Whiter than White? Part III : Interrogating Images in a Critical Study of the Cultural Practice in Japan of Casting White People in Local Print Media Ads, and its Educational Implications

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Abstract: Whereas prior approaches to learning about cultures focused on identifying putatively 'essential' differences and/or trite representations, current approaches adopt critical multiculturalism/interculturalism to debunk stereotypes and expose the insidious workings of hegemonic hierarchies. This study draws on the British tradition of Culture Studies (CS) to problematize the cultural practice in Japan of using White models to represent and advertise products. Advertising functions as a powerful force of 'informal' education, setting cultural 'norms,' so CS posits as paramount the unpacking of the processes and (meta-)messages of such mass media. Thus, this study semiotically interrogates images of foreign (especially White) models in Japanese ads. It aims to unveil the processes/practices of representation: how ads are intended to be 'read' and how consumers are unconsciously complicit in duly making those meanings. Collectively, the images indicate a pattern of positive representation of Whiteness, especially as connoting pulchritude, power, privilege, and prestige. In contrast, Black people are hugely under-represented (especially women) and often only appear in stereotypical roles. Other intersectionally oppressive representations/non-representations include women being sexualised, and everyone being heterosexual and middle-class (or above), with consumers likely to assume models are American. Where is the cultural diversity? Part I of the study interrogated images of White women in ads, noticing a shift in representations (less removed/revered?). Part II interrogated images of White and Black men, noting a similar shift in representation and a change to less macho masculinity. Analysing such changes is a way to challenge the fixity of stereotypes, leading to more equitable intercultural interaction. The present paper (Part III) extends the study by switching the focus from national TV ads to local print media ads to interrogate and compare representations of Whiteness, finding them again to be positive (with Black people hard

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to find). A forthcoming study will analyse images of foreigners in English textbooks in Japan to assess how much they replicate or repudiate the ad images' (meta-)messages, bringing 'informal' and 'formal' learning into productive contact in a way CS advocates but which has not featured in traditional curricula. This could be a model for people in Japan (and elsewhere) to undertake such interrogations of images in their own local contexts to reflect on what (meta-)messages they convey, and to compare such 'informally' educative media influences with the images/attitudes conveyed by 'formal' education (textbooks, curricula etc.) to consider, holistically, what it really is that people are learning/having reinforced about cultures (especially a hierarchy of cultures) and how they might resist/re-envision it in more equitable and transformative ways.

Keywords: Culture Studies, Interculturalism, Whiteness Studies, Japanese Advertising, Intersectionality

1. Introduction

This paper (Part III) is intended to be read as a continuation of Parts I and II (Jones & Honda, 2017 and 2018), so there should be no need to rehash the theoretical framework and methodology behind this study too much here beyond the description in the above abstract. In brief, this study draws on the British tradition of Culture Studies (plus Critical Race Theory/Critical Whiteness Studies) to problematize the cultural practice in Japan of using White models to represent and advertise products. Parts I and II analysed images in national TV ads: Part I investigated White women; Part II investigated White and Black men. The present paper (Part III) investigates images of foreigners appearing in local print media ads and on signboards. A forthcoming study will examine images of foreigners appearing in English textbooks in Japan to assess the extent to which they replicate or repudiate the (meta-)messages communicated by the ads as a way of "reconceptualizing the boundaries of formal and informal learning" (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016, p. 6).

Here is a brief summary of some key points and educational implications from Parts I and II that guide and inform Part III. As Kellner and Share (2005) stated, "It is highly irresponsible in the face of saturation by the Internet and media culture to ignore these forms of socialization and education", so "a student-centred, bottom-up approach is necessary for a standpoint analysis to come from the student's own culture, knowledge, and experiences" (p. 371). Teachers (and parents) should not disregard the informal learning children receive from culture around them (movies, TV, comics, video games, ads, etc.), so incorporating the study of such genres into formal curricula helps children make better sense of the world they live in. This study hopes to provide a model for such investigations, to suggest possible directions for meliorating understanding and practice and enacting

more equitable intercultural interactions.

Advertising is a hugely powerful force of 'informal' education, setting and reinforcing cultural 'norms' in insidiously 'invisible' ways that usually go unnoticed by society. It shapes culture. Japan's ad agencies "devote extensive research efforts to studying how Japanese consumers respond to their images", so the "images are intentional representations" (Creighton, 1995, p. 138), designed to trigger specific feelings/responses. People are subjected to a huge volume of ads but should not simply let themselves be "subject" to it. Instead, they should empower themselves by noticing their complicity in making the meanings intended by advertisers, and then transformationally create alternative meanings/media (i.e. realise their own agency against ad agencies). This is the process of "Encoding/decoding" messages (Hall, 1997, p. 257).

Thus, Culture Studies (CS) stresses the importance of such rigorous unpacking of the processes and (meta-)messages of mass media. It aims to develop "critical media literacy" and to "criticize stereotypes" (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 372). The "basis of media literacy is that all messages are constructed" (p. 381), so the "interrogation of the image", rather than blithely accepting it, is a key CS practice. As Hall (1997 film) stated: "we must probe inside and behind the image" and deconstruct it. This is important because celebrity endorsement and "image advertising"/ "mood advertising" (Creighton, 1995, p. 139) wield huge power in Japanese advertising. Image advertising works by viewers intuiting the intended feeling/meaning from the image, whereas Hall's CS approach of interrogating images very much resists that.

Parts I and II thus semiotically interrogated images of foreign (especially White) models in Japanese TV ads. It found that Whiteness is represented positively, especially as connoting a richer, hipper, happier, more attractive and more modern (Western/international) lifestyle. This creates and sustains a structure of feeling that 'White is Right'/'West is Best'. Thus, this seems to be a quintessential instance of White Privilege: it is unspoken but still comes across loud and clear. In advertising, image is everything, and just being White seems to add value. Thus, are foreign celebs trading on their White Privilege when they make ads in Japan? The "assumption is that Japan does not play by the same rules as the West does" (Maynard, 1997, p. 131), so celebs often insist on the notorious "Only in Japan" clause. Can they thus intuit that something might be suspect?

Analysing how verbal and visual signs establish message and power in Japanese ads, Maynard (1996) found that, often, the "metamessage" is of "intimacy endorsed by power" (p. 262). A position of power is established by the White celeb appearing/speaking from up above (with camera shots from below), but the celeb smiles to convey intimacy (i.e. it is soft power). Other intersectional power dynamics recur: Whites appear far-more often than Black or East-Asian people. A Black person who appears is more likely to be male than female (but likely to be stereotyped as an athlete or musician).

These patterns of representation reinforce the notion of a "ladder of civilizations" (Prieler, 2010, p. 514): White, Japanese, Others. Moreover, there is a concomitant wider lack of diversity (LGBT, developing-world people, etc.). Are almost all foreigners really White, American, not poor, happy, attractive, and heterosexual?

Whiteness is often stereotypically gendered, too. Women often dress sexily and enjoy housework. Men are strong, but, in the 1990s, 'tough guy' transformed into 'new man'. Although it was maybe not major progress in the representation of masculinity, it may be significant in showing how an apparently fixed stereotype can morph into something new, perhaps offering hope for representations of race etc. Meanings, situations, and realities can all change.

Another change observed in ads is the pattern of White models' increased "acculturation" (Martin, 2012) to Japan in ads, but their Whiteness still reinforces a sense of essential difference: "'Others' are often stereotyped in ways that differentiate them from Japanese...the representation of Others constructs 'Japaneseness'" (Prieler, 2010, pp. 511-512). Thus, the binary of the apparent monoliths of (White) Western culture and Japanese culture is constructed/reinforced. Although some ads maybe challenge White Western hegemony and posit Japanese culture as superior (on the "ladder of civilizations"), perhaps that is merely replacing one form of hegemony with another.

Part III will proceed with some updates and contextualization to Parts I and II, then transition into critically interrogating advertising images found in the rural area of Japan where we[1] live: to juxtapose national and local. To what extent are the same (meta-)messages cumulatively conveyed in the national ads replicated or repudiated by the local ads? Such local ads may serve as an important cultural corollary to the national ones and thus may also function as key sites in which tastes and 'norms' are created and perpetuated, shaping attitudes and actions. Again, the informal educational influence of advertising images seems so substantial; interrogating them can bring insights into how people become culturally constructed/conditioned to think and behave in certain ways.

This begins from a young age, so it is imperative that it is recognized and countered by teachers and parents: "Neuroscientists have uncovered brain regions involved in racial and gender stereotyping and shown that such stereotypes begin to form early in childhood" (Devlin, 2018). This is why CS proponents advocate bringing the study of such cultural artefacts/processes into what has traditionally been the remote, removed realm of formal schooling. The focus in these studies has been advertising, but the internet, video games, social media, popular music/music videos, TV, films, books, magazines, and comics/manga etc. are all also hugely influential and well worthy of critical interrogation and formal study, too.

Such reconceptualising of pedagogical practice is indeed welcome, and such a dynamic fusion of informal and formal learning can also be extended to prompt a deeper realization/consciousness

of the possible overlap of many (meta-)messages from the powerful informally educative domain and formal education (in school curricula). Thus, the next stage of this study (forthcoming) will semiotically interrogate images appearing in English textbooks in Japan.

2. Some Updates and Further Contextualization to Parts I and II

Culture Studies critically interrogates, unveils, and tackles issues concerning images, representation, stereotyping, and othering in the media, focusing on power and oppression, hegemonic hierarchies, dominant discourses, and silenced voices/viewpoints. CS also examines how such power dynamics are insidiously, invidiously, and invisibly perpetuated over time, and such issues have burst to prominence in recent times.

However, such issues and ideologies are not radically new at all. Du Bois was writing well over a century ago about the evils of White supremacy and structural/systemic racism, and many have succeeded him (e.g. bell hooks, Toni Morrison, Stuart Hall). Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) have long known how pernicious societal discrimination is, but it is only now that more White people are (belatedly) starting to listen and notice, too: to 'get woke.'

Many other White people, though, of a more traditionalist bent, continue to deny that "White Privilege" and systemic racism exist and use the term "woke" derisively for over-sensitive, 'right-on' leftie liberals/'politically correct' virtue signallers/'social-justice warriors'. These are the battle lines drawn out in the 'Culture Wars' in many countries, perhaps most starkly in the U.S. (the clashes between the Black Lives Matter [BLM] and Make America Great Again [MAGA] movements).

Although the term "woke" is not perfect (is it at risk of becoming too much of a catch-all and thus meaningless term?), it still seems an accurate, evocative image, and one which jibes with Freire's key concept of *conscientização* (conscientization): people become critically aware of a situation/process/phenomenon, and then strive to enact change/transformation through "praxis".

How credible is it to deny that systemic racism exists? Few BIPOC would deny its existence. Open racism is clear; however, systemic racism is far subtler. The fear/reality is that racism is deeply entrenched, both in individuals and wider societal structures. It is important not to overlook the many subtle micro-aggressions that BIPOC routinely suffer, which the White perpetrators may not even recognise as being racist. They may be appalled at the thought, but they nonetheless unconsciously retain some racist sentiments which can then become (unintentionally) instantiated in their words and behaviours (some studies indicate such prejudice affects/afflicts "90-95% of people", Devlin, 2018). For example, Liggett (2009) showed how a blithe lack of awareness of racial issues in White ESL teachers can lead to characteristic "avoidance behaviors" (p. 28) that can hurt students.

Many 'liberals' claim to treat everyone exactly the same and not 'see' colour; however, this

approach may only perpetuate the racism inherent in the status quo. As Kubota and Lin (2009) have stated, "It has been argued that whiteness exerts its power as an invisible and unmarked norm against which all Others are racially and culturally defined, marked, and made inferior" (p. 10). This again indicates the existence and propagation of ingrained/institutional racism that needs addressing. A practical way of approaching this is to reconceptualise: as Kubota and Lin have argued, the "notion that racism is a discourse allows us to understand that most individuals are not racist; what is racist are the structured ideas that shape social reality" (p. 6).

Then, to bring this wider contextualisation back to the focus of the current study, perhaps ads can be seen as perpetrators/perpetuators of stereotypical images that contribute to the discourse of systemic racism. Kilbourne (1987) argued that advertising's influence builds "unconsciously and cumulatively", and Hall (1997) posited the power of the "accumulation of meanings" of images, "across a variety of texts and media", read in connection to and against each other, creating a "*regime of representation*"/"*representational paradigm*" through such "inter-textuality" (p. 232). Conversely, systemic-racism deniers tend to dismiss each racist incident or representation as unconnected one-offs instead of joining the dots to see the bigger picture.

Thus, maybe this kind of study can help shed light on the insidious ways in which images/representations in popular culture (in this case, foreigners appearing in ads in Japan) can cumulatively come to construct and condition people's thoughts and actions. Analysing these images of White and (less frequently) Black people through the lens of Japanese advertising can perhaps sometimes reveal some of these insidious processes of racial representations and positioning more starkly, in microcosm, ideally prompting people to reflect on how much their thinking (and prejudices?) may have been formed/reinforced by the images/messages that they have seen/received in ads and pop culture in their own particular national and local contexts.

These Japanese ads make Whiteness visible and subject to critical scrutiny. As scholars have often noted, Whiteness can be extremely elusive and evasive, so hard to see and analyse, when it is so ingrained that it simply seems to exist and function 'naturally' as the unspoken 'norm' almost everywhere. In Japan, though, Whiteness is not (or cannot/should not be) the 'real' norm, so its constructedness and connotations seem to become much-more conspicuous, even glaringly apparent (as Part I indicated, advertisers deliberately cast Whites to make their product stand out).

This extra level of detachment, placing Whiteness at one remove, can help bring it into sharper focus: ads are carefully staged, raced spaces. The casting is not random; not seeing race is not really an option. This is 'in-your-face' race: within seconds, people see the ad, and make a meaning/get a feeling, usually positive (e.g. longing, amusement, happiness, freedom). Sometimes, in ads, the joke is on the out-of-place *gaijin*, but, even then, the power, prestige, and privilege of the White face

seem to endure, transcending any evanescent loss of face. Other ads seem to posit the White face as the ultimate, longed-for ideal of beauty although it is almost certainly ultimately unattainable for Japanese people; thus, such ads constitute a kind of hyper-reality that makes Whiteness, and its overwhelmingly positive connotations, eminently visible.

What degree of identification might Japanese feel when they see this Whiteness? There may be some notion that Japanese have "assumed the status of whites" (Rivers & Ross, 2013, p. 321), or even surpassed it, and that is why such identifications may not be too fanciful and serve as a further distancing device on the "ladder of civilizations" from the Black and other-Asian people who appear so infrequently in ads. Ashikari (2005) suggested that specifically Japanese white skin (*bihada*) "appears as a symbol which enables the Japanese to feel they are a part of world culture, the dominant population 'us', but not 'others'" (p. 82, though this "should not be understood simply…as a reflection of admiration for the West", p. 72, as it has long been esteemed a beauty/high-class trait).

Kawashima (2002, p. 166) also refuted the idea that Japanese actually want to *be* White, and has contended that people should not "promote essentialized notions of racial boundaries and categories" (p. 184) as "race-ing individuals is a learned process of reading visual 'cues'" (p. 185). It is a key point. Such 'race categorization' is, in itself, an invidious practice: checking skin tone, eye/nose shape etc. It is easy to be 'wrong.' The facts of a Japanese person's skin often being whiter than a 'White' person's (Rivers & Ross, 2013, p. 325), the wide range of 'Black' skin tones, Hall's (1992) deconstruction of the category "black" because of the "extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities" (p. 254) it allegedly comprises, and 'race fake' shocks (e.g. Rachel Dolezal, Jessica Krug) all show how treacherous trying to read those visual "cues" can be.

The process puts the 'complex' into complexion, but it happens when people try to insist on such "essentialized notions of racial boundaries" when no such fixed categories inherently exist (cf. Sussman, R.W. *The myth of race: The troubling persistence of an unscientific idea*. Harvard University Press, 2014). As Rivers and Ross (2013) stated, "It is widely known that race, rather than being a biological reality, is ultimately a sociocultural construct, formed and maintained by dominant attitudes, discourse, and processes of categorization" (p. 322). This is why it does not feel right even to use the terms 'race', 'White', and 'Black', but it seems a necessary evil here (like attempts at race categorization) to see and name race, to study how and why it continues to function so insidiously as an ideology, and to call it out. The social reality is a keenly felt, lived reality for those not racialized as "White". These are important points to consider when thinking and talking about "race"; as Liggett (2009, p. 29) stated, "I use the term race in its socially constructed sense to refer to the imposed racial categories usually based on differences in skin color and physical characteristics…While there is only one race, the human race, the concept of race as an ideology was developed with the expansion of

Europe to justify the African slave trade and European colonialism." Has the imagined 'ladder of civilizations' rung the changes much since then?

   Although those racial categories may seem fixed and immutable (based on phrenotypical differences), in fact the process of racialisation is ever changing. In the U.S., for example, Jewish and Irish people were once considered beyond the pale, but then came to be classified as "White" when the WASP ruling elite sought to expand its powerbase (cf. Ignatiev, 1995, Brodkin, 1998).

   Views of race (and such ongoing processes of racialization), though, may be quite different in Japan from the contemporary U.S. Russell (2008) has suggested that the "process of seeing blacks through Western eyes" (p. 27) has a long history in Japan, from the African slaves that the Portuguese and Dutch brought to Japan in the 16th and 17th centuries to U.S. Commodore Perry's black ships that forced the opening of Japan to international trade in 1854 (whose sailors "treated Japanese negotiators to a blackface minstrel show", p. 27). Then, from the Meiji era onward, the Japanese tried to arrogate a "racial genealogy that located them within the 'white race'" with disparaging views of "the Black Other" (p. 38). The fear lingers that such views might remain comparatively unreconstructed as American movies and TV shows aired in Japan have "perpetuated the myth of America as an essentially 'white nation' in which blacks served as mindless buffoons, if they appeared at all": "The impact of Western views of race had (and continues to have) a profound impact on both Japanese views of blacks but also on themselves" (p. 47).

   In the ads, images of 'race' often seem so exaggerated/differentiated/essentialised that they appear to be screaming out for attention; it would be disingenuous to pretend otherwise. When advertisers so calculatedly and brazenly put 'race' out there, though, it is down to the viewer/reader to make meaning. Creighton (1995, p. 147) described how such ads usually feature either "famous" or "anonymous" *gaijin*. The "anonymous" types seem more prevalent in the local ads in Part III ("the scores of nameless Western models, usually blue-eyed blondes", Trucco [1982]), whereas the "famous" ones tend to do the national TV ads featured in Parts I and II.

   To revisit/update some of the ads and information in Parts I and II, Part I mentioned bleach-blonde Katy Perry's 2017 ad for fabric/air-care brand Launderin', in which she returns to her mansion (while her Black driver unloads suitcases), ascends a spiral staircase (to assume an up-on-high position?), then removes her clothes as she walks along. This seems to confirm the findings of previous studies (Creighton, 1995, p. 137, and Prieler, 2010, p. 517) that foreigners are depicted naked (and sexualised) far-more often in ads than are Japanese people (with this apparently being especially true in the cases of Black men and White women). Part I (Jones & Honda, 2017, p. 25) stated that "two of Orlando Bloom's exes, [Miranda] Kerr and Katy Perry, have featured in Japanese ads". At the time of writing, Bloom and Perry were "exes"; however, that was rendered a bloomer

when they then reconciled and are now affianced. They had planned to hold their nuptials in Japan in June 2020 but had to cancel (because of COVID-19). Perry has since been succeeded by blonde Canadian singer Avril Lavigne, who, in a 2019 Launderin' ad, takes viewers on a fun, sassy tour of 'her' luxurious, pink-and-purple-accented L.A. house (=the same one as Perry's?), including a shot of a Latino-looking[?] worker cheerily mowing her lawn.

As for Bloom's still-ex Miranda Kerr's Bold ads for Procter and Gamble (P&G), a new study has provided updates. Part I mentioned that Kerr's character is called the "new Mrs. Yamada", and Yamada (2019, no relation) has researched and elucidated the origin of his namesake's nomenclature: she is "an American wife who was formerly married to a Japanese man and got divorced. Cameron is portrayed as someone who was originally from California, is always cheerful and friendly, and enjoys doing laundry" (p. 88).

Circa 2017, Australian Kerr was succeeded in the role of "Cameron Yamada" by another blonde beauty, Cailin Russo (a true Californian). Cameron continues to be a domestic goddess and well-acculturated and powerful influencer of the awed Japanese (house?)wives in her neighbourhood. In a 2018 ad, she is shown ironing, teaching her Japanese neighbour-wife how to do it smoothly and even enjoy it. She wears a pink pantsuit, uses a pink iron, and displays a pink Bold bottle, but her laundry is "all white". Yamada has suggested this "connotes in the mind of viewers that she is a great wife who does household chores" (p. 89). It also confirms Martin's (2012) finding that "many ads still portray foreign women performing household chores" (p. 164), often looking sexy, too.

A local coin laundry here features, on its outer wall, an animated image of a brown-haired, wide-eyed [White?] woman, apparently called "clean mama", wearing a white apron over her pink mini-dress (her shoes are also pink); she smiles and waves to signal her love of doing laundry. Similarly, a local dry-cleaning shop has as its "main character" (animated) a cheerful blonde woman called "Mrs. White", so, as a brief preview of section 3, these local ads sometimes seem to reinforce the images/messages of national ones (another launderette chain is called Whiteopia, again emphasising the positive connotations of 'white' as synonymous with 'clean').

In another ad for a related P&G product, New Lenor (fabric softener/odour-eliminator/scent-booster), Cameron is depicted (pretty in pink again) enjoying a daytime grilled-meat BBQ in a garden with the local housewives (another Bold ad shows some wives sitting around having tea in the garden, so they all seem to have ample free time and no need to earn money). Although the meat is tasty, they worry that their clothes will reek of beef as they have to dash off to their kids' school to join a Class Observation. But, fear not, Cameron has used Lenor, so her clothes do not stink. *Au contraire*, when she arrives at school, she is actually complimented on how nice she smells! One of the other wives complains that it is *zurui* (crafty/sly/unfair) of Cameron to be so smart and savvy: always one step

ahead of the other wives. Yamada (2019) has noted that, in the classroom, "Cameron is the tallest person among all the parents, and she is the only one wearing pink...Therefore, she stands out from the crowd" (p. 90).

In analysing the ads, Yamada (2019) has surmised that, "Cameron's positive personality, which is evident in both ads, not only implies her sweet personality but also conveys a positive image of the products", and that the choice to use a White woman for these ads "suggests that a Caucasian person can have a positive connotation in the mind of Japanese consumers" (p. 90). Yamada's conclusion is that "the ads analyzed in this paper present positive images of Caucasians, and this suggests that Japanese have an inferiority complex in relation to Caucasians" (p. 87).

Part I also mentioned Farrah Fawcett's 1982 ads for diamonds, in which the blonde beauty ascended to a rooftop, where her revealing red dress billows up around her (*à la* Marilyn Monroe), and four White men stand by with red roses. This scene seems to accord with Creighton's (1995, p. 145) analysis that, in such ads, "*Gaijin* can do, say, and depict what a Japanese might wish to, but social values militate against", such as brasher shows of sexuality and even the daring wearing of red, which in Japan is considered "too bright and conspicuous for adult women", so, whereas a "Japanese model in a bright red outfit might still spark disapproval, *gaijin* women are frequently presented in red dresses with flair and defiance." The outstanding, bold pink attire of Cameron may be a similar example. With blonde hair and bright red/pink clothing, the differences between Western and Japanese are clearly emphasised.

Creighton has also made an insightful distinction in terms of who is often considered a "true" *gaijin* in Japanese minds. As a counterpart to fallacious Western "Orientalism", Creighton has contended that, "Japan has also been constructing an occidentalist other in the form of the white westerner. This occidentalist construction is reflected in the actual usage of the word *gaijin*": it literally means any "outside person" or "foreigner", "but is commonly used only in reference to whites, who are assumed to be Westerners" whereas "Blacks and non-Japanese Asians are conceptualized differently...as *gaikokujin* (person from an outside country) but are seldom called *gaijin* since...this word suggests someone white" (pp. 136-137 and p. 158 n.2: "blacks are most commonly called *kokujin*": "black people").

Creighton has contended that, "Perhaps the most problematic depictions of foreigners in recent Japanese advertising involve representations of blacks. Caricatured black images appear as comic, low-class, or foolish figures" (p. 152). What is more, such "representations of racial diversity of foreigners more generally serve as a means of projecting heterogeneity outside"; "Projecting heterogeneity onto the outside world reaffirms the uniqueness and specialness of Japan by contributing to an orientalist self-assertion of homogeneity that denies the diversity within Japanese

society" (Creighton, 1995, p. 155, such as Ainu, *burakumin* [descendants of an occupational caste], ethnic *zainichi* Koreans, and Ryukyuans, plus Brazilians, Peruvians, Filipinos, Chinese, Vietnamese and many others of diverse ethnicities).

Perhaps this conceptualisation of what constitutes a *gaijin* helps explain the preponderance of White *gaijin* in Japanese ads. Creighton also quoted a Dentsu creative director explaining that, since the Meiji Era of modernization/Westernization, Japan has been trying to "catch up", and "there developed a sort of complex—'it's a white world'" (p. 142, just as Prieler's extensive study of Japanese ads confirmed that, "It's a white world", 2010, p. 514), with Whiteness signifying attractiveness, status, and authority. Thus, Creighton has claimed, "white Westerners became the primary other in relationship to whom the Japanese dialectically define self" (1995, p. 142).

As Creighton has shown, though, the picture can be more complex. The foreigners in ads are often "othered" from Japanese, not only to keep the distinction clear but also to propagate the "essentialized self-orientalisms" of Japanese "uniqueness[*Nihonjinron*] and cultural homogeneity". Thus, the "social construction of *gaijin* denies the individual uniqueness of Westerners, transforming all Caucasians into an essentialized category that reduces the complex variations among them" (p. 137), meaning representations of foreigners in ads may construct/confirm stereotypes about there being some mythic, monolithic 'Western culture' (Hall, 1997, also criticised the "*binary* form of representation", with "sharply opposed, polarized, binary extremes", p. 229).

In addition, though, the "dual nature" of foreigners throughout Japanese cultural history also becomes apparent: foreigners are viewed as "bearers of highly valued innovation and style, and as moral threat" (Creighton, 1995, p. 141) from outside. As such, the foreigners in ads need to be "acculturated" (some ads in Parts I and II showed this process, e.g. those depicting tough guys like Arnold Schwarzenegger and Tommy Lee Jones as put-upon menial workers in Japanese companies, and then to release their awesome power in the service of their employers), which indicates that the "use of *gaijin* imagery also involves taming the foreigner as moral threat, and a corresponding assertion of the superior value of Japaneseness" (p. 145); thus, somewhat paradoxically, "representations of *gaijin* end up reaffirming Japanese merit and centrality" (p. 149). In this way, again, Japanese culture may sometimes knock 'Western culture' off its perch (Creighton cites examples of ads showing *gaijin* impressed by Japanese superiority, pp. 149-150), but these two cultures seem firmly posited at the top of the tree, with other "others" below.

Although Parts I and II noted the scarcity of Black women featuring in Japanese ads, two more rare instances can be added to the list. In a mid-1970's ad, Diana Ross sang a ditty about Coca-Cola and said, "*Sukatto sawayaka* Coca-Cola" (Coke is refreshing) though her face never appears. Lauryn Hill appeared in a commercial for Sony MDs, singing "To Zion" from her 1998 debut album, *The*

Miseducation of Lauryn Hill, while the voiceover said (in Japanese), "Let's listen to good music!"

More recently, tennis star Naomi Osaka (born in Japan to a Japanese mother and a Haitian father, and raised in the U.S.) has been giving sustained support to the BLM movement and has been endorsing various Japanese brands, such as Nissan, Citizen, All Nippon Airlines, Shiseido cosmetics, and noodle-maker Nissin Foods. However, her ad for Nissin caused controversy because it seemed to depict a "whitewashed" anime version of her (McNeil, 2019). Her great success in winning grand-slams, while representing Japan, has made many Japanese people feel proud, but other Japanese people appear hesitant, or even resistant, to embrace her as really being Japanese (McNeil, 2019). This is regrettable, but she bounds around courts as living proof of the fallacy of fixed, essentialised constructions and representations of 'pure' race/ethnicity, and her activism admirably draws attention to racial injustice around the world (including in Japan).

Major-League-Baseball pitcher Yu Darvish is another successful athlete who embodies the fallacy of such essentialising of ethnicities/cultures: his mother is Japanese; his father is Iranian. He has featured in several Japanese ads, including a 2009 one for Air Salonpas pain-relief spray (with Okinawan golfer Ai Miyazato).

The final update is about a Part II note (p. 64n.5) speculating on the etymology of the "Mandom" line of men's toiletries promoted in 1970s' ads starring Charles Bronson. Creighton (1995) interviewed the campaign's creative director: a *gaijin* was chosen as he could flaunt the "un-Japanese" characteristics of "sensuality and indulgent individualism...an attempt to change the way men's toiletries were presented while utilizing associations of the West with progress, to promote a more modern, Western image for the then fifth-place company in men's toiletries" (p. 148). They wanted to stress the product's ruggedness; hence, the etymology becomes clear: "When creating the name for the product 'Mandom' the desire was to combine the idea of 'kingdom' or 'freedom' with the word MAN, creating the idea of a 'man's world.' Until then the idea of cosmetics for men was to create a 'sweet smell'". After being entertained by a Black pianist in a bar, the moustachioed Bronson returns to his high-rise apartment. In a display of macho masculinity, he splashes the lotion all over his naked, muscular torso. They wanted to show a "dirty American male...looking all sweaty in grimy clothing", with the catch-phrase, "*otoko no taishu*" ("a man's body odour"). Before, *taishu* "was considered a negative phrase" (like 'BO'), so the idea was to turn a negative "into a plus" (p. 148). Such is the magic power of advertising: it can even (apparently) transform a foul odour into an alluring aroma. Even the image of a "dirty American" with BO could make the campaign a success, triggering the boom in using foreigners in Japanese ads (p. 148).

3. Semiotic Interrogation of Images in Current Local Ads in a Rural Area of Japan

First, the caveats of Parts I and II bear repetition here. An ironic limitation of this study of images is that it contains no actual images. Copyright issues may arise, and, in this section, we basically want to avoid naming names/identifying local businesses; instead, the main focus will be on the images/representations of foreign people in local ads. Some of the Japanese ads showcased in this study have been a bit old, and all have been national (though none were ever intended to be global because of the stars' strict contract stipulations), so this section will be a selection of ads/ representations recently spotted around the small city in rural Japan in which we live. The aims are to provide a more local and contemporary flavour to this cultural phenomenon of foreign models being used in Japanese ads, to show underlying structures, patterns, and contents, and the ways subjects are positioned, portrayed, defined, and persuaded, and to try to indicate a couple of potential sites where the essentialised White/Japanese binary that seems so pervasively posited may be destabilised or at least possibly seen to be represented in more nuanced ways. Again, the method is to critically interrogate these advertising images (continuing the 'Culture Studies' approach enacted by Hall, 1997, and Shroeder & Zwick, 2004, and others): to what extent are the same (meta-)messages cumulatively conveyed in the national TV ads (examined in Parts I and II) repeated or refuted by the local ads (mainly on billboards, in/on shops, and in the print media)?

In fact, these local ads mainly seem to replicate the same (meta-)messages: images of White models often seem to be used to connote manicured attractiveness and exciting lifestyles of freedom and comfort/glamour. Thus, such images seem to feature prominently in ads for various products and services associated with those joyous, landmark moments in life (e.g. the "Coming-of-Age Day" [*Seijin no Hi*] ceremony for 20-year-olds, college graduations, weddings, and buying houses or new cars). Those are special occasions, when people want to put their best selves on display. Similarly, people's desire to look their best selves often seems to impel them to use various cosmetic products and services; images of foreigners also appear in this genre of ads.

With that broad framing in mind, here is a selection of such local ads. First of all, there are a few ads for local (ostensibly Christian) chapel-wedding services (venue and dresses etc.) that seem to use white models to convey that familiar feeling/atmosphere of exoticness and glamour. These ads feature in free magazines/flyers delivered to households in the area. One such features a young, attractive blonde woman, on her wedding day (putatively) at the venue, wearing white wedding dress, carrying a bouquet, and smiling (although, somewhat curiously, there is no sign of her husband). It is often said that, "Every girl dreams of her wedding day", of being "a princess for a day", and such fantasies are duly propagated through ads like these, conveying how 'special' and 'magical' the day will be. Of course, one's wedding day should be special and joyous (though some question the

antiquated/accentuated gender alterity performed in traditional Christian marriage ceremony rituals, e.g. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/12/fashion/weddings/outdated-wedding-traditions.html), but why should the 'perfect' image of the scene be a White bride? Is it maybe because it is a Christian-style wedding (though purely ceremonial), so the White bride connotes augmented 'authenticity' (and glamour) in Japan, where only a tiny minority are actually Christian? Similarly, such venues often employ White men as 'ministers' to perform the nuptials, adding apparent 'authority' and 'authenticity' to proceedings, plus some exoticism (though they may be far less attractive than the blondes in the ads and may not actually have completed 7 years' study at Divinity School. Then, how many such blonde White women actually get married at such venues?).

Creighton (1995) cited a Tokyo wedding venue's "dramatic wedding" ad in 1990, featuring a blonde White model,[2] and it is striking that similar imagery is still being used three decades later to advertise wedding venues. A bridal 'rental costume' brochure here also presents a beautiful White woman in a white wedding dress, with a pearl necklace (perhaps given by her husband, depicted as a handsome White man, in tux and moustache. Part II indicated how suits connote power, and Hall stressed that "clothes also double up as signs. They construct a meaning and carry a message", 1997, p. 37). The reception room, where the photos are taken, has candles, baubles, and white tablecloths; the whole scene exudes elegance. Those are the main images, around which (on the periphery) are arranged some smaller images of Japanese people in kimonos etc.

Beautiful White women also feature prominently on signboards of local hair and make-up salons. Usually, such signboards just feature a headshot so the distinct facial features and hair colours are the focus. Creighton (1995) stated that the long-held view in Japan of "white women as standards of beauty" may "explain the prevalence of foreign imagery in advertisements" (p. 142). Creighton quoted a Japanese scholar confirming that, "From long ago there has been an image of European women as glamorous and beautiful" (p. 142), and another who suggested that "whites are considered more stylish. Whether it is true or just an illusion I don't know, but this is the Japanese belief" (p. 143). One salon here is called "Superior", with a blonde White woman on the signboard, and numerous such examples exist for salons all around town. Again, one may wonder how many such White women actually patronise such establishments, and how many of the Japanese clientele emerge from the salons looking like the signboard women. Skin-whitening products (creams, emulsions etc.) are popular in Japan (a "country that unabashedly worships '*bihaku*' (skin whitening)", McNeil, 2019), with many women (especially) exhibiting a fear/phobia of exposing their skin to sunlight.

Make-up is also important for establishing skin tone/contrasts etc., and a brochure of autumn fashions from a department store shows female foreign models wearing the fashions and advertising make-up such as eyeliner. Wide eyes seem desirable (as stated in Part I). Similarly, another print ad

for a beauty parlour shows a blonde and plugs eyelash-styling/mascara/false eyelashes, and another ad for an eyelash salon depicts a blonde promoting the 'Parisian Lash Lift' to make the eyes look wider.

Another ad in the free local magazine depicts a glamorous middle-aged White woman in a few wigs. It might be appropriate were this model Irish (as in "Irish jig"), but the product is advertised as made by "René of Paris by FONTAINE", so perhaps she is supposed to be French. Juxtaposed in the ad next to her is a less glamorous middle-aged Japanese woman, whose wigs are actually much-more expensive. Even so, the *gaijin* face is presented as bigger and more colourful and arresting.

Just as female *gaijin* are used to promote cosmetic/aesthetic products and services, so are *gaijin* men. Again, the gender alterity is stressed: women go to beauty parlours; dudes go to men's salons. There are at least three such salons advertising in the free local magazine. Part II noted the change in depictions of masculinity (from hairy beast to manicured metrosexual), in both ads and wider culture, and these men's aesthetic salons are mining that rich seam. In the ad for the first such salon, a young *gaijin* dude flaunts his flawless, hairless, muscular (6-packed) torso: the much-vaunted "vigorous 'V' shape" body (Shroeder & Zwick, 2004, p. 38) that men are pressured to achieve and maintain through gym workouts and expensive aesthetic-salon services. Whereas past 'real men' would not have been seen dead in such salons, the transformed definition of what is considered 'masculine' allows for, even encourages, visiting such establishments as conspicuous commercial consumers (indicating how ads often "conflate sexuality, masculinity and consumption in the fulfillment of desire", Shroeder & Zwick, 2004, p. 23). Creighton (1995, p. 146) has argued that the male *gaijin* body is sometimes used, though perhaps less so than the female *gaijin* body, "to image sensuality", citing an ad for Zephyr lotion, "highlighting the heavily-muscled and sweat-glistening torso of a white male viewed from below the navel to the neck" (as mentioned in Parts I and II, the shot of the *gaijin* from below may connote/confer power). In this men's salon ad, the White model's skin looks as smooth as the proverbial baby's bottom, but the ad indicates this is because he has undergone a program of hair removal (putatively at the salon, which also offers eyebrow styling).

The ads for the second such salon depict a *gaijin* with a very hairy face, somewhat redolent of a wolf-man. Adding to this wild aura, the *gaijin* mugs away and strikes an exaggeratedly excited pose (of the kind often expected/requested of 'unrestrained' *gaijin*). On one level, maybe it is amusing; however, the image of *gaijin* as "hairy barbarian" has a centuries-old history in Japan, dating back long before the mid-16th–century arrival of European missionaries. *Ketoujin* (毛唐人) is a derogatory term (literally meaning "hairy foreigner", because, as Russell has explained, 2008, p. 40n.22, "'Hairiness' was already a feature of the Barbarian Other associated with not only the Ainu, but Chinese and Koreans as well") that came to be applied to White Westerners (thus, *ketoujin* can

also be translated as "Damn Westerner!"). Thus, an invidious stereotype might be enacted in this ad. This wild *gaijin* barbarian is so grotesquely hairy; however, such is the excellence of this salon's aesthetic services, he can be depilated. It may imply that no task is too big if they can transform such a specimen from hirsute to glabrous.

The third such salon ad shows an image of a handsome young *gaijin* guy, lying front-down. He is clean-cut, with blue eyes, and his naked torso is also hairless. Just half of his face is presented in the top right, but it is still the most striking image in the ad. It is juxtaposed with a smaller image of a Japanese fellow receiving a head massage. Indeed, it is the "head spa" for which this salon seems to be most famous. They claim it helps stressed men get rid of stress, toxins, dandruff, and itchiness. It may even stimulate the follicles to produce more hair because the salon also promotes its "Super Scalp" service which, apparently, helps restore a nice thatch to a bald patch. Again, the connection with the young *gaijin* in the ad, with his full head of hair and bald body, may not be immediately apparent; however, this salon also has another print ad for its "head spa" that features two other (older?) bearded *gaijin*. One is apparently the aesthetician, and the other is the punter, relaxing while the aesthetician massages his bearded face. Presumably, though, there is no pretence/presumption intended that customers will actually receive their head spa from this bearded *gaijin*?

Bearded *gaijin* also feature in a couple of print ads for housing companies: expensive houses and cheaper ones. For the pricy ones (costing around $500K), the debonair *gaijin* has a neatly trimmed salt-and-pepper beard, big black-rimmed spectacles, a suit, and a self-satisfied smile. Is he supposed to be the architect or resident of the house shown? Or is his image just there to confer an atmosphere of prestige? The ad specifically quotes the words "premium", "celebrity", and "status", and the cars on the forecourt are a gleaming Merc and a BMW-made Mini (rather than, say, a rusty 1978 Datsun F-10). As Maynard (1996, p. 247) noted, it is not just the foreign face(s), but rather the whole package of foreign elements that conjure up, construct, and convey those feelings of beauty, prestige, luxury, indulgence, and freedom etc.: i.e. music, words, scenery, and trappings of success etc. Were it a scratch-and-sniff ad on the page, readers might even smell the money.

Contrasting with that level of suavity, the ad of the cheaper housing company (houses priced around $150K) features a cowboy *gaijin* with a more unkempt beard and a far-less-restrained/refined manner. He exudes more of a down-home, good-old-boy vibe. With another camera shot taken from below, this cowboy also has a lofty perch as he apparently sits astride a bucking bronco. Despite the wild convulsions, this larger-than-life character holds a little house steadily in his hands: this is the product being advertised. Perhaps the implication is that, though small, the house would hold firm in an earthquake (and was not made by a cowboy builder). As with the wolf-man *gaijin* (and many more famous foreigners in ads), this *gaijin* also mugs manically away for the camera to convey wide-eyed,

exaggerated excitement and emotion as he rocks around on the bronco.

Yet another bearded *gaijin* appears in another print ad, this time for a restaurant presenting its fondue promotion. Looking like a chef in white attire, with arms folded, he seems to convey an air of authority/gravitas (like he knows his onions) and maybe he is supposed to be Swiss (or French?) to lend some 'authenticity' to the fondue; however, the ad also features the disclaimer (in Japanese) that "the real chef does not look like this". Maybe such a sheepish admission makes this fondue ad look a bit cheesy, or perhaps it does not matter? Maybe it still succeeds in setting the right mood (even if the restaurant's actual fondue chef may take it as a bit of a slap in the face).

A similar willing suspension of disbelief seems demanded in elements of another genre of print ads in Japan: brochures for new cars. (Admittedly, these are not really 'local' ads, but they are rather 'niche' documents, usually only perused by people contemplating buying a car from the local dealership). As Part II indicated, with the ads of Willis and DiCaprio et al., *gaijin* appear to be a particular vehicle for advertising cars. Yamada (2019, p. 92) cited a study of Japanese ads (1999-2001) that showed "automobile ads had the highest numbers of foreigners" but "none of these ads featured African-Americans."

The brochures analysed in this study are all from one of Japan's major automakers and feature many images of *gaijin* (though *not* Carlos Ghosn). The production values are very high: the images are in glossy high definition. Each type of car in the line-up has its own brochure, with each angling for a different kind of image. The brochure for a family car features a blonde family on "summer vacation" (the backdrop seems to be New Zealand). Needless to say, the car is comfortable and spacious enough for the blonde family, and they are all having a grand time.

The brochure for another model features young, attractive, smiling *gaijin* friends away on a fun trip. The gender alterity again seems emphasised: the women wear big-hoop earrings, and the men have dandy, styled little beards (with beards often being used, historically and culturally, as a significant, or even the ultimate, symbol of masculinity. This may be another way of emphasising alterity between *gaijin* and Japanese as fewer Japanese men seem to sport facial hair although little beards do appear to becoming more popular).

The central pages of the brochure for this car are laid out in a set format: each page is divided in two. Commanding pride of place at the top is an arresting (somewhat-dramatic) image of a *gaijin* engaged in some (robust) leisure activity; underneath is an image of the actual product being hawked, i.e. the car itself (in motion). Across the line in the middle dividing the two images is written, in a large, dashing font, a single, impactful English word that (presumably) can refer equally impressively to both *gaijin* and car, thus connecting the two. It seems a deliberate and evocative juxtaposition of images, with the linking words (mainly adjectives) being ones like "attractive", "sensational",

"performance", "passionate", and "exciting". These words make very explicit what associations/ meanings the images are supposed to be conveying. They are almost all highly positive and desirable characteristics (and connoted/conveyed by the Whiteness of the models as well as the 'exotic' foreign locations). In one a blond dude is surfing, in another a blonde woman is jogging among tall buildings in a modern city, and in another a woman is doing yoga in leggings. In another, a bearded *gaijin* driver attracts the happy attention of a blonde as she sashays along the pavement (though it is surely not intended to be interpreted as a kerb-crawler cruising for a street-walker? Rather, they are probably supposed to be old friends).

The brochure also implies that driving this vehicle will facilitate the owner's liberating expression of their true self: "It's me!" (in English) reads the text juxtaposed to the smiling *gaijin* gaggle. This appeal to liberating individuality seems to accord with Creighton's (1995, p. 146) theory that *gaijin* constitute a "safer mechanism for expressing selfish sentiments in a culture which has long frowned on *wagamama*, or self-centred concerns". A convenient displacement can thus occur whereby, "By switching to the English 'my', egoism and individualism persist as occidentalist projections, while the Japanese core of conformity, collectivism, and self-abnegation remains unblemished". Indeed, the Toyota Camry is an anagram of "my car", and Creighton has shown numerous such examples of this prevalent practice in Japanese advertising, such as "my jeans", "my home", and even "my toilet paper" (that proprietorial assertion is perhaps understandable; one probably would not want to use someone else's, especially after they had used it. Most people prefer a pristine sheet, fundamentally unsullied).

The brochure for a smaller car features some *gaijin* couples (maybe European?) smiling as they enjoy a range of leisure activities, such as photography, astronomy, and skiing. Curiously, the brochure for a similarly small car, one in more of an SUV-crossover style, features an (apparently) all-Japanese cast of models enjoying camping. It might be interesting to be a fly on the wall at the meetings of the marketers who make these brochures to try to understand how and why they make their choices about which particular races to use (or not) to create the desired image for each particular model of car.

It seems striking that the only image of a Black person (in this admittedly small and arbitrary sample) seemed to be a blurred one in the background of a chic foreign restaurant, apparently working as a waiter. To the fore in this final example brochure of another model of small crossover/SUV is a group of *gaijin* friends/couples, and, although this model is only sold in Japan, they are driving (in a right-hand drive car) through what looks like an American city (maybe San Francisco?). Similar to the aforementioned ad, this one uses impactful English words at the top of the page to convey the feeling/ message that the images are designed to engender/communicate: "catchy and stylish", "powerful and

dynamic". The word "lifestyle" also features prominently,

Of course, car ads in most countries tend to involve such elements as cool/attractive people driving through beautiful locations; however, the level of fantasy displacement seems especially extreme in these ads, with the foreign locales and people being so far removed from the scenes on Japan's streets. This may accord with Creighton's (1995, p. 138) analysis: "Depictions of foreigners fit into Japanese advertising images of 'fantasy excursions'...Representations of foreigners become just another series of intriguing image quotations and in the process the occident is brought under control while foreigners are rendered not really real—at least as individual people". A Japanese advertiser confirmed that, "Pictures of foreigners and foreign places help create this [fantasy feeling]" (p. 141) or "dream world" (p. 140). In so many ads, images of *gaijin* seem to represent a flight of fantasy: a fun, free, modern lifestyle for attractive people without money worries. Japanese consumers are perhaps buying into that image/fantasy when they buy the advertised product.

That image again seems to be conveyed by the signboard above a national chain of menswear clothing (especially suits). Four white faces in smart clothes beam down from up on high. The image depicts a younger man, in a suit, with his wife (is it their wedding day?), with an older couple (presumably his/her parents), all smiling away. Life looks very comfortable and satisfactory for them. Again, one maybe wonders what the connection is between the image and the store itself: do the men's suits actually come from that shop? Are those people regular customers? It may seem dubious.

Perhaps the most authentic *gaijin* in these ads are those who teach in English-conversation schools. They are the real deal in that they do actually work for the companies whose services they advertise, so these print ads characteristically depict them teaching/having fun with Japanese kids. Maybe that is all fine, but perhaps there is some sense that the *gaijin* teacher might be presented as a kind of badge of honour conferring cachet value on the school, with possible intimations of the invidious conflation of whiteness and "native speaker" (flagged by Kubota & Lin 2009, p. 8).

Again, a striking point about this (small) sampling of *gaijin* featuring in local ads is the almost total absence of Black people: why are they so chronically under-represented compared to White people, apparently even more so than in the national TV ads? Perhaps surprisingly, though, a prominent image of a Native American (chieftain) appears as the logo of a local pizza restaurant (on its signboards and in print ads). However, it is a profoundly stereotypical image. The character has a big headdress and a muscular, naked torso (with red/orange skin), and a big set of chattering teeth that he uses to chomp into a slice of (pepperoni?) pizza. If it is pepperoni, it indicates he has not 'gone native' to the extent that he prefers the notoriously strange pizza toppings in Japan (e.g. squid, mayo, potatoes, and sweetcorn etc.); even so, the image still seems quite offensive, especially in light of the controversies in the U.S. about the Cleveland Indians' recently ditched Chief Wahoo logo and the

Washington Redskins' recent change of name and logo. Kariya and Rappleye (2010) have lamented the apparent "'immunity' of the Japanese context to discourses and concerns over 'social inclusion'" (p. 56), and it seems doubtful that such a logo would be deemed acceptable in the U.S. (Similarly, a local barber shop is called クロンボ, *Kuronbo*, which is a derogatory word for a Black person. The shop's sign, though, shows a White man's face).

BIPOC also seem to be absent in another major genre of ads that feature *gaijin*: gyms. Gyms have grown in popularity since the 1970s/80s as a commercialisation/commodification of fitness. As well as reflecting concerns about body image, going to a gym seems to be a lifestyle statement, associated with being (or at least appearing) modern, hip, and healthy. The jogging and yoga images of attractive *gaijin* in the car brochures seem to be such images and messages.

Thus, some local gyms feature images of attractive *gaijin* working out in their ads. For instance, on the front page of a new gym's flyer, a young *gaijin* woman gives a beaming smile as she runs on a treadmill. Inside, across the centrefold, is a big image of three other *gaijin*, two female and one male, also running on treadmills. The dude and one of the females seem to be sharing a joke and smiling broadly. Once again, all the *gaijin* are all smiles, so happy and healthy, as they sculpt their bodies into attractive shapes as part of their hip, comfortably off, modern lifestyles, full of stimulating leisure activities. If they are still not satisfied with their looks, the aesthetic salon is an obvious corollary of the gym, and *gaijin* models seem to feature prominently in ads for both. This is clearly a body image/lifestyle that is desirable. Of course, it is good to have a healthy lifestyle, but again one wonders, will members of this gym really see such people as actual members there? Again, it may seem doubtful. Conversely, absolutely no Japanese gym members are shown exercising.

Meanwhile, a signboard ad for another local gym may be slightly more realistic. It features a dark-haired 'foreign' woman (though her features might be partially Asian/Japanese? Again, it indicates the futility, rather than utility, of trying to read visual 'cues' to do invidious 'race categorization'), possibly inviting readier identification from Japanese people. This woman is again smiling radiantly. Behind her, albeit out of focus, is a dark-haired White man (with an out-of-focus Japanese man strategically sandwiched between the two of them?), all stretching in synch. Perhaps, then, the image conveyed is that this is a 'cool' gym, where diverse people get together and hang out. Still, at least this ad, by depicting a somewhat ethnically equivocal main character (is she White and/ or Asian?) may be a site that can destabilise the overly rigid and oppressive, essentialised identity dichotomy often posited.

Similarly, the last ads analysed here also show some ethnically equivocal models but this time donning Japan's national dress, the kimono. Of course, wearing kimono should not be the exclusive preserve of Japanese people, and many foreign tourists enjoy trying one on in Kyoto etc.; however,

in ads for this quintessentially Japanese garment, often worn for quintessentially Japanese occasions (e.g. tea ceremony/Coming-of-Age Day), maybe ad execs consider Japanese models more fitting?

Although the majority of kimono ads seem to feature Japanese models, a trend still appears for using foreign models to advertise kimono. Trucco (1982) noted that, "Even department store mannequins modeling bathing suits and kimonos ape foreigners with Western faces and light-colored hair", and Creighton (1995, p. 150) has described her own experience of being hired, with two other White women, to wear a yukata (summer kimono) and be "living advertisements" and translators/guides for a Tokyo department store's exhibition of Japanese crafts. This garnered media attention, some of which "reiterated stereotypes defining *gaijin* as other" (e.g. drawing attention to blue eyes for "'Blue-eyed' serves as a conventional marker for the otherness of *gaijin*") while simultaneously working "to tantalize its public with the blurring of boundaries between the Japanese self and the occidental other" by showcasing the trio's Japanese skills. As Creighton has noted, "the Japanese language is definitively a marker of Japaneseness", and, "Kimonos are also a marker of Japanese identity. *Gaijin* wearing kimonos are funny, even endearing, as long as they do not look quite right" (p. 151. Creighton also cited a 1980s' ad for a department store, featuring Woody Allen in kimono doing calligraphy poorly: "the clumsy *gaijin* engaged in traditional Japanese pursuits", p. 148). Creighton sensed this inherent tension in the contrasting ways in which their wearing of kimono was framed: "we were presented as occidentals who seemed more competent at being Japanese than Japanese" (p. 151), but is that ever truly possible? The possibility/reality of blurred boundaries seemed to be being recognised (including through Creighton's marriage to a Japanese man and their "son who is a Japanese national", p. 151).

Ultimately, though, the *gaijin* attainment/appropriation of genuine "Japaneseness" was dismissed as a fallacy. Creighton was dismayed that a TV show just focused on one throwaway line by one of the women and put a final, summarizing comment on the screen: "So even these so-called experts on Japan do not comprehend the proper way of eating Japanese noodles." That was the end: the harmonious acculturation was fatally undermined by so trifling a faux-pas. Creighton lamented this sorry "finale in which *gaijin* were revealed as ignorant, incompetent foreigners after all, and the distinction between Japanese and other was reaffirmed" (p. 151) and posited it as further evidence to show how, in Japanese ads, it often seems to be the case that "occidentals are tamed and rendered ignorant foreigners, thus bringing the occident under control" (p. 150). Her point seems valid: the essential 'otherness' of *gaijin* appearing in Japanese ads often seems emphasized to show/reify/reinforce, through contrast, the apparently essential uniqueness and homogeneity of the Japanese identity.

In the case of *gaijin* in kimono ads, though, is it just that they look "funny", or "not...quite

right"? When Japanese people see such ads, do they really think that something is a bit "off", or, *au contraire*, might they also think how great they look and longingly picture themselves looking as resplendent in the same garment? That would be the more usual advertising approach and accord with other representations of *gaijin* in ads in this study. As suggested above, on special occasions, people really want to display their best selves. Kimonos are also worn for special occasions (and are thus costly to rent/buy), so people want to present their best selves in kimono. When they see foreign models in kimono in ads, then, are they not imagining looking beautiful as their best selves?

This theory also accords with Creighton's main point: "it is important to restate the dual nature of the *gaijin*. Advertisements that tame the *gaijin* as a moral threat and advertisements that depict *gaijin* as attractive, positive forces can be mutually reinforcing" (1995, pp. 151-152). Indeed, these seemingly paradoxical forces can even be simultaneously operant in the same ad, like these kimono ones. What better way could there be than to signify/channel the supposedly superior/more stylish qualities of the *gaijin* while at the same time keeping them in their metaphorical box, under control, safely tamed and domesticated, than by dressing them in Japan's national costume, the kimono?

On the other hand, some might construe the mere appearance of a *gaijin* in kimono as a paradox or affront to traditional Japanese identity/culture. Ashikari (2005, p. 77n.15) quoted the view that the "kimono as Japanese tradition and culture demands that the wearer be racially Japanese" (citing the offence some people took to darker-skinned, bleach-blonde Okinawan pop star Namie Amuro modelling one in 1996. Although Amuro is Japanese, Ashikari indicated the tendency to look down on Okinawans, which again rather gives the lie to the prized image of Japanese homogeneity).

The ideal image of traditional Japanese womanhood is often held up as the *Yamato nadeshiko* (the *nadeshiko* is a delicate, pink-frilled carnation): beautiful, virtuous, and demure etc. Accordingly, this word features prominently in local ads for a particular kimono-rental shop. At least two versions of this ad were in circulation, both featuring a young *gaijin* or maybe half-Japanese(?) woman modeling a yellow kimono. In one version, her image is quite small, with readers' attention more drawn to the 'Japanese' girls wearing kimono at the top of the page. In another version of the ad, though, the more-foreign-looking model (with lighter hair and wider eyes?) seems to assume pride of place as the biggest image/main attraction. Maybe she represents the best of both worlds.

Similarly, another local kimono-rental shop features big pictures in its windows of a kimono-clad, blonde, popular half-Japanese model called Rola. She often appears on TV. Her father is Bangladeshi; her mother is Japanese (and a quarter Russian). Thus, people who see her for the first time may be tempted to try to classify her (through race categorization) as Bengali or Japanese or White, though it might prove difficult. As Kawashima (2002) confirmed, "Biracial or multiracial individuals, of course, challenge such visual assumptions" (p. 185n.3) as those ones often shown

to be both culturally constructed and fallacious. This image, then, could be another potential site to contest arbitrarily assigned and culturally constructed meanings of representations.

4. Conclusion and Educational Implications

Such sites as Rola's kimono ads should be critically analysed to produce new meanings and resist/ reject the intended/assigned ones that usually serve to uphold essentialising binaries, dominant discourses, and hegemonic hierarchies. An anti-essentialist approach seems necessary to counter the way that *gaijin* often seem to be used in Japanese ads to construct/reinforce a sense of essential difference between the two mythic monoliths of Western and Japanese culture. The construction and representation of this *gaijin* 'other' as a polar opposite to Japanese, thus simultaneously constructing/ reinforcing that identity, too, seem simplistic and fallacious and thus problematic.

The overall impression gleaned from the ads in this study is that *gaijin* are White Westerners (usually American?) who are attractive, with light hair (often blond, and with blue eyes). They live life freely, with style, panache, and smiles on their faces as they have money and few/no worries. They are refined and/or funny. It is not an accurate representation of any foreign country. Of course, it is not supposed to be. Hall (1997) called advertising a "fantasy visual display of *signs and symbols*" (p. 240), and, as the Japanese ad execs quoted said, the *gaijin* images are used to create a "fantasy feeling" and "dream world". They seem to want to engender feelings of admiration, yearning, and maybe even envy; however, what is the (meta-)message conveyed when there is so little diversity presented in this monolithic fantasy world (very few BIPOC, no LGBT, no poor people, no people with disabilities, and nobody overweight)?

Thus, the advertising images analysed in the three parts of this study, both national and local, largely confirm the findings of previous, far-more-extensive studies of Japanese ads, such as Prieler (2010): i.e. "It's a white world" (p. 514), with "Whiteness" pervasively panegyrised as connoting pulchritude, power, progress, prestige, and privilege, as well as aspiration, individuality, freedom, and fun. These are overwhelmingly positive connotations arising from a systemic praising and privileging of Whiteness. As such, it is hoped that this study has made Whiteness (and White Privilege) visible and subject to critical scrutiny in ways that it might not be in contexts where it simply seems to exist as the unspoken norm.

Another dimension/dynamic that arises, though, is where the opposing Japanese cultural monolith stands in relation to this White Western *gaijin* "other" constructed in these ads. As noted, it is a mutually constructing and sustaining binary: they are defined by their putatively essential difference and separation. In terms of the "ladder of civilizations", White Western culture usually seems posited on the top rung (Prieler, 2010, p. 514), and the hankering and reverence for it (or an

imagined version of it) certainly seem palpable in many ads. At the same time, though, as Creighton observed (1995), the *gaijin* are sometimes tamed/domesticated and bossed in ways that make it seem "a Japanese world" (p. 147).

A further complication is the question of the degree of subjectivity/identification that Japanese viewers may feel when they see *gaijin* in ads. To what extent are the feelings vicarious, and to what extent might they actually see *themselves* as the (White) *gaijin*? This question arises in connection to ads that seem to invite Japanese consumers to imagine or project their 'best selves' in(to) situations (e.g. a wedding or such special event) by presenting a White model.

This was another finding in this study: the prominence of *gaijin* images in ads for special occasions, such as holidays, new houses, new cars, weddings, and even special Japanese occasions requiring kimono. Similarly, *gaijin* images seem to abound in ads for products/services that promise to make people more attractive: hair salons, men's salons, and gyms. Again, some connection seems to exist to envisioning one's best self, and *gaijin* images never seem far from good times, beauty, luxury, indulgence, and refinement.

Comparing the local ads to the national ones, the same basic patterns seem discernible: the hugely positive connotations of prestige, power, beauty, leisure, and liberty etc. As with the national ads, accentuated Whiteness intersects with marked gender alterity (beautiful women in dresses, kimono, and make-up, and men in suits and cowboy hats, each going different aesthetic salons).

If anything, maybe the stereotyping seems even cruder in the local ads. Perhaps this area is a bit behind-the-times compared to big Japanese cities that have more diversity and urbanity and might have moved on from such crude representations as the unrestrained, exaggeratedly excited *gaijin*. The crude, hairy-*gaijin* (*ketoujin*) stereotype in one ad was disconcerting in view of its history. It was also noticed that many images of *gaijin* men featured them with beards, so this may be another way in which they are semiotically differentiated from Japanese people.

Previous studies of Japanese ads have indicated that Black people and non-Japanese Asians are marginalised in or excluded entirely from Japanese ads: chronically underrepresented. This study may paint an even-bleaker picture. Again, though it was only a small, arbitrary sampling, the only fleeting glimpse of a Black person was a blurred waiter in a car brochure.

Analysing such patterns/paradigms of representation, the spectre of the ladder of civilizations looms large. It is all very well looking at the twin mythic monoliths of White Western culture and Japanese culture that are constructed and performed through images of *gaijin* in these ads, and how they might be variously positioned and interrelated as they vie to be top of the hierarchy, but then they both come to look like hegemonic discourses that keep "other" cultures well down the ladder.

The educational implications are that those two mythic monoliths, along with their

concomitant myths about 'race', ought to be critiqued to reveal the true diversity that lies within. In that way, anti-essentialist and more hybrid understandings may emerge, and this is why this study highlighted the welcome appearance of biracial/multiracial people in ads as a way of deconstructing these fallacious monoliths so often presented in ads (such as by realising the folly, futility, and invidiousness of attempting race categorization). Monoliths do not always have to be set in stone.

Thus, this study could be a model for people/students in Japan (and elsewhere) to undertake such interrogations of images in their own local contexts to reflect on what (meta-)messages they convey. As Kellner and Share (2005) have suggested, "Demystifying media messages through critical inquiry is an important starting point for media literacy" (p. 374). Students should also talk about their own experiences and reflect on their own identities and positionalities.

Helping empower learners to conduct such critical analysis is a crucial task for educators: to no small degree, it represents the difference between learners being in total thrall to the insidious, invidious influence of the immensely powerful 'informal education' of advertising (apparently teaching that White Privilege is 'good' and 'natural', along with a slew of other such intersectional oppressions) and having the wherewithal to resist/reject it and, ideally, create more positive and equitable new ways and meanings instead. This is the potential and promise that some educators can perceive in incorporating informal learning critically into traditional formal learning school environments: it can be effective in disrupting pervasive and pernicious, exclusionary, hegemonic discourses. As Kellner and Share (2005) have contended: "it is not enough to merely understand media, students need to be empowered to critically negotiate meanings, engage with the problems of misrepresentations and under-representations, and produce their own alternative media. Addressing issues of inequality and injustice in media representations can be a powerful starting place for [Freirean] problem-posing transformative education" (p. 382).

This approach is related to critical multicultural education: it means *not* overlooking the power dynamics inherent in intercultural relations, but rather analysing them with the aim of overcoming stereotypes to establish more genuinely equitable and transformational intercultural interaction. For example, a *gaijin* appearing in a Japanese ad is a key intercultural moment, but critical multiculturalism is required to interrogate it fully: it cannot simply be taken at face-value.

This study has tried to show how an understandably uncritical student in this locality might have their conception of other cultures (and the relations between them and Japanese culture) formed through the informally educative power of advertising. As stated, other informally educative forces exist, too (internet, movies, video games etc.), and can be the subject of other inquiries, again potentially profitably integrating informal and formal learning.

The next stage of this study will be to further consider such educational implications by

semiotically interrogating the images and (meta-)messages conveyed to students within the formal learning environment, i.e. schools, teachers, and curricular materials (textbooks). To what extent do the images/representations in textbooks replicate or repudiate the images/(meta-)messages to which students have been exposed informally through ads (and other media)?

Notes

[1] "We" are work colleagues: a Japanese female and a British male, who has come to realise how much he has benefitted from White Privilege living/working in Japan. That is our positionality. We seek to understand the underlying basis for the prevalent privileging of Whiteness in Japanese society: to identify where it exists and how it is perpetuated, and to try to help create spaces for students to develop alternative ways of understanding media.

[2] Creighton (1995) cited a Tokyo wedding venue's 1990 ad for a "Dramatic Wedding", featuring a blonde Western woman, "Naked from the waist up, her arms lie across her breasts thus concealing the nipples" (p. 135. A topless wedding does sound quite "dramatic": a brazen busting out of conventions, not to mention the time it could save amorous couples on their wedding night).

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