

What is Near, What is Far?





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“Tidal waves, volcanic eruptions, tower blocks that collapse, forest fires, tunnels that cave in, the drugstore de Champs-Élysées burns down. Awful! Terrible! Monstrous! Scandalous! But where’s the scandal? The true scandal? Has the newspaper told us everything except: not to worry, as you can see life exists, with its ups and downs, things happen, as you can see.

The daily newspapers talk of everything except the daily. The papers annoy me, they teach me nothing. What they recount doesn’t concern me, doesn’t ask me questions and doesn’t answer the questions I ask or would like to ask.

What’s really going on, what we’re experiencing, the rest, all the rest, where is it? How should we take account of, question, describe what happens every day and recurs everyday: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the background noise, the habitual?¹”

Back in 1973 the French writer Georges Perec declared, that we should found our own *endotic anthropology* (“one that will speak about us”) in reaction to the pillaging of the exotic. His criticism was a reaction against the media’s privileging of the abnormal. Perec saw the excessive documenting of the unremarkable in daily life – the ‘infra-ordinary’ or the ‘endotic’ – as a remedy to this. Thus, Perec created the term ‘endotic’ as the antonym of ‘exotic’, although the term is still not included in any online dictionary. The etymology of ‘endo-’ originates from Greek word *endon*² meaning; inside, within, internal. Through an obsessive and meticulous accounting for everything and anything in one’s immediate surroundings, this ‘endotic anthropology’ would actively attempt to un- cover the unimportant and the insignificant. My own interpretation of this is that there would be more attention towards the empirical elements of our surroundings, which is already internalised to oneself; to make an effort in experiencing what we know consciously again.

1 Perec, Georges. *The Infra-Ordinary*. 1973

2 “Endo-” *etymonline*, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/endo->

The term ‘exotic’, on the other hand, comes from the Greek word *exo*³ (‘outside’) and literally means from the outside. In most modern dictionaries the first definition of ‘exotic’ is ‘foreign’, “*but while all things exotic are foreign, not everything foreign is exotic. Since there is no outside without an inside, the foreign only becomes exotic when imported – brought from the outside in*”⁴. The other day I saw the package design of the coconut ice cream in the freezer at work; ‘*With the exotic taste of the East!*’, it positioned itself towards me. Nowadays a bird, plant or fruit can be called ‘exotic’ when it is unusual or when it comes from a place that is far away. However the term shifts to be problematic as soon as it is used to describe people or cultures. It then easily turns into exoticization⁵, which is the act of romanticizing features that are foreign to oneself or representing something banal as being exotic. This is controversial because of the implication that there is a deviation from the norm. This ‘other’ is often represented as inferior to the norm of the observer. Since the seventeenth century the term ‘exotic’ has been denoted as “the charm or fascination of the unfamiliar”⁶.

The Western idea that; “the Middle East, [...] East [Asia] and Southeast Asia, especially ideas that are too simple or not accurate about these societies being mysterious, never changing, or not able to develop in a modern way without Western help”⁷, is called orientalism. Orientalism had far-reaching impact, notoriously on colonization. When orientalism and its tangible effects were analyzed and rejected, most famously by Edward Said in his work *Orientalism*⁸ (1978), orientalism became almost a symbol for the thought that led to the horrors of Western imperialism and colonialism. Said’s approach is still very relevant in contemporary discussions on colonialism, imperialism and racism, wherein an oriental point of view often is frowned upon.

3 “Exotic” *Etymonline*, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/exotic>

4 “Exotism” *Wikipedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exoticism>

5 “Exoticization” *Wiktionary* <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/exoticization>

6 Sund, Judy. “Exotic - a Fetish for the Foreign” *Gdcinteriors*, <https://www.gdcinteriors.com/exotic/>

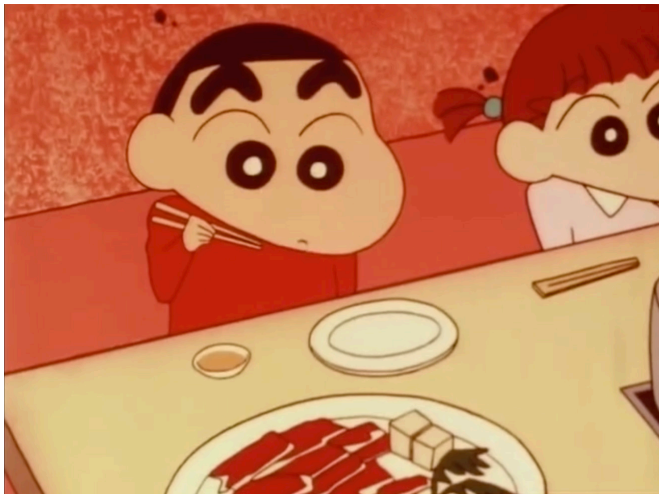
7 “Orientalism” *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/orientalism>

8 Said, W. Edward. *Orientalism*. 1978

At this moment, the effects of globalisation are ubiquitous, and its effects have drastically changed our daily lives. We constantly travel and experience different cultures than our own, and the other way around, things travel to us in form of import or through mass media. With this in mind, the terms 'exotic' and 'endotic' turn out not to be as straightforward as they previously seemed. Looking inward to my daily life in Amsterdam, less than 15 percent of my classmates at the Rietveld Academie is Dutch and a big part of my time I work a side job as a waitress in a Japanese *ramen* (noodle soup) restaurant. In my free time I love to go to take a class at one of the many the hot yoga studios located in my neighbourhood.

When I evaluate my own everyday habits I have the feeling that the 'exotic' and 'endotic' are extremely slippery concepts and seem to fuse into a more ambivalent term, which is still undefined to me. This confused me, and I noticed I was having a hard time speaking about and defining my own observations, because of the continuous problematics around the *exotic* and *Orient*. When I travel, the things I see and experience at that moment are my immediate surroundings, they are not native to me but at that moment I still have to analyse and process them in order to interact with the world around me. Are these things then endotic to me? And how can I explore this without being insensitive?

From a young age onward, I have been familiarised with Japanese visual culture mainly through television, games and internet. There were many Japanese anime-series being broadcasted on the Dutch television channels, some popular examples I personally watched are; *Pokémon*, *Digimon*, *Hamtaro*, *Yu-Gi-Oh*, *Shin Chan*, *Dragonball (Z)* and *Beyblade*. I remember that these shows were all fully dubbed in Dutch and the main storyline was therefore easy to follow. However there were many scenes that were difficult to relate to as a young child, because of a lack of understanding the context in the depicted scenes. Many translations were altered in the dubbed versions supposedly to make the series more accessible towards Western audiences. An infamous example of this was in *Pokémon* Episode 25: *Primeape Goes Bananas*⁹, in which rice balls or *onigiri* are repeatedly referred to as “jelly-filled doughnuts”. These discrepancies, together with a lack of explanation about parts of another culture caused more misunderstandings and kept the young Western audience uninformed. However in my case I think that the visual layer alone, without the added voiced layer of misinformation, raised enough questions about the origin of the portrayed customs to start a growing fascination in Japanese culture.



Shin Chan eating shabu-shabu (boiled meat slices) with chopsticks

9 “Brock’s Jelly Doughnuts” *Knowyourmeme*, <https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/brocks-jelly-doughnuts>



Ivysaur enjoying an onigiri (Pokémon)

My interest in Japan and its visual culture expanded even more when I stumbled upon the photographs by the Czech born Jan Vranovský (1986, Prague) on my *tumblr* feed. Since 2015 Vranovský is building a collection of photographs called *Parallel World*¹⁰, consisting of stills of places in Japan and East Asia. Vranovský originally studied architecture and this can be traced back into the subjects of his gaze. He mainly looks at the different structures and designs of cities with his lens. His images are characterised by their similar visual features; the colour palette Vranovský uses in his work consists of soft pastels and a muted greyscale. Contrast is only present by a strong sense of perspective and intersecting loud shapes that make up the main part of a composition. The contrast in light itself is kept to a minimum, simulating a light but infinite haze. Even the sun and its effects are reduced to a minimum presence and thereby they can't take any attention away from the content. The blue sky is always represented as white nothingness or a light shade of grey, almost as if a black and white filter was applied to this part of every image. All these subtle visual interventions make it seem like the picture is taken in a non-existent void. This concept is fortified by the fact that there are no people present in any of the images, only their traces remain.

¹⁰ Vranovský, Jan. "Parallel World" *Tumblr*, <https://janvranovsky.tumblr.com>



Subway Station (Kyoto) by Jan Vranovský, 2015



Topographical Landscape (Minami-Asagaya, Tokyo) by Jan Vranovský, 2015

The fact that people don't appear in his work makes the photographs seem quite haunting without context, it might evoke thoughts about a possible disaster that happened and that caused mankind to cease to exist in Japan. Scenarios of this nature are strongly connected to Japan through Japanese post-apocalyptic movies and anime-series (for example the movie *Akira*¹¹ (1988) directed by Katsuhiro Otomo). Yet, in Vranovský's compositions there is no sign of any happened violence and the images all have a certain tranquility to them. When you type in 'Tokyo' on Google images the first thing you see, next to pictures of the city's skyline, are photographs of big crowds of people walking at the Shibuya Crossing or in other busy streets of Tokyo. Tokyo is one of the most densely populated cities in the world, but as Vranovský shows, the city is also extremely diverse; there is always a quiet street hidden somewhere next to a busy one. Without people being present in these pictures, Vranovský concentrates on the built environment as opposed to 'the streets' with everything that is happening in them. He turns the backdrop of the omnipresent mass of people into a subject in itself and allows for a contemplative view on the city. Another reading of his work could be connected to the idea that Vranovský as a foreigner, is trying to reflect upon the perceived loneliness a city like Tokyo can bring forward. His work is an interpretation of Japanese cities and by focussing on these selected fragments, it brings out a certain side of their complex personalities. It seems that by leaving out humans Vranovský indirectly puts a great emphasis on them.

When I just started my studies at the Rietveld, I was very interested in minimal aesthetics and the use of lines and grids and I thought Vranovský made the most striking compositions including these. The type of images I was first drawn to were photographs that focused predominantly on showing rasters or included the many repeating patterns in Japanese cities and the way they are built up. Fed by these images, my curiosity for Japan kept growing and I saw myself coming back again and again to look at these compositions. Finally, from behind my computer I decided to make the first steps to go and experience Japan for myself. I booked a plane ticket and set the two images on the left as the backgrounds of my devices as a constant reminder.

11 Katsuhiro Otomo, *Akira* (1988)

When analyzing his body of work now, I can point at a second interesting subcategory which I think could be classified as as portrait photography of isolated subjects. These portraits are characterised by showing the whole, frontal view of a building or house and centering it in the frame. By doing so Vranovský lays emphasis on the unique character of each building, by inviting the viewer to look at the materials, shapes and colours present or absent in the different portraits. It allows the viewer to make their own reading of the topic shown. The shown traces of mankind can be used as handles by the viewer to piece together their own narrative.



Wrapped in green drapes, Sugamo (Tokyo) by Jan Vranovský, 2018



White house, Sugamo (Tokyo) by Jan Vranovský, 2018



Watercolor house, Asakusa (Tokyo) by Jan Vranovský, 2019

The last subcategory I want to touch upon triggers a more ambient feeling. This category doesn't focus on representing a single subject or idea, but instead it looks at the richness of the places in between like parking lots or back alleys. It shows more of the 'veins' that flow between buildings and connect the city internally. Abundance, (for example in form of dangling power lines or pipes on the side walls), is often juxtaposed with the unexpected emptiness omnipresent even in a metropolis like Tokyo. The images in this subcategory are usually much more layered and expose the often uncanny relationships between different parts of the city. What I like most about this type of image is how their beauty makes you wonder about things and places often overlooked. Therefore, I would argue that these images come close to representing the endotic parts of life in Japan.



Red light district in the port city of Niigata (Niigata Prefecture) by Jan Vranovský, 2017



Generic city, Kudanshita (Tokyo) by Jan Vranovský, 2018

All together, the images present vast array of fragments of Japanese urban space, allowing the viewer to compose their own overall picture. The result is place that is both real and fabricated; real in its details given the very nature of photography as a media, fabricated through the highly selective choice of captured topics. With the name of his work being “Parallel World” we could argue that Vranovský is exoticizing Japan, painting it as an alien part of our world. I would argue for a softer interpretation; Vranovský tries to point us towards a different way of seeing. He is looking at the endotic all around us, for him this idea seems to have surfaced when he moved to Japan, where he could explore and develop this interest. In his observations he is playing with the endotic, and his reality is “existing somehow parallel to [the] reality of the rest of the world.”

On his website Vranovský states¹² that he never exactly reveals where a specific image was taken (unless the subject is a commonly known place, like a landmark). With his work he wants to “inspire people to start discovering places they wouldn’t normally go to; see beyond the seemingly banal or mundane. Turning it into a tourist guide would go against the idea. I do, however, reveal general areas [where] the photos were taken, giving anyone the opportunity to search for themselves”.

¹² Vranovský, Jan. “Parallel World” *Tumblr*, <https://janvranovsky.tumblr.com>



おすすめ葛根湯!
ひきはじめによく効く!
眠くならない!
1歳のお子様から服用OK!

NID版本の葛根湯エキス顆粒12包
934円
1008円

NID版本の葛根湯エキス顆粒30包
1888円
2039円

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980円
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生活応援
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①温かいお湯で服用する
②生薬を同時に服用する
③服用後体を温かくする

かぜの中後期の症状
柴胡桂枝湯
980円
1058円

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1080円
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1522円

生活応援
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要注意!!
タスマック
せきてお困りの方に
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タスマック
タスマック
タスマック

I arrived in Japan a few days before Christmas in December 2015, I remember feeling safe and welcomed from the moment I set foot on Narita airport. This feeling stayed with me for the two weeks I spent in Japan, where everything felt light and clean. The host of my first airbnb stay, which was located close to Tokyo Disney Resort, explained me that I didn't need to lock the front door of the apartment, because "nothing ever happens here". I immediately felt at home despite the fact that I did not understand the Japanese language at all. This lack of understanding gave me the opportunity to experience Japan on my own terms; I wasn't interrupted in my thinking by the Japanese-spoken advertisement jingles in the shopping mall or distracted by the advertisements in Japanese script. I was only experiencing a silent noise left by the absence of meaning that is tied to a language one is familiar with. This allowed me to make more concentrated observations, focussing primarily on the pure visual information that caught my attention.

I wrote about one of my newfound interests while comparing the packaging designs of the different products in the Japanese supermarkets to similar products back home:

The visual information in a single shopping aisle is usually abundant and can be compared to that of Times Square, in a sense that you don't know where to focus your attention. Labels with visually loud exclamations are seducing you to buy their goods. A bottle of laundry detergent tries hard to convince you that it is '*The Number One Choice*' and washes in '*High Definition White*'. Even after buying this bottle of detergent and placing it next to your washing machine at home, it will not stop to try selling itself to you. It stands out in a harsh way from its surroundings '*SUPER concentrated formula!*' – while there is no longer a need to compete with its opponents that are still waiting in the store.

In Japan, the different products tried their best to sell themselves to me, but I could not understand what they were saying. I had to rely on the different visual elements present in the label, together with the general design of a product to figure out what they were. I was experiencing

a muted version of the otherwise loud packagedesigns. What caught my interest is that for some product groups the visual aesthetics are nearly homogeneous between countries. I later understood that this can be linked to study of *semiotics*. Which can be explained as the understanding how meaning (*the signified*) is created and communicated via signs and symbols (*signifiers*). “It is a way if seeing the world, and of understanding how the landscape and culture in which we live has a massive impact on all of us unconsciously¹³”. I would say that this is an endotic process, happening almost instinctively, after basic socialisation in society. Researching semiotics further, I first came across the writings of the french writer and theorist Roland Barthes.

Four years after Roland Barthes first visited Japan in 1966¹⁴, his monograph *L’Empire des Signes*¹⁵ (later translated by Richard Howard as *The Empire of Signs*) appeared. In this short book, existing of 26 short chapters about his observations different aspects of Japan; from packages to chopsticks to the eyelid. Today, almost 50 years later, it seems to me as if Barthes wrote this work in our current time. While reading this book, I could relate to his experiences essentially from beginning to end. It felt almost like I was engaging in an active dialogue with his findings and started comparing them with my own memories of my time in Japan.

The murmuring mass of an unknown language constitutes a delicious protection, envelops the foreigner (provided the country is not hostile to him) in an auditory film which halts at his ears all the alienations of the mother tongue: the regional and social origins of whoever is speaking, his degree of culture, of intelligence, of taste, the image by which he constitutes himself as a person and which he asks you to recognize. Hence, in foreign countries, what a respite! Here I am protected against stupidity, vulgarity, vanity, worldliness, nationality, normality. The unknown language, of which I nonetheless grasp the respiration, the emotive aeration, in a word the pure significance,

13 “What is Semiotics”, *Sign Salad*, <https://signsalad.com/our-thoughts/what-is-semiotics/>

14 Marshall, Collin. “Ways of Seeing Japan: Roland Barthes’s Tokyo 50 Years Later”, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/ways-seeing-japan-roland-barthess-tokyo-50-years-later/>

15 Barthes, Roland. *The Empire of Signs*, 1966, introduction

*forms around me, as I move, a faint vertigo, sweeping me into its artificial emptiness, which is consummated only for me: I live in the interstice, delivered from any fulfilled meaning.*¹⁶

Just like Vranofský, Barthes observes the reality from the position of being in the ‘in between’ places or in the ‘interstice’ as he calls it. Here lies an opening for the observer to make their own reality based upon the incoming information. Is it possible then, that as an outsider it is easier to navigate into the endotic parts of a place? Is the endotic then always tied to a place and less connected to ourselves? For Barthes looking at the endotic manifests in incredibly sharp observations, his descriptions are so extensive but his way of writing almost meditative. For example, you can imagine matching visuals while reading the different chapters, especially when you have visited Japan yourself.

If I want to imagine a fictive nation, I can give it an invented name, treat it declaratively as a novelistic object, create a new Garabagne, so as to compromise no real country by my fantasy (though it is then that fantasy itself I compromise by the signs of literature). I can also – though in no way claiming to represent or to analyze reality itself (these being the major gestures of Western Discourse) – isolate somewhere in the world (faraway) a certain number of features (a term employed in linguistics), and out of these features deliberately form a system. It is this system which I shall call: Japan.

With this text is how Barthes starts of his work. The first time I tried reading *The Empire of Signs* this intro confused me a lot. I thought it was off putting to make up a fictional country to then proceed to write about Japan. But just like *Parallel World* this made up ‘system’ allows Barthes to talk about his observations freely, by clearly stating that they are not a reflection of Japan, but a reflection of his own eyes. Barthes thereby prevents his work from falling into an orientalist perspective.

16 Barthes, Roland. *The Empire of Signs*, 1966, pp. 9

Back in May 2017, my Japanese classmate Yuri and I unexpectedly ended up in front of the screening *Ascent* (2016) by Fiona Tan (1966, Pekanbaru), that was on show in the Museum of Contemporary Art De Pont in Tilburg. I clearly remember feeling surprised by the familiar sight of Mount Fuji upon entering the dark room. I was overwhelmed by the perceived presence of the mountain. Regardless of the state or mood you were, the portrayal of Mount Fuji caught everyone's attention in the room. Thinking back, the movie made a lasting impact on me, it was impressive to see this portrayal of Mount Fuji shown on a such a big screen. The mountain is never leaving your sight, it is always there, yet it remains elusive.

The movie, or *photofilm* as Tan describes her work¹⁷, consists of over 4000 still images that contain (different parts of) Mount Fuji that appear one after another. The photomontage is complemented by ambient sounds, music and two scripted voices – one English, one Japanese. The Western woman called 'Mary' is voiced by Tan herself. We can hear her talking about geographical, temporal and cultural divides between the East and West, and meditate on the presence of the mountain in Japanese history, religion and philosophy. The way Tan makes her descriptions made me think of the way Barthes made his observations, slow and extensive different concepts from Japanese daily life are laid out.



Installation view of Ascent in Museum De Pont

17 Ekker, Jan Pieter. "Ascent" *Het Parool*

Mary directs her words towards her deceased husband, who, on his turn, answers her questions. All while they are metaphorically climbing Mount Fuji on their own;

“Emptiness or void, you explained patiently, never has negative connotations in the Japanese language. Just like the shining bamboo, a void has the potential to be filled. In Japanese the word for void is ‘utsuro’. But if you change the last syllable to ‘wa’, the word becomes ‘utsuwa’, meaning bowl. A bowl can receive and hold some very important things; a bowl for rice, a bowl for tea. We are then shown an image of the crater of Mount Fuji and we hear the male voice of ‘Hiroshi’, speaking in Japanese: “If a ‘roi’ is added to the end, the word then becomes ‘utsuroi’ – transience, a word which represents a concept of time rather than of space.”¹⁸

The story, together with the tactile sounds inhibits the images and together the two components create a new narrative; starting out from afar and ending at the top of the Mountain, Tan takes you along a climb to the top of Mount Fuji that is balancing between fiction and documentary.

For this work Tan exclusively used photographs made by other people. The historical images that are used were selected from the collection of the Izu Photo Museum¹⁹, that commissioned this work. The additional photographs mostly made by tourists, were collected through a call to the members of the public. On the website of the Izu Photo Museum, Tan explained her goal for this project back in 2015:

I wish to make a new video piece entitled ‘Ascent’ as its starting point. I envisage a projection consisting of a carefully edited compilation of photos of Mt. Fuji. This work will reflect upon and question the status of this mountain and of all the images there exist of it. For me it is only fitting that I wish to make this piece using images which are not mine. Constructing, imagining, mapping the mountain from

18 Company, David. “Fiona Tan and the Photo-Filmic” *Davidcompany*, <https://davidcompany.com/fiona-tan-ascent/>

19 “Fiona Tan - Ascent” *Izuphoto-museum* <http://www.izuphoto-museum.jp/e/exhibition/208709273.html>

*a distance, through the eyes of others. Stringed together all these images will form a composite like frames in a film. This multitude of images represent two paradoxes, both the impossibility of true and complete (photographic) representation and the nature of the mountain itself, always unchanging and yet never the same. These thousands of images encircle the mountain like a cloud; revealing it and hiding it at the same time.*²⁰



Still from Ascent

Tan, now living and working in Amsterdam, was born in Indonesia and grew up in Australia. She explains in an interview with Getty Research Institute²¹ that she first had the feeling that she shouldn't touch upon an icon and cliché as big as Mount Fuji. "But I like paradoxes and I like doing what you are not supposed to do" she explains in the same interview. Tan visited Japan several times, but never climbed Mount Fuji herself. She knew that working on such a topic as a foreigner could have been easily classified as an exoticizing view.

²⁰ "Fiona Tan MT Fuji Project" *Izuphoto-museum* <http://www.izuphoto-museum.jp/fionatan/en.html>

²¹ "Ascent: A conversation with Fiona Tan" *Youtube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7sRBU2b6x_w

After seeing this movie again in the light of writing this thesis, I started to piece together a connection between the movie and the previous examples I have laid out in this thesis, including my that of own. All these works are made by non-Japanese artists who observed and/or portrayed parts of Japan. This movie does exactly the same; representing views of Mount Fuji, the symbol of Japan, unavoidably with a Western gaze. But by adding a clear subjective layer, this time in the form of a voiced fictional dialog, Tan is able to avoid an exotic view on Japan. In Tan's own words, she combines fiction and documentary works. Therefore, the film is able to explore the intersections between Japanese and Western art and popular culture²². She allows for different endotic views to exist, intersect and transform. This demonstrates the fluidity of the concept 'endotic' as well as 'exotic'. She clearly shows her own personal vision through her work, showing that her vision is her own interpretation and not absolute.

I personally experienced the fluidity of the 'endotic' and 'exotic' myself when I returned to Japan. In December 2018 I visited Yuri and stayed with her in her and her boyfriend in their home in Tokyo. Together we took the Shinkansen (high speed train) to the West of Japan to travel around on the islands in the Kagawa prefecture. We returned to Tokyo for New Years to cook and celebrate with friends. With Yuri as my Japanese-speaking guide I could understand parts of Japan that previously skipped over. Using a different filter, I had the chance to experience Japan in a different way than I had before. Sometimes Yuri would laugh when I stopped on the street to make a photo of some sightings that were ordinary to her. This time I could ask for all the explanation about all things unclear to me. I started paying more attention to things Yuri could translate for me. I could experience new information, readings and flavors, otherwise inaccessible for me and my focus shifted.

22 "Ascent - cinema version" *Fiona Tan*, <https://fionatan.nl/project/ascent/>



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To conclude, a place that is foreign (or exotic) to me, outside of my internalised environment, makes it easier to intensely experience the endotic. The endotic, when it is not linked to your ordinary daily life, becomes more accessible to experience. This endotic is then your direct environment, but not your environment you are already used to. This environment then becomes endotic as well as exotic at the same time.

The above shows that the endotic and exotic are not mutually exclusive, where Perec's 'endotic' and 'extra-ordinary' are. The endotic and exotic are not concepts that can be confined to a plain definition, they are fluid concepts that can overlap and that can exist in different intensities. The endotic I experience when I am in Japan is not comparable to my native endotic I experience back home. Perec's 'endotic' and 'extra-ordinary' seem to exist in a static world, and they are determined by familiarity, frequency of occurrence and whether it affects me. When one's environment changes, however, and the 'extra-ordinary' or 'exotic' starts to affect me, an interaction between the endotic and the exotic results in the blurring of these concepts. My initial question of 'what is endotic to me?' and my inability to analyze my own observations, both originated in this blurring.

Studying the relationship between the endotic, exotic and extra-ordinary has allowed me to analyze my own observations. However, it does not give an answer to whether I am allowed to speak about the endotic that is not mine alone: in the case of my experiences in Japan, if I would consider them as fully endotic, as them belonging to me, I would be an orientalist. I found an answer to this dilemma through analyzing the works of the artists discussed in this thesis. When I became aware of their different personal filters on their perception of Japan, I realized the importance of the translation of this personal filter in their work.

To avoid exoticism, it is safest to share the observations about a culture different than your own with a recognisable and clearly indicated subjective layer. We can see this in the composed images of Vranofský, the self-aware way Barthes made his writings and the fictional layer Tan added to her work. All these works succeed in reminding the viewer that they are just a representation of observations that already went to a personal filter, namely that of the maker.

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