'Japanese' Spaces and the Construction of 'America' in Mass-Market US Fiction : *Sayonara* and *Rising Sun*

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Abstract:

Mass-market American fiction dealing with the experience of places defined as 'Japanese' has, in the post-war era, shown a movement away from a concept of Japanese place as something exotic, contained, and linked to the past, and towards an understanding of it as an unavoidable and invasive part of the American future. This article takes James Michener's *Sayonara* (1953) and Michael Crichton's *Rising Sun* (1992) as early and late examples of the ways in which Japanese place has been constructed as the 'other' against which American senses of spatial and cultural identity have been defined. It concludes that images of Japan and Japanese spaces in mass-market American fiction have altered dramatically while the culturally specific geo-spatial assumptions that inform the construction and use of those images have remained largely unchanged.

Introduction

At the end of James Michener's 1953 novel *Sayonara* the hero says a sad goodbye to the people he has known and the home he has made in Japan: "to the alley and the canal and the little houses and the pachinko parlor and to the flutes at night -- sayonara." Then he suppresses these feelings of loss, deciding that for the American 1950s "love" is not an "acceptable attitude toward strange lands." As he leaves for the airport, he meditates on the meaning of 'sayonara' -- "that sad and final Japanese word" -- and makes his ambivalent farewell: "And you, Japan, you crowded islands, you tragic land -- sayonara, you enemy, you friend."[1] Nearly forty years later, the hero of Michael Crichton's *Rising Sun* does

not have the option of ending his encounter with Japan in this way: he cannot 'go home.' Discouraged and defeated by his encounter with a Japan that now exists within the United States, he tells a colleague "I feel like going somewhere else. But there's nowhere to go." In the 1990s, the American hero can no longer say 'sayonara' and leave for the airport.[2]

These two novels, *Sayonara* and *Rising Sun*, use images of Japanese space in radically different ways in their construction of America. Both rely on images of spatial control and restricted access to define the US through its relationship with Japanese space, but in the two novels the positions of occupier and occupied are reversed. In a sense, the novels can be read as parallel stories of occupation which differ primarily in their understanding of which nation has the upper hand in the control of space and movement. In the earlier novel, set in immediate post-occupation Japan, the American perception of Japan is based on a confident sense of contained difference. In the later story, that perception has shifted towards a threatened sense of Japanese difference as encroaching and displacing American space. In 1953, Japan is exotic, inward-looking, and optional; in 1992 it is an unavoidable, invasive part of the everyday American world. A review of *Rising Sun* in the *Chicago Sun-Times* makes this sense of reversed occupation clear: the reviewer praises the novel's "detailing of the many ways in which Japan has penetrated America."[3]

As parallel stories of occupation, then, *Sayonara* and *Rising Sun* turn out to be remarkably similar novels, despite their radically different attitudes towards Japan and the US-Japan relationship. Actually, the structural parallels between the two work to make the shift in attitude only the more striking. *Sayonara* is set in the Kansai area of Japan, and ends with the departure of the male American first-person narrator to return home to the USA. The ending, like the novel's title, involves the reader in feelings of conclusion, departure, and nostalgia. *Rising Sun*, on the other

hand, is set in and around the American city of Los Angeles, and ends with the male American first-person narrator leaving his job as a member of the police Asian liaison program. The ending, like the novel's title, involves the reader in feelings of dawning and beginning. Michener's 'sayonara' was full of nostalgia; Crichton's 'rising sun' is a source of deep anxiety. As the narrator returns to his apartment and small daughter at the end of *Rising Sun* he thinks about "the world she would grow into," and explains that "as I started to make her bed, I felt uneasy in my heart." As a result of his work with the Asian liaison program, the narrator has developed a deep distrust of the Japan-US relationship and what it means for the future of American society: "I used to think things were basically all right," he concludes, "but they're not all right." Structurally, the two plots have remarkable similarities; these similarities emphasize the fact that where *Sayonara* ends with a confident farewell and departure, *Rising Sun* ends with an apprehensive sense of an unwelcomed meeting and a beginning. (388)

The first-person narrator of *Sayonara* is an American airforce hero, Lloyd Gruver, who has been transferred to a desk job in Japan after an exhausting tour of duty in Korea. He is unenthusiastic about the move: I'd been through the place and it never impressed me much," he says. (7) He is equally unenthusiastic about Japanese women. Engaged to Eileen Webster, an American general's daughter, Gruver is baffled by an airman in his unit who is determined to marry his Japanese girlfriend. Gruver claims he has never seen a beautiful Japanese woman: "they're all so dumpy and round-faced," he complains. "How can our men -- good average guys -- how can they marry these yellow girls? In '45 I was fighting the Japs. Now my men are marrying them." (11) Nonetheless, in Kobe, out of his sense of duty to the airman, Joe Kelly, Gruver acts as best man at his wedding.

Gruver is at first repulsed and baffled by the relationship between Joe and Katsumi. His sense of the division between America and Japan is absolute. Nevertheless, at the same time, he is developing doubts about his own relationship with Eileen and about American women in general. Then he meets and falls in love with Hana-ogi, a prominent member of the famous Takarazuka review. Gradually, through this relationship, Gruver becomes sensitized to some aspects of Japanese culture, grows closer to Joe and Katsumi, and eventually sets up a small home with Hana-ogi. This leads to conflict with military authority and the separation of both couples. Believing that they will be permanently separated, Joe and the pregnant Katsumi commit suicide. Hana-ogi decides not to move to the USA with Gruver; despite his new-found sympathy with Japan, Gruver is utterly baffled by this. For him, it is incomprehensible that a Japanese woman "living in that cramped little land with no conveniences and no future, would refuse America" -- but she does. (156) So Gruver says his 'sayonara' and lets Eileen drive him to the airport.

Rising Sun also has a male first-person narrator, this one a member not of the American armed forces in Asia, but of the Los Angeles police department. Pete Smith has been assigned to Special Services as a member of the Asian liaison program. As the novel opens, he is watching a televised basketball game and studying for his introductory Japanese language class, practicing phrases like "Hello, I am a police officer. Can I be of assistance?" Then he is called in to work on the murder investigation of an American woman found dead in the headquarters of a Japanese corporation: the woman's body has been discovered on the boardroom table of the new Nakamoto tower just as the building's splashy opening party is getting started one floor below. Smith's partner in the investigation is the culturally ambiguous John Connor, a man who makes his first appearance in the novel dressed in a blue *yukata*, at home in a small

apartment distinguished by its tatami, shoji screens, calligraphy scroll, and black lacquer table and decorated by a "vase with a single splash of white orchid." Connor acts as Smith's guide and senior partner throughout the investigation, a *sempai* to his *kohai*, leading him through the intricacies of Japanese corporate Los Angeles.

The novel details the three intense days of the murder investigation, following Smith and Connor through what the back-cover promotional material for the 1993 Ballantine edition of the novel calls "a headlong chase through a twisting maze of indutrial intrigue. . . a no-holds-barred conflict in which control of a vital American technology is the fiercely coveted prize -- and the Japanese saying 'business is war' takes on a terrifying reality. . . ." The main plot revolves around the murder, taking up, as prime suspect, first a Japanese businessman, then a United States senator, and finally a Japanese lawyer from the Nakamoto company. A subplot deals with Smith's personal life: his divorce from his wife, his care of his two-year-old daughter, and his struggle to hold his domestic situation together.

Both plot and subplot are set firmly against a dramatically painted background depicting a Japanese takeover of the US that is apparently well on the way to reducing it to the status of an economic colony. This background is the key point of the story. *The New York Times Book Review,* quoted in the promotional material at the beginning of the 1993 Ballantine Edition, apparently characterized the book as "a thriller set against the background of current American-Japanese tensions," identifying "matters of Japanese culture and the survival of a free and productive America" as Crichton's main subject. At the end of the novel, when the Japanese murderer has been discovered (and allowed to commit suicide), Smith resigns from Special Services and recommends major changes in the financing of the Asian liaison program. "If the department

wants specially trained officers," he argues, "we should pay to train them." Taking up the well-known advice of Matsushita's Akio Morita, "If you don't want Japan to buy it, don't sell it," the novel ends by confronting its uneasy sense of the 'rising sun' in America's uncertain future with the resolution that "it's time for us to take control of our country again." (389)

Sustained assumptions

The fact that the radically different attitudes towards the Japanese 'other' that distinguish *Sayonara* and *Rising Sun* are both expressed through images of invasion and spatial control reflects more than a coincidence in imagery. While the differences in attitude between the two novels clearly do reflect real changes in the popular understanding of what the American relationship with Japanese spaces suggests about the confidence, power, or importance of the home country, the shared focus on images of invasion and spatial control reflects the fact that the two stories both rely for their effect upon an unchanged set of assumptions about the 'natural' relationship between space, power, control of access or movement, and national identity. In fact, while the images of Japan and Japanese spaces are used in radically differing ways, the two novels not only share a set of assumptions about spatial control and power, they also share a set of assumptions about the relationship between gender, power and spatiality.

The two novels, then, clearly represent a shift in the use of images of Japan and the Japanese in American mass-market fiction, while they indicate very little change in the American popular construction of the relationship between spatial control and power, or the assocation of gender with the differentiation of domestic and public spaces. For this reason it is important to acknowledge that the use the two novels make of Japan may have very little to do with any outward-focused interest in the place or

culture itself, and that the differences between the two novels may similarly have very little to do with changes in any actual popular conception of things and places Japanese. Rather, it seems likely that the shift charted by these two novels is in fact primarily a shift in the American popular sense of national identity or confidence articulated through specific, selected images of Japan, and that in this sense the basic perception of Japan in these two books does not change: it remains, most basically, a geographical and cultural 'other' which facilitates the construction of a (male) sense of American spatial and social identity.

This comparative analysis of *Sayonara* and *Rising Sun* is not, then, about Japan. Nor is it even about the American understanding of Japan. Instead, because both *Sayonara* and *Rising Sun* are ultimately novels about male America -- about how an American hero defines himself and his country through an encounter with Japan -- this essay is really focused on the question of how popular fiction has used images of Japan in its construction of a version of America. This question leads into the consideration, firstly, of what this reveals about changes in an American sense of national identity, and, secondly, of how that sense of 'the American' relies on specific assumptions about the 'natural' relationship, for the USA, between spatial occupation, territorial control, freedom of movement, gender and national identity.

In three main areas -- one clearly primary -- the geographical or spatial assumptions of the novels are strikingly similar, each providing an unquestioned framework of attitudes taken to be 'natural' within which positions are reversed, and against the background of which the shift from confidence towards anxiety becomes clearly visible. In this way, images of Japanese place in the two novels reveal an unchanging, specifically male construction of one version of American spatiality. In the three key areas the assumptions remain the same while the positions of the two countries

within a spatial power relationship are reversed.

The first reversal has to do with the association of the control of space through power, and is articulated most explicitly in reversed images of occupation and penetration. A second, connected reversal has to do with the identification of place with time, specifically of particular nations or cultures with the 'past,' 'present' or 'future.' The connection of the time issue with the images of spatial control and limited spatial access springs from the fact that spaces identified as 'past' can be left behind, and that people identified as belonging to those spaces can be denied access to 'future' spaces, or even to the 'present.' In this reversal, Japan and the US again change places, with Japanese spaces leapfrogging the American to move directly from contained past to looming future, suddenly threatening the American present instead of confirming it.

The third reversal, again taking place within an unchanging set of spatial assumptions, has to do with the ways in which both novels rely upon the contrast between images of comforting domestic place and images of disturbing, placeless 'exteriors' to indicate different attitudes towards Japan and also to make a critical point about American women. This reversal differs from the 'occupier/occupied' and 'past/future' reversals, which focused on issues of spatial control in the relationship between Japan and the US, in that it is focused on issues connected to domestic spaces, and the 'placement' of the female. At its simplest level, this reversal is quite straightforward: in the earlier novel the positive domestic space is created within Japanese space, and is threatened by Americans, while, in the later novel, the positive domestic space is an American home threatened by a Japanese corporation. Nonetheless, this simple reversal is complicated by the fact that, in both novels, the threat is associated with or made through American women associated with "outside forces." The apparently simple reversal of postive and negative images therefore be-

comes entangled with a set of unchanging assumptions about the 'natural' association of the female with interiors and domestic security and a sustained criticism of some resistance to domestic placement that is taken to be characteristic of American women.

While all three of these 'reversals' take place within unchanging sets of assumptions about what is 'natural' in terms of space and movement, the really central concept in the definition of an American identity through its relationship to Japanese space, for both novels, is the first -- the issue of occupation and the control of space. In *Sayonara* the Americans are, in effect, still in occupation; in *Rising Sun*, according to Pete Smith, the position has been reversed. The American occupation of Japan is understood in the earlier novel to be entirely natural; the occupation and its implied power relationship is taken for granted, and works as a given background to the novel's love story. The Japanese occupation of the USA, in contrast, has to be insisted upon in the later novel. Where the occupation of Japan was a naturalized background to Lloyd Gruver's story, the occupation of the USA *is* Pete Smith's story. For this reason -- that the overt goal of the first-person narrator is to convince his audience that an occupation exists -- images of occupation are used much more explicitly and with greater narrative force in *Rising Sun* than in *Sayonara*. Nonetheless, both novels take for granted the idea that the occupation of 'other' spaces and the control of movement and access are symbols of strength, and reassuring indications of importance and of a secure national identity.

Occupying/ Occupied

In the world of Michener's *Sayonara*, the realities of the US control of space and movement are primarily suggested by the fact that while Americans are largely free to move between American and Japanese

spaces, the Japanese are not. Central to the novel's plot, for example, is the broad question of whether or not American servicemen can take Japanese wives with them when they return to the US, and the more local issue of whether or not Japanese nationals are to be allowed as guests into the Kobe Officers Club, which is housed in a local hotel and staffed by Japanese employees. After a particularly uncomfortable incident in the hotel dining-room, Mrs. Webster, Eileen's mother, General Webster's wife, and Lloyd Gruver's prime example of what's wrong with American women, explains: "It's not that I dislike the Japanese. Goodness, they're wonderful people. So clever and all that. . . . But a conquering army must retain its dignity." While she admits that "Japan is now a free country," she insists that "we must . . . remember our position. And be firm." (30)

Significantly, Gruver begins the next episode in his narrative with the description of a trip to Takarazuka in which "Mrs. Webster gave striking proof that she really did like the Japanese -- if they kept their place." As long as she -- as long as the USA -- can define that "place," spatially and socially, then all is well. Fortunately, Hana-ogi, Gruver's (unsuitable) Japanese lover, chooses to 'know her place' in an assertively positive sense at the novel's conclusion; she chooses to remain in Japan, insisting "I Japanese. I always Japanese. I never be happy nowhere [else]." (176) Thus at the end of the novel, even with the news that the law has changed to allow Japanese wives to enter the US, the sense of Japan (and Japanese women) as exotic and temporary, a form of optional 'time out' from American reality, is sustained. Taken together, Hana-ogi's decision to move to Tokyo, and Joe and Katsumi's double suicide, mean that the issue of spatial control is simply avoided; there is in the end no serious practical challenge to the American control of space and movement.

The situation is entirely different in *Rising Sun*, paradoxically, because the base assumptions are so similar. The fact that the narrator is at pains to

point out the variety of ways in which the US has been 'invaded' by Japanese spaces and buildings (and people), while it does indicate an entirely new attitude towards the relationship between Japanese and American space, is actually based on the same assumption that this freedom of movement, of Japan or things Japanese into the US, is unnatural. The two novels share the idea that it is natural for the US to create American spaces in Japan, but unnatural for Japan to create Japanese spaces in the US; it is for this reason that the later novel places so much stress on the 'invasion' of Japanese buildings where the earlier novel took the equivalent territorial appropriation of Japanese space for granted.

The central image of the invading Japanese space, around which the novel's plot revolves and in which the crucial murder takes place, is the Nakamoto tower, a newly-completed 97-story building in downtown Los Angeles. The city's tallest building, the Nakamoto tower has glass elevators even though city building codes prohibit them beyond 90 floors--"but then," as the irritated detective Tom Graham points out, "the whole building is one big special case." Putting the building together from prefabricated units made in Nagasaki, the construction company has used no American construction workers, "got variances on the zoning restrictions, [and] the earthquake ordinances" and received "an eight-year break on property taxes from the city." (18) The illegal glass elevators make announcements about their location and movement only in Japanese; Tom Graham is incensed and the bilingual John Connor has to translate. "If an elevator's going to talk," Graham complains, "it should be English. This is still America." "Just barely," Connor replies, staring out through the glass walls at the view of downtown LA.

According to one of the guests at the building's opening party, Connor is quite right to look out over Los Angeles and see Japan. Japanese customers make up 20% of the man's real estate business: "they're buying

up Orange County now," he explains. "Of course," a companion agrees, "they already own Los Angeles." The realtor admits this is true -- "I guess by now they have seventy, seventy-five percent of downtown Los Angeles" -- and adds that "they *own* Hawaii -- ninety percent of Honolulu, a hundred percent of the Kona coast." (44) Connor, overhearing this conversation, remarks that the Japanese are amazed by the American willingness to sell: "they think we're committing economic suicide," he says, adding "and of course they're right." (45) Connor then calmly manages to make the elevator not only communicate with him in English but actually provide him with the information that will initiate his successful investigation of the murder. He pushes the emergency button on the elevator panel and asks the answering building security office where it is located. In this way he begins his circumnavigation of the Japanese control of access to space and information and identifies himself as the novel's personified challenge to the Japanese occupation.

The Nakamoto tower is only the most prominent of the novel's Japanese spaces, with its Japanese-speaking elevators and security guards. Another key site is the Imperial Arms apartment building, a discreet home for the American girlfriends of Japanese businessmen. The outside of the Imperial Arms is carefully anonymous -- "you could drive by the building every day and never notice it" -- and its lobby is decorated in the "most bland California style." The first unusual aspect to the building is the security desk with the "heavyset Japanese doorman" and his "distinctly unfriendly manner." Then, once allowed into the interior of the building, Connor and Smith find it surprisingly elegant. Connor tells Smith that the building is typically Japanese, which confuses him: "a run-down, fake Tudor apartment building in Westwood? Typically Japanese?" He can't figure it out. But Connor explains: "It's because the outside gives no clue to the inside. . . . That's a fundamental principle of Japanese thinking."

(62-3) According to Connor, the anonymous exterior is vital for the Japanese building:

> 'You must understand,' Connor said, 'there is a shadow world-- lhere in Los Angeles, in Honolulu, in New York. Most of the time you're never aware of it. We live in our regular American world, walking on our American streets, and we never notice that right alongisde our world is a second world. Very discreet, very private. Perhaps in New York you will see Japanese businessmen walking through an unmarked door, and catch a glimpse of a club behind. Perhaps you will hear of a small sushi bar in Los Angeles that charges twelve hundred dollars a person, Tokyo prices. But they are not listed in the guidebooks. They are not a part of our American world. They are part of the shadow world, available only to the Japanese.'(63)

The two key points here are, firstly, that in the "regular American world" people are oblivious to the other, "shadow world" alongside them and, secondly, that this "shadow world" is accessible "only to the Japanese." The Americans have been invaded and their spatial access controlled, and they are largely unaware of it.

In the course of his three-day adventure with the Nakamoto murder investigation, Pete Smith learns to see this occupation. First, he finds out that Connor plays golf at the Sunset Hills Country Club, where the original American membership is gradually being phased out -- "whenever an American retired, his place was offered to a Japanese. Sunset Hills memberships were sold in Tokyo for a million dollars each, where they were considered a bargain." (153) Then, he overhears two real estate dealers discussing the sale of a huge chunk of Montana: "that's the Rockies, my friend," one of them enthuses, showing the other a glossy brochure featuring wildflowers and snow-capped mountains. "It's real Americana. Trust me, that's what sells them. And it's a hell of a big parcel." The parcel is, in fact, a hundred and thirty thousand acres, "the

biggest remaining piece of Montana that's still available." It's "the size of a national park," it's got "grandeur," it's "very high quality," and it's "perfect for a Japanese consortium." (180) Later, driving with Connor on the Los Angeles freeways, Smith pays attention to the billboards:

> We passed electronic billboards for Hitachi (#1 IN COMPUTERS IN AMERICA), for Canon (AMERICA'S COPY LEADER), and Honda (NUMBER ONE RATED CAR IN AMERICA!). LIke most of the new Japanese ads, they were bright enough to run in the daytime. The billboards cost thirty thousand dollars a day to rent; most American companies couldn't afford them. (276)

The billboards are a reminder of what Ron Levine, a financial commentator for a cable news network, has told the detectives earlier. For the Japanese, he has explained, "business is like warfare," all about "gaining ground," "wiping out the competition" and "getting control of a market." These are images of territorial control, metaphorical expressions of a sense of invasion. This sense of penetration and loss of control, forming a threat to national security, is the focus of the television commercial that the detectives watch the presidential candidate Senator Morton rehearse while they wait to talk with him. The senator speaks of "the erosion of our national position," and refers to "a time of national crisis":

> 'As our economic power fades, we are vulnerable to a new kind of invasion. Many Americans fear that we may become an economic colony of Japan, or Europe. But especially Japan. Many Americans feel that the Japanese are taking over our industries, our recreation lands, and even our citites. . . . And in doing so, some fear that Japan now has the power to shape and determine the future of America.' (252)

Talking informally with the detectives later, the senator asks that their

conversation be kept confidential: "loose lips sink ships," he says, wryly, remarking that "we are at war with the Japanese." The sense of penetration and loss of control associated with this "war" is brought home in one more image of limited access, the 'Hitachi floors' of the University of California at Irvine. Phillip Sanders, a researcher at the university, explains the infiltration of Japanese money into American universities. "Japan is deeply into the structure of American universities," he tells Pete Smith, "particularly in the technical departments." Japanese companies, Sanders explains, endow twenty-five professorships at MIT alone -- "since they need innovation, they do the obvious thing. They buy it." At the University of California at Irvine, this has led to an extreme situation: "there's two floors of a research building that you can't get into unless you have a Japanese passport." The occupation of that small part of the USA at least is complete and exclusive. It's "an American university closed to Americans." (278)

The repeated images of Japanese invasion and occupation that run through *Rising Sun* are clearly connected to the death of the American woman murdered on the Nakamoto boardroom table. Firstly, the key to the crime is the crucial crossing of a police yellow line by a Japanese member of Nakamoto Security, who invades the off-limits area of the American police investigation ostensibly to take pictures for an in-house investigation, but actually in order to get himself recorded on the security video cameras and thus facilitate the editing of the videotapes to disguise the identity of the murderer. Pete Smith watches this crossing of the tape barrier in astonishment: "I couldn't believe what I was seeing," he comments. "The Japanese had their own employee wandering around inside the yellow tapes, contaminating the crime scene. It was outrageous." (26) Secondly, it is worth noticing, especially in connection with the ways in which spatial occupation and identity are gendered in both *Sayonara* and

Rising Sun, that the Japanese 'penetration' of American space has clearly sexual connotations that associate occupation with submission and invasion with domination. As Ron Levine, the financial reporter, phrases it, the reason why "the Japanese love Reagan" is that his policy on free trade let them "clean up during his presidency." "In the name of free trade, he spread our legs real wide." (229)

Contained past/accessible future

At the end of James Michener's story about his hero's encounter with "the tragic, doomed land of Japan" the American returns to the 'modern world' of the United States. His 'sayonara' is nostalgic: he is leaving the past behind him both literally and figuratively: Japan represents for him some form of lost, transcended, untenable past. To mourn its passing is a luxury afforded him by his access to the future. Japan can be for him both a particular place and a symbol of a shared human past because he has the option to leave it and move in to the modern world of the United States. Gruver is confident of his access to and ability to influence 'the future.'

Forty years later, at the top of the list of "principal sources" given in the bibliography at the end of Michael Crichton's 1992 thriller is a book called *Trading Places: How We Are Giving Our Future to Japan and How to Reclaim It.* This is a book that Crichton's hero, Pete Smith, might well want to read at the end of his intense three-day encounter with the Japanese business world in Los Angeles. Smith has become very uneasy about the future of America, and is obviously wondering, at the end of the novel, whether it is, in fact, too late to "reclaim" it. Where Japanese spaces represented the the past for Lloyd Gruver -- a past he could visit and then leave -- they represent the future for Pete Smith: and the Japanese spaces of Smith's future are unavoidable and threatening. Where Gruver has freedom of movement from past to future in his form of geographical

time-traveling, Smith is faced with the realization that he can't find his way back to a home located, literally, in the past.

Lloyd Gruver has the luxury of being able to identify his image of elemental, solid human values with a place, 'Japan,' that he will always be able to retain in his mind as the road not taken. For Gruver, the Japanese countryside is an embodiment of the "ancient," and, within it, he and Hana-ogi are "timeless human beings." Through his relationship with Hana-ogi, Gruver comes to identify the Japanese countryside with a shared human past: on a train into Osaka one day, for example, he experiences "an overpowering sense of identification with this strange land," realizing that, with Hana-ogi, he could "become part of the immortal passage of human beings over the face of the earth"-- in Japan.

Elemental, human, and ancient, in Lloyd Gruver's view Japan is also small, cramped and doomed. It is tangible, it is solid, but it has no future. While he is able to appreciate Japan's confirmation of his place in a shared human history, Gruver cannot understand Hana-ogi's refusal to leave that "cramped little land with no conveniences and no future." (156) In his understanding, they would always be able to share a located sense of the past while, together, they could also relocate into the future. Pete Smith, the LA detective, has no optional future, to choose or forego, because for him the future is pushing in to take over his present. Where, in *Sayonara,* Japan functions as the past of the American 'now,' in *Rising Sun* it has become constructed as 'the future' itself, and this future, no longer controlled or possessed by America, has become something dehumanized, robotic, technological, intangible, mysterious, and threatening. It is a "shadow world," made up of bland, anonymous buildings and "spare, industrial-looking" spaces.

The enormous difference in the image of Japanese spaces as they relate to issues of past and future and spatial control in *Sayonara* and in

Rising Sun is strikingly represented by the elevator scenes which take place in the two novels. In *Sayonara*, the elevator is part of the the hotel that houses the Kobe officer's club, and features in the episode in which Mrs. Webster pushes her husband into banning Japanese guests from club functions. Taking up his wife's cause, the general insists that his memorandum be posted conspicuously throughout the club and tells his secretary to "be especially sure there's one in every elevator," thus taking particular notice of the moving spaces which represent freedom of access. Seeing his memo posted in an elevator later, the General discovers that someone has scrawled across it in pencil, "Signed, Mrs. Mark Webster." He shouts at the Japanese elevator girl, who cannot read English, demanding to know who made the addition. "'Me no see,'" she whispers, abandoning the elevator controls and "cowering in the corner. . . . In her confusion the elevator stormed past the general's floor and by the time the frightened little girl could get it back under control, General Webster had ripped down the announcement." (31-2) In this episode, the enclosed space of the elevator becomes the theatre for a power struggle over the control of movement and access.

The significant elevator in Crichton's *Rising Sun* has already been mentioned: this is the illegal 97-floor elevator that glides up and down with impersonal efficiency, making automated announcements in Japanese as it displays the night scenery of downtown Los Angeles. The Nakamoto tower elevators are "high-speed Hitachis, using the latest technology. The fastest and smoothest elevators in the world." (18) This is a long way into the future from the frightened Kobe elevator operator, and its robotic efficiency baffles a US senator trying to leave the building. Stepping into the elevator that Pete Smith is riding, Senator Morton mistakes him for its operator: "Ground floor, please," he announces. An aide has to explain the situation twice: "This elevator is going up, Senator," "This elevator's

going up, sir." The senator is frustrated. "Well, I *want* to go *down*." Eventually, the aide persuades him to wait for the next elevator: "the doors closed. The elevator continued up." (21) Here again, an elevator has provided the theatre for a small drama about the exercise of power and the control of movement; this time, a prominent American politician has been thwarted by an impersonal Japanese technology too futuristic for his whiskey-baffled mind to comprehend. And the (Japanese) space itself is no longer small and inward-looking; it has developed an outward view and a mind, apparently, of its own.

The Nakamoto tower and its elevators represent the Japanese-controlled future that Pete Smith finds so worrying. His American present, meanwhile, is a decayed version of its once equally modern past. Four times in his narrative Smith mentions the bad state of the Los Angeles road surfaces: they become a symbol, in the story, of a physical deterioration in American spaces that is brought into focus by the shiny Japanese technology represented by glass-walled, smooth-riding elevators. Early in the story, the car Smith and Connor are using hits "a deep pot-hole, bouncing so hard that the car phone fell off the receiver." (60) Fifteen pages later, the car bounces in another pothole, jolting its occupants again. (75) On the third day of the investigation, Smith and Connor are still "bouncing along the potholes of the Santa Monica freeway," and at the novel's very end they are once again "driving on the Santa Monica freeway," where "the signs overhead had been spray-painted by gangs" and Smith is yet again made "aware of how uneven and bumpy the roadway was." The skyscrapers are hazy in the smog, and to Smith "the landscape looked poor and decrepit." (370, 387). "There was a time," he realizes, when the street he lives on looked pleasant to him, "a little tree-lined street of apartments, with a playground at the end of the block for my daughter." That time has passed. "Now I wasn't feeling that way," he says. "The air was bad, and

the street seemed dirty, unpleasant." (387)

Domesticity and "the world of swirling darkness"

Nostalgia for the past (and the desire to protect a threatened present) are associated with positive images of domesticity and home spaces by the narrators of both novels In both stories, a warm domestic space is threatened: Gruver's Japanese home is destroyed through his confrontation with American military conventions, while Smith's home is threatened with destruction because of his confrontation with a Japanese corporation. In *Sayonara* the positive domestic space is associated with the Japanese homes created by Katsumi and Hana-ogi; these spaces exist in contrast to images of disorientation and placelessness associated with the USA in general and American women in particular. In *Rising Sun* the position is reversed: positive domestic space is associated with Pete Smith's apartment, which is threatened by the Japanese corporate world. Nonetheless, one of the major threats to Smith's domestic security is made through his ex-wife, who is pressured into asking for custody of their daughter, Michelle, on unfounded charges of child abuse. In both cases, American women are identified with a threat to the male narrator's sense of domestic security and associated with images of placelessness, disorientation and "outside forces."

Gruver's positive image of the Japanese home and Japanese women is first suggested to him by Joe Kelly's new wife, Katsumi. In a rather startling image, Gruver tells a friend how much she impressed him, "like a chunk of earth in the middle of a cheese soufflé." (71) This admission is followed by the revelation that sudden doubts about his own future have led him to feel "as if I were in a world of swirling darkness where the only reality was this earth -- this earth of Japan," an "earth" that he has just firmly associated with Japanese women. (72) In time, Hana-ogi becomes,

for Gruver, the embodiment of the "unremitting work, endless suffering and boundless warmth" of Japanese women. (128) At home, Hana-ogi and Katsumi are devoted to their men, scrubbing their backs in the bath and preparing food with "time-christened movements over the charcoal stoves that Japanese women have used for centuries." (97) Gruver becomes convinced that with Hana-ogi he would be able to find "the solid basis for existence that had so far escaped [him]," just as the alley where they live is filled with "a warmth and goodness that [he] had never known in Lancaster or the camps where [he] grew up." (175, 148). Hana-ogi and the home life she creates represent solidity for Gruver: until he met her, he says, he was "a barren desert," "a man flying a lost plane far in the sky." The reassuring, accepting Hana-ogi stands in direct contrast to the American wives Gruver bumps into at the P. X.:

> I looked around me at the faces of my countrywomen. They were hard and angular. They were the faces of women driven by outside forces. . . . They were efficient faces, faces well made up, faces showing determination, faces filled with a great unhappiness. Possibly these harsh faces in the Osaka P.X. bore an unusual burden, for they were surrounded each day with cruel evidence that many American men preferred the softer, more human face of some Japanese girl like Katsumi Kelly. (120-1)

At the end of the novel, Gruver is taken to the airport by Eileen, his erstwhile fiancée and daughter of the novel's personification of a woman "driven by outside forces," Mrs. Webster. He has lost both Hana-ogi and their shared home, and Katsumi and Joe have died in their double suicide. Pete Smith, on the other hand, still has his domestic space intact at the end of his story, his high-powered career-oriented wife ("driven," in this case, by the "outside forces" of Japanese pressure) having abandoned her attempt to regain custody of their daughter. But as Smith tidies his

daughter's bedroom, he worries about the America she will live in as an adult. The inhuman, spacious, meaninglessly minimalist "faux zen" spaces of the Japanese future he sees looming before him are still threatening his sense of home. In *Rising Sun*, Japanese spaces have become the void-like, placeless, "world of swirling darkness" threatening domestic 'reality' that was embodied, in *Sayonara*, by American military conventions and driven women.

In their use of images of domestic security and contrasting (and hence defining) images of placelessness or disorientation, both *Sayonara* and *Rising Sun* rely on taken-for-granted definitions of domesticity and 'home' and draw narrative force from similar assumptions about the 'natural' relationship between women and domestic or interior space. In this way, as in their contrasting but similarly constructed use of images of occupation and spatial control and of past and future, the novels use images of Japan and Japanese space in their construction of a version of American national identity in different ways but within similar frameworks of assumption.

Conclusion

The images of Japan and Japanese spaces presented by these two novels are radically different, then, even while the ways in which those images are constructed remain remarkably similar. The essential and unchanging point is (naturally enough) that the two stories share a strongly American point of view. Neither is actually *about* Japan; both are about the United States, reflections on the American way of life and America's future made by bouncing light off an opposing image. Both identify success and security with spatial control. Not surprisingly, therefore, the back cover promotional material for the Ballantine edition of *Rising Sun* claims, enthusiastically, that the novel is going "to serve a current tenant of the bestseller list with an eviction notice." Even on the bestseller lists,

displacement and occupation are symbols of strength.

One final, revealing similarity: in both novels, a woman who dies is dismissed as "a woman of no importance." In *Rising Sun* it is Cheryl Austin, in *Sayonara*, Katsumi Kelly. Gruver and Smith both react angrily to these dismissals, and both narratives seem to be motivated at least in part by this sense of outrage, by a resolve to make some audience somewhere pay attention to that "woman of no importance." The denial of importance, of significance, is a denial of existence, and this is how these two 'unimportant' women illuminate the slide from confidence to anxiety which characterizes the difference between the two novels and their respective views of America. The deep anxiety in *Rising Sun* comes, in the end, not so much from a sense that the US has been invaded, but that it has become irrelevant, a place "of no importance" whose identity has been denied.

It is no doubt true, as Connor tells Smith, that "countries don't like to be dominated. They don't like to be occupied -- economically or militarily" (280) But it must also be true that a large part of the stress of being occupied comes through the denial of existence that occupation implies, the loss of national identity, the sense of having become nothing but a stage, an arena, for a drama being played out by an intruding foreign cast. The whole complicated action of *Rising Sun*, most distressingly for Smith, turns out to be nothing more than a larger version of the infamous Arakawa case, in which a visiting Japanese couple shot dead in Los Angeles turn out to be not the victims of some random gang-style drive-by shooting, but instead the targets of a Japanese *yakuza* assassination being made on American soil. The shooting was an internal Japanese affair, the place was of no significance. It is for this reason that when Smith, at the end of the novel, finally realizes that the whole Nakamoto murder case, too, has been an internal Japanese affair, he is somehow insulted. "So," he

asks Connor, "is that all this was? Just competition between Nakamoto and some other Japanese company?" Connor admits that for the Japanese, "America is now only an arena for their competition." "That much," he says, "is true. We're just not very important, in their eyes." (387) This is the point at which the two novels show their similarities and their differences most clearly -- on the question of the control of "the arena" and the nationality of the central players. On the one hand, the relative positions are reversed. On the other hand, the issues remain the same. National "importance," in these two male American narratives, comes from the ability to move freely within claimed, contested space, while controlling the free movement of 'others.'

NOTES

1 James Michener, *Sayonara*, [1953] (New York: Fawcett Crest Edition, sixth printing, 1987) 208. Subsequent page references, to this edition, will be given in the text in parentheses.

2 Michael Crichton, *Rising Sun*, [1992] (New York: Ballantine Books Edition, 1993) 387. Subsequent page references, to this edition, will be given in the text in parentheses.

3 This review is quoted on the second page of the promotional material at the beginning of the 1993 Ballantine Edition.