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Journal of American Studies, **51** (2017), 3, 939–964
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doi:10.1017/S0021875817000548

Camera Men: Techno-orientalism in Two Acts

DANIEL MCKAY

During the years of Japan's "bubble" economy, writers and artists in the United States became increasingly susceptible to "Japan-bashing," a discourse that objectified Japanese for their trade practices, overseas purchases, and tourist presence. In the following article, I draw upon a range of cultural texts, from Truman Capote's novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's* to Michael Crichton's novel *Rising Sun*, in order to investigate how the trope of the camera-toting Japanese expatriate encapsulated the fears of the era. I then move to explore the ways in which Japanese Americans negotiated these tropes in their writings, paying particular attention to Ruth Ozeki's novel *My Year of Meats*. I hypothesize that Japanese Americans remained aware of the phenomenon of "Japan-bashing" throughout the era, yet did not confront it in a sustained fashion. Instead, tropes were either dismissed out of hand or, as in Ozeki's case, incorporated into a narrative before undergoing a process of gradual dismantlement.

Grandpa Fred: Can you work a TV camera?
Mr. Katsuji: Work a camera? I *am* the camera.

Gremlins 2: The New Batch (1990)

In 1986 Gore Vidal took stock of the American Empire, as he termed it, and concluded that it had perished. World War II had ushered in "the American century," a misnomer with a clear expiry date: the moment, newly dawned at Vidal's time of writing, when the US returned to its pre-hegemonic financial status and began borrowing in order to shore up the budget deficit. The proper description of this state of affairs was not bankruptcy so much as life support, given that the nation's monetary apparatus remained fully intact but simultaneously sustained by and therefore beholden to its creditors. This moment called for self-reflection, dished out by Vidal in the form of injunctions to "approach" Japan – no longer imperial but no longer an economic subservient either – from a historically informed perspective. As the author put it, "Now the long-feared Asiatic colossus takes its turn as the world leader, and we – the white race – have become the yellow man's burden. Let us hope that he will

Doshisha University, Kyoto. Email: dem52@uclive.ac.nz.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875817000548 Published online by Cambridge University Press

treat us more kindly than we treated him."[1] Not content with inverting Kipling's refrain, Vidal closed by predicting that Japan and China would enter into an economic partnership that would leave the US isolated, a scenario that would then force the US to become for Soviet Russia what Japan was destined to become for China: equal partner in a new relationship combining the technical know-how of an "island empire" with a resource-rich "landmass."[2] Thus would the bipolar order of the Cold War resolve and realign itself.[3]

The breakup of the Soviet Union and the bursting of Japan's "bubble economy" did away with the latter hypothesis, and the prospect of a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), in which Japan and the United States would be the largest members (by GDP measurement), makes it look altogether quaint (though this has been forestalled by the Trump administration). Yet these changes, inconceivable in the 1980s, have nonetheless gone hand in hand with a brand of "yellow peril" fearmongering in US media that was altogether familiar to Vidal, albeit that China now substitutes for Japan. In the history of American cultural representation, a volte-face of this sort is not so much surprising as altogether routine, to the extent that a "seen-it-all-before" intellectual complacency on the part of cultural studies scholars and Asian Americanists must be counted as among several – still hypothetical – responses. Whether "China-bashing" intensifies, in its anglophone manifestation, to the levels that its discursive precursor once attained is still an open question, though some of the analogies that were once applied to the Japanese are now China-specific.[4] As yet, the term has not gained an equivalent journalistic or scholarly traction, suggesting either that the latter scenario has not transpired or that media coverage is more nuanced than it was during the late 1970s through 1994 (the period of Japan-focussed invectives, roughly speaking).[5]

[1] Gore Vidal, "The Day the American Empire Ran Out of Gas," in Vidal, ed., *Imperial America: Reflections on the United States of Amnesia* (New York: Nation Books, 2005; first published 1986), 41–54, 41.

[2] Ibid., 53–54.

[3] That the size of the Japanese economy posed an existential challenge to the Cold War in its US–USSR bipolar form was not lost on Japanese intellectuals either. Three years later, the same premise was advanced in an essay titled "The Japan That Can Say No: Why Japan Will Be First among Equals," coauthored by the outspoken fiction writer-turned-politician Shintaro Ishihara and Sony chairman Akio Morita.

[4] Betsy Huang, "Premodern Orientalist Science Fictions," MELUS, 33, 4 (Winter 2008), 23–43, 23–24.

[5] Some scholars assert that there is now a greater degree of realization on the part of Americans that their national economy is too heavily integrated into global trading networks for outright demonization to be a worthwhile response to China, an observation advanced in Christopher A. Shinn, "Homicidal Tendencies: Violence and the Global Economy in Asian American Pulp Fiction," in Mimi Thi Nguyen and Thuy Linh

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Mitigating against intellectual complacency, the present article offers a retrospective on the phenomenon of "Japan-bashing," positioning Michael Crichton's demagogic novel *Rising Sun* (1992) and Ruth Ozeki's ecocritical novel *My Year of Meats* (1998) in a thesis–antithesis arrangement. By following this comparative methodology, I do not mean to imply that "yellow peril" discourses inspire dedicated book-length counterresponses from fiction writers. On the contrary, even as Vidal and Ozeki took it upon themselves to defuse anxieties over Japan, they did so only as a corollary to their principal literary topics (a history of global finance and an ecofeminist critique of the US meat industry respectively). Contrary to the customary claims of scholars who take literary works as their source material, therefore, I do not claim that my reading of Ozeki's novel should transform the way scholars read her text, whether in research or in the lecture theater. In attempting to gauge the degree to which Ozeki's narrative reflects back upon paradigmatic aspects of "Japan-bashing," I take inspiration from the interdisciplinary scholarship of Sheng-mei Ma, who uses the montage film technique as both an example of and an analogy for the ways in which "Eastern" and "Western" films mutually inform one another. As in what follows, Ma does not emphasize source material in which prior cultural models are evident from start to finish, preferring instead to isolate particular instances of possible intertextuality that, added up and taken collectively, suggest more than a passing interest on the part of the auteur.[6] In like turn, I hypothesize that Ozeki's interest in "Japan-bashing" was less than dedicated but more than casual. Her narrative (dis)integrates signature tropes from this discourse, particularly that of the camera-toting expatriate Japanese (tourist, salaryman, or sojourner), envisaging them as saviors rather than invaders. To better appreciate her efforts in this regard, I argue that a pre-reading of Crichton's novel reveals an assumption on Ozeki's part that the tropes and discourses associated with expatriated Japanese characters are ready to hand in the reader's consciousness, even if not paramount.

If a dedicated book-length counterresponse to "Japan-bashing" never emerged in Asian American fiction writing, the same may be said of monographs in Asian American studies (though scholarly and non-scholarly commemorations of the 1982 death of Vincent Chin ensure that the phenomenon ties into questions of the perceived "foreignness" of Asian

Nguyen Tu, eds., *Alien Encounters: Popular Culture in Asian America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 111–29, 115.

[6] Sheng-mei Ma, *East–West Montage: Reflections on Asian Bodies in Diaspora* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), xi.

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Americans).[7] To date, the most sustained research efforts have come from the field of Japan studies, prominent among which are two book-length studies published earlier this decade as part of the Routledge Contemporary Japan series. The first of these, Narrelle Morris's *Japan-Bashing* (2011), cross-compares the discourse as it arose in the US and Australia, and also devotes some attention to the Japanese response; while the second study, Marie Thorsten's *Superhuman Japan* (2012), focusses upon specific themes (such as youth cultures and parenting models). Both authors, however, evince an intellectual parochialism by shying from Asian American source material, preferring instead to concentrate their analyses on white anglophone subjects portraying Japanese nationals as objects. To some extent, this trade-off is to be expected. After all, the fact that "Japan-bashing" as a mainstream topic has now given way to what some Japanese call "Japan-passing" (in reference to their country's economic doldrums) is, from a researcher's perspective, convenient. In the early twenty-first century, the era of "Japan Inc." now looks thoroughly "dated" (in both senses of the word), meaning that a fresh wave of anti-Japanese cultural productions looks unlikely to emerge (though unexamined material from the era occasionally makes its way into sourcebooks).[8]

Alongside the convenience of temporal demarcation and ready-to-hand source material as explanations for the sustained interest in this field, one might also list a certain methodological "neatness." "Japan-bashing" was primarily of an American provenance, leaving Japan – its institutions and population – on the receiving end, discursively speaking. To comprehend the ideological power relations involved, researchers have typically listed tropes (the robot, the cyborg, the "samurai" salaryman, et al.) and/or selective instances from international relations (such as the public smashing of a Toshiba radio set by US congressmen in 1987) and then isolated their manifestation within the cultural productions of white Americans who were active during the period in question.[9] The present article stands as the beneficiary of

[7] Masao Miyoshi, *Off Center: Power and Culture Relations between Japan and the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 63.

[8] An example of recently recovered source material is a reproduction of a poster from the AutoWorld theme park, photographed by Helen Zia and published in John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, eds., *Yellow Peril! An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear* (New York: Verso, 2014), 262. The plethora of audiovisual material that survives from the era not only substantiates scholarly studies but also finds its way into retrospective documentaries on Japan and/or the US–Japan trade wars. Informative radio programs that do this include "Misunderstanding Japan," *Archive on 4*, dir. Keith Moore, BBC, 8 Aug. 2015; "NUMMI," *This American Life*, dir. Ira Glass, PRX The Public Radio Exchange, Chicago, 17 July 2015.

[9] Ian Littlewood, *The Idea of Japan: Western Images, Western Myths* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996); Ian Buruma, "Wake Up, America," in Buruma, ed., *The Missionary and the Libertine: Love and War in East and West* (New York: Vintage, 2001), 270–77; Andrew

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these studies but does not envisage "Japan-bashing" as a one-way street in which Japan and/or ethnic Japanese (whether as minorities or as expatriated nationals) were victimized in ways that made responses scarce or absent in the world of arts and letters. Thus far, the most sophisticated study that complicates this "neat" structural arrangement has been offered by Kumiko Sato in a 2004 comparative-literature article. In this study, Sato recalls how cyberpunk, a science fiction subgenre, quickly came to the attention of Japan's literati owing to its proclivity for depicting Japan/ese as more postmodern than America/ns. As Sato puts it, "American cyberpunk enabled Japan to find itself in the future of the West, which suggested that it had already outpaced the West in Westernization thanks to its rapid technological progress."[10] The images commonly found within cyberpunk enshrined a technological aesthetic, if rather bleakly (which was where "Japan-bashing" intersected). Even so, American cyberpunk was adopted in Japan because it heralded Japan as culturally unique and, paradoxically, the *telos* to which other capitalist cultures were inbound.

The subsequent sections of my article revisit the principal features of "Japan-bashing," initially as a topic in its own right (after the manner of Morris and Thorsten) but also as a point of contrast to cultural production and expression within Japanese American communities (transplanting Sato's model of comparativism to the US). Whereas American cyberpunk became a genre model for Japanese science fiction writers, I observe that Japanese American authors, preoccupied with the politics of identity in the United States, paid less attention to any one particular genre than to the recurrent tropes thrown up by the prevalent fearmongering. Genre and medium were altogether secondary to ideology, as far as writers like David Mura and Ruth Ozeki were concerned. The situation might have been otherwise had "Japan-bashing" coalesced into an iconic narrative capable of crossing medium, language, and national boundaries – as, say, the story of *Madame Butterfly* repeatedly had over the preceding hundred years. However, this possibility never transpired and, in lieu of an urtext, the corporate thriller emerged as a model that American readers might acknowledge as consistently pertinent to Japan, in essence or in representation.[11] Indeed, American fiction writers

C. McKevitt, "Consuming Japan: Cultural Relations and the Globalizing of America, 1973–1993," PhD dissertation, Temple University, 2009, 89–135.

[10] Kumiko Sato, "How Information Technology Has (Not) Changed Feminism and Japanism: Cyberpunk in the Japanese Context," *Comparative Literature Studies*, 41, 3 (2004), 335–55, 340.

[11] This genre drew upon themes of invasion that had emerged in the "future war" novels of the late nineteenth century and thus possessed a certain lineage or "pedigree" on that basis, though these precursors were never acknowledged by the authors. See Madison J. Davis, "Interpreting the East to the West," *World Literature Today*, 80, 6 (Nov.–Dec. 2006),

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Michael Crichton, Steven Schlossstein, and Tom Clancy wrote novels that portrayed the US–Japan "trade wars" using a predictable narrative formula. In my reading of the Japanese American response to "Japan-bashing," I envisage Ozeki's novel as being, in part at least, a rebuttal of the fears projected onto expatriated Japanese nationals in the US. Though not the urtext that *Madame Butterfly* was for Chinese American playwright David Henry Hwang in his play *M. Butterfly* (1988), Crichton's novel is not a passing influence either.

STAGE SET: THE PLEASURE PERIPHERY

The phenomenon of "Japan-bashing" received its first critical examination during the 1990s, particularly in David Morley and Kevin Robins's coauthored study *Spaces of Identity* (1995), which appended the term to the newly emergent cultural phenomenon known as techno-orientalism, itself a distant derivative of the still-larger discourse that Edward Said identified in *Orientalism* (1978).[12] Said's study had focussed upon the Near East, hypothesizing that Anglo-French imperialism invested in and was dependent upon knowledge industries (libraries, institutes, encylopediae, etc.) in order to create a mutually reinforcing relationship between information and power that denied autonomy to subject races/peoples. Part of the imperial project, as Said saw it, involved representing the culture of "the oriental" as unchanging and premodern, the better to justify foreign rule.[13] Techno-orientalism, by contrast, has not sustained formal colonialism, nor does it depict East Asian peoples as inhabiting a timeless/changeless culture overwhelmingly "different" to the Westerner's own. On the contrary, the techno-orientalist imaginary constructs East Asian societies as following the same developmental trajectory as the West. Sustaining this perspective was not at all difficult in the 1980s, as long as one focussed on East Asia's commitment to capitalist principles and the gradual phasing in of democratic governance (while politely omitting mainland China and North Korea from consideration). The difficulties arose not in the matter of essentials, but rather in the degrees of development

13–15, 14; Takayuki Tatsumi, *Full Metal Apache: Transactions between Cyberpunk Japan and Avant-pop America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 63–70; David Walker, "Godless Heathen: China in the American Bestseller," in Charles Ferrall, Paul Millar, and Keren Smith, eds., *East by South: China in the Australasian Imagination* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2005), 136–55, *passim*.

[12] During the 1980s, studies tended to itemize political disputes between Japan and the US with little attention to ideologies. A precursor to Morley and Robins that went somewhat further than these was Roland Robertson, "Japan and the USA: The Interpenetration of National Identities and the Debate about Orientalism," in Brian S. Turner, Nicholas Abercrombie, and Stephen Hill, eds., *Dominant Ideologies* (London: Routledge, 1990), 182–98, *passim*.

[13] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003; first published 1978), 38.

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involved. More specifically, high levels of industrialization, managerial competency, and technological literacy throughout the region problematized the notion of "follower societies." Acknowledging these trends, fiction writers and film directors in the US began to construct narratives that were, if not declarative in their thesis of a future centered on Tokyo or Beijing, resoundingly suggestive in their aesthetics.[14]

These productions went hand in hand with media commentary and nonfiction publications, all of which reflected anxieties that "the West" was likely to become, if it had not already become, less developed than "the East." Scenarios of fast-slipping technological supremacy therefore underpinned techno-orientalism, though the otherness of East Asian societies was not always or necessarily intensified thereby. When anglophone commentators looked at the Japanese "economic miracle," they saw themselves – more specifically, a version of themselves as they would wish to be – reflected back at them:

> Japan today is an intensely globalized society with skyhigh literacy, very low crime, excellent life expectancy, tremendous fashion sense, and a staggering amount of the electronic substance we used to call cash. After centuries of horrific vicissitudes and heartbreaking personal sacrifice, the Japanese are fat, rich, turbo-charged, and ready to party down. They are jazzing into the 21st-century global limelight in their velcro'd sneakers, their jeans stuffed with spare film-packs and gold-plated VISA cards.[15]

This was techno-orientalism in its compli/ementary form, a discourse that, in the words of theorist Toshiya Ueno, enabled the West "to preserve its identity in its imagination of the future."[16] Sundry cultural productions of the era followed the same mode of representation, paying tribute to Japan's economic dynamism while simultaneously consuming it as a form of spectacle. In all cases, the "up-to-date" technologies and urban landscapes of Tokyo and Osaka "backdated" the cultural vantage point of the onlooker in alarming but simultaneously affirming ways.[17]

[14] For a critical reading of Hollywood films of the era see Christine Cornea, "Techno-orientalism and the Postmodern Subject," in Jacqueline Furby and Karen Randell, eds., *Screen Methods: Comparative Readings in Film Studies* (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), 72–81, *passim*. Non-scholarly discussions of techno-orientalism as it features in mainstream films are also available, such as Umapagan Ampikaipakan and Johanan Sen, "Techno-orientalism," *What The Flick*, podcast audio, 18 March 2012, at www.bfm.my/wtf-technoorientalism-1703.html.

[15] Bruce Sterling, "Shinkansen," *Whole Earth Review*, Winter 1990, 76.

[16] Toshiya Ueno, "Techno-orientalism and Media-Tribalism: On Japanese Animation and Rave Culture," *Third Text*, 13, 47 (Summer 1999), 95–106, 95.

[17] David S. Roh, Betsy Huang, and Greta A. Niu, "Introduction," in David S. Roh et al., eds., *Techno-orientalism: Imagining Asia in Speculative Fiction, History, and Media* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 1–22, 3, 7.

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Alarmism and self-affirmation were never wholly separable as responses, yet alarm was undeniably ascendant at times and, in its Japan-specific accusatory form, came to be known as "Japan-bashing." Once public discourse went down this path, the root cause fixated upon Japan's increased exports (particularly cars and consumer technology products) and high-profile corporate purchases of US companies and real estate (such as California's Pebble Beach Golf Course in 1990). Though overstated, this point of view was not wholly unfounded either. In the earliest period of the postwar Japanese "miracle," automotive exports had been greeted with indulgent condescension, as the 1964 US song title "Little Honda" reveals.[18] By the 1980s, however, this diminutive perspective had long since faded into history and Japanese commentators had begun to take up condescending positions of their own. Prominent among these was Sony chairman Akio Morita, who observed that, in supplying high-quality manufactured goods to the US, Japan was providing a service that Americans could no longer provide themselves.[19] Inflammatory generalizations like Morita's, by no means unique, inadvertently revealed the interpenetrative discourse of the "trade wars," each side carrying – but seldom taking – responsibility for the tensions.[20] So intransigent did these stances become that variations on the arguments often appeared either inconsequential or absent altogether. Aware that this was the case, foreign correspondents and expatriated educators made it their business to uncover the historical dimension that lay hidden beneath the language of tariffs, exchange rates, and trade deficits. Japanese journalist Mitsuko Shimomura, for example, recalled her time in mid-1960s New York City as a "peak moment" in US history before the nation became bogged down in Vietnam, Watergate, and civil rights struggles. In her judgment, the robustness of Japan's economy was partly explained by the absence of these quagmires.[21]

Curiously unexplored in these and other commentaries was an attendant phenomenon to the "trade wars," namely the increased visibility of the

[18] Paul Ingrassia, *Engines of Change: A History of the American Dream in Fifteen Cars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 196.

[19] Akio Morita, "The Trouble with the American Economy," in Peter Duus and Kenji Hasegawa, eds., *Rediscovering America: Japanese Perspectives on the American Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011 [1989]), 331.

[20] That the trade disputes were analogous to war became a commonplace assumption. As the automobile executive Lee Iacocca put it, "Right now, we're in the midst of another major war with Japan. This time it's not a shooting war, and I guess we should be thankful for that. The current conflict is a trade war. But because our government refuses to see this war for what it really is, we're well on the road to defeat." See Lee Iacocca, *Lee Iacocca: An Autobiography* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), 315.

[21] Mitsuko Shimomura, "Glorious America, Where Are You?", in Duus and Hasegawa, 314–17, 315–16.

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commentators themselves or, more generally, those expatriated Japanese who, as beneficiaries of Japan's economic prosperity, chose the US as a tourist destination, a business posting, or, as sojourners, a site of temporary, albeit protracted, residence. In 1987, Japanese tour guide Yukio Nakayama published *Tourists' Bashing*, the title of which revealed the humorous tone of the text while also alluding to an offshoot of "Japan-bashing" that took tourists as its object. There was need for such levity, for Japanese tourists were the subject of lengthy ruminations, especially among the war generation. Combat veteran and historian William Manchester, for example, visited Guam and noted the indifference to battlefield sites and war memorials among Japanese tourists, an observation that was echoed among tourist-watchers in Hawaii.[22] This rhetoric eventually found its way into veteran fighter pilot-turned-thriller writer Joe Weber's novel *Honorable Enemies* (1994), the opening of which begins with a Japanese cruise ship being machine-gunned by a helicopter off Waikiki Beach.[23] The intensity of such images may partly have derived from a colonialist sense of chagrin, insofar as the war generation had come to identify Hawaii as "their" pleasure periphery, not Japan's.[24]

As a term common to tourist studies, "pleasure periphery" denotes a conception (usually urban) of places and peoples (usually rural) as both non-threatening and "exotic," attitudes that have enabled international tourists to objectify host cultures for their own consumption.[25] This model takes on additional complexity when tourist groups originate from more than one nationality, each of which may implicitly identify the host culture as "theirs." Such was the case when Japanese and American tourists crossed paths on Pacific island resorts. To some extent, the racial antagonism that Americans brought to these encounters could be concealed within a genteel distaste for tourism generally, which has a discursive lineage every bit the equal of "yellow peril" anxieties and which employs a similar language of fear or contempt. Making the point succinctly, cultural geographer Mike Crang states,

[22] William Manchester, *Goodbye Darkness: A Memoir of the Pacific War* (London: Michael Joseph, 1981), 282; Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 192–96.

[23] Weber's narrative dwells upon the effect of Japanese tourism upon Pacific islanders, as in the case of a Samoan taxi driver: "The Japs have taken over the real-estate market again, like they did back in the mid-to-late eighties. They come in, buy millions of dollars of property in a few weeks, real estate people jack up the prices, they buy more, and so on. The locals, we ain't got a chance, man." See Joe Weber, *Honorable Enemies* (New York: Putnam's, 1994), 84.

[24] David Farber and Beth Bailey, "The Fighting Man as Tourist: The Politics of Tourist Culture in Hawaii during World War II," *Pacific Historical Review*, 65, 4 (1996), 641–60, *passim*.

[25] Louis Turner and John Ash, *The Golden Hordes: International Tourism and the Pleasure Periphery* (London: Constable, 1975), 19.

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"Mass tourists are frequently treated as a homogeneous mass, who are often metaphorically described like animals as hordes, herds or flocks, making them sound almost like a separate species."[26] Needless to say, those who invested in such binaries (such as William Manchester) never considered themselves tourists, but rather as "travelers" (an older term with a "nobler" linguistic heritage). Furthermore, it remained possible for researchers to interrogate the process by which racial antagonism could inflect other discourses or cultural aesthetics, as scholars of popular culture revealed when pondering the anti-Japanese imagery of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* media phenomenon.[27] Comparative studies of anglophone literature also reveal that, during the same period, Australian writers were expressing antipathies of their own toward Japanese tourists and sojourners.[28] Common to these writers and to those of the United States was a cultural double standard, which saw white male tourists/sojourners present in Japan as inhabiting a free-spirited pleasureworld of sexual indulgence (even as Japanese men were reduced to workaholics), whereas those literary works that depicted Japanese male tourists/sojourners in the US envisaged them as sexual predators (while white American men were out of work).[29]

ACT 1: MESSRS. YUNIOSHI AND SAKAMURA

The "threat" implicit in Japanese tourists, as viewed from the US, did not follow immediately on their arrival in anglophone lands. Indeed, overseas Japanese tourism was almost unknown until the Tokyo Olympics of 1964, prior to which Japanese citizens had faced travel restrictions imposed by the US Occupation and their own government (which sought to limit private expenditure abroad as much as possible, the better to speed domestic economic recovery). In the postwar period, Americans therefore had little contact with expatriated Japanese and only a contemptuous regard for the "tinker" products of Japanese industry.[30] Correspondingly, one finds the Japanese presence

[26] Mike Crang, "Travel/Tourism," in David Atkinson, Peter Jackson, David Sibley, and Neil Washbourne, eds., *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 34–40, 39.

[27] Nora Okja Cobb, "Behind the Inscrutable Half-Shell: Images of Mutant Japanese and Ninja Turtles," *MELUS*, 16, 4 (Winter 1989–90), 87–98, 91; George H. Lewis, "From Common Dullness to Fleeting Wonder: The Manipulation of Cultural Meaning in the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Saga," *Journal of Popular Culture*, 25, 2 (Fall 1991), 31–43, 38.

[28] Megumi Kato, *Narrating the Other: Australian Literary Perceptions of Japan* (Clayton: Monash University Press, 2008), 177–84.

[29] Dong-Hoo Lee, "East Asian Images in Selected American Popular Films from 1930 to 1993," PhD dissertation, New York University, 1996, 218–19.

[30] Ron Tanner, "Toy Robots in America, 1955–75: How Japan Really Won the War," *Journal of Popular Culture*, 28, 3 (Winter 1994), 125–54, 125.

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within American cultural productions of the era to be of a passing, derisive sort. The pidgin-speaking photojournalist Mr. Yunioshi, a character from Truman Capote's 1958 novella *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, is a case in point. Early on in Capote's narrative, readers get an abridged travelogue of this figure's journey through sub-Saharan Africa:

> On Christmas day Mr. Yunioshi had passed with his camera through Tococul, a village in the tangles of nowhere and of no interest, merely a congregation of mud huts with monkeys in the yards and buzzards on the roofs. He'd decided to move on when he suddenly saw a Negro squatting in a doorway carving monkeys on a walking stick.[31]

The association of black Africans with/as monkeys dominates the passage, and yet the curiosity and comedic value lies not so much in this age-old conflation as in its juxtaposition to the stereotype of the Japanese as inseparably attached to their cameras.[32] Mr. Yunioshi might or might not photograph the black woodcarver, but the narrative has already "framed" Mr. Yunioshi from an angle that reduces him in turn. At first glance, the fact that nothing else about this figure's person is acknowledged, much less described, might enable readers to picture him any way they wish, yet the image of an always-present camera serves as a narrative quirk that adjourns the imaginative process before it has had a chance to begin. Not only do readers end up knowing nothing about Mr. Yunioshi, therefore, but also the stereotype of camera-toting Japanese that Capote's narrative endorses implicates the reader's imagination in his textual erasure. Simply put, the camera image disestablishes Mr. Yunioshi's characterization by calling the notion of autonomous camera-free behavior into question.

In the era separating the end of World War II from the rise of "Japan Inc.," expatriated Japanese in American cultural productions, where they featured at all, featured much as Mr. Yunioshi did. Not only were they harmlessly and ridiculously gadget-loving, they were also harmless and ridiculous largely *because* they were gadget-loving. Naturally, all of this changed once "Japan-bashing" took hold of media discourse, at which point the presence of expatriated Japanese, with or without their cameras, became a good deal more than risible. The clearest example of Mr. Yunioshi's metamorphosis comes across in the figure of Eddie Sakamura, a character in Michael Crichton's

[31] Truman Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's and Three Stories* (New York: Vintage, 1993; first published 1958), 7.

[32] The same juxtaposition of modern Japanese and premodern black communities occurs in fictional narratives of the Pacific War, in which the armaments and portable compasses of the imperial Japanese contrast with the drums and spears of island natives. See Daniel McKay, "Enter the Japanese Imperial Marine: Postwar Comedy and Errol Brathwaite's *An Affair of Men*," *arcadia: International Journal of Literary Culture*, 49, 2 (Nov. 2014), 368–91, *passim*.

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novel. Ostensibly, the narrative of *Rising Sun* centers upon an investigation into the murder of a young white woman, Cheryl Austin, whose body is found in a Japanese corporate high-rise newly erected in Los Angeles. On the scene are Peter Smith and John Connor, police detectives who struggle to solve the crime over the course of two days. Variously a suspect, an informant, and a long-time acquaintance of John Connor, Sakamura is also an expatriate whose status as such is established early in the narrative when Connor confiscates his passport as surety of cooperative behavior.[33] Quite what has led Sakamura to reside in the US is never clear, for Crichton's novel is not an immigrant narrative and the transpacific story is left out altogether. Nor does Sakamura's mind dwell upon the omission, for his primary concern is not that he will lose his passport but that he will lose his driver's license after breaking too many traffic rules.[34] Thus the first conclusion one might draw is that urban mobility matters more to him than national identity. However, Crichton invests too little in Sakamura for this character to be considered a Japanese beatnik of the 1990s. His love of cars is not symptomatic of a psychological malaise or anomic value system, but rather a generalized perception in US media discourse that Japanese industrial products were outpacing those of the United States (by performance standards and in sales figures). One must therefore read his presence in the text not in terms of character development but as a focal point for images of expatriated Japanese current at the time of publication. As a female character summarizes it, "He loves it here. Why not? He's got everything. He buys a new Ferrari every time he bangs up the old one. He's got more money than God."[35] Notwithstanding the reference to Ferrari (a possible acknowledgment that luxury Japanese marques such as Acura and Infiniti had not achieved equivalent market penetration), the message is one of extraordinary wealth and a reputation that precedes the man.

As a character trait, Sakamura's love of cars is unreadable except in terms of the polemics that inflected current affairs. The loss of thousands of American jobs on the automotive assembly lines meant that Japanese imports invariably featured in discussions as to the cause. Moreover, Americans entertained "proprietorial" feelings toward their domestic car companies that rendered the associations a good deal more than just economic. As one study observes, "By doing so well in making a product so near to the heart of modern American popular culture, the Japanese inadvertently pushed a collective emotional button."[36] The brazenness of Sakamura's love affair with the car

[33] Michael Crichton, *Rising Sun* (New York: Arrow Books, 1992), 121. [34] Ibid., 107.
[35] Ibid., 79.
[36] David Lawrence Abney, "Japan Bashing: A History of America's Anti-Japanese Acts, Attitudes and Laws," PhD dissertation, Arizona State University, 1995, 317.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875817000548 Published online by Cambridge University Press

constitutes a purposeful attempt, on Crichton's part, to tap into this emotional response from his readers. More than any other Japanese character in the narrative, Sakamura moves rapidly from place to place, eventually appearing to perish in a high-speed car crash.[37] This moment is significant in another way also, for it follows a scene in which Smith breaks into his house to arrest Sakamura, only to be assaulted by two white women who have been keeping him company.[38] In Capote's novel, Mr. Yunioshi is an anhedonic whose attachment to his camera substitutes for sexual virility almost to the point of implied castration. Sakamura, on the other hand, is a self-professed *hipparidako* or "popular guy."[39] Far from robbing him of sexual virility, his love of technology augments it considerably, at least in the opinion of his female admirers. Indeed, the woman who first describes his flamboyant habits, previously quoted, bundles his "fast" automotive history and "fast" sexual history together as if the two are mutually inclusive. In short, he encapsulates the sexist self-image that white American men had entertained in regard to their own auto-mobility, the main problem being one of excess rather than total "difference."[40]

As an ongoing project in anglophone cultural representation, the remasculinization of the East Asian male subject might appear to have advanced somewhat in the figure of Eddie Sakamura, were it not for the fact that his sexual behavior is coded as perversion.[41] It is he who first alerts Smith and Connor to Cheryl Austin's fetishistic need for asphyxiation during sexual intercourse, a practice that he indulged before thinking better of it. In addition, his private residence is akin to a bordello and part of his unofficial position in the US involves supplying girls for visiting dignitaries.[42] These details intersect with more pervasive narrative references to the mistreatment of white American women at the hands of Japanese expatriates, beginning with a salaryman's curt dismissal of Austin as a "common prostitute" and climaxing with Connor's description of a "shadow world" of private clubs catering to Japanese businessmen in major US cities.[43] The latter episode bears some resemblance to the decaying morals attributed to East Asian cities in

[37] Crichton, 168–69. [38] Ibid., 166–67. [39] Ibid., 121.

[40] Floyd D. Cheung, "Imagining Danger, Imagining Nation: Postcolonial Discourse in *Rising Sun* and *Stargate*," *Jouvert: A Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 2, 2 (1998), para. 15, http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v2i2/CHEUNG.HTM.

[41] Robyn Rodriguez and Vernadette Gonzalez observe that the rise of Japan's export industry also enabled young Asian American males to express their masculinity through association, particularly in the subculture of "rice rocket" car imports. See Robyn Magalit Rodriguez and Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez, "Asian American Auto/Biographies: The Gendered Limits of Consumer Citizenship in Import Subcultures," in Nguyen and Nguyen Tu, *Alien Encounters*, 248–66, 255. [42] Crichton, 392. [43] Ibid., 32–33, 71.

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anglophone thriller novels.[44] Thus the implication may be that, in return for exporting consumer products to the US, Japanese men have turned US cities into objects of consumption, including the white women who reside there.[45]

Scholarly readings of Crichton's novel have paid considerable attention to the ways in which gender and race intersect, particularly Cheryl Austin's role as symbol of a United States that has been murdered on the boardroom table of a Japanese corporation.[46] The latter image ties together prevalent fears of collapsing American industries with sexually predatory expatriate Japanese, undoubtedly the two most pressing concerns in Crichton's narrative. To these, one might also add a third fear, less obvious and, thus far, unexamined: the possibility that advances in technology might enable the Japanese to mediate or (re)master American perceptions of the world around them. As with the contrast between Sakamura's happy-go-lucky car purchases and the unhappy state of American manufacturing, these concerns grew out of real-life industrial achievements across the Pacific. Tape recorders were first developed in Germany during World War II, and in 1965 Philips Electronics patented the cassette tape. By the 1980s the technology had become portable, though the most popular model was not a Philips or RadioShack device but the Sony Walkman.[47] Most Americans saw little harm in this, for their feelings toward the new product were not "proprietorial." Among the enthusiasts, William Gibson acknowledged that the Walkman had already changed his own experiences of everyday life for the better.[48] In *Rising Sun*, on the other hand, these same changes are wearisome at best, menacing at worst. The narrative opens, for example, with Smith's attempts to learn Japanese by following prerecorded sentences on a tape.[49] By the early 1990s, the numbed wretchedness that these "teach-yourself" sessions tended to evoke

[44] Robin W. Winks, "The Sinister Oriental: Thriller Fiction and the Asian Scene," *Journal of Popular Culture*, 19, 2 (Fall 1985), 49–61, 51.

[45] This fear recurred in thriller novels of the era. Reviewing Tom Clancy's *Debt of Honor* (1994), the critic Christopher Buckley summarized it as follows: "It all plays into the crudest of cultural paranoia, namely, that what these beastly yellow inscrutables are really after is – our women." See Christopher Buckley, "Megabashing Japan: World War II Wasn't Half Enough for Tom Clancy," *New York Times Book Review*, 28 Oct. 1994, 28, underlining in original.

[46] Heather J. Hicks, *The Culture of Soft Work: Labor, Gender, and Race in Postmodern American Narrative* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 149; Gary Y. Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014), 138.

[47] Carroll W. Pursell, *The Machine in America: A Social History of Technology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 330.

[48] In Gibson's own words, "the Sony Walkman has done more to change human perception than any virtual reality gadget. I can't remember any technological experience since that was quite so wonderful as being able to take music and move it through landscapes and architecture." See William Gibson, *Time Out*, 6 Oct. 1993, 49.

[49] Crichton, 15.

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had become a minor literary trope in its own right, satirized in Ishmael Reed's *Japanese by Spring* (1993). As in Reed's novel, bilingualism for Smith is neither an end in itself nor especially desirable on its own terms. Instead, functional fluency is something he simply must acquire if he wishes to keep his job as liaison in the Los Angeles Police Department's Special Services Division.

One of Crichton's speculative hypotheses is that Japanese visual technologies might change American perceptions much as audio technologies already had. By the time of publication, Japan's status as the world's most media-saturated society was widely acknowledged. The 1983 francophone documentary *Sans soleil* alluded to this and in 1990 Carl Eugene Loeffler envisaged Japan as a giant "video garden":

> In Japan, you can find public video displays wherever people gather – stores, transportation centers, and places of rest. Japanese public video takes on the same cultural meanings as the presence of water in gardens and parks: it is a kind of religion. People immerse themselves in it, and as with most religions, some people are fanatical, while others remain aloof.[50]

Gibson and Loeffler were struck by the power of medium, but more especially by Japan's role in expanding the reach of a given medium. However, these perspectives presupposed either that the content of the medium was confined to Japan (Loeffler's assumption) or that users would be able to decide for themselves what they would experience (Gibson's assumption). Both premises became increasingly open to question in the aftermath of Japanese investments in Hollywood production companies. As one study noted, "Investing in Hollywood cinema more intensely than its own 'national' cinema, Japanese companies and producers blurred the definition of 'Japanese cinema' by making Hollywood cinema, in part, identifiable as Japanese."[51]

Crichton's response to this media history was not overtly articulated, but the subtext to his narrative is that Japanese control over American media industries (emblematized in Nakamoto Corp.'s investment in hi-definition video) could indeed change the way that Americans perceived the world around them. That the Japanese might attempt this is clear from the moment in which Smith and Connor search Cheryl Austin's room and discover that, prior to their arrival, the contents had already been examined and subsequently placed back in their original positions.[52] The rearrangement is painstakingly accurate, and yet Japanese reliance upon analogue photographic technology betrays the deception. As the police investigation proceeds, however, the Japanese discard analogue technology for digital formats when

[50] Carl Eugene Loeffler, "Video in Japan," *Whole Earth Review*, Winter 1990, 84.
[51] Ken Provencher, "Japan in Transnational Hollywood: Industry and Identity, 1985–1995," PhD dissertation, University of Southern California, 2013, 2.
[52] Crichton, 72–74.

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they provide Smith and Connor with security tapes recovered from the murder scene.[53] Once again, the content of this evidence appears to be true and accurate, until Smith takes the tapes to media laboratories for close analysis. As a last-minute recourse, this move provides Smith with a glimpse into the dire state of American research institutions, complete with a mini lecture on the influence of (Japanese) financial donors.[54] Thwarted at every turn by Japanese corporate leverage, the original content of the tapes is at last revealed and Smith gradually comes to understand how the Japanese had been planning for such a contingency from the moment the detectives first arrived at the crime scene:

> Theresa said, "Did anybody cross the room? Anybody at all?"
>
> "No," I said. "We had the yellow barrier up. Nobody was allowed on the other side of the tape. In fact –"
>
> And then I remembered. "Wait a minute! There was somebody! That little guy with the camera," I said. "He was on the other side of the barrier, taking pictures."
>
> "That's right," Connor said.
>
> "What little guy?" she said.
>
> "A Japanese guy. He was taking pictures. We asked Ishiguro about him. He said his name was, ah …"
>
> "Mr Tanaka," Connor said.
>
> "That's right, Mr Tanaka. And you asked Ishiguro for the film from his camera." I frowned. "But we never got it."
>
> "No," Connor said. "And frankly, I never thought we would."[55]

Though the narrative is not intertextual at this point, the image of the "Japanese guy" with his camera is clearly a holdover from the prior era, even to the point that Mr. Tanaka's "littleness" makes him an object of ridicule as his literary ancestor in Capote's narrative had been. Thus it is clear that, as the global footprint of Japanese technology became ever larger, the dominant image associated with expatriate Japanese shifted away from the camera (Mr. Yunioshi) toward the car (Mr. Sakamura), but not to the extent that the former disappeared altogether. Indeed, in some literary productions such as the 1984 short story "Kaibutsu-san" by the New Zealand author Keri Hulme the image of the camera-toting Japanese becomes menacing enough to connote an image of "takeover" all on his own.[56]

[53] Ibid., 150–56.

[54] Ibid., 288–89. The narrative is broken up into a series of episodes in which Smith is the pupil and Connor the learned "Japanologist," with the latter discoursing on Japanese culture from the vantage point of the perpetual outsider. See Jacob Raz and Aviad E. Raz, "'America' Meets 'Japan': A Journey for Real between Two Imaginaries," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 13, 3 (Aug. 1996), 153–78, 156.

[55] Crichton, 297.

[56] Daniel McKay, "The Japanese Tourist Survival Guide: Undead Tropes of the Pacific War in Contemporary New Zealand Literature," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 49, 1 (March 2014), 130–34.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875817000548 Published online by Cambridge University Press

ACT 2: MESSRS. SUZUKI AND OH

The Japanese American reaction to Crichton's brand of "Japan-bashing" was one of general distaste, tempered by a multifaceted and complex response to the rise of Japanese tourism and corporate investment in their own neighborhoods. Indeed, (counter)reactions to the latter at the community level preceded the engagement of Japanese American literary writers like David Mura and Ruth Ozeki by many years. Since the late 1960s, in fact, those Japanese tourists who chose to holiday in the mainland United States had tended to prefer Los Angeles as a destination, with first-time tourists dividing their time between Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Century City, and Olvera Street. The Japan Travel Bureau had offered overnight stays in these areas, but continued to accommodate the majority in the city's "Little Tokyo" district (one of three such districts in the USA).[57] Financially speaking, this arrangement served the needs of the tourist group and the host community alike, and yet the influx of tourist dollars belied a growing controversy that was already evident by the mid-1970s. The older generation of native-born second-generation Japanese Americans ("Nisei") resented the erosion of their cultural heritage, which was tied in part to the stories of their immigrant parents and, in the opinion of the Nisei, not one and the same with "fixed" notions of Japanese culture that tended to be brought to the United States by tourists and corporate executives. These divisive issues were intensified by the redevelopment of Little Tokyo in the late 1970s, a process that was part-sponsored by Japanese corporations (which tended to choose Los Angeles as their US headquarters). Subsequently, the annual "Nisei Week" festival underwent a similar "makeover," epitomized in its new name ("Japanese Festival"), which shifted the cultural emphases away from local Japanese American culture toward a uniform idea of Japanese – that is, Japan-derived – culture, with corresponding expectations for the ways in which high-profile participants publicly expressed their identification.[58]

These developments pre-dated the publication of *Rising Sun* and show that the influence of Japanese overseas investment could be every bit as controversial for Japanese Americans as it sometimes was for white Americans. In fact, Crichton's narrative includes a Japanese American forensic pathologist, Tim Yoshimura, who tersely rebukes Smith and Connor for presuming that he is a Japanese national.[59] However, the history of Little Tokyo and its

[57] Alexander Moore, "Rosanzerusu Is Los Angeles: An Anthropological Inquiry of Japanese Tourists," *Annals of Tourism Research*, 12, 4 (1985), 619–43, 632.

[58] Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival, 1934–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 191–201.

[59] Crichton, 136–40.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875817000548 Published online by Cambridge University Press

controversies are left out of Crichton's narrative altogether, a curious omission for a novel that focusses the reader's attention upon Japanese influence in Los Angeles.[60] More curious still is the response of Japanese American writers, who tended to address the topic of "Japan-bashing" in a passing way as though the issues either did not concern them or were too sensitive to handle. The reasons for this are beyond the scope of the present article, though it is possible that memories of World War II-era internment left writers unwilling to weigh into the controversies, perhaps because the journalism of the day had brought the history of the Pacific War back into people's minds (such as the idea of Japan's trade practices constituting an economic "Pearl Harbor").[61] However, this is not to say that responses from Japanese Americans were altogether absent. The Japanese American Citizens' League listed Crichton's novel in their collection of "Japan-bashing" material,[62] and some writers, such as the memoirist David Mura, drew attention to the news coverage:

> Before the television set, wearing my ever-present Cubs cap, I crouched near the sofa, saw the enemy surrounding me. I shouted to my men, hurled a grenade. I fired my gun. And the Japanese soldiers fell before me, one by one.
> Of course, by the eighties, I was aware, as everyone else was, of Japan's burgeoning power, its changing image – Toyota, Nissan, Sony, Toshiba, the economic, electronic, automotive miracle. Rather than savage barbarism the Japanese were now characterized by a frightening efficiency and a tireless energy. Japan was a monster of industrialization, of huge, world-hungry corporations. Unfair trade practices, the trade imbalance. Robot people.[63]

Japan's "robot people" were observable not just in screen images, but also within the descriptions applied to Japanese tourists who ventured overseas. Sometimes the language blended fear with derision, as in the notion of Japanese as "camera people," an image that usually sufficed on its own as an "encapsulation" (owing to its lineage, previously discussed) but one that also held the potential to combine with the robot analogy, thereby suggesting cyborg prostheses. In her study of Japanese American science fiction writing,

[60] Crichton may have been aware that the distinction between Japanese nationals and Asian Americans had been violently blurred on several occasions in the decade preceding publication. See Moon H. Jo and Daniel D. Mast, "Changing Images of Asian Americans," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, 6, 3 (March 1993), 432–35.

[61] Emily S. Rosenberg, *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 54.

[62] Narrelle Morris, *Japan-Bashing: Anti-Japanism since the 1980s* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 103–7.

[63] David Mura, *Turning Japanese: Memoirs of a Sansei* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), 8.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875817000548 Published online by Cambridge University Press

literature scholar Greta Aiyu Niu speculates that this mutually reinforcing conjunction is implied in Linda Nagata's novel *The Bohr Maker* (1995).[64]

Asking whether Japanese American authors may have incorporated tropes of "Japan-bashing," not in the didactic mode that Mura employs but as (apparently) constituent features of characters and situations, requires of readers that they approach such a narrative from one of two critical stances. The first is familiar to Asian Americanists from the writings of left-wing critics, writers, and anthologists active from the 1970s onwards, especially Frank Chin, Jeffrey Paul Chan, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong. Spearheaded by Frank Chin's categorizations of "real" and "fake" Asian American writers, these cultural nationalists looked askance at Asian American authors whose writings recycled, for any reason whatsoever, the stereotypes of ethnic Asians commonly found in white anglophone cultural productions. Those who did so were branded "sellouts" or traffickers in "racist love."[65] Among the many problems with this school of criticism was the way in which it envisaged hegemonic discourses as presenting writers with a zero-sum choice whereby stereotypes are either interpellated wholesale or contested outright. More recently, Sheng-mei Ma has adopted a less polarized position, suggesting that contestation might involve the evocation – perhaps the redeployment – of ethnic stereotypes as a necessary first step before their retirement, an idea that has also found favor with Jane Park, whose study of techno-orientalism in Hollywood cinema is concerned less with playing "spot the stereotype" than with examining the narrative development of a given stereotype once it emerges.[66]

Ruth Ozeki's novel *My Year of Meats* (1998) is usually read through the prism of feminism or ecocriticism, though the narrative focus upon documentary filmmaking easily lends itself to examinations of ethnic stereotypes as they form, re-form, and transform within the production process. The production in question is *My American Wife!* (hereafter "*MAW!*"), a weekly Japanese television documentary sponsored by the US lobby group BEEF-EX featuring profiles of American housewives whose lives and meat recipes are held up as examples for Japanese housewives to follow. Scholars Emily Cheng and Jodi Kim have provided the most thorough examination of the ways in which

[64] Greta Aiyu Niu, "Techno-orientalism, Nanotechnology, Posthumans, and Post-posthumans in Neal Stephenson's and Linda Nagata's Science Fiction," *MELUS*, 33, 4 (Winter 2008), 73–96, 84.

[65] Frank Chin and Jeffrey Paul Chan, "Racist Love," in Richard Kostelanetz, ed., *Seeing through Shuck* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1972), 65–79, *passim*.

[66] Sheng-mei Ma, *The Deathly Embrace: Orientalism and Asian American Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), xi–xiii; Jane Chi Hyun Park, *Yellow Future: Oriental Style in Hollywood Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xi.

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US–Japan histories are critiqued in this storyline, specifically the gendering of Japan as a female consumer (traceable to US Occupation food distribution policies) and the ways in which the US meat export industry became a way in which Americans imagined the restoration of hegemony in their relations with Japan.[67] As should now be clear, however, the polemics of the era, though mainly focussed upon export products, also fixated upon the passage of human beings between Japan and the US, particularly the former to the latter. When Japanese nationals enter the US for the purposes of "capturing" it photographically, as they do in Ozeki's narrative, a set of tropes and assumptions come into play that writers such as Crichton had already circulated in their most sinister form. As the most recent scholarship on *Rising Sun* makes clear, the greatest challenge confronting Smith, the narrator of the novel, is the Japanese capacity to use visual technology to disrupt the meanings attached to an original event by editing a "master copy" to comply with their own preferred meanings.[68] In like turn, the Japanese American narrator of Ozeki's novel, Jane Takagi-Little, feels dismay after shooting the show's first episode because subsequent Japanese editing (over which she has no control) glamorizes an otherwise distressing confession of marital infidelity.[69] At first glance, therefore, the techno-orientalist stereotype of manipulative Japanese video editing appears to feature in Ozeki's narrative wholly unchanged.

Furthermore, the values associated with camera-toting expatriate Japanese are especially evident at times. To shoot *MAW!* properly, the Japanese production company sends over two employees, the cameraman Suzuki and the soundman Oh, both of whom Jane describes using a number of stereotypes, beginning with Suzuki's eyes: "You could never tell if they were open or shut, or if he was watching you. 'He has a great eye,' I liked to say to Americans and then watch them glance dubiously at him and wonder, Where?"[70] This double entendre reduces Suzuki's face to a blind mask, substituting the "great eye" of a video camera for human vision and thereby suggesting an all-encompassing scale as well as discernment. Thereafter, Suzuki and Oh encounter the US much as Mr. Yunioshi encountered Africa, meaning that their pleasures are primarily visual and that social relationships are either nonexistent or heavily mediated. The same holds true for their immediate superior, Joichi Ueno, whose recreational pursuit in the US

[67] Jodi Kim, *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 132–33; Emily Cheng, "Meat and the Millennium: Transnational Politics of Race and Gender in Ruth Ozeki's *My Year of Meats*," *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 12, 2 (June 2009), 191–220, 191–92.

[68] Michael J. Blouin, *Japan and the Cosmopolitan Gothic: Specters of Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 111.

[69] Ruth L. Ozeki, *My Year of Meats* (New York: Viking, 1998), 29–30.

[70] Ibid., 33.

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involves visiting striptease clubs and admiring the "vigor" of white American women.[71] Suzuki and Oh observe American women as similar to the products lining supermarket shelves, their eyes lingering on specific "items" and "tracking" bodily movement. Taking these moments into account, scholarly readings of Ozeki's novel make much of the link between an all-pervasive American consumer culture and the sexism that intrudes into gender relations.[72] Indeed, just as it is apparent that Ozeki's main purpose in the early sections of the novel is focussed upon exploring such links, so it is equally apparent that the characters of her expatriate Japanese are diminished in the process, an aspect that Monica Chiu points out in observing how Jane never bothers to provide Suzuki and Oh's first names and addresses them as "boys," never as men.[73]

Chiu's critique remains the most censorious to date, mainly because she sees Ozeki's narrative as endorsing an ideology of acceptance of racial minorities and women at the expense of othering and essentializing Japan.[74] Unlike Ma and Park, however, Chiu does not envisage cultural or ethnic stereotypes as undergoing development and, perhaps because of this, her critique is confined to the *MAW!* sections of the novel and not the second documentary that Jane embarks upon. This second documentary is a clandestine affair that Jane pieces together from the editorial discards of *MAW!* after breaking from the show's original thematic focus to investigate the role of diethylstilbestrol (DES) hormone injections in the farming industry. Crucially, Jane retains the services of Suzuki and Oh for this purpose, both of whom have already undergone a moral recuperation after shooting an episode on the Bukowsky family, whose daughter had emerged from near-total paralysis after being run over by a Walmart truck. In a 2009 interview Ozeki recalled, "The first part of the book is kind of a picaresque novel … and then about half way through the book, it changes. Something happens."[75] Among the many happenings, I would suggest, is a renegotiation of the original *MAW!* concept and the gradual retirement of tropes associated with the camera-toting Japanese

[71] Ibid., 43–44. On the underdevelopment of expatriated Japanese males as characters in Ozeki's writing see Cheryl J. Fish, "The Toxic Body Politic: Ethnicity, Gender, and Corrective Eco-justice in Ruth Ozeki's *My Year of Meats* and Judith Helfand and Daniel Gold's *Blue Vinyl*," *MELUS*, 34, 2 (Summer 2009), 43–62, 54.

[72] Andrew H. Wallis, "Toward a Global Eco-consciousness in Ruth Ozeki's *My Year of Meats*," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 20, 4 (2013), 873–54, 843.

[73] Monica Chiu, "Postnational Globalization and (En)gendered Meat Production in Ruth L. Ozeki's *My Year of Meats*," *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, 12, 1 (2001), 99–128, 113.

[74] Ibid., 101.

[75] Ruth L. Ozeki, "From Meat to Potatoes: An Interview with Ruth Ozeki" by Simon Estok, *Foreign Literature Studies*, 31, 6 (Dec. 2009), 1–14, 6.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875817000548 Published online by Cambridge University Press

expatriate, narrative processes that commence with the Bukowsky episode and culminate in Jane's commitment to feminist documentary filmmaking.

The Bukowsky family constitute a challenge to Jane and her film crew, as the *MAW!* concept requires that a given family have foodstuffs ready for cooking and a willingness to share their life stories. Yet the Bukowsky parents have partially rehabilitated their daughter by asking that visitors bring a food gift and, in the course of things, offer a few words to Christina in her near-catatonic condition. In short, the expectations of the family and the show are at odds with one another, although *MAW!* is less adaptable in practice and thus retains its place as the structural paradigm.[76] As Jane and her film crew become better acquainted with the Bukowsky family, however, the influence becomes social as well as professional and increasingly mutual. The narrative provides early clues that this is likely to happen, for Christina's "vegetable" mind is the antithesis to the normative "meat-is-the-message" concept, and her single-eye vision, opening and closing for no apparent reason, is akin to a camera insofar as those who are "exposed" to her never know whether their presence has been "captured" or not, nor what their presence betokens to the mind within. Christina is thus the equal and opposite of Suzuki, and though he comes to her at a time when her mobility is somewhat improved, her effect upon him is immediate. This comes across most obviously when a white former flight attendant lewdly speculates whether Christina possesses sexual desires: Suzuki

> let loose a torrent of Japanese expletives that I'd never before heard or even imagined. It was like being transported back in time, into the thick of a samurai drama, and this effect was only heightened when, having finished cursing him, Suzuki stepped back and slapped the flight attendant's face.[77]

In the era of "Japan-bashing," samurai analogies were seldom intended as compliments and hardly ever associated with defending women.[78] Indeed, the opposite tended to be the case, as one of the more aggressive anti-Japanese characters in Crichton's novel makes clear when he speculates that Cheryl Austin had been murdered by "a big samurai cocksman."[79] In the figure of

[76] Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 132–33.
[77] Ibid., 138.
[78] Mari Suvanto, "Images of Japan and the Japanese: The Representations of the Japanese Culture in the Popular Literature Targeted at the Western World in the 1980s–1990s," PhD dissertation, University of Jyväskylä, 2002, 48–49.
[79] Crichton, *Rising Sun*, 142. The sexual undertones associated with samurai references could also be employed in critiques of "Japan-bashing," as in one review of Crichton's novel which suggested that a suitable cover for the paperback version "might be a caricature of World War II-era Prime Minister Tojo skulking off into Rockefeller Center with Doris Day over one shoulder and an eighteen-inch dildo sheathed where his samurai sword would have been." See Karl Taro Greenfeld, "Return of the Yellow Peril," *Nation*, 11 May 1992, 636.

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Suzuki, however, readers encounter a character whose language and behavior are ennobling rather than sinister. Having recuperated Suzuki's masculinity, Ozeki then does the same for his sexual virility, which is neither in recession (as in Mr. Yunioshi's case) nor overbearing (as in Sakamura's case), but gently responsive. This aspect comes across when Suzuki and Oh awaken Christina's sexual consciousness (formerly held in abeyance by her condition) by "pursuing" her at the same time as they "propel" her, thereby illustrating the Japanese presence as curative rather than perverse.[80]

The Bukowsky episode is a significant turning point in the renegotiation of stereotypes, a process that climaxes during another episode when the film crew visit a farm and interview the Dunn family. At this point, Jane breaks with the *MAW!* concept by focussing the episode on an abattoir instead of a kitchen, as well as the bedroom in which the five-year-old Rose, sick from DES poisoning, sleeps unawares. The first of these scenes is necessarily an audial as much as a visual experience, and accordingly the sequence is "picked up" most acutely by the soundman Oh. The latter is an otherwise undeveloped character whose presence in the narrative goes unremarked in most scholarly readings of the novel, which neglect to acknowledge that the one characteristic Ozeki repeatedly emphasizes in respect to this man is his love of animals.[81] Thus the sensory imagery of the killing scenes, already visceral in the literal sense, undergoes a narrative enhancement by association with the Japanese soundman who recoils from it.[82] The purposefulness of this narrative strategy reveals itself in the final scene, in which Suzuki matches Oh's audial sensitivity by recording a wholly visual spectacle: an aborted calf fetus lying on the "kill floor."[83] Structurally, therefore, Suzuki and Oh "frame" the narrative as well as the filmic material that is their reason for being present, and they do so as investigative documentarians intent upon revealing truths rather than covering them over, a clear break with the expectations hitherto endorsed by writers like Crichton.

At least one scholar has detected a sexual undertone in the abattoir scene, which has a forbidden quality that titillates almost as much as it horrifies.[84] However, the stronger insinuations come through when the team enter Rose's bedroom, and it is here too that the imagery recalls Crichton's narrative more suggestively. Guided by Jane and Rose's mother, Suzuki films Rose's prematurely developed body, which her mother tiredly acknowledges as already signifying sexually: "It's not like it's her fault. And with a body like that,

[80] Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 139. [81] Ibid., 34, 190. [82] Ibid., 265. [83] Ibid., 267.
[84] Laura Anh Williams, "Gender, Race, and an Epistemology of the Abattoir in *My Year of Meats*," *Feminist Studies*, 40, 2 (2014), 244–72, 249.

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who's gonna be looking at her face, right?"[85] To this, the Japanese have no reply and yet their presence is not passive, for by recording the mother's testimony they become agents against women's exploitation. In narrative terms, the scene pivots upon the inauguration of a politically active consciousness among the documentarians, for Rose's mother is too drained of emotional strength to intervene personally (until they supply her with the video, that is). This consciousness is ushered in by Rose's body, which "shockingly intrudes into the mix of polemical rhetoric, factoids, multiple narrative sources and voices … and the hyperbolic, darkly comic – bordering on the cartoon-like – invented stories."[86] In these respects, the body's place in the narrative is altogether similar to that of another character, Michelle, Peter Smith's daughter in *Rising Sun*, whose significance is underscored in the final paragraph of his own video-recorded testimony:

> I walked into my daughter's room. I looked at her crib, and her covers with the elephants sewn on it. I thought of the way she slept, so trustingly, lying on her back, her arms thrown over her head. I thought of the way she trusted me to make her world for her now. And I thought of the world that she would grow into. And as I started to make her bed, I felt uneasy in my heart.[87]

Crichton and Ozeki both position a white infant daughter as symbolic of the country's future, and each strikes a pessimistic narrative pose (one daughter faces a world of toxic farming practices, carcinogenic meat, and medicalized female reproduction; while the other confronts a world of corrupted American institutions, perpetual trade imbalance, and sexual practices akin to white slavery). These features reveal both novelists as essentially issue-driven, for as literature scholar Emily Russell correctly points out, in US politics the child is an "apolitical" figure whose invocation cuts across ideological lines.[88]

That both authors use the child figure as a politically redolent signifier is suggestive either of intertextuality or of a shared sense of dominating discourses, a conclusion that is further reinforced by the significance of the tape recordings to the plot development of both stories. In *Rising Sun*, Japanese corporate executives attempt to keep the tape recordings of Cheryl Austin's murder from Smith and Connor, while in Ozeki's novel Jane's

[85] Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 276.
[86] Nina Cornyetz, "The Meat Manifesto: Ruth Ozeki's Performative Poetics," *Women & Performance*, 12, 1 (2001), 207–24, 218.
[87] Crichton, 398.
[88] Emily Russell, *Reading Embodied Citizenship: Disability, Narrative, and the Body Politic* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 131. An important stylistic difference between Crichton and Ozeki is that the former began with a self-conscious political agenda, whereas the latter came to her political position in the course of writing. See Ruth L. Ozeki, "'A Universe of Many Worlds': An Interview with Ruth Ozeki" by Eleanor Ty, *MELUS*, 38, 3 (Sept. 2013), 160–71, 161.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021875817000548 Published online by Cambridge University Press

tapes almost fall into the hands of Joichi Ueno, who strictly adheres to his version of the original *MAW!* concept and has no patience with Jane's boundary-pushing approach.[89] In both narratives, the denouement hinges upon the repossession of the tapes with their incriminating footage and the narrators of both stories watch the footage many times, to an almost obsessive degree. Indeed, students who read Ozeki's novel frequently report that the narrative itself "has a cinematic quality or … the pacing of a multi-episode television show."[90] However, Ozeki's work inverts Michael Crichton's narrative inasmuch as the tapes are kept and preserved by Oh and Suzuki, not altered.[91] In addition, the Japanese security tapes that record Cheryl Austin's death are visual-only media, meaning that the reader cannot imagine a multisensory response on the part of the Japanese who view her death. Instead, the latter proceed impassively and heartlessly, whereas in Ozeki's narrative Oh and Suzuki respond emotively to their work, enabling the reader to recover them from the stereotypes they inhabited at the start of the novel.

CLOSING SCENE: THE DEPARTURE LOUNGE

"The passage from the modern to the postmodern is also the passage from Fordism to Sonyism; the passage of the locus of technocultural power from the manufacture of standardized, mass-produced goods to the manufacture of quality products designed to sit in a variety of specialized market niches."[92] This observation, offered by the Australian media theorist McKenzie Wark, encapsulates the sense of transition that pervaded socio-economic analyses in the United States during the late 1970s through 1994. Sensing that the trade winds of global finance had changed direction, writers like Gore Vidal offered stern guidance through the much-anticipated "Pacific Century," while Hollywood responded to the decline of "rigid" Fordist production methods at Detroit by ushering in a new wave of thrillers and science fiction films that envisaged a future center on Tokyo or Osaka (or a machine world in which humans are all but extinct).[93] "Japan-bashing" was a cruder response, less creative and more didactic – in a word, more Fordist

[89] Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 299.

[90] Leigh Johnson, "Conceiving the Body: Sandra Cisneros and Ruth L. Ozeki's Representations of Women's Reproduction in Transnational Space," *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy*, 19, 2 (Fall 2008–Winter 2009), 32–41, 36.

[91] Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*, 302.

[92] McKenzie Wark, "From Fordism to Sonyism: Perverse Readings of the New World Order," *New Formations*, 15 (1991), 43–54, 45.

[93] Robert F. Arnold, "Termination or Transformation? The 'Terminator' Films and Recent Changes in the U.S. Auto Industry," *Film Quarterly*, 52, 1 (1998), 20–30, 22–23.

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inasmuch as authors like Crichton responded to a perceived threat by mass-producing xenophobic tropes in an assembly-line fashion.

To date, those Asian American scholars who have grappled with "Japan-bashing" have proceeded as far as to acknowledge, ruefully but honestly, that being enthusiastic consumers of at least some anglophone cultural productions that include ethnic minority Asian characters renders critical reading practices an intriguing experience.[94] In a recent article, Stephen Hong Sohn attempts to strike a balance between the need to grant ethnic minority writers the integrity of their depictions and the equally pressing need to acknowledge the imprint of orientalism within their published narratives, whether the writer is aware of its presence or not (a variation on Sheng-mei Ma's idea of writers as fully self-aware in their confrontation with stereotypes). Erring on the side of (semi)autonomous writing practices, Sohn reconfigures orientalism away from the pejorative mode of domination as originally conceived by Said toward a "value-neutral approach to Orientalist representations that affirms their various rhetorical stances."[95] In my reading of Ozeki's novel I have plied the same course, given that the first half of *My Year of Meats* reveals clear instances in which the author incorporated tropes commonly associated with expatriated Japanese in white American cultural productions of the era. Just as clear, however, are the instances in which Ozeki breaks the mold even after constructing it. Though Oh and Suzuki do not emerge as developed characters at the end of this process, their transition from myopic would-be womanizers to critically astute documentarians is the clearest substantiation of this process.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Daniel McKay teaches at Doshisha University, Kyoto. His journal articles have appeared in *Comparative American Studies*, *MELUS*, and *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies*, among others. An abridged version of the present article was presented at the Australia & New Zealand American Studies Association (ANZASA) conference, Australian Catholic University, Sydney, 27–29 June 2017.

[94] This observation was offered by Mimi Thi Nguyen and Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu apropos the character "Data" in Steven Spielberg's 1985 film *The Goonies*. See Mimi Thi Nguyen and Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu, "Introduction," in Nguyen and Nguyen Tu, *Alien Encounters*, 1–4.

[95] Stephen Hong Sohn, "Minor Character, Minority Orientalisms, and the Borderlands of Asian America," *Cultural Critique*, 82 (Fall 2012), 151–85, 155.

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