Otaku Tourists Out of Japan: *Fictionality*, Shared Memories, and the Role of NationalBranding in the Japanese Pilgrimages of Anime Fans in the United Kingdom

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Media, Tourism, and Fan Pilgrimages in Japanese and Global Contexts

BOTH MEDIA STUDIES AND TOURISM HAVE BEEN INTERESTED IN THE

proliferation of global mass media. The ways in which place images are created, and how they are eventually transformed, are key to the development of more competitive tourism strategies, as well as to understanding the global phenomenon of tourism (Kim and Perdue 225; Schama). Most of the studies labeled "film-induced tourism" or "movie-induced tourism" extend the appeal of these fic- tions and narratives to other audiovisual media, such as television or video games (Beeton). Still, the visual signs remain central to under- standing these forms of tourism and the construction of touristic des- tinations. This has been extensively discussed with regard to the concept of the "tourist gaze" (Urry and Larsen), a term chosen to rep- resent the subjectivity, the singularity, and the ephemerality of the tourist experience. And, yet, despite its individual nature, the tourist gaze is subject to certain norms or rituals. This double nature of experience is further complicated by images of tourism, as the gazing "is conditioned by personal experiences and memories and framed by rules and styles, as well as by circulating images and texts of this and other places" (Urry and Larsen). Behind the sights and the experiences of each tourist reside different degrees of involvement. The relation- ship of these experiences with the values and belief systems of each individual makes the experience enduring in the memory of the tour- ist. On many occasions, this cycle is reversed and the experiences of individuals who formulate new frames of interaction are reinterpreted through new experiences. Fan studies, in particular, have focused extensively on the analysis of "casual"

or spontaneous forms of media tourism, as opposed to institutional approaches (i.e., those touristic routes and activities promoted by national or commercial institu- tions).

In this context, the so-called "media pilgrimage," or the visit to places related to a media narrative that involve fan communities, is a form of spontaneous media tourism of special interest (Hills; Norris). The religious metaphor implies a considerable engagement with these narratives, but in their reverence there is also an implicit ritual, a social act. Once again, the performative component is inseparable from the activity of the tourist cum pilgrim. Scholars have discussed media pilgrimages in relation to other forms of popular culture, including films, music, and sports. However, for many reasons, serial narratives, such as comic books and TV series, usually stimulate greater emotional engagement than other kinds of cultural produc- tion. Serial distribution is usually spread over a wider period, with long periods between their different seasons or volumes. This has the potential to result in a more persistent effect upon fans than many other one-stand cultural blockbusters seem to lack. Serial narratives also feature complex social networks that create bonds among their characters and between those characters and fan audiences.

While spontaneous and creative fan responses do exist, the conver- gence of media industries and tourism activities has clear benefits, which stimulate media tourism. All over the world, business and commercial activities have responded to audiences' interest in visiting the locations depicted in global mass media. But these processes rarely happen in a vacuum. Some locations have seen their natural and historic tourist appeal augmented, as an effect of their relation with recent fictional media, such as in the case the local develop- ment of tourist services around the Croatian coast as an effect of HBO's *Game of Thrones*' (2011–19) worldwide success. In recent years, this convergence of economic and media interests has also stimulated a turn in global media industries' strategies toward the production and distribution of media products and events. The so-called Public Relations (PR) movies and series sponsored by local and national institutions are also a manifestation of this confluence.

Media industries and tourism not only interact at these micro- (i.e., local retailers) and *meso*-levels (i.e., media companies), but also establish synergies between users and other higher structures, such as global contents producers and

even countries. Ultimately, both indus- tries complement each other since both build global imaginaries from which they constantly receive feedback. Both tourism and media con- sumption are activities that "[make] sense only as an imaginative pro- cess which involves a certain comprehension of the world and enthuses a distinctive emotional engagement with it" (Crouch et al. 1). An example of this multilevel interaction can be found in the con- struction of national branding; the images associated with the value and meaning of a country among potential consumers. Tourism and transnational media industries are among the most recognizable vehi- cles for this exchange of national images. They are at the forefront of exchanges of information and services within countries from educa- tional institutions to hospitals, continuously contributing to their international image in terms of reputation and influence (Anholt). However, although influential, this relationship should be considered only one factor in the dynamic process of construction of national images; the reputation of a country is the result of an inheritance, the result of an exchange of information among international agents over time. This process of exchange necessarily includes diverse fields, such as literature, philosophy, politics, and economic relationships, among others.

Many countries benefit from these synergies, although those with more developed media industries and, therefore, with higher levels of cultural production and export have a greater facility to distribute national images. Together with the United States and the United Kingdom, Japan holds a privileged position as a global producer of popular culture. Particularly, Japanese animation (anime) is a global market industry that has traditionally involved the transnationaliza- tion of capitals. Anime is the central medium of a whole system of global resonances often referred to as the "anime media-mix" (Lamarre; Daliot-Bul and Otmazgin), but it also has relevant histori- cal and financial links with other media such as manga (Japanese comic books), TV dramas, and video games.[1] Japanese popular cul- ture is distinctive and is often considered inseparable from Japanese identity, sparking debate around the reasons behind the integration of Western and international tropes within their narratives. These contents of antithetic nature interact in a manifestation of a transna- tional identity, or "internationalization" (Lu), through different mechanisms of self-projection, cultural appropriation, and hybridiza- tion. Independent of their meaning, it is a fact

that these industries often weave several images that are directly inspired by locations and cultures from all around the world into their fictional imaginaries.

Previous studies of *otaku*[2] tourism have examined the motivations of international fans visiting Japan. These actions have been consid- ered under a holistic perspective, where the popularity of manga and anime industries has mobilized both Japanese and international tour- ists to visit significant places of cultural interest for the otaku com- munity (Sabre; Denison). Other studies have worked extensively on the Japanese area, dealing with paradigmatic cases of *seichi junrei* (pop culture tourism) in depth and making accounts of their social and economic benefits as well as the motivations behind them (Yama- mura, "Pop Culture"; Seaton and Yamamura). Until now, there has been little discussion about the "out of Japan" pilgrimages and how these sacralizations take place, despite valuable contributions from significant case studies (Norris; Kawanishi; Hernández-Pérez, "Think- ing"; Geraghty). There is also a need to construct a model for the analysis of otaku tourism and media pilgrimages that differentiates between activities based on the tourist profiles and fan communities involved, as well as their motivations. This framework could be applied to the discussion of other forms of media tourism and mediapilgrimages.

There are many reasons why Japanese fans of manga and anime make pilgrimages to tourist destinations in Europe, and there is a distinct difference between "fan tourism," which can be considered synonymous with otaku, and other forms of content-based tourism. For otaku tourists, scene hunting for fan-favorite locations from the media texts—a practice known as *butaitanbou*—and *seichi junrei* or "pop culture tourism"— marks the emergence of sacred locations in the real world related to a fictional world's narrative. Together, these terms offer a typology of anime tourism that provides a framework for the analysis of otaku tourism and, particularly, the circulation of shared memories and images of Europe across Japanese anime media. Indeed, an anime pilgrimage in the European context, to Cotswold (England), in relation to other examples of otaku tourism points to the role of national branding (British) in moderating these media and touristic consumptions. In the overlap between different forms of tourism, including cultural tourism, media-oriented tourism (includ- ing anime tourism), and media tourism involving the participation of fan (otaku) communities, the confluence of

national identity images and media products makes it possible to identify key international signifiers that guide the experience of the tourist.

A Typology for the Study of Transnational Forms of Anime Tourism

Otaku tourism and, particularly, anime pilgrimages are widely stud- ied by Japanese and international academics. The origins of anime tourism in Japan have been documented since the beginning of the 1990s and are associated with highly technological otaku cultures that began to use the Internet to communicate with other members of the fan community and distribute their own fandom works (Oka- moto 19). Anime tourism has been commonly considered under the theoretical umbrella of "contents tourism" (also known as *kontentsu tsurizumu*), which aims to be an inclusive term that also refers to other forms of media tourism, despite being originally coined for the study of Japanese media-mix industries (Seaton and Yamamura).

Anime tourism follows the pattern of other transmediational forms of media tourism in relation to fan consumption in which media con- sumption leads to higher levels of involvement and, eventually, the production of its own cultural contents.[3] This form of creative pro- duction and identity consumption is similar to that described in other fan communities (Hills) and can include the remixing of media content, the elaboration of discussion fanzines, cosplay of favorite characters, and, finally, visits to sacred places described in fictional worlds. Anime tourism has frequently been approached from an insti- tutional perspective and considered for its relationship with Japan's national branding. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century,

the Japanese government has progressively developed tools to support cultural industries, including manga and animation, in a strategy known internationally as "Cool Japan" (Matsui). However, identifying the activities of media tourism (hereafter "otaku tourism") within a framework limited to institutional actions would be a biased way of understanding these phenomena for different reasons. Firstly, in the context of international audiences, there is a considerable gap between the institutional images provided as part of tourism promotions and the references sought by fans (Sabre 3). This type of negative response could be due to the overlap between

marketing directed toward gen- eral audiences, and therefore of more general content similar to other examples of cultural tourism, and that directed toward specific fan audiences. For example, the organized visits to the technological neighborhood of Akihabara, a symbol of otaku culture, can be of interest to the hardcore fan but also to many other individuals visit- ing Japan or even the "casual otaku." Secondly, limiting the analysis to those forms of tourism directed by the national strategy requires discarding those forms of productive consumption that take place within the international/transnational otaku community. In the case of anime tourism, certain practices, such as visiting an author's museum, represent discursive forms among audiences, a sort of "ele- vation" of popular forms or discourses, such as manga production (Denison). However, the creation of these museums is primarily a form of institutionalization in which local authorities change the dis- course of the popular. In other words, when a museum is created and the normal construction of these discourses is subverted, these forms cease to be "popular." Therefore, the focus of study on anime tourism should be shifted in order to examine how those institutional frames can shape or influence other activities specifically created, promoted, and consumed by fan communities.

With the purpose of creating a structured discussion about the dif- ferences between otaku tourism in the Japanese context and abroad and of contributing to the academic literature on this subject by examining the different subjectivities and degrees involvement in this practice, as well as the role of national branding in the consolidation of these forms of content tourism, I propose the following classifica- tions: pilgrimage, scene hunting, anime tourism, and cultural tour- ism (Figure 1). Each of these components also relates to other formsof otaku and content tourism.

MOTIVATIONS

MODES			Involvement with Characters and Story	Cult to the Author	Interest in other cultures	Involvement with Fan Communities	EXAMPLES
Fan	Fan / Otaku Tourism	**Pilgrimage/Seichi Junrei** -Worship -Spread the beliefs -Live and perform the story	Medium to High	Medium to High	Medium to High*	Active, in different Levels and Roles	Sacred Places i.e. Shrines in *Lucky Star*
		Scene Hunting/ Buitantabou -Visit Spots -Scene Collection	Significant	Not Compulsory	Medium to High*	Basic exchange of information	Focal Points i.e. Stairs from *Your Name*
Tourist	Content Tourism	**Anime Tourism / Casual Otaku Tourism** -Gather information and experiences	Medium to Low (Nostalgia)	Different Levels	Medium to High*	Not Compulsory	Institutionalized Places of reference i.e. Shigeru Mizuki Road (Sakaiminato)
		Cultural Tourism	Low	Different Levels	Different Levels	Different Levels	Cultural Oriented (Japanese Heritage)

FIGURE 1. A typology of Otaku Tourism [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Content Tourism and Cultural Tourism

Of all the forms, content tourism is the most inclusive. The term cor- responds to previously designated labels, such as "anime tourism" (Denison), "otaku tourism" (Okamoto), and "contents tourism" (Sea- ton and Yamamura). All these approaches point out how the con- sumption of transnational and transmedia products can contribute to the creation of positive images of tourist destinations.

Engaging with content tourism greatly benefits local communities. A perfect example of how content tourism can appeal to global audi- ences, and to more specific markets, such as fans, is Sakaiminato. The city, located in the prefecture of Tottori, is a rural village known for being the birthplace of Shigeru Mizuki (1922–2005), one of the most influential *mangaka* artists in the history of Japan. Mizuki's best- known works take inspiration from Japanese mythology and folklore to create a genre for young people that is obscure yet still includes a melancholic vision and a certain sense of humor. The term "*yokai*" (ghost) is intimately linked to the author's memory and is the germ of the idea for the Shigeru Mizuki Road. Opened in the mid-1990s, this street is located in the center of the village and connects the Yonago Station and the Shigeru Mizuki Memorial Museum. This road is, in many aspects, an adaptation of Mizuki's texts, or at least of his particular visual style. This is mostly demonstrated through the more than one hundred and seventy bronze

statues of his little monsters scattered throughout the city, as well as in other artifacts and temporal events (decorated trains, taxis, cosplayers, etc.) that con- tribute to this immersion effect. Sakaiminato's transformation enhances the effect of tourism based on media products toward the displacement of coordinates in real space and makes possible the jour- ney to a fictional world laid over a real city (Couldry). However, a visit to the "The Otherworlds of Shigeru Mizuki" (Foster) is also an example of cultural tourism, at least for national audiences, since these institutionalized actions support the idea that Mizuki's work transcends popular culture to be considered part of the visual heritage of the village and the country.

The motivations of consumers of cultural tourism, the casual otaku audiences and groups that consider themselves to be part of an inter- national otaku audience, may overlap. Consider the great number of visitors to museums dedicated to manga and Japanese animation authors every year. That is the case for the museum dedicated to Stu- dio Ghibli in Mitaka or the Osamu Tezuka museum in Takarazuka. These are indeed great cultural spaces that, as showcased by the Shi- geru Mizuki Road, due to their evident degree of institutionalization and the support of the local authorities in their promotion, can attract audiences of all kinds.

As such, the complex ways in which the image of Japan is trans- formed through its popular culture are not an impediment, and otaku audiences have developed an attachment for their heritage that drives them to other forms of cultural tourism. The otaku is often also an avid consumer of food, art, history, and the Japanese language, which makes him not that different from other tourists visiting Japan. In many aspects, content tourism is inseparable from other forms of tourism and, particularly, from the utilization of popular culture more generally. As with the consumption of manga, anime, and other forms of Japanese popular culture, audiences seek contact with the tradition and history of Japanese arts as the origin of these forms of modern culture. This association, which may seem natural to fan audiences, is not necessarily assumed by academia.[4]

The overlapping of cultural tourism and fan tourism is also reflected in the motivations of Japanese and non-Japanese media pilgrims. The history of anime markets highlights how nostalgia is actually a common feature in European audiences of anime (Hernández-Pérez et al.; Pellitteri), a motivation that

has been also com- mented in the case of international otaku pilgrims (Sabre 5). The Japanese animation boom started in the late 1970s in the United States and expanded progressively to European broadcasters in the 1980s. Therefore, it is not surprising that the children from those decades have grown into adults interested in visiting places related to the history of their favorite TV memories, such as Toei Gallery (*Sailor Moon* and *Dragon Ball*) or Go Nagai's Museum (*Mazinger Z*). How- ever, as happened during the visits of French otaku to Akihabara, appealing to media involvement can be problematic, as a consequence of a touristic event attempting to address both general and more involved audiences (Sabre). Here, a sanctioning response has been observed that is quite common to other activities of fan communities. When fans identify images of mass culture as the "inauthentic Other," they tend to belittle them, as a compensatory effect after the loss of their original exclusivity (Jancovich). This way, fan communi- ties tend to find other ways to differentiate their consumption and their identity from general audiences in activities such as *seichi junrei* and *butaitanbou.*

Seichi junrei or *Otaku Pilgrimage*

The term *seichi junrei* (聖地巡礼) is identified with "pop culture tourism," although it could be literally translated as "holy land trip." This is a concept that could be read as irony or, in many cases, as lit- eral, depending on the audiences' degree of involvement. In most cases, this sacralization takes place in locations with special signifi- cance to a community due to their relationship with canonical narra- tives, such as animation series, movies, or video games. While sacralization can be the result of spontaneous fan activities, over the years these activities have gained the support of local communities and copyright holders (Yamamura, "Contents"). Since 2016, the Anime Tourism Association has curated temporal events and loca- tions with an emphasis on Japanese heritage including temples, shri- nes, and castles (ATA). Alternatively, fan communities can adjudicate, either authoritatively (modulated by leaders) or by agree- ment, these special or sacral characteristics to specific places.

It is important to understand that, in anime pilgrimages, the nar- rative, the technique, and the tradition come together in a configura- tion of sacred images. While many cases of otaku pilgrimage can take place in nonsacred spots, such as high schools (*K-On*), the streets of a particular city (*The*

Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya), or hospitals (*Robotics*; *Notes*), it is not a coincidence that many of the most paradigmatic cases of anime pilgrimage (*Lucky Star*, *Your Name*) are centered precisely on locations representative of the country's Shinto heritage, such as shrines. The metaphor established between spiritual- ity and fan consumption takes root with classic discussions of fan studies (Lewis). Both the characters' narratives and otaku pilgrimages are constructed around these spaces of affection that, in many cases, were already sacred in the religious sense long before the media sacralization began to take place. The fan decorates with *ema*, or small wooden plaques, where worshippers write their prayers and wishes following Shinto traditions, which are now customized with anime characters. They also write vows and offerings at the very same places of traditional worship, to which they add a parallel meaning. The use of religious spaces, mainly those associated with Shinto, as the object of otaku pilgrimages can also give rise to other confluences of cultural tourism and otaku tourism. However, as in many other cases of otaku tourism in the rest of the world, the appropriation of spaces of great heritage value can lead to conflicts between heritage and tourist activ- ities.[5]

Here, it may be worth consciously getting some distance from the term "contents tourism" (Seaton and Yamamura), to designate otaku pilgrimages and, particularly, the forms of *seichi junrei*, less directed or institutionalized activities, although there may be overlap. Otaku pilgrimages can be understood as the combined acts of production and social consumption that do not differ much from other forms of fan culture. Matt Hills defines these practices as part of those "cult geographies," making this dual nature different as "an affective inter- pretive process which spills into and redefines material space" (110). Indeed, tourism can be understood as a performance (Edensor; Urry and Larsen). Performance, in this case, implies the existence of a text (in this case, the media) that is interpreted as a ritual or tradition. In otaku tourism, tradition emerges from discursive communities. Fans and otakus born in the mid-1980s and 1990s are especially active on social networks, and they construct these traditions in the form of

travel blogs and forums (Okamoto 102; Williams). Many personal websites gather information about these pilgrimages (how to arrive, where to go, the cost of activities, etc.) and

offer the possibility to engage in conversation with other members of the *otaku* community. While these paratexts can support and feed the pilgrimages affects and motivations, at the very center is the narrative that establishes the guidelines, or the "Media Scaffold" (Norris), for the elaboration of tourist experiences. Access to the fictional world is based on two complementary mechanisms: mediating the tourist experience, either by the capture of trophies (*Butaitanbou*) or by the creation of visual testi- monies (selfies, photo reports, blogs, etc.) and other forms of post-pil- grimage testimony. On the other hand, performance and identification with the characters, defined as a set of activities that take place in a particular social (fan) context, might include cosplay or photoshoots with references to the narrative.

Butaitanbou

The practice of *butaitanbou* (舞台 探訪) ("scene hunting") consists of the realization of photographs that replicate scenes from a movie. It is, therefore, typically associated with anime fans, although this audi- ence is often juxtaposed with other audiences of Japanese visual cul- ture (manga, video games, cosplay, etc.).

The natural association of anime and butaitanbou lies in the realis- tic nature of anime as a means of representation, as well as in its stylistic differences with manga. Although many of the anime stories have their origin in manga, there are certain stylistic patterns com- mon to the animated adaptations that the original medium lacks. Manga, with its customary black and white color scheme and its screen tone patterns, usually relies on an author's (*mangaka*) style and ability to determine the degree of realism in backgrounds and figures. Anime productions, despite involving different producers, tend to converge in similar production techniques and final aspects. This is a defining feature of backgrounds where well-defined shadows and flat colors in foreground objects coexist with pseudo-photographic por- traits in the background.

Butaitanbou finds its parallel form in other examples of otaku tourism defined as "On-location" (Beeton), as opposed to those "off location," such as visits to tourist centers, museums, or theme parks.

However, what differentiates these activities is not the similarity with the narrative, since this may be affected by the degree of realism of the representation, or even the introduction of fictional elements. The difference between butaitanbou and

other otaku tourism practices is that this is a practice of creating hypertextuality, or even intertextual dialogue versus the exploration of other related texts or paratextual- ity. A natural consequence of the adoption of this role as a fan fiction reteller is the way in which the original authorship of the work takes a secondary position. This can also be affected by the use of anime as the main inspiration for butaitanbou since the author's presence in the anime is smaller than in the manga and is perceived as essentially collaborative. This feature is radically different from other forms of cultural tourism and even casual otaku tourism (i.e., visiting muse- ums dedicated to an author). This latter profile can be similar to that of the "serendipitous tourist" described in the case of cultural tourism in which the cult of the author and the art piece could have a more relevant role (Seaton and Yamamura 3).

Butaitanbou is usually rendered as a narrative practice in the form of travel blogs. Blogs that recount pilgrimages often include forms of butaitanbou. Both are part of the "post-pilgrimage" narratives (Oka- moto). Capturing scenes is not only part of collecting trophies for the pilgrim,[6] but also of the narrative of the trip itself. As with other forms of media pilgrimage, the ways in which tourists experience space depend on the selection of elements from the original narrative (events, characters, artifacts, etc.) with which the fan identifies. The recreation of scenes is a complementary role, which, in recent years, has been coordinated with cosplay and other forms of reenactment.

If narratives are the guide for the tourist's experiences, images are the model from which fans construct their gaze. In the case of movie- induced tourism, the search for these focal points, or icons, popular- ized by cinema and television guides the planning and later the expe- rience of the tourist (Riley et al. 924). Fan communities go a step further in this level of engagement, using the image as a trophy but also as a testimony of their pilgrimage. The selection of images is not totally arbitrary, and it can be found in the nature of the selected nar- ratives and their relationship with intimate environments. In the field of Japanese animation, there is a profusion of romantic dramas, such as the blockbuster *Your Name* (*Kimi no Na wa*, 2016) by Makoto Shinkai, which inspires pilgrimages to the stairs of Suga Shrine (Shinjuku, Tokyo) among many other locations in Tokyo and Hida (Gifu prefecture). Characters and the intimate plots from the "slice of life" genre favor the creation of emotional ties with the characters (Yamamura, "Contents"), which fosters a

private relationship between the fan and the narrative they are willing to protect. In this sense, fans have raised concerns about how the institutionalization of anime tourism could conflict with "the art of *butaitanbou*" (Lombardi). Here is another example of how the fan community creates both the rules of these activities and the moral scale with which they should be measured.

Otaku Tourism Out of Japan?

Compared to the considerable number of studies of international pilgrimages visiting Japan, there are only a few cases studying anime pilgrimages to Europe (Kawanishi; Geraghty; Yagi and Pearce). Arguably, the reasons for tourists to visit these locations are not usu- ally related to their mediation through anime. Even so, there are cases of great relevance in the representation of European heritage through anime. A paradigmatic case is that of Nippon Animation's productions, focused on the adaptation of European youth literature classics, which over the years has created a nostalgic fan tourist base (Geraghty; Yagi and Pearce). Together with the enduring memory of these products by the audiences of the 1970s–80s, there is also a fan base related to the prestige of their authors, particularly Hayao Miya- zaki and Isao Takahata, who may be two of the best-known figures in Japanese animation.

The following case study discusses different forms of otaku tour- ism, including *seichi junrei* and *buitantabou.* It also offers a comparison between the phenomena of otaku pilgrimage inside and outside of Japan.

B&B in the Cotswolds, England

Since 2010, United Kingdom national agencies have estimated that the contribution of the travel and tourism sector to the British economy has grown more than 22.7 percent (World Travel). In comparison with visitor spending from other countries, Japan is a minor market for the United Kingdom, being only the twenty-eighth lar- gest market in 2017, competing in share with the United States, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Most holiday and business visits to the United Kingdom are concentrated around London, character- ized by higher visitor spending, around £1,011, compared to the market average of £625 (Visit Britain).

Many Japanese tourists visit the United Kingdom due to the appeal of well-known British characters, such as Harry Potter or Sher- lock Holmes. The English imaginary, especially in relation to Victo- rian literature and other genres of thematic fantasy literature (i.e., steam punk), has a strong presence in manga and anime narratives. Japanese tourists' image of Britain has been described as "romantic" and "fascinating" (Visit Britain 37). Other studies on Japanese tour- ism have confirmed that images from the United Kingdom are mainly imported from media, especially films and TV, which create a positive portrait of "natural scenic beauty," "beautiful rural areas, and gardens" (Iwashita 143). Until now, the only otaku pilgrimage to England that falls within these parameters is the case of the Cots- wolds area, which has been the object of research using anthropologi- cal models (Kawanishi).

The anime series *Kiniro + Mosaic* (also known as *Kinmoza!*) intro- duced the history of Shinobu Oomiya, a Japanese student who travels to the United Kingdom to take part in a homestay. Consequentially, Shinobu befriends Alice Cartelet, the daughter of a Bed & Breakfast (B&B) owner, who, five years later, would move to Japan and study at the same high school as Shinobu. In this "slice of life series," loca- tions are carefully chosen. The anime accurately portrays the Fosse Farmhouse in Castle Combe, Wiltshire, which is an archetypal Brit- ish B&B. This twobedroom cottage, equipped with a garden, was built in the 1700s. This British guesthouse is reproduced to a high level of detail, even including the 1954 Morris Minor, a family car (Figure 2 and Figure 3). Although the events are fictional, the char- acter design is intended to represent ethnicity, even though this is done through the limited conventions of anime style. The same hap- pened to Mrs. Cartelet character, Alice's mother, who is loosely based on the owner of this B&B.

In June, 2018, British media (BBC; Pullan) focused on its owner, Caron Cooper, who presented the business and her story. Cooper has given several interviews to media since then, explaining how this

FIGURE 2. Views from outside Fosse Farmhouse compared to images of the series *Kinmoza!* (2013). © *Caron Cooper* © *Kinmoza! Production Committee and* © *Studio Gokumi.* [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

business gained popularity in Japan after the inauguration of a hostel there that replicated her B&B's style.

The Fosse Farmhouse was also featured on *LEE Spotlighting* in 1990, which eventually led to artist Yui Hara creating a manga in 2012 (Gates). Before Gokumi studio began the production work for its animated series, the staff visited Fosse Farmhouse, as well as all the other locations also portrayed in

FIGURE 3. Views from inside Fosse Farmhouse compared to images of the series *Kinmoza!* (2013). © *Mike Hattsu* © *Kinmoza! Production Committee and* © *Studio Gokumi.* [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

the manga, including Kemble Station, Cirencester, Bibury, andBathampton.

Pilgrimages to the Cotswolds are mainly recounted in travel blogs and news sites. Interestingly, British fan discussions of *Kinmoza*! rarely express negative criticism about the way England is repre- sented. After reviewing data from anime fan forums (Anime UK News, UK Anime, and Anime League), most of comments and reviews were positive, emphasizing the light-hearted tone of the nar- rative and the "beautifully depicted England—which has clearly been reconstructed through meticulous on-site research" (L. Green). How- ever, more surprising in the case of *Kinmoza!* is the level of institutionalization it has reached. From May 2015 to the end of 2016, the tourism agency CANTOUR offered weekly departures from Tokyo (S. Green). The five-day guided tour offered the essential British destinations in London and included a stay at the Fosse Farm-

house, more than 100 miles away from the city. These routes com- bine the most recognizable rural and urban focal points of a mediatized England including those already represented through *Kin- moza!*: Big Ben, Piccadilly Circus, the London Eye, and Abbey Road. It also matches the idiosyncrasies of Japanese tourism, which tends to have planned and tight agendas coordinated by Japan-based travel agencies (Iwashita; Visit Britain).

As the story of *Kinmoza!* takes place both in the United Kingdom and Japan, some otaku pilgrims blogs have exercised the butaitanbou in the most accessible areas of Sakura (Chiba Prefecture) (Nagarawi; Cairn). Probably for the same reason, it is easier to find blogs written by international otakus living or visiting Japan (Hattsu).[7] As with other sites of otaku pilgrimages, these sites offer complete repositories with scenes of the series and the real locations in different forms (links to maps, screenshots with time codes, name of the locations, etc.). Alongside trophies, bloggers offer advice for future pilgrims in order to get the best shot: "The cherry blossoms will be beautiful in spring" (tsurebashi). Interestingly, in many other cases there is no clear narrative behind these pilgrimages. These blogs are merely proof of achievement, instead of an insight into the tourist experience.

 The series has also attracted considerable fan activity in other forms of *Seichi junrei*. Kawanishi's study was based, like other works of Media Pilgrimages (Norris), on the collection of testimonies, either direct, in the form of interviews, or indirect, using visitors' books, as well as fan websites and other forums. Kawanishi shows that the pilgrimage to the Cotswolds attracts not just Japanese visitors. The study compiled a total of eighty-six cases, mostly males, based on their records in English, who identified as Chinese (including people from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau) and Korean (all male). A significant number of the identified cases (61 percent) were Japa- nese speakers. The predominance of males in this sample may be sur- prising, in regard to previous publications on Japanese media pilgrims to the United Kingdom. It would be expected that female pilgrims would make up a large proportion, since film/TV are main motivators for them (Iwashita). However, it would be risky to assume a similar profile in relation to anime pilgrimages or, specifically, *Kin- moza!* which may depend on other factors.

Other behavior reported through media made account of the otaku nature of these visits. The owner of this B&B described a

common ritual among visitors, who usually copy a scene from the series in which Shinobu, the Japanese friend, enters the house without taking off her shoes (BBC). This little performance accounts for the involve- ment of otaku pilgrims with these "light-hearted" narratives but also proves the nature of the appeal of *Kinzoma!*: The tourists share the pleasure of first contact with a foreign culture and its derived other- ness alongside the protagonist. The owner also highlighted the offers and souvenirs stored in the installations. As a result of the pilgrim- ages, the living room of the B&B is now full of postcards, fan art, and merchandizing related to *Kinmoza!* narratives. The result is not different from many other hostels in Europe, but the image is still implicitly addressing the parallelism between secular and religious reverence.

Conclusions

Reviving the discussion around the interaction of national images and media tourism with reference to a little-known phenomenon, otaku pilgrimages outside of Japan, reveals the differences between forms of content tourism and fan tourism, especially in the case of anime industries, differentiating, according to the levels of involve- ment of the tourist or fan, between pilgrimages (*seichi junrei*), scene hunting (buitantabou), anime tourism, and other forms of cultural tourism.

The pilgrimage to Fosse Farmhouse presents many features in common with previous case studies on anime and content tourism (Yamamura, "Pop Culture"; Okamoto). It uses an anime series as a central narrative with the potential for high emotional engagement with audiences, rendered through a "slice of life" treatment. It is also constructed through "small narratives" (Okamoto) that create the pos- sibility to collect and exchange information in the form of experi- ences and trophies. In contrast, the case does not seem to replicate relevant pseudoreligious rituals similar to those studied in Japanese otaku pilgrimages. These pilgrimages to United Kingdom are strongly influenced by a pervasive national image and its icono- graphic tradition (i.e., the gardens, the cottage architecture, or the English breakfasts of their pictures). This does not correspond entirely to the otaku pilgrimage model but rather to the mediation of tourist destinations described in many mediatized places (Urry and Larsen). This denotes a significant overlap with the model of cultural tourism that is oriented toward heritage.

Otaku tourism as an alternative form of content tourism faces

numerous methodological challenges. Many national tourism agencies' current research models do not determine precisely the number of tourists by region (Hernàndez-Pèrez, "Thinking"). In the same way, it is quite difficult to measure the precise role of media industries on the tourist's motivation and planning, or the true level of overlap between cultural tourism and fan tourism. In this sense, the claim by British tourism agencies that Japanese visitors are much less influenced than other international visitors by tourism marketing when choosing their destinations is still surprising (Visit Britain 59) and seems to contradict other studies (Iwashita). It may be worthwhile to explore the use of alternative methodologies due to the limitations of the surveys and interviews as main methodologies for the study of media tourism. The lack of post-pilgrimage narratives in some the cases shows that modern media pilgrimage might differ considerably from other models of media pilgrimages employed in the past, such as those describing literary tourism. Millennial digital natives are more oriented to the use of visual media than previous fan communities, which used to employ elaborated text-oriented speeches. In the case of international otaku tourists visiting the United Kingdom, these testimonies also reflect the influential national branding derived from British culture, mainly from England's visual heritage and other forms of transnational popular culture.

Notes

1. While the term "anime media-mix" is the most popular, the centrality of manga as an origin of stylistic features and narrative tropes has been often discussed (Hernàndez-Pèreze, "Look- ing"). Here, the focus is on "anime," which is arguably the most international of the ele- ments within these media mixes and the main motivation for the different forms of otaku tourism.

   2. "Otaku" (literally, "your house") has a long history in relation to the study of Japanese popu- lar culture. It has gone a long way from being stigmatized by its association to a particular subculture of sci-fi novel consumers to being popularized and adopted by international fan audiences of Japanese visual culture. Throughout, I apply the ordinary contemporary mean- ing of the term, which is parallel to the terms "geek" or "fan," depending on the context and connotations involved.

   3. Fandom, in the Japanese context, is called *doujinshi* and adopts formats similar to fanzines that, over the years, have

become popular in online formats. Due to Japan's tolerant copy- right laws, there is an important tradition of creating parodic and even subversive stories using the characters of the publishers as protagonists of these fanzines, which are even some- times commercially distributed.

4. In this sense, there is an important debate in the studies of manga and anime in relation to the link between popular culture and traditional Japanese arts and those that point out the historical influence of Western media. These media, particularly cinema and Sunday strip cartoons, would come to constitute the modern forms of manga or story-manga. This debate became even more complex with the appearance of other traditions within comics that adopt an aesthetic similar to those of Japanese products and accentuate, even more, the problem behind using nationality as the defining axis of manga and anime media (Kacsuk).

5. Sadly, these otaku offerings are not always made with due respect to heritage, as demon- strated by the series of vandalized acts of Free! anime fans at the altar of Arasune, Tottori prefecture, in April 2014 (Iwami Town).

6. The pilgrim behavior in the case of *So· Ra· No· Wo· To* (2010) buitantabou has been compared to a game in which tourists find the differences with the images of the television series (Hernández-Pérez, "Thinking" 62). It is worth mentioning that some Japanese traditions reflect similar dynamics of collection and gamification. In the religious field, common in Buddhist and Shinto traditions, the *shuin* (sel stamp) to register and identify the visit to dif- ferent temples on a book or scroll (*shuinchō*). A more modern tradition, the *eki stamp* (train station stamp) that started to be used in the 1930s could be the origin of the stamps employed that often in many touristic routes as a game, even those including otaku contents. Here, the parallels between religion and modern rituals are clear.

7. The anonymous nature of the publishing on blogs and other social media makes difficult to determine author's demographic profiles.

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