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メタデータ	言語: eng 出版者: 公開日: 2021-10-20 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: RUSSELL, John G. メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12099/4438

Jurassic Japanese and Silicon Samurai:

Rising Sun, Tech-noir Orientalism, and the Japanese Other in American Popular Culture

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(November 28, 1997)

I. INTRODUCTION: AGENTS OF INFLUENCE

If one reads a book claiming that lions are fierce and then encounters a fierce lion . . . the chances are that one will be encouraged to read more books by that same author, and believe them. But if, in addition, the lion book instructs one how to deal with a fierce lion and the instructions work perfectly, then not only will the author be greatly believed, he will also be impelled to try his hand at other kinds of written performance.

— Edward Said, *Orientalism* (p. 94)

Since the mid-1980s, American popular culture and media have revived old “yellow peril” imagery. The covers of reputable magazines sensationally warn of the “Japanese Invasion,” while non-fiction that ominously predicts “the coming war with Japan” has found a profitable niche on bestseller lists that only a decade ago had been dominated by trendy tomes on the mysteries of Japanese corporate decision-making strategies and “zen-style” management practices. However, like the postwar popularity of zen and haiku, this fascination has proven short-lived, with dread replacing curiosity as the image of “Japan as Number One” is eclipsed by the menacing shadow of “Japan as Public Enemy Number One.” This paper examines the changing imagery employed in the construction of the Japanese Other in American popular culture. It is concerned in particular with the resuscitation of “yellow peril” imagery and pernicious stereotypes of oriental avarice, decadence, and inscrutability as manifested in the discourse that revolves around “Japan conspiracy” theories. In the past such imagery was mobilized in times of economic competition and war, with government propaganda and financial interests deliberately manipulating popular racial fears and prejudices to unite Americans against a perceived common foe. Although contemporary anti-Japanese imagery and stereotypes continue to be based on perceived and real threats of economic competition, unlike their pre-war and wartime manifestations, today they are fueled less by the agency of government strategists, xenophobes, and racists than

by decentralized concerns for marketability and political profitability. That is, they are employed by the capitalist production apparatus which regularly dips into the reservoir of popular stereotypes, many the legacy of late-19th and early-20th century Euro-American anti-oriental sentiment and of WWII, and which also borrow from a shared social reality that itself has been largely defined by the marketplace, race-baiting and race-thinking being no less a marketable — and potentially lucrative — commodity than other more material products processed for mass consumption, and as such are designed not only to entertain but to evoke patriotism, cultural chauvinism, and xenophobia. Simply put, Japanese stereotypes sell. Whether portraying Japanese and Japan as an unfathomable exotic ally or an inscrutable enemy, the current “product” betrays both a lingering fascination as well as unresolved fears that have been allowed to fester in the American Imaginary. Despite decentralization and the sophistication of the means of their dissemination, the current crop of stereotypes is not particularly new, only the manner of their presentation has changed, as old stereotypes are repackaged for an American market in search of enemies, conspiracies, and future wars to confirm American values and to overcome growing insecurities about America’s proper place in the world.

Racist propaganda in the creative and visual arts serves just such purposes, singling out for selective presentation the “virtues” of Self and “vices” of the Other in a manipulative attempt to mobilize public sentiment by appealing, either explicitly or implicitly, to national and racial mythologies. In Germany, Leni Riefenstahl glorified the Aryan supremacy in *Triumph of the Will* (1935), which served as a recruitment film for the Nazi Party; her documentary on the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, *Olympia* (1936), successfully translated the master race Nazi aesthetic. In America, Frank Capra’s *Know Your Enemy: Japan* (1945), a controversial installment of his award-winning documentary series *Why We Fight* (it was not released theatrically until after the war because of disagreements over its depiction of Japanese) was designed to convince Americans not only of the righteousness of the war against Japan but of the singular inhumanity of its people. The use of racist anti-Asian caricatures and stereotypes had, of course, existed prior to the war — the American government merely sanctioned and legitimized their use, exploiting them for its own wartime objectives. The private sector was more than willing to accommodate those objectives: Such American icons as Superman, Batman, Popeye, Bugs Bunny, and Mickey Mouse were all recruited in the fight against Japan (very much as in Japan Momotarô, Norakuro, and other figures from Japanese folklore and popular culture were recruited to battle Anglo-American “oni”), proof not only of their patriotism but that of their creators and of the comic book and film companies that produced them and profited from their creation.

In both the American and German cases, state propaganda exploited pre-existing racist, white supremacist ideology that had insinuated itself into society, its exploitation by the state serving to legitimize and encourage it, harnessing the infectious, persuasive power of popular prejudices to mobilize segments of its citizenry in the pursuit of state objectives. Indeed, in some cases, American propaganda challenged popular prejudices when it served the government's interest. Although anti-Asian prejudice had led to the forced internment thousands of Japanese-Americans on the west coast, based largely on a racist paranoia that refused to accept persons of Japanese ancestry as loyal Americans, the propaganda apparatus, nonetheless, went along with the government's policy to use nisei, or second-generation Japanese Americans, though significantly in the *European* theater, documenting and celebrating their contribution to the war effort, while their relatives still lingered in concentration camp back home.

By far the most profitable and ubiquitous stereotypes have been those that cast Japan as economic pariah. Yet unlike America's growing roster of demonized yet personalized enemies — Moammar Gadafi, Mohammed Farar Aidid, Saddam Hussein — situated oceans away in Third World “technological backwaters,” the Japanese “enemy” continues to be depersonalized, totalized, stripped of even an individualized notoriety upon which to affix blame for its acts of so-called economic terrorism. The Japanese, we are told, have penetrated the American citadel, pillaged its culture, sapped its national will, and turned America into a nation of consumers of hi-tech Japanese gadgets. Such charges are particularly persuasive because they appear to be solidly grounded in empirical reality. After all, since the 1980s not only have American pundits been regularly denouncing the so-called buying of America, but their apprehensions have been broadcast on television sets and radios made in Japan. The “reality” of those fears is evident to anyone who has even casually glimpsed the present corporate neon landscape of America's major cities where hardly an American corporate brand-name is to be found. More recently, allegations that “Asian businessmen” have illegally contributed huge sums of money to the National Democratic Party have rekindled the charge, placing all Asians — foreigners and American citizens alike — under suspicion and once more called into question the loyalty of Asian Americans.

In the postmodern information age, propaganda is no longer (if indeed it ever truly was) the monopoly of governments, ideologues, journalistic muckrakers, and government-funded documentary filmmakers. It has become the commodity of corporate entities — publishers, film companies, communication conglomerates, the “free” press — whose shareholders shape our attitudes, orchestrate our emotions, and, more often than not, choose our enemies. It is here that the much-vaunted information super-highway turns into a *cul-de-*

sac, a one-way street paved with pre-packaged images whose veracity is made more persuasive with each sound-bitten reiteration. Collectively this discourse borrows from a ready-made vocabulary and iconography of difference that distorts both our perceptions and our emotions.

Walter Lippman aptly described stereotypes as “pictures in the head.” Propaganda makes these pictures concrete, transforming them into material products for mass consumption that manipulate our most basic and base suppositions about the Other. Long before the term virtual reality came to signify the postmodern moment, propagandists, employing conventional technology, had been quite successful in fabricating and disseminating fraudulent social realities. What distinguishes postmodern propaganda from its modern counterpart is the lack of centralized agency, the insinuating anonymity of both its authority and its authorship, combined with the invisible hand of market forces. That is, postmodern propaganda is characterized by decentralization, its web-like interstices wedding mass media and popular culture as converging sites for the transglobal mass production, consumption and reproduction of stereotypes.¹

The technological sophistication of postmodern propaganda aside, its objectives remain largely unchanged: the perceived threat is dehumanized, demonized, turned into an easily mass produced caricature of what we have been conditioned to believe it to be. Africans are transformed into incompetent, disorganized blood-thirsty tribes; Arabs into terrorists; Latin and Central Americans into narco-terrorists and job-stealing illegal aliens. The media and popular culture in general — popular films, novels, and nightly news broadcasts — have conditioned Americans to perceive the world around them as hostile and savage, populated by dark-skinned Third World demons, attitudes that can and have been easily manipulated by government when it serves its interests and by the corporations seeking to capitalize on fears it has itself played a large role in shaping. The smug, “might is right” techno-machismo of some Hollywood films not only serves to entertain film audiences seeking safe, escapist cinematic adventures but it may also serve to stir them to seek the real thing, as was the case with the box-office hit *Top Gun* (1986) whose gun-ho heroics helped to spur Air Force recruitment. Other Hollywood films, typically action films that depict the hi-tech, at-a-distance, mass slaughter of “Arab terrorist” and other non European people have desensitized Americans to the horror of real warfare while providing their military leaders with the cinematic iconography and vocabulary with which to orchestrate and sanitize such conflicts so as to better manufacture and sustain popular support for them. One need only look at the Gulf War, which not only had the support of the majority of the American people, but proved profitable for the network news organizations that covered it and for Hollywood

producers hungry to capitalize on the wave of uncritical patriotism. Televised Pentagon briefings and media reports on the Gulf War took on the gloss of a Tom Clancy novel, a high-tech exorcism which in true Hollywood fashion pitted the forces of "good" against those of "evil."

In the case of Japanese, the propaganda function of American popular culture must "Japanize" them by assimilating selected elements of their culture in a kind of ideational androphagy that transforms Japanese into "our" Japanese so as to better gain mastery over them and our fears of them. As in the debate over what constitutes an "America car," the boundary between "ours" and "theirs" must be reified, even in the absence of objective criterion. As Other, they must be reduced to a mirror image of ourselves through which we indulge the illusion of our own inherent difference, celebrate the uniqueness of the American self. Self-imagery is, however, a double-edged sword. As John Dower notes in *War Without Mercy*, his seminal study of racial stereotypes in the Pacific War, "self-stereotypes fed hostile stereotypes The group became the herd, the individualist became the egoist" (p. 28). Self-stereotypes perceived as a virtue in one society may be viewed as a vice in another, such that "cherished words, shibboleths, images and values [can be] taken over almost intact and used against [the enemy]" (p. 30).

At a time when the United States and Japan are nominally allies, the source of these images is no longer captured enemy propaganda but the media and artifacts of popular culture. The position of America at the center of this transglobal marketplace has insured that its self-image will be exported and consumed abroad. In an earlier era, one of America's most effective propaganda weapons was provided by images of the American Dream as embodied in its exported popular culture. However, by mid-1960s, as Americans began to doubt the viability of that dream, American media and popular culture began to reflect this loss of national confidence, increasingly portraying America as a decadent, violent, outlaw society overrun by corrupt politicians, bleeding-heart liberals, and unruly minorities, who, if not accused outright of selling out the country, were nonetheless blamed for its decline.

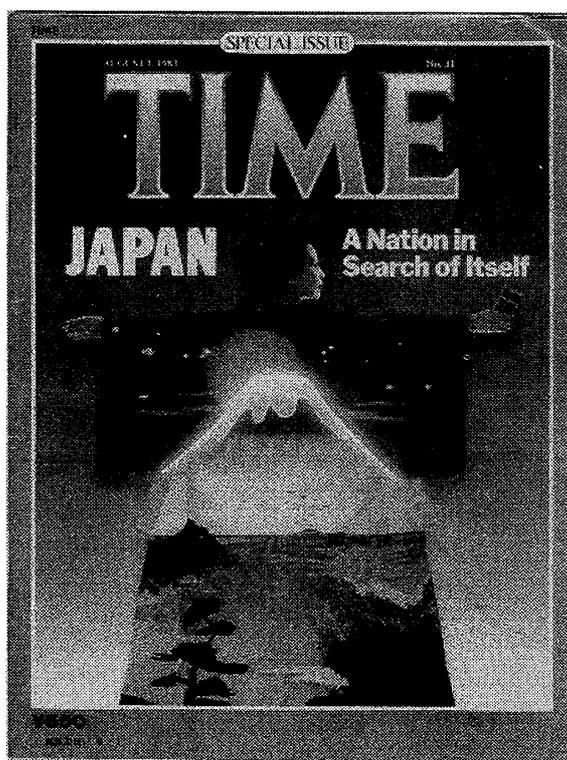
Given the hegemony of American popular culture, it is not surprising that these negative self-stereotypes would find their way overseas where they form the basis for the Japanese "Americanization" of America. For example, following the slaying of a Japanese exchange student in Louisiana in 1992 after he apparently failed to understand the expression "freeze" shouted by his assailant, some Japanese commentators, citing its use in American films, argued for its inclusion in orientation materials for all prospective exchange students. In fact, the image of America as an urban warfare state whose citizens are all gun-toting vigilantes had begun to emerge as early as the late-1970s and 1980s through Japanese

exposure to American action films (e.g., *Dirty Harry*, *Death Wish*), television dramas, and cable and network news programs. By the late-1980s the image of America as a multiethnic “*hanzai taikoku*” (crime superpower) and “*jū-shakai*” (gun society) had largely replaced images of idyllic sit-com suburban affluence, a transition in no small part due to the emergence of tabloid “reality television” programs, segments of which were often aired on Japanese quiz shows and network television documentaries, and which soon found appreciative audiences abroad who accepted these distorted images of America's underside at face value (Fig. 1). Similarly, in 1992 when Japanese Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi and Speaker of the Diet Sakurauchi Yoshio proclaimed that Americans were lazy and had lost their work ethic, they were restating what the American media itself had been telling Americans — and incidentally, the Japanese — since American media broadcasts on the issue of the productivity and competitiveness of U.S. workers and corporate management had also been picked up by the Japanese media. In the west, the process of “Japanizing” the Japanese is somewhat more complicated since the influence of Japanese popular culture and media there has yet to approach that of its American counterpart. Instead, western, particularly American mass culture admits only those images that adhere to prevailing

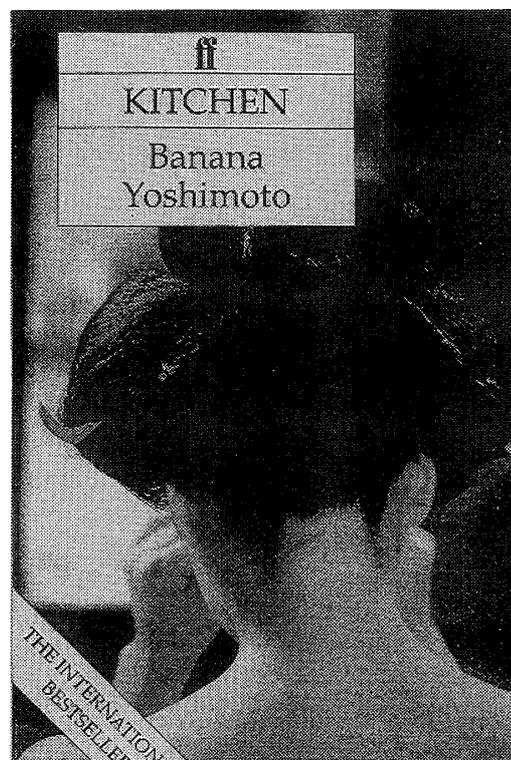


Figure 1 : The Americanization of America (*Japan Times*, November 8, 1992)

stereotypes. Contemporary media representation of Japan focuses almost exclusively on trade friction and fillers that contrast “traditional” and “modern” aspects of Japanese society. For example, the cover of *Time* magazine’s August 1, 1983 special issue on Japan, “Japan: A Nation in Search of Itself,” features a photograph of a geisha, her silk kimono emblazoned with Mt. Fuji and a fiery rising sun, clasping a pocket calculator (Fig. 2a). Another cover, from the British edition of Yoshimoto Banana’s *Kitchen* (1993), is adorned with a photograph of the nape of what appears to be a geisha’s neck, though no geisha appear in this postmodern novel whose style and themes owe more to the bizarre literary fabulations of John Irving and Kathy Acker than to the *fin de siècle* exoticism of Natsume Sôseki or Tanizaki Junichirô (Fig. 2b).



2 a



2 b

Figure 2: The Japanization of Japan: a) *Time* (August 1, 1983) ; b) *Kitchen* (Flamingo, 1993)

Anachronisms and exoticism aside, what is more problematic is the dehumanizing tone Japanization often assumes in American popular culture. In the publishing industry in particular, Japan has once again emerged as the epitome of global menace. The most recent manifestation of this trend can be seen in the revival of “yellow peril” imagery. As of this writing, the most successful exploitation of this reemerging genre has been Michael Crichton’s controversial bestseller *Rising Sun*, whose success lies not so much in its narrative as in its manipulation of perdurable stereotypes of Japan and Japanese. These stereotypes of Japanese are far from original, having been elaborated and refined in

countless pulp novels, grade-B movies, radio and television dramas, political cartoons, comic books, and commentaries, but the phenomenal success of the novel as well as the written performance that underscores it, derives from its ability to exploit old clichés and the American fears they embody, legitimizing their conspiratorial worldview and investing it with authority and even respectability.

II. THE COMING WARS WITH JAPAN

“You know, I have colleagues who say sooner or later we’re going to have to drop another bomb. They think it’ll come to that.” He smiled. “But I don’t feel that way. Usually.”

— Senator Morton, *Rising Sun* (p. 269)

The body of a high-class prostitute is found in the offices of Nakamoto Tower, a Los Angeles-based Japanese conglomerate. Detective John Connor and police lieutenant Peter Smith are called in to investigate. The Japanese management is decidedly uncooperative, thwarting the investigation at every turn.

Thus begins Michael Crichton’s bestseller *Rising Sun*. As drama *Rising Sun* has all the subtlety of a *Dragnet* episode in which the monotonous police lieutenant Joe Friday solicits for “the facts, ma’am; just the facts.” And the “facts” are precisely what Crichton’s revisionist mouthpieces give us. Page after page of didactic, prosaic prose informs the reader that the Japanese are “different,” “racists,” “group-oriented,” an “arrogant,” “obsessive” tribe who do not play by American rules. Virtually every American character in the novel, from high-class prostitutes to research scientists, has had some dealings — all unfavorable — with the Japanese. Although its conventions are those of the detective novel, *Rising Sun* may more aptly be described as a courtroom drama which places Japan on trial for the crime of challenging America’s techno-economic hegemony.

Like old soldiers, old stereotypes never die they just fade away, lingering in the subconscious until expediency necessitates their revival. *Rising Sun* resuscitates wartime anti-Japanese racist imagery, adapting it to 1990 obsessions. Crichton’s novel is not the first to exploit American fears of Japan, nor will it be the last; both mainstream and genre fiction (science fiction, mystery, the techno-thriller) have turned to Japan as an exotic setting for their tales of international intrigue and cultural conflict, and the success of the novel has prompted imitations. Still, the novel points to a disturbing resurgence of anti-Japanese paranoia not seen since the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) and World War II, which

exploits and nurtures anti-Asian prejudices and stereotypes that, albeit muted, have never entirely faded from American popular culture and consciousness.

Oriental invasion narratives have a long if not particularly distinguished genealogy in the West where they have been repeatedly mobilized whenever Anglo-Americans perceived Asians as a threat to their hegemony in Asia and elsewhere. In the United States, Japan's victories in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and Russo-Japanese War spurred the production of several works that envisioned America as the next target of oriental expansionism. In popular literature, the theme can be seen in M. P. Shiel's *The Yellow Danger* (1898), *The Yellow Wave* (1905) and *The Dragon* (1913, revised in 1925 as *The Yellow Peril*). The most successful, Hector Bywater's *The Great Pacific War: A History of the American-Japanese Campaign of 1931-1933* (1925) Homer Lea's *Valor of Ignorance* (1909), and Ernest Hugh Fitzpatrick's *The Conflict of Nations* (1909) prophesied war with Japan over its invasion of Hawaii.

Another source of anti-oriental narratives was pulp fiction. Oriental invasions, primarily those masterminded by fiendishly clever Chinese, were a staple of American comics books, pulp magazines, and matinee serials of the 1920s and 1930s. By far the most longevous was British writer's Sax Rohmer's evil Chinese super-genius Fu Manchu, whose oft-thwarted bids for world domination were chronicled in the pulps from 1912 to 1959 and in film from 1932 to 1968. In Philip Francis Nolan's original Buck Rogers novel *Armageddon 2419 AD* (1928-1929) and in subsequent comic strips based on it, Rogers, a 20th-century airman accidentally placed in suspended animation, awakens 500 years later to find an America that has been conquered by "Red Mongols hordes." In the 1930s, Alex Raymond's Flash Gordon comic strip and the movie serials that followed relied on similar anti-oriental imagery in their depiction of the despotic Fu Manchu-inspired Ming the Merciless of the planet Mongo. Long before the flying saucer and alien invasion scares of the 1950s, Major Donald Keyhoe, an early popularizer of UFO phenomena, penned oriental invasion novels in the 1930s for serialization in short-lived magazines like *Dr. Yen Sin* that capitalized on the popularity of Rohmer's oriental super-villain.

By the 1940s, oriental invasion narratives had found a new home in literary science fiction, with Japan replacing China as oriental menace. Robert A. Heinlein's *Sixth Column* (1941) depicts an America whose isolationism has left it open to conquest by sinister "Pan Asians" who are ultimately defeated by American technological ingenuity. C. M. Kornbluth's *Not This August* (1955) and "The Two Domes" (1958) and Philip K. Dick's classic *The Man in the High Castle* (1964) depict alternative "presents" in which America has lost the war and is under occupation by Japanese and their German allies. Norman Spinrad's "A Thing of

Beauty" (1973), probes the same themes as *Rising Sun* — American decline and Japanese acquisition of American cultural icons — *sans* the latter's blatant jingoism.

Other genre conceits disguise Japanese as aliens. Eric Frank Russell's *WASP* (1958) depicts the comical adventures of a human undercover intelligence operative who has been surgically altered to pass for an alien and dispatched to their homeworld to wage a campaign of dirty tricks aimed at toppling its totalitarian government which bears an uncanny resemblance to that of wartime Japan, a scenario based loosely on Russell's own experience in British Intelligence during WWII where he was involved in devising psychological warfare operations (apparently never implemented) designed to undermine Japanese morale. The topsy-turvy world of French author Pierre Boulle's *Planet of the Apes* (*La planète des singes*, 1963; film 1968) can be read as an allegory for Japanese-occupied Burma in which Boulle, a former POW better known as the author of *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1954; film 1957), substitutes sentient simians for his brutish Japanese captors. More recently, Barry Longyear's "Enemy Mine" (1979; film 1985) lifts its scenario of two enemy soldiers (one human, the other a reptilian alien) marooned on a deserted planet from the film *Hell in the Pacific* (1968).

Even when Japan itself is depicted, it is almost always as a corrupt, repressive, sexist, and racist society which while technologically advanced, remains trapped in the 17th century.² Eric Van Lustbader's three-volume *Sunset Warrior* series is set in a such a post-apocalypse society. A computer-generated virtual reality feudal Japan serves as the backdrop to Victor Milan's *The Cybernetic Samurai* (1985) and *The Cybernetic Shogun* (1990). Betty Ann Crawford's *The Bushido Blade* (1992), Ken Kato's *Yamato* series: *A Rage in Heaven* (1990); *The Way of the Warrior* (1992), and William H. Keith, Jr.'s Warstrider saga (1992) transport the battle for political and economic hegemony to interstellar-space, combining elements of James Clavell's *Shogun* (1975) and *Star Wars*- and Japanimation-inspired space opera with the conventions of WWII war films. Reads the blurb from Kato's *Yamato: Rage in Heaven* (1990).

WINDS OF WAR HOWL THROUGH SPACE, GALACTIC SUPERPOWERS
CLASH ACROSS DECADES, AND WHOLE WORLDS ARE RAVAGED AS THE
VERY STARS ARE ENGULFED IN AN EPIC CRUSADE OF COURAGE
AGAINST CONQUEST. NOW THE FEUDING FREE MEN AND WOMEN OF
AMERIKA MUST CONFRONT THE MIGHT, WEALTH, THE IRON-WILLED
EMPIRE OF THE RISING SUNS.

In the same vein, Keith's *Warstrider: Jackers* (1994) depicts an intergalactic Japanese-ruled evil empire and the movement of rebel colonies led by New America to overthrow it. Having usurped America's supremacy in space and united the warring nations of earth under *Pax Nipponica*, the Japanese conquerors have not only gained superpower status but have acquired unparalleled mastery of the technical sciences, particularly genetic engineering, which they have applied toward their own perverted purpose as connoisseurs of human debasement, producing a wide assortment of genetically engineered quasi-humans and subhuman castes, including "*ningyô*," made-to-order sex slaves genetically encoded to provide their sadistic masters with the ultimate in sexual pleasure. The depravity of the Japanese is made evident early in the novel in a scene in which Vice Admiral Tetsu Kawashima visits the Palace of Heaven, an orbiting space platform which houses the Imperial Throne and also serves as the residence of senior imperial officers, including Yasuhiro Munimori, the sadistic commander of the Imperial First Fleet and Chief of the Emperor's Personal Military Staff.

[Kawashima] was drawn at once to the *inochi-zo*, a "life statue" standing perhaps a third of a meter tall. Like some obscene plant, it grew from a pot of soil, but it appeared to be sculpted of living flesh, an exquisitely delicate homunculus crafted by a genegineer's art. Its overall form was that of a nude man, but the limbs bent folded about its artistically twisted torso, a part of the body they embraced. Lacking a head, the creature's face had been grafted onto a broadened chest; the mouth in a voiceless, breathless eternal scream, while the living eyes followed Kawashima's every move.

He'd heard of such things, of course, but had never seen one, for they were quite rare and extraordinarily expressive. Though each was unique, as befitted a work of art, they reputedly fell into one of two classes, the *tanoshimi-zo*, which lived in continual orgasmic pleasure, and their dark counterparts, the *kurushimi-zo*, for which simply existence was unending agony.

This one, obviously, was in pain. Kawashima stared into those pleading eyes — their irises were pale blue — and shuddered. It seemed as though he was looking into twin wells of bottomless, endless horror.

"I am very proud of that one," Munimori said at his back. Kawashima started. He'd not heard the admiral's return (pp. 10-12).

Munimori explains his fascination for the chimeral monstrosity:

“Over ninety percent of this one’s genotype is pure human. Its nervous system has been tuned to transmit constant pain, something roughly on a level, I understand, with being burnt alive except that the pain never overloads the organism’s brain and senses and never dulls. Its brain is fully functional, and according to its paper it was link-educated so that it could, ah, fully appreciate its predicament It’s not simply a living sculpture, something pretty to look at, but a thinking, knowing soul trapped in a living hell.’

Kawashima felt dizzy, and the pale walls of the sparsely furnished room seemed to be closing in around him. Why? he wanted to ask, but to demand an explanation for this twisted horror would be to insult his host.

“Can . . . it speak?”

“Oh, no. No lungs, no voice box. The mouth is pure art. I have to provide it with a special nutrient each day, watering it like a plant, or it would lapse into a coma and die. The ears are functional, however. It can hear us and understand what we say. Beautiful is it not?”

“Remarkable, my lord.”

“Actually, I suspect that after ninety years, it must be quite mad. But just look at those eyes. Mad or not, it still feels, after all this time! Occasionally, I speak to it, promising release for it, one day. I don’t know if it believes me or not, but I permit myself the small conceit that it may continue to hope, through year after year of unendurable agony” (pp. 11-12).

Across the Atlantic, British author Patrick Tilley’s *Amtrak Wars* series (1983-1990) envisions an post-apocalypse America whose northeastern coast has been carved up into rival feudal domains controlled by the Iron Masters, “a subhuman species” whose culture and social structure is modeled on that of 17th-century Japan. American cities and states have been converted into feudal domains governed by *daimyō* who bear the names of 20th-century Japanese corporations — Toh-Yota, Mitsu-Bishi, Toh-Shiba, and Ho-Nada (Fig. 3). The series relies heavily on “yellow peril” race imagery, as witness the following excerpts taken from the novel’s preface which is written in the form of a computer entry:

Iron Masters have their roots in illegal immigrants communities of various asiatic subtypes that managed to infiltrate the major northeastern urban centres during the pre-Holocaust era. Between 2300 and 2400, there was a small but significant influx of “boat people”; asiatics who spoke a language known as “Japanese.”

Allying themselves with the resident groups of similar origin, the boat people rapidly seized power and have remained the dominant racial group ever since.

Though the process of genetic mutation common to all subhuman species and lower animal orders, Iron Masters have become immune to atmospheric radiation but, once again, acquisition of immunity has had a negative impact on other vital functions. In the case of the Iron Masters, the most obvious side effects are their diminutive stature, yellow-tinted skin, and total lack of body hair, but the greatest damage has been to the circulatory systemThrough bushido . . . these inherent defects have acquired positive values, engendering a calm, disciplined approach to life and an unquestioning acceptance of death.

See related entries: CHINKS, DINKS, GOOKS, JAPS, MEATBALLS, NIPS, SLANTS, VC, YELLOW PERIL (p. 12).

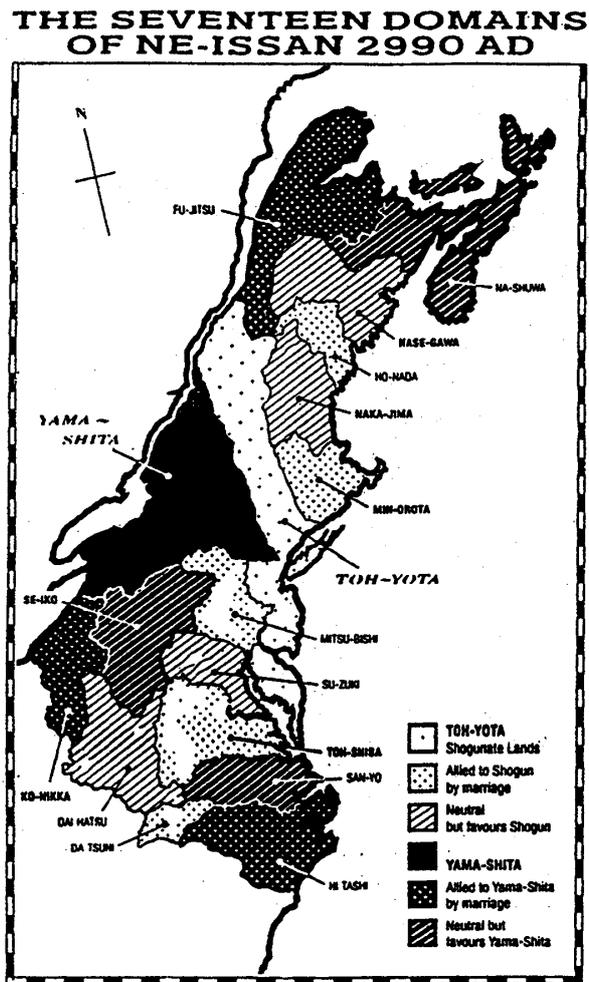


Figure 3: The American northeast in the 30th century: *Amtrak Wars : The Iron Masters* (Sphere Books, 1987)

Perhaps because technology and exotic, alien cultures have always been a staple of science fiction, its practitioners were quick to incorporate Japanese themes into their works. In the 1980s cyberpunk created a dark, decadent *tech-noir* Orientalism that fused 1940s hard-boiled *film noir* iconography to perdurable stereotypes of Oriental exoticism and decadence, though Japan itself was often exploited merely for its exotic, otherworldly ambiance (Fig.4a). The cyberpunk movement, with its bleak depiction of an America on the periphery of the Pacific Century, has produced its share of futuristic Japan-inspired fabulations, ranging from the corporate *yakuza*, hi-tech *ninja*, *zaibatsu*-dominated global economy depicted in Bruce Sterling's *Schismatrix* (1985) and William Gibson's "Sprawl" narratives" — Johnny Mnemonic" (1980), *Neuromancer* (1982), *Count Zero* (1986) *The Mono Lisa Overdrive* (1988), *Virtual Light* (1993), and *Idoru* (1996) — to the nihilistic, *tech-noir* orientalism of the 21st-century LA that forms the backdrop of director Ridley Scott's cult classic *Blade Runner* (1982) (Fig. 4b).



Figure 4a : Shinjuku comes to Gotham City, *Batman: Digital Justice* (DC Comics, 1990) ; b) Los Angeles 2017 A. D., *Blade Runner* (The Ladd Company / Warner Brothers, 1982)



Figure 4b : Los Angeles 2017 A. D., *Blade Runner* (The Ladd Company / Warner Brothers, 1982)

The trend is not exclusive to science fiction. The techno-thriller genre also has proven to be receptive, though here the focus is less on extrapolating imaginary worlds than exploring contemporary political and economic issues on a level slightly more sophisticated than Rohmer's Fu Manchu potboilers and Ian Fleming's *Dr. No*, replacing evil Oriental scientific geniuses with megalomaniacal Japanese tycoons bent on world economic domination, as in Thomas Hoover's *The Samurai Strategy* (1988), Marc Olden's *Oni* (1988), and Steven Schlossenstein's *Kensei* (1993). With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Japan has assumed the mantle of evil empire in the geopolitical thriller genre as well. Clive Clusser's *Dragon* (1990), Ralph Peters' *The War in 2020* (1991), former U.S. Navy Secretary James Webb's *Something to Die For* (1991), Guy Durham's *Extreme Prejudice* (1992), and Tom Clancy's *Debt of Honor* (1994), to name but a few, all cast Japan in the role of an aggressive, unscrupulous economic superpower. Other works like Eric Van Lustbader's *Ninja* (1980), *Miko* (1984), *Zero* (1988) and *Kaisho* (1993) and Marc Olden's *Giri* (1982) and *Gaijin* (1983) exploit standard tropes of Oriental mysticism, martial arts-tinged underworld violence, sadism, decadence, and sexual perversion. In film, the tradition can be seen in *Kinjite* (1988) and *Black Rain* (1989). However, none of these works has had the impact of Crichton's *Rising Sun*.

III. "DOMO ARIGATO, MR. ROBOTO"

"We will learn everything from you now," said Mr. [Mori] Arinori. His face was flushed; the whiskey and heat seemed to have kindled a fire in him. "We build great schools and navies, like you. In Choshu, we have an Engine [computer]! We will buy more Engines. We will build our own Engines!"

Mallory chuckled. The queer little foreigners seemed so young, so idealistic-intelligent, and above all sincere. "Well! It's a fine dream, young sir, and does you credit! But it is no simple matter"

— William Gibson and Bruce Sterling, *The Difference Engine* (p. 169)

You're wondering who I am — Machine or mannequin
With parts made in Japan, I am the Modern man.

"Mr. Roboto"

— Styx

Any discussion of contemporary images of Japan in American popular culture would be incomplete without mention of technology, for in the West not only does the possession of "inferior" technology or its absence signify the Other but in an age when the boundary between human authenticity and mechanical artifice is constantly being contested and re-drawn, it also serves as a key signifier of Otherness itself. Conversely, the absence of technological sophistication is interpreted as a sign of an inferior, primitive people who can be civilized only through conquest by a technologically advanced (read western) civilization. Conversely, should advanced technology come into the hands of a primitive Other, its acquisition results not in its elevation to the level of westerners, but to provide the Other with the means to subdue a morally superior West. According to this worldview, in the absence of a controlling western will, technology becomes a potential weapon of the Other, or so alienates its creators that they themselves become the Other as victims either of a willful, rampaging technology, or of those who, having acquired it, turn it against them.

Ambivalence toward technology has a long history in western literature, finding early expression in Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872), William Morris' *New from Nowhere* (1890), E. M. Forster's "The Machine Stops" (1909), Karel Capék's *R. U. R.* (1920), Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and *Ape and Essence* (1948), and, of course, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's classic *Frankenstein* (1818). In America, it can be found in such novels as Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s dystopian satire *Player Piano* (1952) and Bernard Wolfe's nightmarish *Limbo* (1952). Even cyberpunk, with its brooding depictions of a commodity-driven postmodern future, rejects the Victorian fantasy that technology would redeem the human spirit by providing solutions to the human condition, adopts a cautionary stance, viewing advanced

technology as a mixed blessing at best, that while transformative also holds the potential to enslave and depersonalize. In film the conflict between man and machine has been a staple of countless postwar B-films as well as more ambitious works such as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926), Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936), Stanley Kubrick's and Arthur C. Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), *Colossus: Forbin Project* (1972), and *The Terminator* (1984) in which human beings must match wits against their coldly efficient creations. All are more or less the step-children of the Shelley classic.

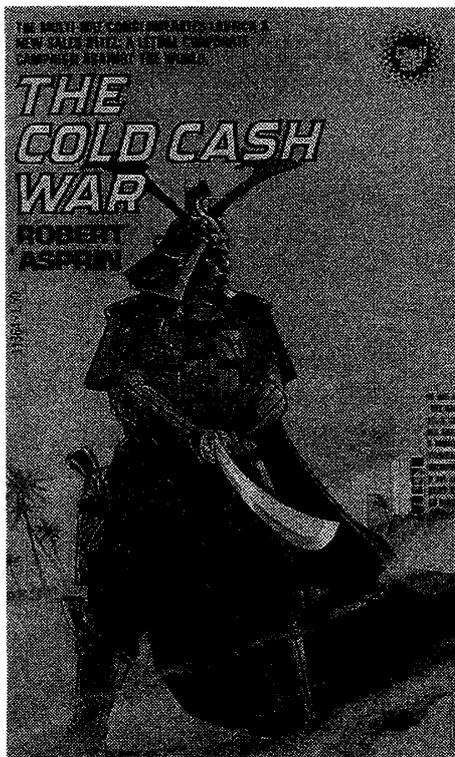
Science fiction writer Isaac Asimov has aptly termed this dread that technology will one day turn on its creator the "Frankenstein Complex." One might further suggest that America's current "Japan Complex" is a variation on the Frankenstein Complex which projects its fears of vengeful creation upon an increasingly technologically sophisticated Japan, combining them with 19th- and early 20th-century anti-oriental imagery. If the moral premise behind these technophobic tales is that the creation of life is the providence of God, the creation of "science" is thought to be the prerogative of the west: upsetting either the divine order of things or western technological hegemony inevitably invites destruction. That such a transference has taken place seems inevitable given both current association of Japan with high technology and the fact that the ultimate signifier of Armageddon, the atomic bomb, is inextricably linked to the carnage its deployment inflicted on Japan. After all, it was not too long after Americans celebrated their victory over Japan and the instrument believed to have hastened it, that the silver screen was inundated with a menagerie of monstrosities spawned by fears of the destructive and mutagenic powers of the atom.

In the U.S.-Japan relationship in particular, technology has emerged as a key signifier separating "us" from "them." So long as Americans viewed Japanese as producers of cheap, inferior consumer goods they had nothing to fear from a nation of "little transistor radio salesmen." However, Japan's rapid technological advance has forced Americans to reconsider such stereotypes and to modify them accordingly. Today, American anti-Japanese rhetoric adds a new twist to the Frankenstein Complex: It is now the Japanese who have expropriated "American" technology and who are using it against its creators. One finds traces of this thinking in the myth of the Occupation and the unanticipated consequences of its nation-building reforms, where a omnipotent SCAP revitalizes a moribund Japan which, once fully recovered, ungratefully turns against its American master.

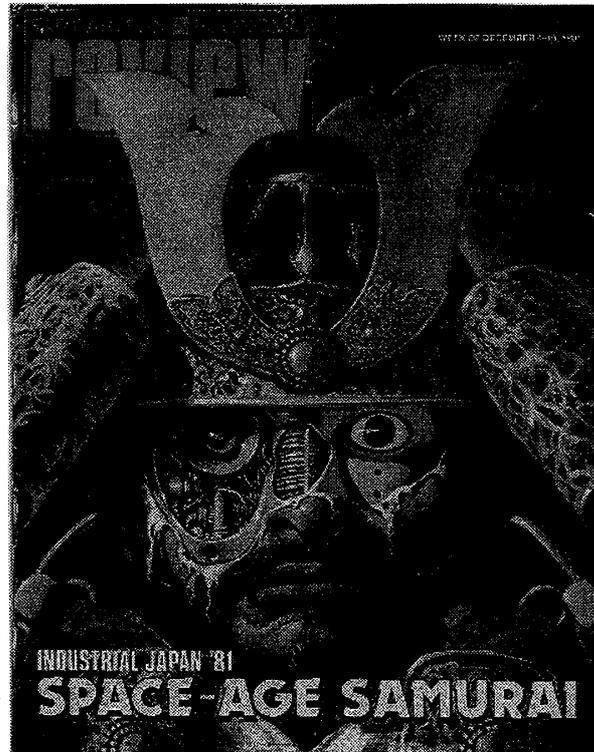
In the 1980s, American ambivalence toward Japan and technology, particularly nuclear technology, served as a subtext for thrillers that ostensibly questioned the morality behind the decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan. George E. Simpson and Neal R. Burger's *Fair Warning* (1980) and Alfred Coppel's *The Burning Mountain* (1983) discuss alternative

scenarios to the dropping of the bomb, only to conclude that the decision was both just and inevitable, thus assuring readers of the infallibility of those in Washington who made it. By the 1990s, however, the attempt to allay any moral doubts by justifying the atomic bombings in fiction had given way to narratives that depicted Japan as a fanatical aggressor who, far from having learned the tragic lessons of the past, was now bent on mobilizing its new technological sophistication against the United States. In Al Dempsey's *Pika Don* (1993) and former *Washington Post* Tokyo correspondent Fred Hiatt's *The Secret Sun* (1992), Japanese ultranationalists develop their own nuclear bomb with which they plot to blackmail America. The destruction of Japan is played out once again in Simon Winchester's *Pacific Nightmare* (1992), an "historical" account of events leading to World War III in which America is compelled to loose its nuclear arsenal on a remilitarized Japan scrambling to stake its claim to a China ravaged by civil war following the reversion of Hong Kong and the outbreak of another Korean war in the late 1990s.

Contemporary popular imagery of Japan clearly reflects Anglo-American techno-paranoia, with mechanistic metaphors replacing animal imagery (Said's "fierce lions") as one of the key symbols of Japanese otherness. Samurai and Robot imagery coalesce, overshadowing images that once depicted the Japanese enemy as vermin, superhuman, and



5 a



5 b

Figure 5: Silicon Samurai: a) *Cold Cash Wars* (Dell, 1977) ; b) *Far Eastern Economic Review* (December 4-10, 1981)

bestial subhumans (Fig. 5a, 5b). Although Japanese are still dehumanized, the metaphors invoked are mechanical not organic. Such imagery merely makes explicit standard stereotypes of Japanese that ascribe to their culture an artificiality that is thought to find expression in the ritualization of its fine arts, the emphasis of its education system on rote memorization, its prescriptive codes of social etiquette and, more recently, its reliance on industrial robotics. Whatever their specific content, in the end these images ascribe to Japanese a mechanical, spirit-denying ethos diametrically opposed to western ideals of individualism, spontaneity, and free will. The suggestion that the West, particularly America, might regain its competitive edge by adopting Japanese management practices also arouses fears that to do so would result in the loss of the very qualities that define the western spirit, a theme expressed in the lyrics and droning syncopation of popular hit songs such as The Vapors' "Turning Japanese" (1979) and Styx's "Mr. Roboto" (1983) that rely on stereotypes of Japanese uniformity and artificiality to voice fears of technologically induced culture shock, anomie, and depersonalization.

Indeed, examining contemporary images of Japan, one is struck by the literal hardening of the imagery. Japan is no longer regarded as a "soft" culture (chrysanthemums, lotuses, contemplative zen masters) but a "hard" one (swords, robots, silicon samurai). Such shifts have occurred before and have traditionally followed strains in Japan's relations with the west. When these relations are relatively smooth, Japan is presented as a serenely exotic, receptive, essentially "feminine" culture whose arts reinvigorate a moribund, materialistic west. Once these relations deteriorate or become outright hostile, popular imagery presents Japan as a chitinous, threatening, uncontainable, aggressive "masculine" culture. The physics of cultural stereotyping does not permit both cultures to occupy simultaneously the same engendered roles; rather, the image of a pliant, feminine Japan serves to enhance America's image of itself as masculine protector, while images of an effete, emasculated America assumes recasts it in Japan's traditional subordinate position in relations to with a newly invigorated, virile Japan. Having metaphorically "turned Japanese," Americans are admonished to be, to borrow the title of *Atlantic Monthly* journalist James Fallows' bestseller, "more like us," to, as it were, revive the values, vision, and spirit that define the "American Way," the collective national self.

No one was better positioned to exploit these obsessions than Crichton, a master of the modern cautionary tale. Crichton has made a name for himself producing realistic, fast-paced, technophobic bestsellers (*The Andromeda Strain*, *The Terminal Man*, *Jurassic Park*) and films (*Westworld*, *Looker*, *Runaway*). Each work is a modern-day reworking of the Frankenstein tale recast in the form of a formula thriller that capitalizes on popular fears of

technology run amok In *Rising Sun*, Crichton adds to the mix more than a pinch of xenophobia: technology, he insists, is always potentially destructive, particularly so when it falls into the hands of an implacable Other. In *Rising Sun*, these hands belong to the Japanese, who replace extraterrestrial pathogens, epileptic serial killers and cloned dinosaurs as the new source of fear and loathing. However, unlike his predecessors', Crichton's tale takes place in the present and aims to convince the reader that the Japanese invasion is a fait accompli.

In convincing the reader of the reality of the Japanese invasion, *Rising Sun* displays what Edward Said has called a textual attitude. Stripped of its detective mystery trappings, the novel regurgitates the revisionist canon, selectively invoking the textual authority of such works as Ezra Vogel's *Japan as No.1* (1979), Clyde Prestowitz's *Trading Places* (1989), Karel van Wolferen's *The Enigma of Japanese Power* (1989), James Fallows' *More Like Us* (1989), and Pat Choate's *Agents of Influence* (1990) to add a patina of authority to its otherwise tarnished generalizations. It is from these works, all of which are cited in Crichton's bibliography, that the novel derives its persuasive power, for lacking a personal familiarity with Japan and the scholarly credentials of the Japanologists from whose works he copiously cribs, Crichton must prove himself a credible (if credulous) interpreter of the Japanese Mind. In a speech before the Japan Society of Southern California reprinted in the Japanese English-language monthly *Intersect* (November 1992), Crichton states that he wrote the novel "after a trip to Southeast Asia in 1988" (p. 26), a trip that apparently did not take him to Japan. Although Crichton himself has not met any "fierce lions," as it were, he has few compunctions about instructing his readers on how to deal with them, taking his cues from the growing revisionist literature on Japan.

Of course, one need not visit a place to write persuasively about it. Some critics have compared Crichton's *Rising Sun* to Ruth Benedict's *Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946), whose study of Japanese national character remains a classic despite the fact that she had never visited Japan. Benedict's data was gleaned from secondary sources: interned Japanese Americans, publicly available Japanese-language documents, and previously published western scholarship. Yet both works are seriously flawed. Benedict, whose credentials as a liberal and critic of racism were in many ways beyond reproach, nonetheless failed to recognize that her own analysis of Japanese culture was sorely biased. As one of a number of studies commissioned by the American government aimed at "knowing the enemy," her analysis singled out those characteristics of Japanese personality that would be useful to the war effort. Consequently, Benedict was concerned with patterns of Japanese aggression and their alleged "cultural" causes. In accounting for Japanese wartime behavior, Benedict focused on early childhood socialization practices and "traditional" values; extrinsic factors,

such as the geopolitics of western expansionism and legitimate Japanese fears of western domination were overlooked. As a result, Japanese personality was strapped to reified Procrustean dualities that reflected less the national character of “the Japanese” than the conceptual biases of Benedict, anthropologists, and her government sponsors. Although Benedict did not conceive of Japanese as congenitally different, they remained culturally Other, a neurotic, obsessed, rigid, bipolar personality oscillating between the extremes of Apollonian serenity and Dionysian aggressiveness. Benedict’s Japanese were both literally and figuratively unbalanced.

Ironically, in combating racial determinism, mid-20th century anthropology contributed its own set of equally questionable assumptions about the Other that, while rejecting race-based arguments to account for the diversity of human behavior, proved to be just as totalizing as racist explanations, substituting unproven generalizations about Japanese personality based on intuitive insights and biased observations of the culture. At a time when American scientific racism could not escape uncomfortable comparisons with Nazi race ideology, propagandists quickly learned that they could exploit cultural explanations to equal effect. Although Geoffrey Gorer, another proponent of national character studies, saw Japanese aggression as only one of many “themes in Japanese culture” produced by severe childrearing practices, *Time* magazine cited his work as offering scientific evidence that explained, as the headline of its August 7, 1944 edition proclaimed, “Why Japs are Japs.”

Today, few image-conscious Afrikaners openly claim for racial segregation based on notions of genetic inferiority. American whites who protested racial integration premised their objections not on the belief that blacks were biologically subhuman but that their values and lifestyle were essentially different and antithetical to those of whites. It is “Islamic culture” not Arab genes that is perceived as a threat to the New World Order, responsible for the imminent “clash of civilizations” predicted in Samuel Huntington’s crystal ball. The arguments are cultural: “They” have their culture; “We” have ours and never the twain shall meet — at least not peacefully. This is not to suggest that biological determinism in either its scientific or popular manifestations has completely disappeared from public discourse (indeed, vestiges of this kind of thinking can be seen in *The Bell Curve* (1994), and the debate is likely to be rekindled as “discoveries” in molecular genetic research challenge socio-cultural and psychiatric explanations of social problems). Rather it is to recognize that overt references to race have become less acceptable as a rationale and that difference has increasingly become inscribed in and as culture, since to do otherwise would inevitably bring the charge of “racism.” Crichton skillfully exploits this shift in the semantics of racial Otherness, for nowhere in the novel does he ascribe Japanese difference

to race: culture not genetics is the culprit.

Moreover, what distinguishes Crichton's approach from other anti-Japanese narratives is the scope of its indictment of Japanese. Other authors have been selective in their attacks on Japan, contenting themselves with *roman à clefs* loosely based on well-publicized incidents of Japanese corporate malfeasance. For example, Toshiba's sale in 1987 of submarine propeller parts to the Soviet Union provides the backdrop for both Cussler's and Webb's tales; similarly, the controversy surrounding Japan's plans to develop the FSX fighter plane forms the subtext of Jim DeFelice's *Coyote Bird* (1992). Crichton's tale, in contrast, is comprehensive, indiscriminate, systematically paranoid in its attacks. Every source of U.S.-Japan friction is regarded as evidence of a Japanese conspiracy to undermine the United States and used to propel the reader to conclude not that "the Japanese are Coming" but that they are already here and that their presence is detrimental to American interests. In *Rising Sun* the webs of Japanese influence extend everywhere, from the boardroom to the classroom, from Capital Hill to the Fourth Estate, from seamy bordellos to Tinseltown and beyond. No one and nothing is safe. This is conspiracy writ large.

In some theme and tone, *Rising Sun* bears an uncanny resemblance to *Amerika*, the controversial 1987 ABC mini-series. Both depict an American under foreign occupation — Russian military occupation on the one hand; Japanese economic occupation on the other. Both operate under the premise that Americans would rather surrender than put up a good fight. What distinguishes Crichton's Japanized Amerika from its Cyrillic counterpart is its insistence that it is a realistic portrayal of current events. Crichton's "Amerika" is divided into "plotting and plodding" Japanese and their American collaborators. Like the mini-series, the collaborators are the usual suspects: ambitious career women, bed-hopping anchorwomen, sleazy homosexual, and, of course, money-grubbing politicians, all easy scapegoats of American discontent.

Ironically, Crichton commits many of the abuses of information technology of which he warns. One of the book's key themes revolves around the manipulation of such technology as a tool of misdirection. Eventually, the reader learns that the identity of the true killer — captured by one of the corporation's security cameras — has been digitally altered to mislead the authorities. This key to unlocking the novel's mystery also offers a key to the techniques Crichton employs in framing the Japanese, for he engages in a similar legerdemain by doctoring "evidence" of a Japanese conspiracy. In catering to contemporary anti-Japanese sentiments, Crichton, like the real conspirators in *Rising Sun*, has in his own literary way tinkered with the pixels, creating a fraudulent Japanese villain that distracts us from the realization that the identity of the true manipulator is that of the author himself,

IV. TRADING PLACES

My own modest proposal for solving America's racial problems is to make all white Americans live in Japan for a year or two. It's a quick way to learn how it feels to have your race be the most important and on the whole unfavorable thing about you.

— James Fallows, *More Like Us* (p. 30)

I got tired of being a nigger.

— John Connor, *Rising Sun* (p. 381)

When *Rising Sun* appeared in bookstores in 1992, critics of the book charged it was racist. Indeed, it is possible that the charge itself helped spur sales. Within a few weeks of its publication, the novel had risen to the top of *The New York Times* bestseller list and repeated the performance in paperback. Indeed, promotional literature for the paperback exploited the racism charge to promote the book. It seems unlikely that Crichton was unaware of the controversy his novel would create, a point he acknowledges when he writes “the subject of Japanese-American relations is highly controversial” (p. 403). However, even before its publication, Crichton had prepared his defense with a preemptive strike of his own. It comes from none other than the novel's protagonist John Connor himself.

Most people who've lived in Japan come away with mixed feelings. In many ways, the Japanese are wonderful people. They're hardworking. They had real integrity. They are also the most racist people on the planet. That's why they're always accusing everybody else of racism. They're so prejudiced, they assume everybody else must be, too (p. 380).

Unlike the fictional scenario described above, however, most of the initial accusations of racism against Crichton's book came not from Japanese but Americans. Yet if the world Crichton describes is as real as he so strenuously maintains, then one can only attribute their accusations to the Japanese-manipulated American press. After all, Crichton has spent some 400-odd pages arguing just that!

Like other revisionists, Crichton must convince the reader that while the Japanese hold a technological edge over the United States, they are nonetheless morally inferior. He accomplishes this by countering that it is the Japanese who are racists, citing the litany of *gaijin* grievances voiced by white characters who have lived in Japan. Invoking the Fallowsian Fallacy that equates the position of blacks in America to white foreigners in

Japan, Connor says:

And living in Japan . . . I just got tired, after a while, of the way things worked. I got tired of seeing women move to the other side of the street when they saw me walking toward them at night. I got tired of noticing that the last two seats to be occupied on the subway were the ones on either side of me. I got tired of the airline stewardesses asking Japanese passengers if they minded sitting next to a *gaijin* assuming that I couldn't understand what they were saying because they were speaking in Japanese. I got tired of the exclusion, the subtle patronizing, the jokes behind my back. I got tired of being a nigger. I just got tired. I gave up (pp. 380-381).

Connor's statement conveniently obscures the fact within Japan's *gaijin* hierarchy, whites are viewed as a model minority.

Having faulted Crichton's rhetoric, it is not my intent to argue that Japanese racism does not exist or merely a figment of Crichton's fertile imaginings. But is it somewhat of a stretch to go from this realization to the statement (repeated twice in the novel) that "the Japanese are the most racist people on earth/planet"? (p. 256; p. 380) The primary targets of Japanese prejudice and racism in Japan are neither American blacks nor whites but other Asians. It is they, not the John Connors of the world, who are treated as the "niggers" of Japan. Instead of exploring this reality, Crichton draws upon a cherished western literary conceit, casting Connor as our intrepid white guide into the unknown. Connor is our jaded Lawrence, a cynical Kurtz who leads the reader through the darkened heart of an LA under Japanese economic occupation. He is that most favored of western literary conceits, the archetypal omniscience White Man whose mission is to invite us into the inscrutable mind of the nonwhite Other. He is the man who knows the Japanese better than they know themselves and uses his secret knowledge as a weapon against them. Connor serves not only as authority figure (*senpai*) to his naive protégé Smith, but performs the same function for the reader. Connor possesses authority, for he has been to Japan, is fluent in Japanese, knows their ways. "They" are by definition different and hence unfathomable save to those who have lived amongst them. Like other revisionist writers, Crichton seeks to demystify the Japanese, if only by swapping one set of invidious cliché for another.

In the *Intersect* interview Crichton dismisses critics who charge racism, citing the fact that his Harvard senior thesis "investigated whether the ancient Egyptians were black. I concluded that perhaps they were, contradicting claims that blacks had never created a major civilization" (p. 26). Crichton's display of his liberal credentials is not only irrelevant to the

issue at hand — none of the novel's critics charged that its racism was directed at blacks — but also betrays a rather narrow understanding of racism, ignoring the fact that liberalism extended toward one group does not necessarily include other groups.³ Crichton goes on to say:

To the claims that I have created a “predatory people bent on economic domination” or “creepy manipulators whose sinister influence is seeping into every aspect of American life”, I would point out the terms vile, predatory, economic domination, manipulator, evil empire, and sinister do not appear anywhere in the text. That is not to say that I don't think that Japan exerts undue influence on American institutions. I do. I say that clearly. But I don't characterized that influence as predatory, sinister, or bent on economic domination. Those are the words of my critics. They are not in the book (p. 26).

Crichton expresses bewilderment that “none of the American reviews object to the characterization of American politicians as drunken womanizers, beset by flatterers, focused on their contrived media images, attentive only to polls and special interest groups, and in the pocket of foreign powers. I don't understand why so few American reviewers defended the Americans in the book, when so many have rushed to defend the Japanese” (p. 27).

The final criticism is that the book is paranoid and racist. Well, thrillers need bad guys, and bad guys become “they.” In other thrillers, “they” have been the police, the FBI, lawyers, the Mafia, Big Business, zombies, and Amsterdam diamond merchants. I would suggest that, if anything, the “they” under indictment in this book are the makers of American trade policy who have, for decades, betrayed their country's economic interest for their own personal gain (p. 27).

This is a disingenuous line of defense at best, for following Crichton's own logic, he cannot claim to be indicting the “makers of American trade policy” since nowhere in the text are the exact words “drunken womanizer,” “contrived media images,” “attentive only to the polls and special interest groups,” and “in the pocket of foreign powers” to be found. Nor for all his “undergraduate training in anthropology” and study of “social differences and how we perceive those differences” (p. 25), does Crichton seem to realize that being a politician, an FBI agent, a lawyer, even a zombie is an acquired status, while being a Japanese is not. Indeed, it is perhaps this same confusion that permits Americans (who not too long ago

expressed outrage that stereotyped Sambo dolls were still being produced in Japan) to dress up as “Cowboys” and “Indians” on Halloween and to make themselves up as “Red Skins” and “Braves” at Major League baseball games despite the disapproval of Native Americans. Crichton counters the charge that the book is racist by denying that it depicts Japanese as one-dimensional villains. On the contrary:

Rising Sun is carefully structured to make a very different point. The principle villains are paired: an American senator and a Japanese corporate lawyer, who end up killing a girl. Each thinks he alone has done it. Each is equally guilty. Each commits suicide. Of the six surrounding villains, five are American. These Americans are not well-meaning dupes. They are cynical bad guys who know exactly what they are doing selling out their country (p. 27).

Conceivably, following NAACP-led protests against *Birth of a Nation* during its release in 1915, D. W. Griffith might have argued that his film was not racist because it pairs villains: one a white abolitionist, the other a politically ambitious “mulatto.” He might have pointed out that both are responsible in their own way for the tragic death of film’s heroine who commits suicide rather than be raped by a black foot soldier whose lust for white southern womanhood has been unleashed by Reconstruction reforms. Were Griffith possessed of Crichton’s rhetoric skills, he might have pointed out that the abolitionists in his film were “not well-meaning dupes” and “cynical bad guys who knew exactly what they were doing by selling out the South to carpetbagging Yankees.” Does all this alter the fact that the depiction of blacks in *Birth of a Nation* is racist? I think not. Crichton’s rhetoric aside, the only Japanese character to emerge somewhat sympathetically is the unctuous Eddie Sakamura, an ostentatious mimic American — “You wouldn’t think he was Japanese, he’s so flashy” (p. 78) — who, with his taste for drugs, high-priced callgirls and expensive sports cars, is the least “Japanese” of Crichton’s simulacra. More like us, indeed! Sakamura is the sole “good” Japanese whose presence is used to counter the weight of his devious compatriots. Yet it is precisely his “Americanness” that invites suspicion, since he is not what he appears to be.

Significantly, while the Americanized Sakamura is portrayed as an ally, oblique references in the novel to Asian Americans suggest that they constitute a fifth column. Crichton fails to view Asians as anything other than an undifferentiated, homogeneous mass whose loyalty to the United States he implicitly questions. Crichton consistently uses the phrase “Asian community” to refer to community protests against Los Angeles Police

Department's management of the murder investigation. but to which community is he referring? The Japanese business community in Los Angeles? The Japanese American community? The Asian American community as a whole? Like the novel's addled police dispatcher, Crichton is unable to distinguish one "Asian accented voice" from another, lumping all Asians together. Nor is he willing to acknowledge the inflammatory nature of his novel. In the interview, Crichton raises the issue that the novel may incite anti-Asian hate crimes, only to dismiss it by insisting that "the book is provocative, and critical of both the United States and Japan, but in a way structured to inform rather than incite."

The argument that *Rising Sun* is inflammatory and may provoke hate crimes against Asians and Asian Americans presents an ugly prospect which must be considered. All thinking people must be vigilant about racial hatred, which dehumanizes everyone in the society in which it occurs. Is it likely *Rising Sun* will cause some future dire consequence? I do not believe it will. Certainly the book is provocative, and critical of both the United States and Japan, but in a way structured to inform rather than incite. Indeed, the mail I received is all critical of America; if there is any mention of Japan, it is laudatory (p. 27).

To be sure, as a work of fiction *Rising Sun* need not concern itself with the fact that incidents of anti-Asian hate crimes tend to increase during times of mounting U.S.-Japan friction. Ron Wakabayashi (1992), executive director of the Los Angeles City Human Relations Commission, notes that in the 1980s not only was there a "steady, sometimes dramatic increase in acts of anti-Asian violence" but they also showed a geographic shift from the American rust belt to the West Coast. The rise in such crimes is certainly as worthy of comment as the escalation of U.S.-Japan trade friction. Yet nowhere in the novel does Crichton address the issue seriously. Instead, he cavalierly dismisses it as a smear tactic orchestrated by the Japanese and their American collaborators (including, no doubt, members of the Crichton's nebulous Asian community). Crichton displays a similar callousness in his treatment of police brutality. Like the issue of anti-Asian hate crimes, police misconduct is not worthy of serious consideration.

"You could arrange one of your famous incidents of LA police brutality."

"That's not funny."

"Nobody at this paper would cover it, I can promise you that. You could fucking kill him. And if somebody made a live video? Hey, people here would pay to see

the video" (p. 204).

Indeed, the line is not funny, and is made even more chilling in the wake of the brutal videotaped beating of Rodney King in 1991 and the reality of police victimization of minorities. But as one of the characters in *Jurassic Park* (1990) informs us, "Entertainment is not reality. Entertainment is antithetical to reality" (p. 121). The admission, however, does not dissuade the architects of the saurian Disneyland from proceeding to realize their vision of what dinosaurs ought to be. Nor does it stop Crichton from doing much the same thing, for if the cloned dinosaurs that populate *Jurassic Park* represent childhood fantasies given life by the genetic engineers who recreate them, the same is no less true of the Japanese who populate *Rising Sun*, though instead of manipulating DNA fragments, Crichton has chosen to manipulate American racial fears of Japan in order to breathe a semblance of life into his creations.

Significantly, for all his diatribes against Japanese racism Crichton never actually depicts Japanese behaving in an overtly racist manner toward any of the novel's protagonists. This cannot be said of Graham's and Senator Morton's behavior toward the Japanese, however. Indeed, all accounts of Japanese racism are rendered as personal narratives of the characters who have had some dealings with Japanese or Japan in the past. Graham is certainly the most overtly racist. He consistently refers to Japanese as "Japs." Yet we are lead to believe he is basically a decent soul, just a good cop trying to do a good job. Moreover, Graham's hatred of the Japanese is understandable, since we later learn that his uncle was captured by Japanese soldiers during the war and may have been the victim of "terminal medical experiments" and cannibalism (p. 145).

V. EXTREME PREJUDICE

The Japanese are the most racist people on the planet.

— John Connor, *Rising Sun* (p. 380)

Ever since prime minister Nakasone Yasuhiro's infamous remarks in 1986 that the presence of blacks Puerto Ricans and Mexicans in the United States has lowered American intelligence levels, the image of Japanese as, in the words of one American journalist, "racist in kimonos" has been added to the growing rhetorical arsenal employed to batter Japanese as a whole. The charge that Japanese are racist *sui generis* has been manipulated to mobilize public opinion against Japan, racism itself becoming yet another distinctive characteristic

that sets Japanese as a race apart.⁴

Although African Americans do not appear as major characters in the novel, they are used to force home the point that Japanese are not merely racists, but “the most racist people on the planet.” Our first clue to the racist proclivities of the Japanese are intoned by a black man, Jerome Phillips, a security guard employed by Nakamoto who tells the officers:

Well, I tell you, its a secure job. That’s something in America. I know they don’t think much of black folks, but they always treated me okay. And hell, before this I worked for GM in Van Nuys, and that’s . . . you know, that’s gone (p. 56).

Phillips remarks are ambivalent at best. Later, Crichton, speaking through a white American business man, makes it clear that foreign employees can succeed only if, like Phillips, they know their proper place.

There is a place for the foreigner in a Japanese corporation. Not at the top, of course, perhaps not even the upper echelons. But there is certainly a place. You must realize that the place you hold as a foreigner in a Japanese corporation is an important one, that you are respected, and you have a job to do. As a foreigner, you will have some special obstacles to overcome, but you can do that. You can succeed if you remember to know your place (p. 196).

Another character who plays an instrumental role in the indictment of Japanese racism is Theresa Asakuma, the “dark, exotic-looking, almost Eurasian” (p. 213) computer technician who assists in the investigation. Eventually we learn that she is an “*ainoko*,” the biracial daughter of a Japanese mother and an African American father, who has come to America to escape Japanese racial intolerance. Asakuma labors under the added burden of having been born with deformed hand. The narrative of her treatment in Japan allows Crichton to expand on Connor’s charge of Japanese racism and to attack the exclusive, hierarchical nature of Japanese society where because of her dual stigmata she was considered “lower than *burakumin*” (p. 302), a reference to Japan’s outcaste minority.

“And I was lower than *burakumin*, because I was deformed. To the Japanese deformity is shameful. Not sad, or a burden. *Shameful* . . . The people around you wish you were dead. And if you are half place, the *ainoko* of an American big nose . . .”

She shook her head. “Children are cruel. And this was a provincial place, a country

town" (p. 302).

Explaining her decision to live in America and her willingness to cooperate with the investigation, Asakuma says:

So I am glad to be here. You Americans do not know in what grace your land exists. What freedom you enjoy in your hearts. You cannot imagine the harshness of life in Japan, if you are excluded from the group. But I know it well. And I do not mind if the Japanese suffer a little now, from my efforts with my one good hand (p. 303).

One genre convention the book does manage to avoid is the Asian female love interest. With the exception of Theresa Asakuma, who we eventually learn is also African American, none of the novel's major female characters is Japanese. Despite his obvious attraction to her, Smith remains surprisingly chaste, with only the most subtle hint that his interest in her may be sexual, a subtext that Crichton inexplicably abandons once her background is revealed.

Not long after its climb up the bestseller lists, it was announced that *Rising Sun* would be produced as a major motion picture. Sean Connery was cast in the role of John Connor and Wesley Snipes in the role of his protégé cum *kohai*, Peter Smith. The casting of Snipes, an African American actor, in the role of Smith is significant. On one level, it merely follows Hollywood's proven success with the interracial male buddy formula (e.g., *24 Hours*, *Lethal Weapon*) insuring the film's crossover and box-office appeal. More significantly, however, it allows Hollywood to more dramatically exploit the theme of Japanese of racism, inviting black audiences to identify with Snipe's character and to more easily accept the film's conspiratorial worldview in a way that Connery's character and a white Smith would not.

Sensitive to the charge of racism leveled at the book, the filmmakers soft-peddle its controversial elements, only to add new ones of their own. The film opens with a shot of a glaring red sun that soon fades into a swarm of ants toiling in an Old West desert. The ants are trampled by a horse ridden by a Japanese cowboy, a Chinese slave girl in tow, as Cole Porter's "Don't Fence Me In" is sung off camera. As it turns out, the scene is from a karaoke video being projected on a television screen in a plush Japanese private club, where playboy Sakamura belts out his version of the Porter tune. The "ants," far from being exterminated, have absconded with yet another American cultural icon — the freedom loving cowboy.

As the film unfolds, all the standard archetypes of Japanese otherness are presented:

white-faced geishas, tattooed yakuza, Odd Job-like henchmen, inscrutable Japanese executives. The only Japanese character allowed any trace of personality is Sakamura, the glib, Americanized playboy whose passion for Caucasian women makes him a prime suspect in the murder investigation. While retaining much of the anti-Japanese imagery of the novel, the screenwriters have added scenes that pander to white America's obsession with black sexuality as well. Smith's erotically charged encounter with a white prostitute familiar with the murder victim and a fantasy seduction scene involving a semi-conscious Smith and the victim are gratuitous touches which, while doing little to advance the storyline, are well in keeping with the film's leering portrayal of interracial sex.

The film's treatment of its black characters is also problematic. Phillips, the black security guard, comes off as a spineless Uncle Tom, shucking and jiving to save his job. Even the film's one modestly entertaining moment, when a street-wise Smith seeks aid from his homeboy buddies to distract a carload of Japanese corporate thugs, is dependent on racial stereotypes, pitting one racist caricature against another as it suggests that these "boyz'n the hood" may be the last defense against the "yellow peril." Equally contrived is the scene where Connor, Smith, and Asakuma, obviously meant to symbolize the strength of American diversity, storm into Nakamoto Tower's corporate headquarters and confront the corporation's monolithic geriatrics with the CD containing the identity of the real murderer.

Asakuma (oddly renamed Jingo in the film and now Connor's lover), while no *Terry and the Pirates* Dragon Lady is, nonetheless, relegated to the role of exotic conquest, whose sexual relationship with Connor is never problematized except by a racist Japanese society whose distaste for miscegenation has forced them to leave the country. Although the film treats Asakuma's relationship with Connor as the culmination of her quest for freedom and acceptance, relationships between white women and Japanese are depicted as debasing and exploitative, with white women being, in the words of detective Tom Graham, yet another "plundered national resource" (Fig. 6). These are not the white slaves of John Hershey's *White Lotus* (1965), but willing white trash, sexual collaborators in the Japanese conquest of America. The film's sexual imagery inverts the traditional engendered relationship between Japan and the United States, in which America is positioned as virile male protector to Japan's subservient femininity. Like the white women depicted in the film, it is a feminized America that has allowed itself to be prostituted and raped by rapacious Japanese men. Indeed, director Philip Kaufman and his screenwriters up the ante on the novel's inflammatory racist stereotyping, as in one scene where Sakamura dines on sushi placed on the prone, naked body of a white prostitute. In its depiction of Japanese males as sex animals, *Rising Sun* is reminiscent of such classics of cinematic propaganda as *The Count*

(1915), *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *The Eternal Jew (die ewige Jude, 1940)* which depict the non-Caucasian Other as pariah, sadist, and sexual predator, with one major difference: here the victims of Japanese male lust are all willing. Ironically, while striving to paint a sordid picture of Japanese lechery, the excesses belong to the American filmmakers. That their intent was ostensibly to avoid the novel's controversy, and that they fail so miserably to do so, suggests the extent to which they embrace the very stereotypes they purportedly had sought to avoid.

VI. CONCLUSION: TURNING JAPANESE

No sex, no drugs no wine, no women
 No fun, no sin, no you, no wonder it's dark.
 Everyone around me is a total stranger.
 Everyone avoids me like a psyched lone-ranger.
 Everyone.

"Turning Japanese"

— The Vapors

The battle for American hearts and minds is being waged in the arena of popular culture. Given the insidious nature of popular culture in shaping national identities and ideologies, the acquisition by outsiders of sites of its production has become a source of concern, since these outsiders may deliberately exploit its propaganda functions for their own ends, unraveling national myths and substituting their own in their place. In a transglobal economy dominated by American media imagery and Hollywood simulacra, those who control the means of representation control how that world sees itself. Were non-Americans in general and nonwhites in particular to seize control of that apparatus, not only would American self-identity be compromised, but also the vision of a world weaned on American popular culture.

Following the Sony Corporation's acquisition of Columbia Pictures in 1989, alarmists issued dire warnings about the Japanese influence on American culture. The substance of these fears are three-fold: 1) that a monolithic Japan is bent on adding America's own lucrative entertainment industry to its offense arsenal; 2) that should the Japanese succeed in this venture, they would proceed to rewrite cinematic history; and 3) that American executives and filmmakers employed by Japanese conglomerates would kow-tow to their Japanese bosses and henceforth depict Japan and the Japanese in a more favorable light. As *Newsweek* put it, "How will the Japanese change Hollywood? Will they really let Americans

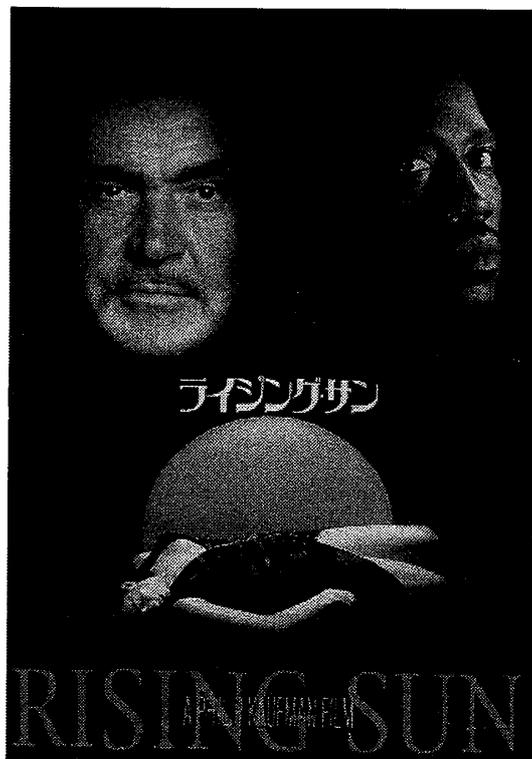
call the shots? Or will they eventually find ways to promote their products and points of view?" (international edition, October 9, 1989, p.15). The question seems an odd one considering the fact that the international edition of the issue replaces the sensationalistic "Japan Invades Hollywood" cover title of the American edition with the kinder and gentler "Japan Moves into Hollywood" (Fig. 7). Still, these concerns were not allayed by the subsequent purchase of UA/MCA and RCA by Japanese firms (in contrast, the American media has made little of Australian media mogul Rupert Murdoch's creation of the Fox network and his acquisition of several city newspapers, including the *New York Post*, *Village Voice*, and the *Boston Herald*, nor has it interpreted the success of films like *Crocodile Dundee* and the *Mad Max* films as a sinister ploy by Australians to manipulate the American soul.

The Japanese have invaded America culture but not in the way envisioned by the pundits. This invasion has taken place despite the mobilization of stereotypes that protect Americans against all but the most depersonalizing images of Japanese. While America has not been successful in curtailing the invasion, it has managed to assimilate and Americanize for national consumption elements of Japanese culture and to retain as quintessentially Japanese those which confirm stereotypes about them and which conceptually confine them to their proper place in the American imaginary.

Japanese influences on American culture is not perceived as a threat so long as it is first



6 a



6 b

Figure 6: "Plundered American resources": a) Then : WWII propaganda poster; b) Now: *Rising Sun*, movie pamphlet

diluted so as to produce a distinctly American product that conceals its originals at the same time it celebrates American values. Such "American" classics as *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) and *Star Wars* (1977) owe as much to the genius of Kurosawa Akira — *The Seven Samurai* (*Shichi-nin no samurai*, 1954) and *The Hidden Fortress* (*Kakushi toride no san-akunin*, 1958), respectively — as they do to John Ford and John Sturges, though the idiom is decidedly American. Clint Eastwood's *A Fist Full of Dollars* (1964) and *For a Few Dollars More* (1968) — Italian Westerns filmed in Spain with American actors in starring roles — are loosely modeled on Kurosawa's *Yôjimbô* (1961), a samurai film. The blurring of boundaries both national and genre is evident in Dutch director Paul Verhoeven's *Robocop* (1988) whose inspiration is derived not only from Clint Eastwood's *Dirty Harry* films (themselves an updating of the Eastwood's archetypal *Yôjimbô*-derived Man-With-No-Name) but Japanese SF animation as well. George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, Francis Ford Coppola, and Martin Scorsese have all acknowledged the impact of Japanese cinema, in particular, Kurosawa, on their work. Sydney Pollack's *The Yakuza* (1975), based on a screenplay by Paul Schrader (*Mishima*, 1985) foreshadows *Black Rain* and the literary oriental noir thrillers popularized by Lustbader and Olden. Graphic comic artists like Frank Miller, whose rendering of Koike Kazuo's and Kojima Gôseki's *Kozure ôkami* (*Wolf and Child*, 1970-1976) for American audiences bought the brooding cinematic *mise en scene* of Japanese *manga* to American comics, and whose dark recreation of the Batman mythos in *The Dark Knight Returns* (1986) served as the model for director Tim Burton's gothic interpretation of the popular American superhero, have also acknowledged their debt to Japanese *manga* and *anime*.

The 1960s saw the first wave of imported Japanese cartoons, including *Speed Racer* (*Maha Go Go Go*), *Gigantor* (*Tetsujin 28-go*), *8 Man* (*Eitto-man*), and Tezuka Osamu's *Kimba the White Lion* (*Jyanguru Taitei*). Since the late-1970s, Japanese-inspired iconography has increasingly decorated American popular culture. Indeed, in recent years some of the most popular children's programs on American television — *Starblazers* (*Uchû-senkan Yamato*), *Robo-Tech* (*Makurosu*), and *Power Rangers* (*Go Ranjâ*) — have been based on Japanese programs retooled for the American market (in the case of the latter, multi-ethnic actors replace Japanese). The trend is also seen in films, ranging from *Star Wars* to *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. In 1994, American fans of Japanimation, many of whom had been weaned on imported Japanese cartoons in the 1960s, charged that the Walt Disney Company's animated feature film *The Lion King* had plagiarized from Tezuka's *Jyanguru Taitei*, a charge Disney Studios denied and Tezuka Productions declined to pursue legally despite several points of uncanny similarity in story, character design, and theme. Such imitation, however, acknowledged or not, has not been above recycling America's less than



Figure 7: The Japanization of America (*Newsweek* October 9, 1989, International edition)

flattering stereotypes of Japanese. *Star Trek's* (1966-1969) Klingons, once signifiers of Oriental (read Soviet) despotism have since evolved into *yoroi*-clad alien samurai. Similarly, *Star Trek: The New Generation's* (1987-1994) toothy, dwarfish, ultra-capitalist, incorporate both anti-Asian and anti-Semitic stereotypes. Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985) features a dream sequence in which the Everyman hero battles a towering samurai. In *Back to the Future II* (1989), Marty McFly is fired by his ill-tempered boss — Mr. Fujitsu; in *Alien³* (1992), we learn that the sinister “Company” alluded to in the two previous installments, Weyland-Yutani, is partially Japanese owned, and briefly meet one of its representatives, an arrogant Asian. Robot and corporate menace tropes are combined in *Robocop 3* (1993) in which the eponymous Made-in-America cyborg-cowboy superhero takes on a small army of mute, physically identical cybernetic ninja and the shady Japanese conglomerate that produced them. In the film, co-written with Frank Miller, the Japanese assassin is named Ôtomo, presumably in homage to Ôtomo Kazuhiro, the animator responsible for *Akira* (1988), considered by many fans of Japanimation to be a cyberpunk classic on a par with *Blade Runner*.

In American popular fiction, a small but growing number of young mostly white male authors such as Jay McInerney (*Ransom*, 1985), Bruce Fieldman (*Bicycle Days*, 1989), and John David Morley (*Pictures of the Water Trade*, 1985) have appropriated Japan as a personal space wherein they inscribe their solipsistic journeys toward self-discovery, inevitably adhering to the Madama Butterfly convention that requires their male protagonists to be initiated into the mysteries of Japanese society through an enigmatic Japanese female. There are a few exceptions. Rey Ventura (*Underground in Japan*, 1992) and David Miura (*Turning Japanese*, 1991) filter Japan through the eyes of unprivileged outsiders, an undocumented alien and a third-generation Japanese American, respectively, whose marginal status in Japan permits them to transcend the romanticism, exotica, and stereotypes that characterize so many of the works of their white counterparts. Another atypical work is *Japanese by Spring* (1993), black satirist Ishmael Reed's wry burlesque of Japanese conspiracy narratives and of the American racial obsessions that motivate them.

Japanese culture is influencing American tastes, though it is unable to compete with that exercised by the gatekeepers of American popular culture who persist in trivializing it, offering for mass consumption stereotypes of Japanese treachery and comic inscrutability (*Bad News Bears Go to Japan*, 1978; *Gung Ho*, 1985; *Mr. Baseball*, 1992; and *Major League 2*, 1994). These stereotypes have conditioned Americans to regard their presence and culture in America as comic relief or as a threat to national identity. However, American fears of "turning Japanese" sorely underestimate the ability of American popular culture to preemptively Americanize its Japanese appropriations and to transform Japanese into exotica and caricatures of ridicule and dread. The fact remains that Japanese influence on American culture is neither new nor inherently insidious. But such quotidian realities are unlikely subjects of instant bestsellers and cinematic blockbusters.

NOTES

1 Although this paper focuses on images of Japanese in American popular culture, Japanese popular culture indulges in a similar discourse about Americans and others that is no less dependent upon wartime stereotypes and a conspiratorial worldview. Every year in Japan sees the publication of books, magazines, and comic books (including Kawaguchi Kaiji's highly popular serial *Chinmoku no kantai* (*The Silent Service*) in which Americans are "Americanized," made to fit Japan's conception of America. In recent years, Japanese popular culture has resurrected its own version of the yellow peril, "*kichiku-Bei*" (bestial Americans) in which stalwart Japanese re-fight WWII, protect the homeland from American invasion, and preserve the "racial and moral purity" of the Japanese. However, on the whole, Japan's literary war of words against

American seldom comes to the attention of its target, though some works, such as Ishihara Shintarō and Morita Akira's controversial *No to ieru Nippon* (*The Japan That Can Say No*, 1989; translation 1991) and a spate of anti-Semitic tomes that blame everything from U.S.-Japanese trade friction, the collapse of the bubble economy to the proliferation of McDonald's fast food franchises and its impact on traditional Japanese dietary practices on an "international Zionist conspiracy" aimed at weakening Japan, have been covered in the American press.

2 According to science fiction critic and publisher Stephen P. Brown, one well-known SF critic once suggested that "fully half of all alien or future human societies in SF were based on feudal Japan" (Brown, 1991, p. 97).

3 Aside from Phillips, the only time African Americans appear in the novel is during a scene set in a hospital emergency room full of "black and Hispanic people" (p. 135), prompting Connor to comment: "A homicide every twenty minutes. A rape every seven minutes. A child murdered every four hours. No other country tolerates these levels of violence" (p. 135). While Crichton may have sought to debunk the myth that Africans never produced a major civilization, he implies that their American descendants have contributed to the decline of a great one.

4 For its release in Japan, 20th Century Fox and Toho, the film's Japanese distributor, were apparently less concerned with racist depictions of Japanese than with the depiction of Japanese as racist. Two lines of dialogue in which Asakuma refers to Japanese prejudice against biracials and *burakumin* were redubbed in English and newly subtitled. In the original version, Asakuma refers to herself using the pejorative "*ainoko*," but in the version shown in Japanese theaters, she calls herself a "half-bred," which is rendered in the Japanese subtitle as "*konketsu*" (mixed blood). Similarly, the term "*burakumin*," commonly equated in the West with India's "untouchable" outcastes, is changed to "racial prejudice (*jinshu-teki henken*)," a substitution which leads to the following *non sequitur*:

Asakuma: You know the term racial prejudice? It means . . .

Subtitle: *Shitte iru? Jinshu-teki henken 'tte kotoba wo*

Smith: Untouchable?

Subtitle: *Henken ka* (Prejudice?)

Audiences were in no position to check the movie's dialogue against that of the novel, since Hayakawa shobo, the book's Japanese publisher, had deleted from the translated text all references to *burakumin* (as well as Asakuma's denunciation of Japanese attitudes toward the physically disabled). However, alert viewers might have found it peculiar that Asakuma would ask a black man if he had "ever heard the term racial prejudice" and that Smith must make a mental leap to India to define it.

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