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Coloration Strategies of (Non)Place in Anime: Globalization, Hybridity, and Mediating Japan

A hybrid *u:japan* lecture by Stevie Suan

Thursday
2026-01-15
18⁰⁰~19³⁰



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Examining some of the ways color operates in anime allows for an exploration of place production in anime as it mediates Japan in a global context. Specific strategies of utilizing color to depict place will be revealed through a comparison of two anime: *Bakemonogatari* and *Non Non Biyori*.

Employing large blocks of segmented solid colors, the former anime tends toward the production of what Marc Augé calls “non-places,” but ones that do not exist in the real world; the latter tends toward a painterly pastoral image, producing the impression of a locality in Japan through a textured merging of various colors. Both can be read as depicting places engaged with globalization in distinct ways.

Bakemonogatari echoes the tensions of the breakdown of classically considered localities, presenting

non-places of “passing through” (like airports) prevalent in contemporary globalization.

Based on disparate parts of rural areas of Japan (but with some backgrounds painted in Vietnam), *Non Non Biyori* presents the sense of a local place, but one of hybridity and interlinking of dispersed places to produce that locality.

Through the specific strategies of coloration, both tendencies—segmented solid colors and non-place, and painterly pastoral imagery and place—are never fully subsumed by the other and appear in varying degrees in these and other anime. Such methods of analysis open a means to explore mediation, hybridity, and the various forms they may take to better navigate notions of place in relation to Japan and beyond.



Stevie Suan is an Associate Professor at Hosei University’s Faculty of Global and Interdisciplinary Studies (GIS). His research utilizes performance/performativity theory and media theory to explore anime’s media-form, different modes of acting, and transnational cultural production. This is the topic of his recent book *Anime’s Identity: Performativity and Form beyond Japan* (University of Minnesota Press, 2021; Winner of the Japan Society for Animation Studies Award). This interdisciplinary approach is also extended to ecocritical analysis of anime with publications such as, “Enacting an Ecological Disposition: Performing Dividuality in *Kaiju no Kodomo’s* World of Vibrant Matter,” and “Objecthood at the End of the World: Anime’s Acting and its Ecological Stakes in *Neon Genesis Evangelion*.” He has also discussed his work on education in, “On Pedagogy and the Personal: Teaching Media, the Nation, and Globalization about/in Japan.”

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