under the premise of preserving “Japan’s homogenous ethnic composition” while simultaneously addressing the industrial demands for cheap labor, a new legal category was created, the “long-term resident.” This residency status was made available to second-

and third-generation *Nikkeijin* as well as their spouses, regardless of ancestry (Sellek 1997: 188f.). Additionally, under this revision, relatives within a "sixth degree of consanguinity," such as the grandnephews and grandnieces of an applicant's great-grandparent could also apply for a "certificate of eligibility" from Japanese Immigration Offices. With no restrictions placed upon these virtually guaranteed entry visas, they provided *Nikkeijin* with *de facto* working visas (Sellek 1997: 189).

This transformation of Japan's immigration policies coincided with the bleakness of Brazil's "lost decade," a period characterized by a faltering economy, hyperinflation, and high unemployment (Tsuchida 1998). Capitalizing upon their newly-acquired preferred entrance category, many Brazilian *Nikkei*, frustrated by their country's economic malaise and governmental mismanagement, "re-migrated" to Japan in hopes of earning better wages (Linger 2001: 24). As a result, the number of *Nikkeijin* living and working in Japan increased from approximately 2,000 in 1986 to almost 155,000 by 1993 (Cornelius 1994; Kajita 1998). Despite a prolonged Japanese recession, their numbers continued to increase steadily and today the domestic *Nikkeijin* population (predominantly, but not exclusively from Brazil) exceeds 300,000, thereby constituting Japan's second-largest "foreign" group (Tsuda 2003: 123).

INSTITUTIONALIZING JAPAN'S "NEWEST ETHNIC MINORITY"

A number of recent works have examined Japan's *Nikkei dekasegi* phenomenon (Lie 2001; Linger 2001; Yamashita 2001; Brody 2002; Mori 2002; Roth 2002; Tsuda 2003; Douglass and Roberts 2003). While these studies employ a variety of approaches, they appear to be undergirded by one fundamental question: namely, "to what degree are the *Nikkei Nihonjin*⁵?" This is not surprising given that contemporary studies of diasporic communities derive from prior anthropological inquiries on the retention and transformation of culture (Kelley 2002: 127). However, more than simple "social scientific" observations, these ethnographic studies have focused heavily upon the daily struggles of *dekasegi* life and in this sense appear to

⁵ "*Nihonjin*," referring to Japanese people, is a contentious category, particularly within the context of this paper (see also Lie 2001: 144–148). From this point on, I will delineate "Japanese" and "*Nihonjin*" in order to accentuate the differences between the language/culture/citizenry associated with "Japanese" and the seemingly immutable, ethnonational, and almost "racial" connotation of "*Nihonjin*."

be invested in institutionalizing the *Nikkei* as Japan's "newest ethnic minority."

For example, Michael Weiner, in the introduction to his edited volume, *Japan's Minorities*, states that he included a discussion on the *Nikkeijin* because they have recently emerged "as a *distinct minority population*" (Weiner 1997: xiii, emphasis added). In the same volume, Yoko Sellek notes that the purpose of her chapter is to "detail the current state of the *Nikkeijin* and discuss the possibility of them becoming a *new minority group in Japanese society*" (Sellek: 179, emphasis added). More recently, Takeyuki Tsuda, writing on the social isolation experienced by *Nikkei dekasegi*, claims that because second- and third-generation *Nikkei* are culturally Brazilian, "they are ethnically rejected and treated as foreigners in Japan despite their Japanese descent, and thus have become the *country's newest ethnic minority*" (Tsuda 2003: 123, emphasis added). And, in a similar tone, Yamanaka Keiko, in describing the consequences of Brazilian labor migration to Japan, contends that despite the promise of "privileged access to economic opportunities and cultural integration," the *Nikkeijin* have found themselves "relegated [...] to the position of a *disadvantaged 'ethnic' minority*" (Yamanaka 2003: 192, emphasis added).

To be sure, the life of a *Nikkei dekasegi* is difficult. Beyond the long hours spent performing alienating *san-k*⁶ jobs (Tsuda 2003), and beyond the everyday struggles associated with living in a foreign country, they are confronted with the reality that "most Japanese citizens regard them as behaviorally strange and culturally inferior as a result of their *Nikkeijin* ethnicity and their third-world nationality" (Yamanaka 2003: 192). Nevertheless, the argument that I want to advance here moves in a different direction. That is, while many of the aforementioned treatments have demonstrated how the preference for *Nikkeijin* over other migrant workers has reified Japanese beliefs in *ius sanguinis* (the "law of blood") and racial homogeneity, I want to suggest that the institutionalization of *Nikkeijin*-as-minority enacts a strikingly similar kind of reification. In other words, by establishing *Nikkeijin* as "Japan's newest minority," these works discipline the indistinctiveness of *Nikkei* subject positions (i.e. neither resolutely "foreign" nor essentially *Nihonjin*) in a manner that naturalizes the *Nihonjin* group identity as a majoritarian fact (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 105).⁷

⁶ *San-k* refers to the "three k's" of Japanese migrant labor: *kitanai* [dirty], *kitsui* [difficult], and *kiken* [dangerous].

⁷ This move draws from Michael Shapiro's treatment of Deleuze and Guattari's "becoming-minoritarian" in "Radicalizing Democratic Theory: Social Space in Connolly, Deleuze, and Ranciere" (Shapiro 2003).

By revisiting the core question, “to what degree are the *Nikkei Nihonjin*?” it becomes evident that *Nihonjin*-as-majority operates as the constant against which the *Nikkeijin* are to be evaluated. Yet, when framed in this manner, political responses to discrimination are reduced to advocating for a minority’s right to be included within the majority—in this case, an extension of the legal protections afforded to *Nihonjin*. While this brand of politics strives for equality, it is an equality in its most anemic form, as subjects are simply overcoded in “sameness” through a recalibration of the self/other disjunction (Patton 2000: 47). Such a modification not only fortifies the majority/minority binary, it also, as a result, accepts exclusionary practices as an inevitable matter-of-course (Scott 1988: 47).

Without denying the importance of conventional responses to inequality (i.e. judicial and legislative reforms), working solely for the incorporation of minorities into the majority is not sufficient. Rather, projects must simultaneously work to distinguish between the “majoritarian” as a constant and homogenous system, “minorities” as subsystems, and the “minoritarian” as a potentially creative position of becoming (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 105f.). By interjecting the “minoritarian” into the majority/minority dialectic, Deleuze and Guattari offer those involved with minority struggles another trajectory. Whereas traditionally, minorities have been problematized as outcasts who may strive to be included within the legal protection of the majority, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that marginalized peoples can function as collectivities of a different kind, ones whose very presence threaten the cohesiveness and stability of all unities, majority or otherwise (Patton 2000: 48). At the core of this concept is the claim that representations of the “majority” are untenable since there exists no coherent horizon or durable essence behind any collective identity (Nancy 1997: 93). Therefore, rather than subsuming to Komai’s logic of immutable and mutually-exclusive differences through discussions about who is/not *Nihonjin*, the remainder of this paper seeks to employ a minoritarian tack, one that can affirm intra-national differences in ways that confound, disrupt, and render ambiguous the myth of Japan as a homogenous majority. What is enabled then, is a more complicated engagement with difference, one that disrupts the oscillation between minority demands for equality (i.e. “We want to be treated equally”) and affirmations of their differences (i.e. “We want our uniqueness to be respected”), and therefore fosters the conditions of possibility for a more pluralistic Japan.

It is for this reason that I have come to focus on the somewhat flexible position of *Nikkeijin* in Japan. Being neither resolutely “foreign” nor essentially *Nihonjin*, the *Nikkeijin* embody a “zone of indistinction” that can potentially render the dynamics of exclusion untenable (Agamben 1998: 9). In other words, the indistinctiveness of Japan’s *Nikkeijin* population has

the potential to loosen the *Nihonjin/gaikokujin* [Japanese/foreigner] binary. The remaining sections, therefore, will focus less upon indexing the discrepancies between *uchi no hito* [insiders] and *soto no hito* [outsiders] and more upon the construction, maintenance, and transgression of the thresholds that define and differentiate the two. To begin, it is critical to examine the contours of Japan's bio-political order.

JAPAN'S NATIVIST ORDERING

All national constructions contain a fundamental biopolitical fracture (Agamben 1998: 178). On the one hand, the "nation" instantiates a moment of *inclusion*, as it refers to the "total state of integrated and sovereign citizens" (ibid.: 177). However, this consolidation and naturalization of "the people" enacts a simultaneous process of *exclusion* as citizens are constituted through their opposition to alien-others (i.e. inside/outside, us/them, domestic/foreign). As Agamben notes, much of the shape of national political discourse stems from an attempt to finesse this fracture as disaggregating multiplicities are synthesized into a single representation of national unity (Agamben 1998; Shapiro 2001: 13). Yet, because the quest for unity utilizes the same exclusionary practices that produce national insecurities (Dillon 1997), boundary-producing processes are forced to operate in a perpetual state of reproduction. It is this continuous adjustment, the ceaseless recalibration of who "we" are, that animates and redeems exclusionary forms of violence. As Sankaran Krishna writes:

[M]ajoritarian nationalism and ethnic cleansing are two points along the same continuum. Both are based on an exclusionary vision of national space; both regard national identity and membership as an ineradicable and unchanging matter of blood and belonging; and both would attempt to carry the fiction of homogeneity to its logical conclusion: the permanent effacement of minorities either through genocide or by according them an eternal second-class state as "guests." (Krishna 1999: 222)

Thus, the nascent violence and discrimination embedded within national boundary-producing practices underscores the need to create other, more ethical ways of engaging with intra-national difference.

In the case of Japan, the nation's biopolitical fracture moves along a ubiquitous inside/outside binary: *Nihonjin/gaikokujin* [Japanese/foreigners] or *uchi no hito/soto no hito*⁸ [insiders/outsiders] (Nakano 1983; Lie

⁸ While a majority of Japanese relationships are framed within *uchi/soto* terms, thereby making the categories situational, there also exists a prevailing concep-

2001). This nativist ordering grants those included within the “politically qualified” *uchi no hito* category the privileges of legal protection, whereas the *soto no hito*, those designated as politically ineligible, are left exposed to the vagaries of power (Agamben 1998: 7). Despite the normative strength of Japan’s *uchi no hito* category, its salience remains contingent upon its ability to contain the unruly exceptions that are increasingly posed by the trans-boundary flows of globalization. Thus, when threats to the sanctity of the *uchi/soto* order arises—such as the *Nikkeijin*—the master-narrative of national unity works to curtail the possibility of disaggregation, thereby reestablishing the boundaries between inside and outside. As a result, *Nihonjin* as a homogenous category once again comes to represent a unified nation. In its pursuit of “immaculate conceptions, pure belongings, and unambiguated identity” (Krishna 1999: 228), these nation-building efforts merely privilege one out of a variety of possible unities (Balibar 1991: 49).

The remainder of this paper, then, treats Japan’s *uchi/soto* binary not as a given fact but as a tenuous achievement that must be continually remade in order to suppress those narratives that contest the nation’s ethno-spatial order. Mass media, because it is one of the main transmitters of the nation-building process’s regulatory ideals, stands as a provocative site for investigating the ways in which the nation is presented, contested, and re-presented. “MADE IN JAPAN” (MIJ), a promotional campaign designed for the June 2003 release of *SMAP*’s⁹ latest album and concert tour, offers a revealing site for this kind of analysis.

“THE SLOGAN IS – MADE IN JAPAN = [MIJ]”

I encountered the first installation of the MIJ campaign in May 2003. In Tokyo’s Harajuku ward, along Omotesandō-dori, directly across the street from one of the world’s largest Louis Vuitton showrooms, stood a wall-length billboard (Figure 1). Its text, written (in English) in red on a white background, read:

We all know the Japanese star called the fantasista, who is one of the most exciting in Serie A. This year, he was joined by another Japanese. Now we have two fantasistas. In Major League baseball this year, there is the Japanese pitcher who achieved the 100th win of his career. Right now, the most valuable first batter in the Majors is Japanese. There is the Japanese rookie who could become the first Jap-

tion of Japan-as-*uchi*, which sits in contrast to all that is *soto*, or beyond Japan (Creighton 1997: 212).

⁹ *SMAP* is the name of Japan’s most popular boy-band.

anese home run king in the Majors. On the movie front, a Japanese won the Oscar for the best animated feature film. One of the world's top fashion brands has worked in a tie up with a Japanese artist. In classical music, we have the Japanese conductor who has won world wide praise. This was the first time that Nobel prizes were won by Japanese in two separate fields in one year. Has there been any other period where so many Japanese have played such active roles in the world at one time? Nowadays, Japan is experiencing tough times. People seem to have lost their energy. However, this is a truly amazing time for Japanese culture. Don't you feel good to be living as a Japanese insuch [sic] a wonderful age? We should be encouraged by their achievements and feel a little proud of ourselves. We hope that someday, with you, we will be able to walk tall and play a positive role too. So come along with us! The slogan is—MADE IN JAPAN = [MIJ]



Figure 1: MIJ Omotesandō 18/05/03

Upon viewing, I became instantly intrigued by its political implications. After speculating for days about the possibility of politically-motivated artists setting up installations throughout Tokyo, challenging brand-obsessed consumption, I encountered several other installations in Harajuku and Shibuya (Figures 2, 3, and 4), these with the notable addition of “6.25 SMAP” in the lower right corner. It was only then that I came to understand the MIJ campaign to be a promotion for the latest *SMAP* release.



Figure 2:
MIJ Shibuya 5/24/03



Figure 3:
MIJ Harajuku 5/18/03

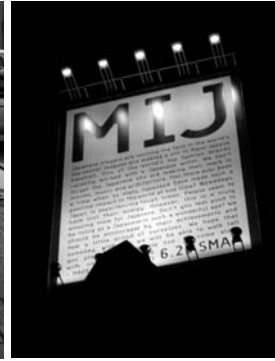


Figure 4:
Shibuya 5/24/03

While this was certainly disappointing, it was not long after that I again began speculating upon the political implications of MIJ. Because the impact of the installments far exceeds the hyper-commercialization of the J-pop music industry, it is necessary to respond to and extend MIJ's message. This entails treating it not just as an advertisement, but also as a moment of social disruption designed for a particular place and time (Morris 1992). In order to heighten the kind of sensibility that I want to imbue in MIJ, it is helpful to examine the politics of Shepard Fairey's OBEY GIANT project.

The OBEY GIANT project began 1989 with the creation of Fairey's first sticker modeled upon the face of American wrestling star, Andre the Giant (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Fairey's "Obey the Giant"

Since its inception, the sticker, which Fairey himself describes as "nonsensical," has popped-up in the urban landscapes of nearly every major U.S.

city, as well as London, Tokyo, Melbourne, and Hong Kong (Fairey 2002: 55).

While the image itself may have no inherent meaning, it is the placement of these stickers that drives Fairey's politics. He writes: "Because people are not used to seeing advertisements or propaganda for which their product or motive is not obvious, frequent and novel encounters with the sticker provoke thought and possible frustration, nevertheless revitalizing the viewer's perception and attention to detail" (Fairey 2002: 4). In other words, for Fairey, context is crucial. He claims that his works must be installed in public spaces in ways that compete with other forms of signage and corporate advertising (Figure 6). "The fact that the images are placed in public without permission," writes Fairey (2002: 4), "brings the control of the public space into question." Thus, by integrating his art into the fabric of urban landscapes, Fairey forces viewers to become "curious about the images and how they relate to their surroundings, therefore bringing the surroundings into question as well" (*ibid.*).



Figure 6: Fairey's Obey Giant

By bringing the politics of OBEY GIANT into MIJ's Omotesandō milieu, I want to reread the installment in a style similar to Fairey's, as both create novel encounters that provoke thought and illicit a questioning of public space. In order to convey the disruptive force of MIJ, it is important to describe the "signage" of Omotesandō.

Fodor's guidebook to Tokyo describes Omotesandō-dōri as the "Champs Elysées of Tokyo," a "wide, tree-lined avenue that runs from

Aoyama-dōri to Meiji Jingū [Shrine] and is lined with expensive cafés and designer boutiques" (Kaufman and Dunford 2002: 154). It was along this street that, opposite the Louis Vuitton showroom, Omotesandō's MIJ installment was flanked on the right by a women's boutique named "Morgan de Toi," a United Colors of Benetton, a boutique named "Marcella," and a McDonald's. Across the street from McDonald's, moving down Omotesandō-dōri towards Louis Vuitton is the American-owned Citibank, La Maison du Chocolat, a De Jour flower shop, the cosmetic line Shu Uemura, Kawai Music Plaza, Max & Co., a bar named "Seoul to Soul," Emporio Armani, and the Tokyo Unity Church. On the opposite side of Louis Vuitton stand Missoni, Paul Stuart New York, and beach-themed boutique named "Santa Monica." The mere presence of MIJ, then, as an emblem of Japanese pride, not only disrupts the international milieu created by the intrusion of American and European retailers, but also reterritorializes Omotesandō as unquestionably Japanese.

This kind of attentiveness to MIJ's signifiers heightens both its articulation of national anxiety ("Nowadays, Japan is experiencing tough times. People seem to have lost their energy"), as well as its simultaneous effort to shore-up group membership through a re-stabilization of the nativist order ("Don't you feel good to be living as a Japanese insuch [sic] a wonderful age? We should be encouraged by their achievements and feel a little proud of ourselves. We hope that someday, with you, we will be able to walk tall and play a positive role too. So come along with us!" [emphasis added]). While MIJ's employment of "we" and "ourselves" recuperates Japanese "energy," it also resettles Japan's ethno-spatial boundaries as viewers are interpolated into the exclusionary practices that populate the either-or categories of "us/them," *uchi/soto*, and *Nihonjin/gaikokujin*. As such, the installation, standing as national banner, stakes a nativist claim in both Omotesandō's designer boutiques and Japan as a whole.

Resonating with Komai's nihilistic outlook on immigration, the reactionary politics of representation evinced in MIJ can be read as an effort to re-stabilize the dominant fiction of a homogeneous nation. In its effort to "recuperate" ethno-spatial homogeneity, the narrative of MIJ silences the irresolvable forms of otherness that are necessary for the very construction of an *uchi no hito* category. Thus, by couching the heterogeneity of Omotesandō within the either-or rigidity of Japanese nationality—one defined by culture, descent, and the ideologically-charged metaphor of "one large household" (Kashiwazaki 2000: 16)—MIJ's reanimation of the myth of national unity effectively inhibits the affirmation of Japan's unruly exceptions, those unrecognized identities that have, at other times, exceeded the current limits of nationhood. Therefore, in order to activate a minoritarian approach, one would need to disrupt this historical amnesia by giving

presence to those narratives that refute this latest investment in ethno-spatial homogeneity.

REFIGURING THE "FAMILY STATE"

Drawing from a number of recent works that have detailed the historic fluidity and contingency of Japan's biopolitical order, one could demonstrate how, during Japan's period of colonial expansion, the nation's multiethnic origins were not only recognized but celebrated (Oguma 1998; Tanaka 1995; Young 1999; Kashiwazaki 2000). Additionally, the scholarship that has traced how the Meiji Restoration's state-sponsored nationalism imbued all strata of Japanese society with a sense of homogeneity (Gluck 1985; Fujitani 1993; Oguma 1995; Vlastos 1998) is equally beneficial as it illustrates the ways in which the notion of *Yamato minzoku* [distinct Japanese race] was enabled by a dual process that mobilized powerful cultural generalities while simultaneously suppressing and redefining regional particularities (Weiner 1997: 1, 8). These two moves could be further supplemented by an examination of the *Nihonjinron* [Japanese cultural uniqueness] discourse. Because the resiliency of *Nihonjinron* has effectively buried in antiquity all evidence attesting to Japan's heterogeneous past (Yun 1993: 27; Weiner 1997: 8), such a treatment would reveal how race and nation came to be institutionalized as naturally occurring phenomena. Thus, the canonization of *Nihonjinron*, coupled with the notion of the *Yamato minzoku* has, through their "powerful images of the enduring purity and homogeneity of the nation, the family, and Japanese way of life" (Weiner 1997: 2), established the nation as a *kazoku kokka* [family state]. It is precisely this familial conception of the state that has veiled the means by which Japan's contradictions and contingencies have been constructed, consented to, displaced, and replaced by the naturalization of a homogeneous culture and identity.¹⁰

Because this reigning ideology obscures the counter-memories that attest to the "household's" ethnic and cultural diversity, a minoritarian approach must both loosen the *uchi/soto* binary and foreground those zones of indistinction that refute the concept of the *kazoku kokka*. For this reason, the remaining sections will focus more sharply on the ways in which popular fictions participate in the production of Japan's ethno-spatial boundaries. Through an examination of two sites—Kurosawa Akira's 1991 film,

¹⁰ This move was inspired by similar arguments posed by Lauren Berlant in her *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Berlant 1997: 57).

Rhapsody in August and NHK's 2002 *asadora* [morning serialized drama], *Sakura*—the analysis will center on how *Nikkeijin* characters disrupt the stability and cohesiveness of Japan's *Nihonjin* majority. Since both *Rhapsody* and *Sakura* can be read as domestic allegories, they intersect with the themes of this paper through their explicit engagement with *Nikkeijin* intrusions into Japan's familial-as-national space (i.e. *kazoku kokka*). While it is true that both storylines ultimately domesticate the threats posed by their *Nikkeijin* characters, scripting them as "essentially *Nihonjin*," they remain instructive precisely because they depict Japan's ethno-spatial order as a complex process rather than an inevitable matter-of-course.

INCORPOREAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN *RHAPSODY IN AUGUST*

Rhapsody in August (*Hachigatsu no kyōshikyoku*), one of Kurosawa's last films, explores the effects of the Nagasaki atomic blast by interlacing four storylines in a leitmotif of remembrance. The first storyline revolves around Kane, played by Murase Sachiko, a woman who survived the August 9, 1945 bombing, but whose husband was killed. The film opens inside Kane's traditional farmhouse, set in a rural village just outside of Nagasaki. Maintaining a self-sufficient life, one devoid of modern appliances, Kane is seemingly at peace with her memories; she has forgiven, or perhaps forgotten, the traumas of the war. But, when she receives a letter from Suzujiro, a man claiming to be an elder brother who migrated to Hawai'i in 1920, the film's narrative and Kane's memories are set into motion. Written from Suzujiro's deathbed, the letter asks Kane to come to Hawai'i so he can see his only remaining sibling before he dies. Kane, however, is reluctant to leave her home for two reasons. First, because she had more than ten older siblings and has difficulty remembering a brother named Suzujiro, Kane questions the integrity of the "stranger's" claim. Second, and more significantly, despite the gravity of Suzujiro's condition, a visit at this particular moment would force Kane to miss her husband's annual memorial service.

The second storyline is told through the eyes of four adolescent grandchildren who are staying with Kane because their parents—Kane's son, Tadao and daughter Yoshie—have already left for Hawai'i to meet the ailing Suzujiro. The grandchildren, clad in American baseball and university t-shirts throughout the film, are aware that their grandfather was killed by the blast, but it is a vacated memory since they know little more than what was presented in their history lessons. This changes, however, when they encounter a memorial at the elementary school where their grandfather taught and was presumably killed. In the school's playground stands the

twisted wreckage of a steel jungle gym, melted from the heat of the blast and its resulting fires. Standing in front of this enduring marker of destruction, the children finally confront the loss of their grandfather. After a solemn moment of contemplation, one says, "Even though no one ever found Grandpa, he's here ... I'm sure." Upon experiencing this emotional awakening, the children deduce that their grandmother's reluctance to visit Hawai'i is due to resentment over their grandfather's death. "Grandma does not like America and it is only natural," one explains, "After all, Grandpa was killed by the bomb." However, upon overhearing this comment, Kane protests stating: "I do not particularly like or dislike America. War is to blame." From this moment forward, the children's relationship with their grandmother deepens as petty complaints about her stubbornness and cooking are replaced by feelings of compassion and respect.

The third storyline emerges as Tadao and Yoshie return from Hawai'i and rejoin their spouses and children in Kane's home. Impressed by the wealth that Suzujiro's family has amassed through their multinational pineapple enterprise, the middle-aged parents begin to fantasize about the potential benefits to be drawn from their newly discovered relatives. But, upon learning that Kane sent a telegram stating that she will postpone her visit until after her husband's August 9th memorial, the parents become outraged. The daughter, Yoshie, surmises that Kane's letter will bring an end to the budding relationship because, in her words, "Americans resent being reminded of the atom bomb." When they discover that the purpose of a surprise visit from Suzujiro's son Clark is not to officially sever the relationship but to apologize for his family's insensitivity regarding Kane's loss, Tadao and Yoshie are visibly embarrassed. Yet, unlike their impressionable children, their embarrassment fails to result in an increased sensitivity to their mother's travails.

For the purposes of this paper's argument, the fourth storyline, Clark's visit to Nagasaki, demands the most attention. After receiving the telegram explaining why Kane must postpone her visit to Hawai'i, Suzujiro sends his *hapa-nisei*¹¹ son to offer the family's apology. And, while Clark seems to thoroughly enjoy his time with the family, he receives word of his father's death and is forced to return to Hawai'i. His presence in Kane's home, however, triggers a series of events that suggest Kane has begun to re-live past traumas. After witnessing one such relapse, one of Kane's

¹¹ Native Hawaiian language for "part," *hapa* is commonly used in Hawai'i to refer to people with multiethnic backgrounds. *Nisei*, meaning "second generation," refers to the *Nikkeijin* children of the original immigrants or *issei* [first generation]. In this case, Clark is second-generation *Nikkei* and half-Japanese, half Caucasian.

grandchildren deduces that “[t]he clock in Grandma’s head is running in reverse so now she is slipping back to the time of Grandpa.”

Previous readings of Kurosawa’s *Rhapsody* have claimed that the representations of Suzujiro and Clark distort *Nikkeijin* realities (Bernstein and Ravina 1993; BLS 2001); that the film fails to represent *Nikkei* “as they really are” or “should be.” This hermeneutic approach, however, assumes that a more psychologically rounded portrayal of *Nikkeijin* would expose the “true complexities” of their experiences. Rather than deepening this interpretive frame, I want to employ a genealogical sensibility, one in which interpretation becomes the subject matter rather than a strategy of epistemic closure (Shapiro 2001: 6). In this sense, *Rhapsody* can be analyzed as a domestic allegory, one that stages broader national anxieties. Instead of demonstrating how such genres (in)validate fundamental *Nikkeijin* characteristics, it seems a more vital treatment would explore how popular fictions operate as sites of conflict and negotiation, mediating *Nihonjin* reactions to the pluralization of Japanese space, culture, and identity.

It is appropriate, then, to note that in *Rhapsody* there is but one passing reference to *Nikkeijin*. For the remainder of the film’s ninety-seven minutes, the characters are reduced to being either “Japanese,” characterized by Kane, her family, and her neighbors, or “American,” represented by Suzujiro, Clark, and abstractly, “those who dropped the bomb.” Nevertheless, while *Nikkeijin* identity is not stated explicitly, a subtext regarding the familiar question, “to what degree are the *Nikkei Nihonjin*?” plays heavily throughout the film. In the opening scene, for example, the domestic tranquility of Kane’s countryside home, representing the *uchi* as the primary locus of belonging for the family and by extension Japan, is disrupted by the arrival of Suzujiro’s letter, an embodiment of the *soto*. Kane and her grandchildren gather at the threshold of the house to read the letter aloud. And, while Suzujiro’s offer to pay for all to come to Hawai’i thrills her grandchildren, Kane remains hesitant. Scrutinizing each word and the enclosed photos, struggling to make sense of the situation, the bewildered Kane proclaims:

This is all so strange. It could be some kind of mistake ... Haruno Suzujiro? Surely, my maiden name is Haruno but I cannot remember the name Suzujiro. After all, I was born in a poor family that was blessed only with children. I had more than ten brothers and sisters ... Besides, this man is an American, isn’t he? How could *he* be my big brother?

In this sense, the *Nikkei* position of Suzujiro emerges as a zone of indistinction that threatens the ontological security of the film’s ethno-spatial boundaries (i.e. Japan/U.S., *uchi/soto*). In this particular scene, Kane (sim-

ilar to Komai and MIJ) re-establishes the *uchi/soto* binary by ascribing Suzujiro an unambiguous *soto no hito* identity: “[T]his man is an American [...] How could *he* be my big brother?”

The challenge to and resettling of Japan’s ethno-spatial order is underscored by the way in which Kurosawa frames the scene. When the letter arrives, Kane and the grandchildren, some of whom were busy with tasks deep inside the house, convene at the threshold to read the letter at the physical boundary between *uchi* (inside/family/domestic) and *soto* (outside/stranger/foreign). Furthermore, the camera’s point of view is established from within the house gazing out, as if the interior of Japan is scrutinizing, along with Kane, whether or not to accept the American-outsider into her family-*kazoku kokka*.

The *Nikkeijin* of *Rhapsody* are relegated as American-outsiders until Clark’s arrival in Nagasaki. Tadao and Yoshie, who had pre-arranged for Clark to stay at a hotel, greet him at the airport. Clark, however, rejects the hotel accommodations and in a rough handling of Japanese (so perhaps less assertive than what appears on the page), states: “I do not need a hotel. I am staying at Auntie’s place.” But, before reaching Kane’s home, Clark asks a dismayed Tadao and Yoshie to take him to the site where his uncle (Kane’s husband) died.

At the elementary school, they encounter a number of scarred survivors who have come to tend to the memorial. Despite Yoshie’s assumption that “Americans resent being reminded of the atom bomb,” Clark is visibly moved. In a gesture that echoes the grandchildren’s prior encounter with the memorial, Clark claims, “Seeing these people, I can understand well what happened that day.” Tadao and Yoshie’s reactions to Clark’s compassion evince neither a refiguring of their conceptions of American-outsiders nor the establishment of a hybridized subjectivity. Instead, Clark is incorporationally transformed as an “essentially” Japanese-insider.

This transformation is made complete in the following scene: the film’s first exchange between Clark and Kane. Echoing the reading of Suzujiro’s letters, their encounter takes place at the threshold of Kane’s home. And, while the shot is established outside the house looking in, *uchi no hito* are given presence by Tadao, Yoshie, and the youngest grandchild who are positioned in the background, eavesdropping from within the house. As Clark and Kane sit together staring at the moon, Clark offers an apology. It is worth noting that contrary to the initial reactions from American film critics (Yoshimoto 2000: 365–368), Clark’s apology is not for the American bombing of Nagasaki. Instead, he expresses deep regret for not understanding that Suzujiro’s request was asking Kane to forego her husband’s memorial service. In this sense, Clark is speaking to Kane as an insider, a family member: “My father said to me, ‘Clark, go and do whatever you

can for your aunt'." Moved to tears, Kane accepts Clark's apology. The camera acknowledges this by once again establishing a point of view from within the house in order to capture Kane embrace Clark, her welcoming him inside her home. Kane's gesture, paired with Kurosawa's framing, establishes Clark as a family member (*uchi no hito/Nihonjin*) and permits him to enter the deepest and most sacred room of the house, that of Kane's late-husband. Lined with family portraits, now Clark's family portraits, the room has been decorated by the very grandchildren who initially shunned Clark as resolutely *soto no hito*. Next to a makeshift bed are flowers and a sign that reads, "Welcome." With this, the threats of Clark's American foreignness and *Nikkei* indistinctiveness have been domesticated as his newly acquired *uchi no hito* status affords him access to the sanctity of Kane's family and by extension, Japan's *kazoku kokka*.

The last scene worth discussion is one of *Rhapsody's* final moments, one that takes place just after Clark leaves to attend his father's funeral. When Tadao, Yoshie, and the grandchildren return from the airport, they find Kane shut within her house, crying into a picture of Suzujiro: "Big brother, I am so sorry, I wish I had come to see you sooner." With Kane's finally accepting Suzujiro as her brother, not at the threshold but within the enclosed space of her home, she re-establishes the *uchi/soto* boundary, as Suzujiro's indistinctive *Nikkei* identity has been completely re-made.

While "families" have historically been contingent forms of association with unstable boundaries and varying structures (Shapiro 2001: 2), as objects of appropriation within Japan's *kazoku kokka* ideology, they are represented as the non-contingent result of cohesive and unambiguous unities. The homogeneity of Kane's own family, however, is only made possible through the misrecognition of the incoherence and otherness that always already exists with all collectivities. While obscured when set in relation to the abject alterity of the film's American-outsiders, *Rhapsody* does portray a wide array of intra-familial conflicts. There are vast generational gaps between Kane and her children, Kane and the grandchildren, and between the grandchildren and their parents. There is the indication of class differences between Yoshie's husband, a clerk, and Tadao who is perhaps middle management. But most significantly, there is an overwhelming disparity between the traditional existence of Kane's bucolic Nagasaki village and the modern, urban lifestyles of which her Tokyo-born grandchildren are accustomed. But, similar to the logic of Komai and MIJ, the energy the film spends dissimulating *Nikkeijin* indistinctiveness as either American-outsider or *Nihonjin*-insider, conceals these intra-familial/intra-national differences and enables the master-narrative of Japan as a homogenous and cohesive society to remain intact.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE "HOME" IN NHK'S *SAKURA*

While considerably less stylized than Kurosawa's *Rhapsody*, NHK's *Sakura* nevertheless offers another insightful staging of *Nikkeijin* intrusions and disruptions of Japan's ethno-spatial order. And, when contextualized within the cultural authority of NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation), the primary site where Japanese citizens form images and gain knowledge about their state (Krauss 2000: 19), the influence of *Sakura's* nation-centered narratives become even more significant.

NHK's *asadora* [morning serialized drama], *Sakura*, was broadcast in fifteen-minute episodes, six days a week, from April to October 2002. The drama's storyline follows the adventures of a Hawai'i-born *Nikkei-yonsei*¹² who moves to Japan to teach English at an intermediate school in the prefecture of Gifu. Staying true to its genre, *Sakura* is a conservative family drama that emphasizes the dynamics of social interaction by focusing on the emotional overtones of interpersonal relationships (Leung Yuk Ming 2002: 68). Because NHK was established "to conduct its domestic broadcasting with rich and good broadcast programs for the public welfare" (Krauss 2000: 97), its programming is concerned less with engaging controversial social issues than with providing viewers with a "prescriptive dose of programming for what it considers to be the personal and national good" (Yano 2004: 3).

Throughout the series, the central character, Sakura, confronts a new challenge involving her family, friends, co-workers, or love interests, and in every situation she works against all odds until her goals are met and love prevails. As the story unfolds, Sakura heals a rift between her mother and mother's father, reunites her paternal grandmother with a lost love, repairs the marriage of her homestay "older sister," and improves the relationships amongst the students and teachers at her school—all the while learning about and rubbing against Japanese norms and culture. By the series' end, Sakura decides to reject both her Anglo-American fiancé and a research position at the University of Hawai'i in order to return to Japan, resume her teaching job in Gifu, and most importantly, pursue her love for Katsuragi, a *Nihonjin* co-worker. In one of the series' final scenes, Sakura returns to Gifu to find Katsuragi standing alone at their romantic meeting place. After a moment of awkwardness, Sakura stares into Katsuragi's eyes and utters the single line, "I've returned home."

While some critical attention has been paid to *Sakura's* stereotypes and "glaring mistakes" (Connell 2002; Yano 2004: 11), I want to maintain a ge-

¹² *Yonsei* refers to the "fourth-generation" of *Nikkeijin* immigrants, the great-grandchildren of the original immigrants.

neological perspective by focusing on how the *asadora* participates in the construction of Japan's ethno-spatial boundaries. In this sense, the inquiry shifts from "are the representations of *Nikkei* 'realistic'?" to "what are the political implications of this particular representation that has emerged and retained significance in this specific time and place?" *Sakura* can thus be read as a nation-centered narrative that seeks to re-establish familial and national coherence by bringing *Nikkeijin* "home" to Japan.

The drama's storyline begins with a point of stasis as Sakura's Honolulu home and nuclear family mark her formal space of departure. This stasis, however, is disrupted by her decision to teach in Japan, a move that initiates the story's central thematic: namely, a determination of Sakura's identity. The problematization of *Nikkeijin* identity is established in the series' first episode when, on the eve of Sakura's departure for Japan, her father delivers an emotional speech:

Although our nationality is American, our faces, our blood are Japanese. I myself have pondered this situation, "What am I?" If you go, you too will probably have these feelings. So as long as you are going, I want you to find the answer.

With the familiar core question ("to what degree are the *Nikkei Nihonjin*?") established, the remainder of the story follows Sakura's incorporeal transformation from an ambiguous, and therefore threatening, *Nikkeijin* to the recuperative category of "essentially *Nihonjin*."

Once in Japan, the narrative maps Sakura's journey, oscillating between the cultural competency of *uchi no hito* and the awkwardness of *soto no hito*. As she settles into her new point of stasis, the domestic space of her homestay family's traditional house, the indistinctiveness of Sakura's *Nikkeijin* position gradually achieves the stability of *Nihonjin*. Similar to *Rhapsody in August*, the traditional style home is propped up as the interior of Japan writ large and in this sense, Sakura is not only disruptive—as evinced upon her first moving in with the homestay family when her "mother" declares, "From now on, things will become difficult"—but also *transgressive*, as Sakura literally crosses the threshold between *uchi* and *soto*.

Sakura's metaphorical transgression is demonstrated by countless instances throughout the series where *Nihonjin* characters, commenting on Sakura's appearance and behavior conclude, "she is just like a *Nihonjin*." For example, after delivering a formal self-introduction at the Gifu middle school, the camera moves amongst her coworkers who variously comment on her seemingly *Nihonjin* characteristics: "Her Japanese is perfect"; "She looks just like a Japanese high school student." The ease of this transformation is rationalized by Sakura herself in an exchange with her more

“Americanized” younger sister, Momo. When Momo questions Sakura’s strong attachment to Japan, Sakura replies, “It is just that I love Japan and I want to preserve the Japanese culture.” But, while Momo maintains an indistinct or at least hybridized position by asserting, “We are Americans too, aren’t we?,” Sakura settles the debate, and in turn the *uchi/soto* binary, by providing a prototypical *Nihonjinron* response: “But, we have Japanese blood running through our veins.”

The drama contains other narratives that overcode *Nikkeijin* as “essentially *Nihonjin*.” On a visit to Japan, Sakura’s father delivers a guest lecture at her school whereby he educates the students, and subsequently NHK’s audience, about the history of Hawaii’s *Nikkeijin*. However, his lesson, rather than emphasizing the processes of blending and acculturation that are commonly heralded in Hawai’i, works to affirm *Nikkeijin* allegiance to Japan:

Some people say the first generation forsook Japan, but I think this is wrong. Soon Obon will come and Hawaii’s *Nikkei* still enjoy Bon dancing. At the sea, they release lanterns towards the direction of Japan. This is called *seirei nagashi*, which means to let their spirits return to their hometown. I think they want to send the *issei*’s spirits back to Japan.

By closing the cultural and emotional distance between Hawaii’s *Nikkei* and their Japanese “homes,” the father’s parable works to elide the social distance between *Nikkeijin* and *Nihonjin*. In a similar fashion, at the end of the drama, when Sakura decides to leave Hawai’i and return to Japan, her father reads a letter she left behind explaining that she has gone to “follow her heart”:

I am going back to Japan. I cannot excuse what I am doing. I am going to hurt Dad and the people around me. But, no matter how much people blame me, denying my feelings is a crime I don’t want to commit. While I know that hurting Dad is unforgivable, my life will become much happier and I promise to make a bridge between Japan and Hawai’i. That is going to be my life’s task.

In this promise to become a bridge (*kakehashi*) between Hawai’i and Japan, Sakura’s body becomes the conduit through which *Nikkeijin* “spirits” can cross over from the abject difference of American-outsiders to the interiority of *Nihonjin*-insiders. This crossing over is completed for Sakura the moment she tells her *Nihonjin* boyfriend that she has “returned home.” However, the narrative’s quest for transcendence—the overcoming of *Nikkei* indistinctiveness—contained within the supposedly emancipatory inclusion of *Nikkeijin* as “essentially Japanese,” stands

as just one more instance in a continuous series of efforts to maintain Japan's imaginary unity.¹³

CONCLUSION

Japan's engagement with *Nikkeijin* subjectivities can be taken as an indication of the degree to which the nation is prepared to meet the challenges of its so-called immigration "problem." In order to foster the conditions of possibility for a more hospitable Japan, one that can responsibly accommodate intra-national differences through acts of tolerance, plurality, and non-violence, efforts must be made to move beyond the nation-centered narratives that seek to recover a "pure originary state of being where territory and identity coincide" (Krishna 1999: xxxviii).

With this project in mind, the analysis above has combined political theory with applied treatments of popular genres in hopes of loosening the certainties of Japan's *uchi/soto* binary. In treating SMAP's MIJ campaign, Kurosawa's *Rhapsody in August*, and NHK's *Sakura* as enunciative spaces that mediate *Nihonjin* encounters with alterity, I have tried to foreground the fragility of Japan's ethno-spatial order as well as the anxieties that are produced by trans-boundary movements. Furthermore, *Rhapsody in August* and *Sakura* demonstrate how domestications of *Nikkeijin* indistinctiveness, regardless of their form (i.e. Japan's "newest ethnic minority," resolutely "foreign," or "essentially Japanese"), recuperate the myth of a homogeneous society.

In order to resist this sort of recuperation, work must be done to continuously decenter those narratives that obscure the ineffably miscegenated character of an national origins. Only then it will be possible to affirm the hyphenated spaces and identities of a pluralistic Japan.

¹³ Draws from Krishna (1999: 246).

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