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Slanty-eyed architecture?: Orientalism and Japanism in the works and writings of Ralph Adams Cram, Greene & Greene, and Frank Lloyd Wright

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SLANTY-EYED ARCHITECTURE?:
ORIENTALISM AND JAPANISM IN THE WORKS AND WRITINGS OF
RALPH ADAMS CRAM, GREENE & GREENE, AND FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

by

Don H. Choi

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ABSTRACT

Slanty-Eyed Architecture?:
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Architectural knowledge of Japan, although often implicitly considered to be
objective, is the product of personal, political, and subjective circumstances. Ralph Adams
Cram's works and writings suggest that the dominant American attitudes depended on the
Orientalist assumption of the essential difference between East and West, the textual
treatment of Japan, and American political hegemony. The critical reaction of the work of
Greene & Greene reveals that early twentieth-century American knowledge of Japanese
architecture was extremely cursory and heavily stereotyped by Arts and Crafts filters.
Frank Lloyd Wright's writings suggest that his attitudes were originally derived from the
same context as Cram's, but from this Orientalist base he created a complex and frequently
contradictory architectural and cultural understanding of Japan. The work of all of these
architects implies that American architectural knowledge of Japan is tightly confined by
Orientalist assumptions and narrow, Western architectural frameworks.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To my parents, for everything.
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Prologue

CHIPANGU is an Island towards the east in the high seas, 1500 miles distant from the Continent; and a very great Island it is.

... ... ...

I will tell you a wonderful thing about the Palace of the Lord of that Island. You must know that he hath a great Palace which is entirely roofed with fine gold, just as our churches are roofed with lead, insomuch that it would scarcely be possible to estimate its value. Moreover, all the pavement of the Palace, and the floors of its chambers, are entirely in gold, in plates like slabs of stone, a good two fingers thick; and the windows also are of gold, so that altogether the richness of this Palace is past all bounds and all belief.

Marco Polo
ACT ONE

[Scene: Courtyard of Ko-Ko's Palace in Titipu. Japanese nobles discovered
standing and sitting in attitudes suggested by native drawings.]

Chorus:
If you want to know who we are,
We are gentlemen of Japan;
On many a vase and jar--
On many a screen and fan,
We figure in lively paint:
Our attitude's queer and quaint--
You're wrong if you think it ain't, oh!

W.S. Gilbert, The Mikado.

Introduction

I have, on occasion, been told by strangers that my English is impeccable. Though
this is undoubtedly a compliment, it is slightly unnerving within the context of casual
conversation. I fear that the next comment might be something like, "You know, the tone
of your skin looks quite normal in spite of the fact that you're a yellow person." This type
of speaker manages to ignore the primary evidence-- for instance that I speak with no
foreign accent whatsoever-- and instead rely on preexisting ideas to interpret his
experience. In this case, it is assumed that because of the way I look, I am an Oriental, and
therefore I must have been born somewhere in the Orient, and therefore my native
language must not be English. Such is the occasionally entertaining role of being an
American of Asian descent.

These kinds of assumptions make it clear that statements about Orientals frequently
have relatively little to do with their nominal subject, but a great deal to do with the
speaker. The concept of "Orientalness" is defined externally, by the non-Orientals rather
than by the Orientals themselves. An American of Japanese descent, for instance, will
encounter a range of stereotypes that define what it is to be Japanese.
These stereotypes are graphically depicted by the various branches of the arts. What kind of Japan would the audience infer from Gilbert & Sullivan's quaint Japanese court at Titipu? The ostensible court of Japan in *The Mikado* is almost wholly a British invention, but even if Gilbert was aware of this, his audience may have been more gullible. While few theatergoers would have taken the court at Titipu as a literal reproduction of the actual Japanese imperial court, *The Mikado* may have provided the only information they had about Japanese court life.

If the audience of *The Mikado* derived their knowledge from the opera, where in turn did W.S. Gilbert's information come from? Perhaps, as is hinted in the above stage directions, from "native drawings." For Gilbert and almost all Westerners of the time, information about Japan was likely to be second-hand at best.

The same questions can of course be asked of any form of art: How is a given work involved in creating or perpetuating images of another culture? How does the artist derive his or her understanding of that culture? Some research has been done in literature and painting, but within the field of architecture, these and related questions are not often asked.

As an architect, this is rather disquieting. For example, what role does architecture, not representational in the literal sense way of painting or drama, play in creating polarized images of a race or culture? What motivates an architect to create representations of Japan, or to draw on it for inspiration? To what extent is supposedly objective architectural knowledge bound up in subjective stereotypes?

As an architect of partial Japanese ancestry, the examination of American images of Japanese architecture in this context is both academically intriguing and personally rewarding.


Japan in the United States

During the late 1800s, Europe and the United States became fascinated by Japan, and writers from Rudyard Kipling to Walt Whitman brought Japan to the Western world. Lafcadio Hearn presented a fragile fairyland while Pierre Loti's Madame Chrysanthème ingrained images of the Japanese woman on the psyche of the Western man.

Because of their positions on the Pacific Rim, though, Japan and the United States have suffered and enjoyed a closer relationship than that between Japan and Europe. During the late 1800s, the expansion of Japanese and American trade ensured repeated contact and conflict.

During W.W.II., it was unsurprising that negative stereotypes were aggressively invented by both nations. What is more surprising is that these general stereotypes are often remarkably durable, adapting themselves to fit changing circumstances. Recent economic events have heightened American paranoia about Japan, reawakening or reincarnating old fears.

One example mentioned by Endymion Wilkinson is "Japan, Inc." Recent American interest in Japan has been driven largely by economic motives, and has sparked both business management texts and espionage novels. Both tend to present "Japan, Inc.", a monomaniacal nation ruled by a consortium of government and big business. The specific setting is new, but, as Wilkinson puts it, "The notion of 'Japan Inc.' is more easily understood as an echo of the age-old fear of 'Oriental despotism', a phrase first used by the ancient Greeks to describe the Persians."2

The importance of the Japan/United States relations suggests that some efforts to demystify Japan should be undertaken. Yet the popular appetite seems to feed on the opposite, the exaggeration of past and present images of the Orient. The back cover of Eric Lustbader's 1993 novel Black Blade tempts its audience by claiming, "Black Blade

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2 Endymion Wilkinson, Japan Versus the West. Image and Reality, p.139.
is bullet-fast reading, a brilliant excursion into adventure and romance, intrigue and sex, providing a feast of insights into the mysteries of the Oriental mind." The same description of the exotic, dangerous, and sensual Orient might have been written two centuries earlier. Strangely enough, then, the Japan/United States relationship is characterized both by proximity and remoteness. In spite of continual contact and an apparent need for smooth relations, the United States seems to have little interest in a rational understanding of Japan.

**Japanese-Americans**

For those Americans who trace their ancestry to Japan, stereotypes and racial misunderstanding have more than an academic significance. As a child, I was surprised to learn that my mother's side of the family had been interned in the W.W.II. relocation camps in southern California. I was equally surprised that, fifty years later, relatively few Americans were familiar with this peculiar episode in American civil rights history. Is it the case that American tolerance and understanding has progressed significantly in the past fifty years? It has been suggested that these kinds of stereotypes can have a remarkable durability.

On the most benign level, there are people who are well-intentioned but know little about Asian-Americans outside the generalizations and stereotypes. They are the ones who, in admiring voices, are likely to praise my rather ordinary English language capabilities. The occasional misunderstanding of this type is more often amusing than threatening, but more serious events are also prompted by confused racial perceptions.

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4 The event which brought the camps back into the news was the bill introduced to pay a $20,000 restitution fee to Japanese-Americans who were interned in the camps.
5 see Wilkinson, above, and Sheila K. Johnson, *The Japanese Through American Eyes*. Said's *Orientalism*, discussed in the following chapter, is the classic text on stereotypes of the Orient.
The most extreme example is perhaps the Vincent Chin case, which loaded the old saying "All Asians look alike" with ironic and tragic connotations. Chin was beaten to death by two men who blamed the Japanese for American auto industry troubles. Chin, of course, was not Japanese, but it is the nature of stereotypes to overlook such subtleties.

Architectural Stereotypes

As certain cartoons suggest, what easier way to evoke a place than by portraying its architecture? [Figures 1,2] Because of this close link between the architecture and the people, impressions based on the architecture can easily be transferred to people. For instance, what kinds of characteristics can be inferred about the Japanese if "Ripley's Believe it or Not" is truly to be believed?6 [Figure 3]

There are architectural stereotypes just as there are racial and ethnic ones, and like any other rigid preconceived framework, architectural stereotypes limit what can be understood about their subject. The works and writings of the modern architects have played a major role in determining how Japanese architecture is currently perceived. However, the modern understanding of Japanese architecture is limited and limiting.

Prior to the influence of the European modernists, the American image of Japanese architecture was rather different. During the late 1800s, American interiors sometimes took on a Japanese Victorian flavor far from the ascetic images purveyed by Taut and Gropius. Japanese art to the Victorian American was completely different from Japanese art as imagined by the European modernists. It is hardly necessary to point out that neither group was necessarily more correct in its interpretation. Faced with certain elements of Japanese culture, each group adopted what was most fitting to their goals.

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6 It might be noted, too, that the picture looks more like a Shinto shrine than a Buddhist temple. Perhaps, like Oriental people, all Oriental architecture looks alike.
Figure 1

"These Tokyo nights can be chilly... throw some more dollars on the fire."

Figure 2

"Well, anyway, it keeps the rain out."

Drawing by Dick Oldden. Reprinted by permission.
Figure 3
from The Houston Post, May 21, 1991.

The Houston Post/Tuesday, May 21, 1991/ D-7

Newgrange, an ancient burial mound near Drogheda, Ireland, was built 5,000 years ago—pre-dating both Stonehenge and the Great Pyramid of Giza.

5-21

Ripley's Believe it or Not!

Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have developed a tiny robotic cockroach named "Squirt" that measures one cubic inch in size and is programmed to react to light and noise.

Believe it or not! Log cabins are so popular in Japan that even Buddhist temples are built from logs.

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The most fruitful period for examining American architectural stereotypes of Japan is the early twentieth century. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the United States experienced its first prolonged contact with Japanese culture and art. Consequently, this was the period when many American perceptions of Japan were formed, and by the turn of the century, architects who had grown up during this period of Japanophilia were beginning to produce mature work.

Born in 1869 and 1871, respectively, Charles and Henry Greene are usually described as Arts and Crafts architects. Ralph Adams Cram, born in 1863, is best described as a gothicist and medievalist. Born in 1867, Frank Lloyd Wright might in certain ways be considered an architect in the tradition of Emerson and agrarian democracy. In spite of their philosophical and architectural differences, each of these men found in Japan particular elements which attracted his interest.

Prior investigations of the relationship between these architects and Japan have been confined largely to formal influences. It has been tacitly assumed that Japanese architecture was a simple fact to which architects could react. Knowledge about Japan has never been so straightforward, and understanding the role of Japan in an architect's career demands the understanding of the general framework through which he acquired his information. In other words, it requires a knowledge of general and architectural stereotypes. In turn, by realizing these limits, a fuller picture of Japanese architecture may be attempted.

The careers of these four architects provide a cross-section of contemporary American attitudes. The diversity of their work suggests that Japan could provoke a broad range of reactions, but their shared perceptions suggest that several basic assumptions were fundamental to the American understanding of Japan. Although these principles are illustrated in architecture, they are derived from more general images.
Analyzing Stereotypes

If stereotypes were, as they first might appear, only temporary products of misinformation, then they would be relatively easy to dispel. If, on the other hand, they were rational and logically constructed, they would at least be easy to explain, if harder to eliminate. However, stereotypes often display a longevity and consistency that eliminate the first possibility, and their very perversity argues against the second. How, then, are they to be analyzed?

Edward Said's book *Orientalism* presents Western images of the Orient within the context of political history, arguing that these images are tied to Western imperialism and colonialism. Although *Orientalism* considers European images of the Near East, rather than American images of Japan, it provides a useful framework for understanding the production and persistence of Oriental stereotypes.
Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgement Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends
of the earth!

Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West"

I. Orientalism

Edward Said describes three uses for the term "Orientalism." The academic use of
the word refers simply to the study of the "Orient". As such, "orientalism" is a slightly
archaic term for what might currently be called "area studies" or "Oriental studies."

Said presents a second, more provocative definition of Orientalism as: "a style of
thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the
Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident.'"¹ This division is all the more insidious for its
widespread use in common speech as well as learned discourse. If the first definition is an
academic label, then the second is, loosely, a state of mind. As Said shows, the dichotomy
between Orient and Occident, between East and West, suggests a great deal more than
geographical convenience.

The third meaning of Orientalism is more tangible and specific than the first two:

Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting
point Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate
institution for dealing with the Orient-- dealing with it by making
statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by
teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a
Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority
over the Orient.²

Several implications of this passage merit comment. First, Orientalism is an
empirical, historical, political entity, not an abstract or hypothetical one. Second,

¹ Edward Said, Orientalism, p. 2.
² ibid, p.3.
Orientalism is consistent and persistent, continually placing the West in a position of power over the East. Third, Orientalism has more to do with the West than with the East. That is, it has more to do with Western commentary about the East than with the East proper. This third form of Orientalism might be thought of as the interaction of the Orientalist scholar with the Orientalist state of mind. Generally, the term "Orientalism" will here refer to this most specific meaning. Knowing it as "the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient", though, is only a beginning point. The obvious next question is to ask is how Orientalism dominates and restructures the Orient for the West.

Orientalism is a school of interpretation whose material happens to be the Orient, its civilizations, peoples, and localities. Its objective discoveries—the work of innumerable devoted scholars who edited texts and translated them, codified grammars, wrote dictionaries, reconstructed dead epochs, produced positivistically verifiable learning—are and always have been conditioned by the fact that its truths, like any truths delivered by language, are embodied in language. 3

"Truths" about the Orient, even those of the most "positivistically verifiable learning" are couched in language, which is never completely neutral. That knowledge about the Orient is not purely objective is hardly unique or even notable; what is interesting is a consistency which marks the tone of Orientalist learning.

Western "knowledge" of the Orient has certainly changed over the past two hundred years, yet certain generally unspoken principles fundamental to Orientalism have remained in place. These unchanging rules comprise what Said calls latent Orientalism, in contrast to the specific, explicit, and temporary "facts" of manifest Orientalism. Latent Orientalist tendencies are characterized by "an almost unconscious (and certainly an untouchable) positivity." 4

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3 ibid, p.203.
4 ibid, p.205.
Three Fundamental Principles of Orientalism

Perhaps the most basic of these latent principles is that Orient and Occident are considered to be fundamentally, insuperably separate. Frequently, East and West are considered to be opposed, as well as separate. If this distinction between East and West were only geographical, it would seem curious enough, especially in these days of westward Los Angeles to Tokyo flights. However, as Said emphasizes, it is the "ontological and epistemological" split which is at the heart of Orientalism.

A second general constant in Orientalism is that the Orient is assumed to be incapable of speaking for itself. Because of this muteness, it falls to the West to speak for the East. The East is treated textually, as an inert object to be analyzed, dissected, and explicated as any other text. Along with the assumption of the separation of East and West, this silence makes the whole project of Orientalism possible. Clearly, if the East were not considered to be essentially different from the West, there would be no need for the specialized field of Orientalism. Its study could be subsumed under such categories as history, literature, politics, and the other specialties usually used in Western research. Assuming the silence of the East ensures that Orientalism is essentially a Western creation.

A third factor enabling the rise of Orientalism was Western political interest in the East. The political interests of the colonial powers not only demanded knowledge of the East, but a particular type of knowledge that would aid in ruling the natives as well as justifying an imperial presence in the first place. "My contention is that Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient's difference with its weakness."5 Yet to say that politics was the dominant force behind Orientalism would be simplistic, and perhaps even worse, rather boring. However, knowledge about the Orient could not fail to be political in some way or another--perhaps not expressly political, as in Parliamentary foreign policy

5 ibid, p.204.
rhetoric, but political in the sense that it was inescapably informed by political concerns.

As Said writes:

> What I am interested in doing now is suggesting how the general liberal consensus that 'true' knowledge is fundamentally non-political (and conversely, that overtly political knowledge is not 'true' knowledge) obscures the highly if obscuringly organized political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced.  

The politically loaded circumstances of some positions are quite explicit. For instance, Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer, was England's imperial representative in colonial Egypt at the turn of the century. That his policy writings on Egypt would be informed by political concerns is probably beyond dispute.

In other cases, the impingement of political concerns on scholarship is less obvious. After all, the ideal ivory-tower academic is considered to be above such issues. However,

No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of society.

For instance, Americans no doubt view Iraq in a much different manner than they did before the United States/Iraq war. The extent to which the war would color the academic scholar of Iraq is less clear, but it brings up Said's point that:

> to be a European or an American in such a situation is by no means an inert fact. It meant and means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement almost since the time of Homer.

Even if miraculously suspended above current politics, the student of the Orient is still dependent on previous work in the field. Much of this work, of course, was pursued

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6 ibid, p.10.
7 ibid, p.10.
8 ibid, p.11.
under clearly political interests. It is the period of British and French imperialism which ushers in the age of Orientalism, after all.

In the relationship between self and knowledge, Said emphasizes that there no pure, objective knowledge. Dorinne Kondo examines the conception of the individual and reaches the conclusion that there is no pure self:

Through experimentation with multiple, shifting voices, I undertake a project to decenter and de-essentialize selves, focusing on the ways people construct themselves and their lives—in all the complexity, contradiction and irony—within discursive fields of power and meaning, in specific situations, at specific historical moments.\textsuperscript{9}

Rather than postulate some essential self which reacts with context, Kondo proposes that the self is partially created by context. Different circumstances produce different selves, and seemingly contradictory behavior may be appropriate given a different context.

Enlarging the meanings of "personal" and "political," and displacing the opposition between them, take the form of showing the multiple definitions of selves in specific situations and the inseparability of those definitions from terms we would label economic, political, cultural, and historical.\textsuperscript{10}

Thus, Kondo makes it clear that the "self" is necessarily complex and may appear to be contradictory. Understanding an individual becomes tantamount to understanding the context.

**Additional Traits of Orientalism**

These first three enduring characteristics have allowed and encouraged the creation of the particular entity of Orientalism. Three other traits, often intermingled with the first three, have characterized the manner and method in which the West has gathered

\textsuperscript{9} Dorinne Kondo, *Crafting Selves*, p.43.
\textsuperscript{10} ibid, p.44.
information about, or "invented", the East. All of them work together to create the self-perpetuating phenomenon of Orientalism. By the end of the 19th century, certain beliefs about the Orient "seemed to have an epistemological status equal to that of historical chronology or geographical location. In its most basic form, then, Oriental material could not really be violated by anyone's discoveries, nor did it seem ever to be reevaluated completely." 11

Orientalism is a textual exercise. That is, Orientalists tend to rely on texts as an accurate representation of the Orient. "One would no more think of using Amadis of Gaul to understand sixteenth-century (or present-day) Spain than one would use the Bible to understand, say, the House of Commons,"12 writes Said, but this is in fact what Orientalists tend to do.

As a text, the Orient, like any other text, is generally treated as being static and unchanging. Observations of the Orient tend to be general, all-encompassing, and timeless. Consider, for instance, the distinction between Orient and West, a division predating Homer. The term "Orient" gathers countless peoples and cultures under one label, along with the assumption that this dichotomy is appropriate for all times. Other labels, too, are used as if the groups they describe are monolithic and homogeneous. In the way Orientalism presents the Orient, "For all these functions it is frequently enough to use the copula is."13 In other words, the Orient is backwards, or Islam is an imitation of Christianity, or the Oriental mind is backwards: no qualification of time, no variations of individuals, no multi-faceted institutions need be acknowledged.

Generalization is hardly a tendency limited to Orientalism, of course. However, the scholars of the Orient have been particularly inclined toward blanket treatments of the

11 Said, p.205.
12 ibid, p.93.
13 ibid, p.72.
"Orient" or "Islam" or "Egyptians". One reason is to objectify the Oriental, as an object of study, as a text.

Along with the belief in the Orient as a static entity, Orientalism also assumed the superiority of the West. In some cases this was quite explicit and clear; during the period of Western imperialism which produced the great body of Orientalism, the West was clearly militarily superior. This general assumption of superiority colored other observations of the Orient, often couched in terms of oppositions between the East and West. For instance, through the 19th century the Orient could be evaluated in terms of "its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness..."¹⁴ The implied inferiority of the East is even clearer when the implied converse to the above statement is articulated, that is, that the West is moral, democratic, normal, accurate, and progressive.

Another tendency of Orientalist research is that the East tends to be defined in terms of the West. Said points out a blatant example in d'Herbelot's Bibliotheque Orientale, the entry for Mohammed:

C'est le fameux imposteur Mahomet, Auteur et Fondateur d'une hérésie, qui a pris le nom de religion, que nous appelons Mahometane. Voyez le titre d'Eslam.

(This is the famous imposter Mahomet, Author and Founder of a heresy, which has taken on the name of religion, which we call Mohammedan. See entry under Islam.)¹⁵

It is bad enough that Islam is denounced as mere heresy, but what is perhaps even more notable is that we call it "Mohammedan." Islam, of course, is the proper name, the one used by Muslims, but what seems more important is that we call it "Mohammedan." The use of "Mohammedan" is to make Mohammed and Islam the analog of Christ and Christianity, when in fact the role of Mohammed in Islam is certainly not that of Christ in

¹⁴ ibid, p.205.
¹⁵ ibid, p.65.
Christianity. Thus, one way the West understands the East is by considering objects in the East to be analogous to certain ones in the West.

In a more general manner, the Western treatment of the East tends to provide an Orient which is there for Western purposes.

Orientalism is premised upon exteriority, that is, on the fact that the Orientalist, poet or scholar, makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West. He is never concerned with the Orient except as the first cause of what he says.\textsuperscript{16}

In other words, Orientalism is a project carried out by Westerners, for Westerners.

\textbf{Consistency and Durability}

In this day it seems hardly necessary to emphasize that the knowledge possessed about the East is a set of representations, rather than a set of "truths". These representations can themselves be analyzed textually; this is Said's approach. The question is not how close a representation comes to the "true" Orient, but how the representation informs us of Western conceits. What is striking is the consistency of certain beliefs about the Orient:

Thus all of Orientalism stands forth and away from the Orient: that Orientalism makes sense at all depends more on the West than on the Orient, and this sense is directly indebted to various Western techniques of representation that make the Orient visible, clear, "there" in discourse about it. And these representations rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding for their effects, not upon a distant and amorphous Orient.\textsuperscript{17}

Orientalism, then, creates or invents its own Orient, placing some representation of the East on display. What makes Orientalism convincing are its internal consistencies, the

\textsuperscript{16} ibid, p.20.
\textsuperscript{17} ibid, p.21.
durability of certain concepts mentioned above. Such "knowledge" about the East
developed to the point that:

For any European during the nineteenth century—and I think one
can say this almost without qualification—Orientalism was such a
system of truths, truths in Nietzsche's sense of the word.\textsuperscript{18}

These general tendencies, though, are hardly the limit of Orientalism. Orientalism is
more than an accumulation of ephemeral facts and enduring tendencies:

Thus Orientalism is not only a positive doctrine about the Orient
that exists at any one time in the West; it is also an influential
academic tradition (when one refers to an academic specialist who
is called an Orientalist), as well as an area of concern defined by
travelers, commercial enterprises, governments, military
expeditions, readers of novels and accounts of exotic adventure,
natural historians, and pilgrims to whom the Orient is a specific
kind of knowledge about specific places, peoples, and
civilizations.\textsuperscript{19}

Orientalism might be described as a matrix or field which interacts with each
individual participant. Although it may be only the academic specialist who is termed the
Orientalist, Orientalism's authors and acolytes include to some extent any party interested
in the East. Clearly, the manner in which any given person reacts with Orientalism
depends on his position and intent. Compared to the tourist, for instance, the academic
historian is likely to be immersed in the body of scholarly written work. The novelist may
be attracted to the exotic elements in Nerval and Flaubert, the foreign policy expert to the
writings of the British imperialists. Said proposes three types of journeys to the Orient:

One: the writer who intends to use his residence for the specific
task of providing professional Orientalism with scientific material,
who considers his residence a form of scientific observation. Two:
the writer who intends the same purpose but is less willing to
sacrifice the eccentricity and style of his individual consciousness to
impersonal Orientalist definitions. These latter do appear in his
work, but they are disentangled from the person vagaries of style

\textsuperscript{18} ibid, p.203.
\textsuperscript{19} ibid, p.203.
only with difficulty. Three: the writer for whom a real or metaphorical trip to the Orient is the fulfillment of some deeply felt and urgent project. His text therefore is built on a personal aesthetic, fed and informed by the project.

Orientalism is hardly an honorable institution, based on assumptions of Western cultural and racial superiority. Yet certain of its characteristics seem understandable, if not defensible:

It is therefore correct that every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric. Some of the immediate sting will be taken out of these labels if we recall additionally that human societies, at least the more advanced cultures, have rarely offered the individual anything but imperialism, racism, and ethnocentrism for dealing with "other" cultures.²⁰

In other words, certain of these less-than-admirable Orientalist tendencies seem quite predictable. However, several factors make Orientalism more than just another case of cultural egotism: First, Orientalism displays a durability and internal consistency which marks it as a major cultural creation. Second, the Western hegemony which produced Orientalism did not allow a reciprocal "Occidentalism." During what Said calls the modern period of Orientalism, beginning in the late 18th century, no Eastern nation could penetrate the West in the manner that Britain and France invaded the Orient. Its political strength allowed the West to invent an East without the participation of the East.

Methodology

For our purposes, several of Said's methodological points require elaboration. From the entirety of the Orient, Said has chosen to concentrate on the Near East, partly because, Orientalists notwithstanding, the Far East and the Near East present different histories. Although many general tendencies characterized Western dealings with both regions, proving the evolution of Orientalism in both areas would require examining two different

²⁰ ibid, p.204.
sets of authors. Furthermore, during the past three hundred years, Western relations with
the Far East often involved the Near East. Thus, one might consider the Near East without
the Far East, but it would be more difficult to do the reverse.

The two nations most involved in the creation of modern Orientalism, were, not
surprisingly, the two nations with the greatest vested interest in the Near East. Britain's
presence in Indiia and the Near East was unrivaled by any other nation, and though
France's holdings were lesser, French academicism produced figures such as Silvestre de
Sacy and Ernest Renan, seminal Orientalists. Notes Said:

My point is that Orientalism derives from a particular closeness
experienced between Britain and France and the Orient, which until
the early nineteenth century had really meant only India and the
Bible lands.21

However, Orientalism is hardly limited to Britain and France. Other European
nations also had dealings with the Orient, and with British and French texts about the
Orient. More recently, the United States has become closely involved with parts of the
Orient; "since W.W.II America has dominated the Orient, and approaches it as France and
Britain once did."22 In addition, though Orientalism may have originated in the Near East
and India, East and Southeast Asia would also fall prey to imperialism at later dates.

Another, very different impulse also motivated Said's interest in the Near East:

My own experiences of these matter are in part what make me
write this book. The life of an Arab Palestinian living in the West,
particularly in America, is disheartening. There exists here an
almost unanimous consensus that politically he does not exist, and
when it is allowed that he does, it is either as a nuisance or as an
Oriental. The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political
imperialism, dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arab or the
Muslim is very strong indeed, and it is this web which every
Palestinian has come to feel as his uniquely punishing identity.23

21 ibid, p.4.
22 ibid, p.4.
23 ibid, p.27
This statement is all the more effective because Said expressly denies the possibility of supra-personal, "ideal" research. Instead, the individual reacts with the surrounding field of his circumstances. One of the insidious effects of the belief in purely objective knowledge is to ignore the personal circumstances of the scholar, and to believe his representations as "truth". "Truth", of course, is rarely subject to reevaluation, and, in the guise of fact, such beliefs as the essential inferiority of the East may endure with little question. By admitting his personal interests, Said ensures that his own account will not be taken as the only "truth", and provides first-hand evidence of how Orientalism can be more than an academic, impersonal institution.

Within the great body of evidence created by Western dealings with the Orient, Said examines written texts by British and French authors. Within these bounds, all manner of works are considered. Some are academic, such as the writings of Silvestre de Sacy. Others are expressly political, by government officials like Arthur James Balfour, once prime minister and a long-time Parliament member. Still others are works of fiction, such as Flaubert's Salammbo, or narratives of travels like Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madina and Meccah by Sir Richard Burton. A very few examples suggest visual images, most notably Delacroix and others who painted an Orient of "Sensuality, promise, terror, sublimity, idyllic pleasure, intense energy."24 Other visual images include brief references to Homer and Aeschylus and the cover illustration, the painting Snake Charmer, by Jean-Léon Gérôme.

From Said's choice of authors, it is clear that Orientalism creeps into texts in many ways. For the most part, he considers fairly direct links between a given author and Orientalism. Said's project is to outline the development of modern Orientalism in general terms; to do this he examines a wide range of authors, examining the dialectic between the individual and the collective, between a given text and the great body of Orientalism. He

24 ibid, p.118.
has two goals, then: first to establish the existence of Orientalism, and second, to examine how unique authors relate to this field. However, given the scale of its subject, the book *Orientalism* cannot consider any one author in great depth and breadth.

One might expand the analysis to include the intersection of Orientalism with other broad movements, as well as with the individual. For instance, Said refers to Romantic tendencies as well as to Orientalism when writing of Chateaubriand, and notes that Orientalism emerges as "a nineteenth-century discipline with roots in revolutionary Romanticism."\(^{25}\) Given Chateaubriand's travels in the Near East and his taste for exoticism, it is hardly surprising that Orientalism and Romanticism should converge in his works. Yet in other cases, Orientalism might encounter a movement through stealthier means. For instance, it might become allied with Medievalism in the work of Godfrey in Britain, and so filter into the Arts and Crafts movement, only to find its way across the Atlantic to America.

The United States and Orientalism

The American presence in the Orient is relatively recent, and the United States played little part in the emergence of modern Orientalism. With regard to the European understanding of the East, "In contrast the American understanding of the Orient will seem considerably less dense, although our recent Japanese, Korean, and Indochinese adventures ought now to be creating a more sober, more realistic 'Oriental' awareness."\(^{26}\) Without a long history of contact with the Near East, "Americans will not feel quite the same about the Orient, which for them is much more likely to be associated very differently with the Far East (China and Japan, mainly)."\(^{27}\)

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\(^{25}\) ibid, p.130.
\(^{26}\) ibid, p.2.
\(^{27}\) ibid, p.1.
However, to say that the United States was and is free of Orientalist tendencies would be gravely myopic. If the closeness between Europe and the Bible lands led to Orientalism, the closeness between Europe and the United States, particularly between Britain and the U.S., led to shared academic traditions. If the United States became heir to French and British imperialism, it also became scion of continental Orientalism.

There remain many issues which fall outside Said's purview: Can it be said that there is or was a "Japanism" in the United States which parallels the Orientalism developed in Europe? Do graphic texts suggest tendencies similar to the ones implied by verbal and written texts? Are investigations of more limited cultural aspects subject to the same kind of generalizing that characterizes descriptions of the "Arab" or of "Islam"? The examination of the American reception of Japanese art and architecture suggests that the answers are largely affirmative.
No great artist ever sees things as they really are. If he did, he would cease to be an artist. Take an example from our own day. I know that you are fond of Japanese things. Now, do you really imagine that the Japanese people, as they are presented to us in art, have any existence? ... In fact, the whole of Japan is a pure invention. There is no such country, there are no such people.

Oscar Wilde, "The Decay of Lying"1

II.
Orientalism, Japan and the Visual Arts

Commodore Perry's mission to Japan in 1853 provided a new frontier for the Western imagination, opening a country sequestered for over two centuries. Few Americans in the nineteenth century could have imagined accurate views of Japan. Some of the obstacles were merely logistical, for instance the geographic separation in the era of steamship travel. Other barriers were less obvious, rooted in cultural rather than physical features. After all, by inheriting much of its literary tradition from Europe, the United States also accepted romanticism, racism, and other elements related to Orientalism. In certain ways, too, American experiences in the Pacific paralleled European forays into the Near East. For these reasons, it was inevitable that American attitudes toward Japan were greatly indebted to Orientalism.

The Near East and Orientalism: Japan and Japanism?

In nineteenth-century Western relations with Japan, the sine qua non of Orientalism remained unchallenged: the world was fundamentally divided into East and West. Yet there are two fundamental axes along which an American creation of Japanism will differ from the European creation of Orientalism. First, at the risk of sounding glib, Japan is obviously not the Near East. Second, the United States is neither England nor France.

Several important characteristics of the historical relations between Europe and the Near East were lacking in Western relations with Japan.

Orientalism was the product of centuries of relations between Europe and the Near East, leading to a period of modern Orientalism beginning in the late eighteenth century. In contrast, until the 1850s, Western contact with Japan had been remarkably brief. In the 1540s, Portuguese traders "discovered" Japan, introducing the European export staples of religion and firearms; both proved popular. The popularity of Christianity suggested a threat to Tokugawa Ieyasu, who had unified Japan after several decades of civil war. Persecution increased, and the massacre of a group of Japanese Christians near Nagasaki in 1638 effectively eliminated the Church from Japan. In the same year, Japanese citizens were barred from traveling abroad. The only remaining links to the outside world were a few Dutch and Chinese trading ships. This isolation endured until Commodore Perry's "black ships" steamed into Edo bay on July 8, 1853.

The Near East, on the other hand, had been ingrained into Western consciousness since Hellenic times. Birthplace of Christianity and incubator of Islam, the Near East could hardly disappear from the Western imagination. Strong challenges had also emerged from the Near East, most notably from the aggressive expansion of Islam; "And to this extraordinary assault Europe could respond with little except fear and a kind of awe." Orientalism was a product of this long period of proximity. Compared to the Near East, Japan was conceptually and geographically far removed, suggesting that Japanism might be considerably less developed than Orientalism.

Also absent from relations with Japan was an extended tradition of unequivocal European hegemony. In the sixteenth century, European science excelled Japan's in a number of areas, including weaponry, but European hegemony was not unequivocally established. By 1853, circumstances had changed greatly, and the first treaties made this

2 Said, Orientalism, p. 59.
quite clear. Japan became another country to be commercially exploited through Western dictates. To the surprise of many, this inequality was not to last; barely half a century passed between the first ignominious treaties and Japan's defeat of Russia in the Pacific. The 1894 Sino-Japanese war heralded the rise of Japanese power, and the defeat of Russia confirmed it. While not regarded as the equal of the great Western powers, Japan was clearly the strongest Asian state and was still developing rapidly. Often in positions of apparent political inferiority, Japan escaped foreign occupation until World War II, a tradition which emphatically separated it from many other Oriental countries.

The United States presents a particular case in East-West relations. A relative newcomer to international politics, in the nineteenth century the United States lacked the rich history of imperialism possessed by England, France, and the other European powers. America had little tradition of global exploration to compare with sixteenth-century Spain and Portugal. Always a facile student, the United States did manage to learn many lessons about cultural domination from its more experienced colleagues. To believe otherwise is to be hypermetrophic; one has only to look at the Native Americans and Africans, or "Indians" and slaves, as the United States called them, to be reassured of this.

Another difference between European and American politics is that the location of the United States produced a different imaginative geography. For Europe, the dividing line between East and West was crossed between Greece and Turkey. For the United States, the demarcation occurred, paradoxically, westwards, somewhere in the Pacific Ocean. Instead of the Near East, China, Japan, and the Far East became America's primary Orient. "The central fact of American imaginative geography and one to which Said pays little heed, is that Americans have usually pictured themselves standing on their 'new world' with their backs to Europe." 3

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The vastness of the Pacific Ocean denied any physical closeness between Japan and the United States, but parallel interests drew the two into contact. As Japan industrialized in the latter stages of the nineteenth century, it became apparent that the control of Pacific trade would rest with these two nations. In the 1890s, for instance, Hawaii became the site of several disputes between Japan and the United States. In 1899 the United States annexed the Philippines, further increasing tensions. Just as Europe had been entwined with the Near East, America became inextricably involved with the Far East.

Given the similarities and contrasts between American and European adventures in the Orient, it is difficult to predict an a priori American Japanism corresponding to the (primarily) European construct of Orientalism. Many characteristics of the relationship between Europe and the Near East are present to a lesser extent in the relations between the United States and Japan. For instance, the long history of domination of the Near East can be compared to a relatively short period of domination over Japan. In 1900, the many centuries of closeness between Europe and the Near East stood in high contrast to the few decades of relations between the United States and Japan. Ultimately, the United States contributed relatively little to nineteenth century Orientalism but played a major role in interpreting Japan to the West.

It cannot be denied, of course, that a great deal of American culture was derived from Continental precedents, especially in literature. "Where else would American commentators find their starting points except in the Europeans?" To the degree that writers such as Nerval, Chateaubriand, and Burton became part of the American literary tradition, the United States inherited Orientalist tendencies through them. The United States also received a body of more overtly political writings, but it seems likely that this acceptance was tempered by America's distance from the Near East. The urgency that

\[4\  \text{ibid, p.10.}\]
characterized English political writings about Egypt was not likely to reappear in
nineteenth-century America.

At any rate, the proof of Japanism is in the writing, and perhaps in the buildings.
What makes Said's essay truly provocative is the pervasiveness of certain traits throughout
a remarkable variety of texts and authors, rather than the simple facts of these traits. For
instance, to read that Rudyard Kipling was an imperialist is boring, but to read *Kim* is an
altogether different story. Similarly, simply to call Frank Lloyd Wright a racist is neither
particularly interesting nor particularly useful. It becomes worthy of note only in light of
the rest of his life, work, and times.

**Isolation and Change: Logistical Difficulties in Interpreting Japan**

Orientalist or Japanist attitudes were not the only factors distorting nineteenth-
century Western perceptions of Japan. Because Japan had been isolated for over two
hundred years, Western knowledge of Japan was very limited, and the language barrier
prevented most foreigners from gaining anything but a cursory knowledge of Japanese
civilization. The most authoritative reference at the time was Engelbert Kaempfer's *The
History of Japan*, based on the author's residence in Japan from 1690 to 1692. Since
information on Japan was difficult to obtain, Kaempfer's work remained the most
comprehensive Western treatment through the middle of the nineteenth century. Even
after trade was established in the 1850s, foreigners were forbidden to travel inland without
a permit from the Japanese government. These travel restrictions were gradually eased
until their elimination in 1889.

Jean-Pierre Lehmann notes that "although Japan was changing fairly dramatically,
decade by decade, during the period we are dealing with, realisation in the West of these
changes, if it existed at all, tended to come in fits and starts, although obviously there were exceptions."\(^5\) Much of this change was directly precipitated by the Western presence.

Because of its concessions to the West, the Tokugawa shogunate was considered to be weak by the lords of several powerful, outlying regions. In the name of the emperor, for centuries only a figurehead, these leaders allied against the shogunate. In 1868, they succeeded in restoring the emperor to his position at the head of the government. After this Meiji restoration, political change continued, and the traditional feudal system was abolished. Naturally, the dismantling of the feudal system meant the destruction of the existing economic and social order as well.

Following the Meiji restoration, Japan embarked on a campaign of rapid Westernization. In the face of Western strength, Japan seized upon modernization as the key to gaining political equality. "To the people, however, it meant more. From xenophobia in the 1850s and 60s, by the 1870s and 80s they had reached the other extreme--uncritical adulation of all things Western."\(^6\) Government commissions were sent abroad to study almost all aspects of Western culture, including science, education, and government. The result was an unparalleled period of industrialization and Westernization.

Given the difficulties of access, language, and rapid social change, the lack of a coherent Western image of Japan was inevitable, and this paucity of information fueled all sorts of fantasies. In fact, the sudden introduction of Japan into the Western consciousness is precisely the kind of situation that tends to support a textual attitude. Without direct knowledge of Japan, Westerners turned to texts, generally heedless of the fact that these texts themselves were characterized by many kinds of inaccuracies.

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\(^6\) ibid, p.24.
Japanism, China-ism, and Suggestions of a Differentiated Orientalism

In Reflections on Orientalism, several critics examine the question of whether Western representations of the Far East are as Orientalist as depictions of the Near East. Donald Lammers concludes, "At the minimum I hope to have shown that this group of Western writers did produce, intentionally, a substantial body of accurate sociological and psychological observation of the Japanese, most of it derived first-hand, and much of it rendered with imaginative sympathy as well...." Edward Graham comes to similar conclusions about Malraux, Pearl Buck, and several other writers who set their work in China. At least for these authors, Orientalism does not seem to extend to all parts of the Orient.

There is also evidence that the West differentiates between Asian nations, although not always for sound reasons. Sheila Johnson writes that in post-W.W.II America a "migrating Asian stereotype" has developed:

The favorable Asian stereotype includes such attributes as patience, cleanliness, courtesy, and a capacity for hard work; the unfavorable one emphasizes clannishness, silent contempt, sneakiness, and cruelty. There is a good deal of evidence that these two stereotypes alternate between the Japanese and the Chinese, and that when one nation is being viewed in the light of the favorable stereotype, the other will be saddled with the unfavorable epithets.

These stereotypes are particularly interesting because they parallel Western images of Japan and China from a century ago. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, China was seen as decadent, stagnant, and backwards, in other words, quintessentially Oriental. Japan was regarded as (relatively) vital, progressive, and modern. "The Japanese

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7 Donald Lammers, "Taking Japan Seriously: Some Western Literary Portrayals of the Japanese During the Climax of their National Self-Assertion (c.1905-c.1945)," in Reflections on Orientalism, p.59.
8 Edward D. Graham, "The Imaginative Geography of China," in Reflections on Orientalism. Graham notes that Chinese cultural hegemony in the past created what might be called a "Barbarianism" analogous to Said's Orientalism.
are certainly the Yankees of the Asiatic continent,"10 beamed a guidebook to the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial, leaving unsaid the inference that the superiority of the Japanese resulted from their renunciation of typical Oriental backwardness in favor of American progressiveness.

In *From Sea to Sea*, Kipling suggests not only an imperialistic mindset but also the anomalous position of the Japanese: "'The Chinaman's a native,' I said, but the Jap isn't a native, and he isn't a Sahib either. What is it?'"11 For the Japanese to completely escape the label of "Oriental" was out of the question, but apparently not all Orientals were created equal.

Thus, Japan occupied a peculiar place in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western imagination. Both its past and apparent future separated it from other Oriental nations, freeing it somewhat from traditional views of the Orient. On the other hand, a relative independence from Orientalism did not in any way guarantee accurate representations of Japan. On the contrary, the absence of a well-defined image of Japan allowed many, potentially contradictory interpretations. As Lehmann notes, "one sees and believes largely what one wants to, giving far more credence to what seems to confirm one's prejudices."12

**Texts Written, Painted, and Built**

In his study of Orientalism, Said freely admits that written texts are only one way to represent the Orient, noting that "Later in the nineteenth century, in the works of Delacroix and literally dozens of other French and British painters, the Oriental genre tableau carried representation into visual expression and a life of its own (which this book unfortunately must scant)."13 There is no reason to believe that the "knowledge"

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12 Lehman, p.15.
possessed by painters should be any less political than that possessed by writers. Yet the
typical art critic focuses on issues internal to painting, such as composition, technique, and
art-historical lineage. The treatment of the "subject" is often confined to the literal, visually
depicted subject.

**Orientalist Representation in Painting**

Commenting on the exhibition "Orientalism: The Near East in French Painting 1800-
1880," Linda Nochlin writes:

> Above all, the Orientalist exhibition makes us wonder whether there are other questions besides the "normal" art-historical ones that ought to be asked of this material. The organizer of the show, Donald Rosenthal, suggests that there are indeed important issues at stake here, but he deliberately stops short of confronting them...
> In other words, art-historical business as usual.\(^\text{14}\)

Nochlin exposes several Orientalist characterizations in Gérôme’s *Snake Charmer*,
previously mentioned as Said’s cover illustration. The naked boy, coiled snake, and
prominent weapons all imply that the Orient is a place of sensuality, irrationality, and
backwardness. The dominant mood is sensual and mysterious; the architectural setting is
decadent and decrepit. All of this is executed with a pictorial realism which demands that
the painting be taken as scientific observation rather than artistic fabrication. Just as telling
as the excruciating detail are the absences. There is no sense of time or history and there
are no white men to suggest that this scene is other than the essential, primordial Orient.

It becomes clear that these paintings are in part a justification for French
imperialism: if the Orient is truly as Gérôme paints it, a locale where natives "quite literally
charm snakes while Constantinople falls into ruins,"\(^\text{15}\) then Western attention is clearly
demanded. If not merely for the sake of political gains, then at least to save the Orient

\(^{15}\) Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," p.123.
from the Orientals. Just as Said notes, the text has more to say about the author (and his context) than the nominal subject.

Architecture as a Representation of the Orient

Obviously there is more than one layer of representation to these paintings, but art historians often gloss over broader political issues. Architectural writers, too, often prefer issues internal to the field. As Peter Eisenman writes:

In other disciplines representation is not the only purpose of figuration.... Conversely, in architecture only one aspect of the figure is traditionally at work: object representation. The architectural figure always alludes to—aims at the representation of—some other object, whether architectural, anthropomorphic, natural, or technological.\textsuperscript{16}

This is a remarkably restrictive understanding of representation, and it seems that several readings of architecture as representation are not only possible, but inevitable.

Erwin Panofsky provides a convenient categorization of three "strata" of subject matter.\textsuperscript{17} Most literally, the "subject" of the painting is the collection of forms and colors that are perceived as natural objects. The next layer can be called secondary subject matter, which involves allegory and iconography; "It is apprehended by realizing that a male figure with a knife represents St. Bartholomew, that a female figure with a peach in her hand is a personification of veracity..."\textsuperscript{18} and so on. Finally, there is intrinsic meaning or content, which is "apprehended by ascertaining those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion—qualified by one personality and condensed into one work."\textsuperscript{19} This third level of meaning is what Said and Nochlin are really concerned with, while art historians usually prefer to deal with the levels of allegory and literal subject matter.

\textsuperscript{17} Erwin Panofsky, "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art," in \textit{Meaning in the Visual Arts}.
\textsuperscript{18} ibid., p.28.
\textsuperscript{19} ibid., p.30.
Panofsky applied these rules to Renaissance art, and in many ways they now seem restrictive and outdated. With regard to Panofsky's primary subject matter, for instance, the Rothko Chapel canvases provide colors and forms but not the illusion of natural, physical objects. Architectural forms, too, often do not literally represent other objects. However, his three strata of representation might be generalized to provide a less essentialist, more flexible framework. Given that the primary subject matter itself may be uncertain, it is clear that the other understanding of the other two levels of meaning must also be modified.

On the secondary level of meaning, Panofsky's iconography suggests that the author communicates a unique, universally understood message by means of a figurative element. Assuming that there is a figurative element, which there is not in many abstract works, the artist's attempt at communication may be intended to carry a much less specific and defined meaning, assuming of course that there is any intended message at all. Assuming again that a figurative element exists, the observer may interpret the figurative element in many ways regardless of the artist's attempted message. I am only slightly embarrassed, for instance, to admit that I had no idea that a male figure holding a knife represents St. Bartholomew. As a Houston resident, my own apprehension of a knife-wielding man is somewhat different. If there is no "primary subject matter", to use Panofsky's terms, then the arrangement of forms and colors may suggest certain meanings, but will generally not function in an iconographic manner. The specific allegories of figural, Renaissance painting will be replaced by less obvious, less concrete meanings.

Panofsky's third stratum of meaning, intrinsic meaning, examines a work of art as a symptom of something else, such as the views of the artist or of a broader group. Clearly, the relationship between the symptom and the condition is more equivocal than Panofsky suggests. In his view, the work of art is a rather literal reflection of changes in the mindset of the artist. Yet forms also have an autonomous existence, and formal changes may
reflect only that the author has come to a new way of expression from internal experimentation. In other words, a work of art does not literally represent general attitudes in the artist's mind, much less broader, cultural values.

The question of representation in architecture is obviously a complicated issue, but several general points are useful for my purposes. In some cases, architectural forms are seen as representations of other objects; Laugier might claim that classical columns refer to trees, for instance. The use of the classical order also represents previously used orders. However, like most music or abstract expressionist painting, the forms of architecture tend to become their own subject matter on the most literal level. They tend to be seen first as columns, and only secondarily as representations of other columns.

The symbolic or allegorical meaning carried by these elements tends to be vague. If a woman holding a peach in a particular position is an allegory of veracity, the classical orders of the Court of Honor buildings at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition have no such unique meaning. These columns refer to many precedents, whether Beaux Arts, Renaissance, Roman, Greek, or other. In these references they also gain some symbolic value and connote values of progress or civic pride or whatever, but compared to painted forms, their allegorical meaning is broad and general. To return to the Gérôme painting, a naked boy holding a large snake implies fairly specifically and vividly that the Orient is a place of sensuality and danger. The Chinese pagoda in Kew Gardens, built in 1762, suggests that the Orient is quaint and exotic, perhaps, but with little of the force or specificity of Snake Charmer.20

In comparison with painting, then, architecture is generally less specific in the references it makes to other objects and values. Gérôme depicts the backwardness, depravity, decadence, and "otherness" of his Oriental subjects, and it is tempting to infer that he believed that the East was inferior and backwards. Certainly, this is the message

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that *Snake Charmer* tends to convey about the Near East. Inferring the attitudes of an individual through his architecture will be relatively difficult, and there is a danger of accepting a text too readily as the literal representation of the author's actual beliefs.

Because Said is concerned with the broad outlines of Orientalism, the private opinions of any given author remain largely irrelevant to his arguments. On the scale of the individual author, though, the question of the correspondence between public and private opinions becomes more engaging. Did Gérôme truly believe in the "oriental-ness" of the Near East, or was his choice of topics motivated by other concerns? It is all too easy to accept a text as reality, as Orientalism shows; it is also easy to accept a text, even an ostensibly fictional one, as a literal record of the author's beliefs.

Generally, the relative lack of specificity in architectural representation means that architecture will not reveal Orientalist attitudes so readily as painting and literature do. Yet there are other factors which make the analysis of architecture a potentially useful tool in the examination of Orientalism. First, the very vagueness of architectural representation allows greater latitude in critical evaluations. The setting of the *Snake Charmer* can hardly be mistaken for any place outside the Near East, especially given the literal writing on the walls. In some cases, such as the Kew Gardens pagoda, architecture can be considered as a specific representation of the Orient; the architect of this pagoda, Sir William Chambers, had published a book on Chinese architecture based on his visits to China. However, many other architectural examples may look vaguely Oriental without referring to a specific precedent. Frank Lloyd Wright's Ward Willits house and Greene & Greene's Blacker house look somehow Japanese to many observers, but the extent of Japanese influence inferred depends on the particular critic.

In this situation the building itself becomes something like a Rorschach test, reflecting the attitudes of the critics more than those of the designer. As a very simple

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21 ibid, p.10.
example, one critic may see a Japanese influence in the plaster and timber walls of the Ward Willits house. Another observer may believe that Japanese architecture influenced the hovering roof forms. In architecture as in race, stereotypes often provide a means for "understanding" the unfamiliar, and the architectural stereotypes of the critics may become clear in their observations about what they feel to be Japanesque buildings.

Many architectural works reflect not only the attitudes of the architect and critic, but those of the client as well. Wright's Imperial Hotel, for instance, says a great deal about Baron Okura and broader Japanese attitudes. The choice of an American architect rather than a Japanese one may suggest that Japan had a relatively high regard for American culture.

Architecture and Japanism

The utilitarian, experiential nature of a building gives it a life of its own outside whatever role of representation it may play. On the most literal level, architecture is not representational in the way painting or writing is, and this is probably one of the major reasons why architecture is left unmentioned in Orientalism. However, it seems likely that Orientalist architectural texts might limit thought and action about the Orient in the same way that written texts do.

The use of architecture as a text to examine Japanism is intended as both a criticism and an affirmation of Orientalism. The general principles that Said proposes are both provocative and convincing. However, the universality that he ascribes to Orientalism is unnerving. There are reasons to believe that American representations of Japan may diverge from the primarily European construct of Orientalism. Other than historical and overtly political concerns noted above, there is another factor which makes Japan a special case in nineteenth century East-West relations. To a greater extent than any other Oriental nation, Japan became an important element in nineteenth century Western art. Japanese art was taken seriously by a number of major figures, especially the Impressionists and post-
Impressionists, suggesting that at least certain aspects of Japan escaped the Orientalist assumption of Eastern inferiority.
"It would pay us," said the Professor, his head in a clog-shop, "it would pay us to establish an international suzerainty over Japan to take away any fear of invasion or annexation, and pay the country as much as ever it chose, on condition that it simply sat still and went on making beautiful things while our men learned. It would pay us to put the whole Empire in a glass case and mark it, Hors Concours, Exhibit A."

Kipling

And in due time, with the mastery of the major portion of the undeveloped wealth of the earth, Asiatic militancy and industrialism shall reign supreme in this world and the Mikado shall become the Mikado of kings.

Homer Lea

III.
Fairyland to Yellow Peril: Perceptions of Japan in the Nineteenth Century West

"By 1900 so many books and articles had been published on the Far East that few with any interest in culture could have remained totally oblivious to the seduction of Japanese civilization." In an age of expansion for both Japan and the United States, it was inevitable that the two nations would come into repeated contact, yet their mutual fascination suggests other conditions as well. If the Japanese emulation of the United States seems a logical (if extreme) outgrowth of Japan's modernization, the critical and popular American interest in Japan seems more puzzling. A great deal of Japan's appeal was in its novelty and exoticism, yet certain other cultures might have offered similar pleasures. Yet somehow, ideas about Japan found their way into Impressionist studios, New York department stores, and Arts and Crafts workshops.

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1 Rudyard Kipling, From Sea to Sea. NOTE: Reference Lehman for this quote
2 Homer Lea, The Valor of Ignorance.
3 Meech, Julia and Gabriel Weisberg, Japonisme Comes to America, p.17.
Fairyland

The most celebrated case of nineteenth-century Japanophilia is the affection of the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painters for the Japanese woodblock print. Because the concerns of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists were relatively narrow, many broader ideas of Japan were probably relatively irrelevant to their treatment of things Japanese. Even so, current literature on Japonisme seems to underplay the wider role that Japan played in the European imagination of the time.

In *Japan in the Victorian Mind*, Toshio Yokoyama presents several themes in British popular literature between 1850 and 1880. During the 1850s, Japan was presented as a "singular" nation, a mysterious place of oddities and of "immutable amiability."4 Over the next few decades, interest and information on Japan grew, but the stereotype failed to disappear:

> On the contrary, Japan underwent rapid social changes and British knowledge and understanding of Japanese history and culture also developed. But the general view of Japan not only survived but even reinforced itself on many occasions.5

Although not directly negative, these "fairyland" characterizations were patronizing and simplistic. Most readers were probably less interested in factual accuracy than in entertaining reading. "On the whole one can say, however, that although Japan was praised for her beauty and the charms of her people, the country was not taken very seriously."6

Lafcadio Hearn was a prolific American writer on Japan, and "more than anyone else Hearn was responsible for creating the more romantic image of Japan in the West."7 His

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5 ibid, p.2.
7 ibid, p.184.
work deserves consideration partly because it is so entertaining, and partly because it serves to illustrate many of the common American perceptions of Japan.

In Japan: An Interpretation, he writes of being in Japan, "Really, you are happy because you have entered bodily into Fairyland,—into a world that is not, and never could be your own.... That is the secret of the strangeness and beauty of things,—the secret of the thrill they give,—the secret of the elfish charm of the people and their ways." In this fantasy world, "Mr. Percival Lowell has truthfully observed that the Japanese speak backwards, read backwards, write backwards,—and this is 'only the abc of their contrariety.' "9 The Shinto shrine is an architectural example of this weirdness; "We have no English words by which these queer shapes can be sufficiently described,—much less any language able to communicate the peculiar impression which they make."10

Hearn's opinion on the state of Japanese art was shared by many observers. "The old methods of family production—and therefore most of the beautiful industries and arts, for which Japan has been so long famed—now seem doomed beyond hope; and instead of the ancient kindly relations between master and workers, there have been brought into existence—with no legislation to restrain inhumanity—all the horrors of factory-life at its worst."11 In other words, idyllic Japan had been spoiled by modernization.

Race

As it was with much of the public, the attraction of Japan for Hearn was in its particular strangeness and distance from Western culture, a distance of partly of race. "No foreigner really capable of estimating the conditions could have seriously entertained any hope of a rapprochement. The barriers of racial feeling, of emotional differentiation, of manners and beliefs, are likely to remain insurmountable for centuries."12 Certain qualities

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8 Lafcadio Hearn, Japan: An Interpretation, p.19.
9 ibid, p.11.
10 Lafcadio Hearn, Gleanings in Buddha-Fields, p.2.
11 Hearn, Japan: An Interpretation, p.493.
12 Lafcadio Hearn, Kokoro, p.134.
of the Japanese could be explained by appeal to some mysterious essence; "The strength of Japan, like the strength of her ancient faith, needs little material display: both exist where the deepest real power of any great people exists.--in the Race Ghost."\(^\text{13}\)

In an age fascinated by race, the belief in a number of distinct, identifiable races was one way in which Western minds could validate the East-West dichotomy. To a much greater degree than today, race in the nineteenth century was tied to both physical and psychological stereotypes. These were considered to be permanent and inherent. According to Sir Rutherford Alcock, then considered Britain's greatest authority on Japan, "However modified by external influences, ancestral blood and race are continually asserting their original characteristics, and reappearing in hereditary lines of thought and action."\(^\text{14}\)

Kaempfer's *History of Japan* actually presented the theory that the Japanese were a Semitic people, descended from the lost people of Babylon, and "Towards the late 1850s, this idea of the Semitic origin of the Japanese became much in vogue, especially among popular magazines."\(^\text{15}\) This was one way in which the apparently un-Oriental trait of progressiveness was explained.

**Modernization and Westernization**

Barely forty years passed between the opening of Japan and Japan's defeat of China in 1895. Ten years later, Japan's victory of Russia again surprised Western observers. The pace of Japanese modernization was especially astonishing given the stereotype of Eastern decadence. "By embracing modernism and the Western ideal of progress, Japan became a symbol of triumph of Western values. Having been last, Japan was now first in the eyes of the West and one of the only nations in the history of colonialism to embrace

\(^{13}\) ibid. p.12.


\(^{15}\) Yokoyama, p.51.
wholeheartedly the values of its oppressors." In fact, the progress of Japan suggested to some authors that Japan was an Eastern analogue of England. Apart from a skill at industry, both nations shared a similar geographic position and a history of feudalism.

This modernization produced a couple of reactions in the West. Many writers were disenchanted by Japan's apparent renunciation of its traditional culture. Alcock, for instance, worried that, "In seeking too hastily to snatch the secrets of European superiority, and reap its worth without the toil and the slow growth of centuries of which it was the produce, they are daily losing much that was most distinctive, and not a little that was truly valuable." By the end of the nineteenth century, when the Westernization of Japan was fully evident, this lament was commonly heard, especially from those romantics who had presented Japan as a kind of fairyland or unsullied paradise.

Given Hearn's delight with this quaint and charming nation, it is no surprise that he laments Japan's industrialization, for instance the railroad. "For Western civilization has invaded all of this primitive peace, with its webs of steel, with its ways of iron. This is not of thy roads, O Koshin--the old gods are dying along its ash-strewn verge!" Compare, for instance, his ideas of a Japanese fairyland with his statement about his own native culture: "In our great cities, beauty is for the rich; bare walls and foul pavements and smoky skies for our poor, and the tumult of hideous machinery,—a hell of eternal ugliness and joylessness invented by our civilization to punish the atrocious crime of being unfortunate, or weak, or stupid, or overconfident in the morality of one's fellow man."

Yellow Peril

Japanese modernization also produced the alarmist Yellow Peril reaction. Japan's victory over Russia was also an unsettling triumph of East over West. After the threat of

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17 Alcock, p.286.
19 Hearn, *Gleanings in Buddha-Fields*, p.64.
Islam had diminished, Europe had become complacent, and "That a yellow people could defeat a white people in a major war was contrary to all accepted laws of nature and of history."\textsuperscript{20} The beginnings of the Yellow Peril had emerged ten years earlier with the Japanese defeat of China. At that time Kaiser Wilhelm produced a widely circulated "Yellow Peril" drawing [Figure 4]. Asia seemed to provoke some profound yet vague fear in the hearts of Westerners. As Homer Lea put it, "We know not for how many years the Occident has been muttering to itself of a peril that it has called yellow. In the penumbra of its dreams it has seen indistinct shadows lightened, or rather made pallid, with uncertain consciousness, in which, sicklied over with fear, phantoms have rioted."\textsuperscript{21}

After the defeat of Russia, Western fears became more specific. Several beliefs fed the Yellow Peril. First, "Japan's rise as a formidable military power was bound to provoke racial instincts."\textsuperscript{22} In the face of a challenge to the superiority of the white race, the Yellow Peril was a defensive, slightly paranoid reaction. Second, it was thought that Japan would awaken the slumbering Orient, bringing to bear the immensity, fecundity, and fanaticism of the East. Third, it was known that Japan possessed militaristic values and a strong national pride.

That the Yellow Peril reaction could occur at all suggests a remarkable double standard. If Europe and the United States could fear hypothetical Asian aggression, how were Asian nations to feel about the undeniable, immediate fact of Western imperialism? After all, from the Asian point of view, the "White Peril" was historically quite well established. Perhaps the Yellow Peril was motivated in part by the fear that what Europe and the United States had done to Asia would be done unto them.

The United States had the most concrete reasons for fearing Japanese aggression. After the Russo-Japanese war, it appeared that Japan and the United States would

\textsuperscript{20} Lehmann, p.149.
\textsuperscript{21} Lea, p.205.
\textsuperscript{22} Lehmann, p.149.
Figure 4: Yellow Peril

The Yellow Peril.
inevitably come into conflict over territories in the Pacific. Cultural differences made hopes of peaceful reconciliation unlikely. Some writers thought that by maltreating Japanese residents in California the United States provided a further motive for Japanese hostility.

**Fenollosa and Morse: American Intellectuals at Home and Abroad**

While the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial and the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition were presenting Japan to the masses, intellectuals were cultivating the idea of Japan for reform reasons. "The idea of Japan was calculated to intoxicate Western readers by appealing to their deepest desires. Japan offered both a diagnosis and a cure for the Victorian's growing cultural malaise." 23 Two of the leading Japanophiles were Bostonians Edward S. Morse and Ernest Fenollosa.

In 1878, Ernest Fenollosa was invited to Japan to teach philosophy, but his interests soon turned to Japanese art. "Until shocked by Western Japanophiles into arresting its loss, Japan appeared perfectly willing to discard centuries of art and tradition as the detritus of a discredited age." 24 Fenollosa was foremost among the Westerners trying to save Japan's artistic heritage, proposing a synthesis of traditional Eastern traditions with modern Western traditions. The East would bring feminine spirituality, the West masculine technology.

What then shalt thou harmonize?
All that force the Westerners prize;--
Masculinity of measures,
Vigilence of Argus eyes.

Whence shall spring harmonic norms?
From the sun the Eastern warms;--
Loving femininity
Fertile flower-bed of forms.

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23 ibid, p.129.
24 ibid, p.28.
Then shall art with hearty rite
Melt into the Art of Life,
And the Marts of industry
Win for starving sons of strife.25

Fenollosa, when not poeticizing, had succeeded in becoming the most respected authority on Japanese art, and in 1885 was chosen to head the Japanese effort to register their national art treasures. He also learned traditional painting techniques, and was eventually adopted into the Kano family of painters.

Originally a zoologist, Edward S. Morse traveled to Japan to study brachiopods, but soon found a more compelling subject in Japanese ceramics. His best-known work, *Japanese Homes and their Surroundings*, was published in 1886 and is still in print over a hundred years later. *Japanese Homes* is a remarkably exhaustive treatment of the ordinary Japanese home and the first Western book to examine this prosaic subject. The Japanese house is presented, at least in part, as a criticism of contemporary American habits. "It is extraordinary how blind one may be to the faults of his own people, and how reluctant to admit them,"26 he writes, and the American house is chief among these faults. The recent American affection for Japanese decorative art had resulted largely in the copying of decorative motifs, but "Even with this mongrel admixture, it was a relief by any means to have driven out of our dwelling the nightmares and horrors of design we had before endured so meekly.... Our walls no longer assailed us with designs that wearied our eyes and exasperated our brains by their inanity."27 The simplicity and logic of the Japanese residence appealed to him, but he concludes that "the throng--who are won by tawdry glint and tinsel; who make possible, by admiration and purchase, the horrors of much that is made for house-furnishing and adornment--will, with characteristic obtuseness, call all else but themselves and their own ways heathen and barbarous."28

27 ibid, p.xxxvi.
28 ibid, p.348.
A theme common to both Fenollosa and Morse is the attempt to preserve traditional Japanese culture in the face of Japan's own wish for modernization. In more general terms, the attempt to save an "other" culture from extinction has been termed by anthropologists the "salvage paradigm." Many of the assumptions underlying this idea of cultural salvage parallel Orientalist attitudes. As Virginia Dominguez writes, "When we assert the need to salvage, rescue, save, preserve a series of objects or forms, we announce our fear of its destruction, our inability to trust others to take appropriate action and our sense of entitlement over the fate of the objects."²⁹ In other words, the people of the "salvaged" culture are assumed to be different, unable to adapt, shortsighted, and in need of aid. The belief that an Oriental culture, for example, is admirable and worth saving does not necessarily remove the "salvager" from Orientalist attitudes.

²⁹ Virginia Dominguez, p.132
Hokusai ... does it by his *line*, his *drawing*, just as you say in your letter—"the waves are *claws* and the ship is caught in them, you feel it."

Well, if you make the color exact or the drawing exact, it won't give you sensations like that.

Van Gogh\(^1\)

**IV.**

**Japan in Nineteenth Century Western Art**

The range of concerns appropriating ideas of Japan and Japanese art in the late nineteenth century is a testament to the flexibility of the American mind. For example, the Whistlerian dictum "art for art's sake" could find inspiration in Japan at the same time Arts and Crafts followers could find an ideal unity of art and function. Social critics could promote an idea of small-scale handicraft industry while A.A. Vantine and Co. was selling Japanese fans by the thousands. Edward Morse could present the simplicity of the Japanese home as a reproach to Victorian tawdriness as Americans filled their rooms with cheap Japanese bric-a-brac. Obviously, images of Japan in America had more to do with American needs than with Japanese reality.

**The World's Fairs and the Japan Craze**

The 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia was undoubtably the seminal event in the bringing of Japan to America. "Japan's performance at the United States' International Exhibition of Arts, Manufactures, and Products of the Soil and Mines... presaged a twenty-year national pre-occupation with Japanese art which crested during the 1880s when American industry, art, and popular culture lined up behind a movement the Victorians dubbed 'the Japan craze.'"\(^2\) However, this public interest in Japan has until recently been largely excluded from the history of Japanese art in the United States. Yet

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along with the more "serious" reform movements, the Japan Craze shaped American ideas about Japan and Japanese art, and it was during this period that Cram, Wright, the Greenes, and other artists of their generation came to know Japan.

Until the Philadelphia Expo, Japan had remained largely invisible to the American public, even though it had been the Americans who had forced Japan out of its isolation. By most criteria, Japan succeeded to a remarkable extent in selling a positive image to fairgoers. "The beauty of the exhibits, coupled with the industriousness of the Japanese workers, seemed incompatible with the prevailing stereotypes of nonwhite people. Nevertheless, these preexisting racial attitudes formed the starting point for the response to Japanese creativity."\(^3\) For the Philadelphia Centennial, the Japanese government shipped materials to California, where they were transferred into fifty rail cars bound for Philadelphia. Japanese craftsmen constructed two buildings, one of which was a house. [Figure 5] "This house, during its erection, created more curiosity and attracted infinitely more visitors than any other building on the grounds...The woods are of fine grain, carefully planed and finished, and the house, which is the best-built structure on the Centennial grounds, was as nicely put together as a piece of cabinet-work."\(^4\) The other building, a bazaar, sold relatively affordable Japanese manufactures. Finer examples of Japanese crafts were on display in the Main Exhibition Building.

Japanese decorative arts were displayed, to the dismay of certain idealists, with price tags. The motivations of the Japanese extended beyond vague notions of international goodwill; one of the purposes of the displays was to create foreign markets. For instance, certain items such as writing desks had no history in Japan and were produced solely for overseas buyers. At any rate the craftsmanship was very fine. For the reformers, "Here at last was living proof that traditional craft methods were the key to art reform and good

\(^3\) Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, p.30.
Figure 5: Japanese Dwelling at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition from Thompson Westcott, *Centennial Portfolio*, facing p.22.
taste." As part of its sales pitch, Japan printed a booklet suggesting that the Japanese craft industry was not unlike that of medieval Europe. The truth was rather different, since by that time Japan had reorganized much of its industry from individual, small-scale enterprises to large, mass-production corporations.

The Japan Craze

A great part of Japan's appeal lay in its exoticism. "The American encounter with Japan occurred at a moment when there was a great longing, both in Japan and in the West for the 'other,' the distant shore. Japan was mysterious in part because of the language barrier. Few foreigners could be aware of the rich inner life and intellectual heritage of the Japanese." Yet it was this naive view of a simple, unspoiled land which appealed to so many Americans. Nowhere is the paradox of the Japan craze more succinctly apparent than in the writings of Lafcadio Hearn. To truly understand Japan would be to defeat its appeal, and from this motive it is clear that attempts at objective inquiry are not likely to be a part of the Japan craze.

After the Philadelphia Fair, certain highbrows were reached through museum exhibits and lectures; a great many more were reached by an expanding art literature, including such magazines as The Decorator and Furnisher and The Art Amateur, and various books on proper domestic living. Japanese art acquired a certain cachet through the efforts of critics and other arbiters of taste; Louis Comfort Tiffany, for instance, collected Japanese art. Publishers and importers were all too happy to promote idyllic images of Japan and its arts, and "Both depended on an increasingly status-conscious, culturally insecure, and affluent middle class, determined to join the consumer revolution begun by their counterparts in Europe." The press and the vendors worked hand in hand,

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5 Hosley, p.41.
7 Hosley, p.45.
and "Never before had a style of fashion been promoted so vigorously, and never had admission to the select halls of 'good taste' been so unabashedly sold."\(^8\)

There is always the question whether the typical seller creates demand or only meets it; critics and reformers had created some demand, as had the Expositions and the efforts of the Japanese themselves. On the supply side, two sellers deserve mention for their aggressive promotion. S. Bing, the previously named Paris dealer, founded the magazine *Artistic Japan* in 1888. Thirty-six issues were planned and published, concluding in 1891. The philanthropic motive behind *Artistic Japan* was to spread the gospel of Japanese art. The other goal was to cash in on the newly created market. *Artistic Japan* was printed in French, German, and English, and catered to a fairly elite clientele. Mass-marketing was performed by such firms as A.A. Vantine and Company, chief among over two dozen Japanese import houses in New York.\(^9\)

While not all of its goods may have been top-quality, or even authentically Japanese, Vantine's role in bringing Japan to the American middle class was crucial; "If you want to know what people were being told to like, read the reform critics. If you want to know what people actually liked, read Vantine's catalog..."\(^10\) What people were buying were decorative items such as fans, paper lamps, vases, porcelain, and countless other nominally household items, and not "art" as is commonly conceived today. "Of all the works made by man and machine, form the vaunted sensibility of the impressionist canvas to the studied workmanship of the handcrafted chair, the Japan idea resounds most clearly in the artifice of the Japanesque interior," writes William Hosley. [Figure 6] Yet these interiors were Japanesque mainly in their bric-a-brac and superficial ornamentation.

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\(^8\) ibid, p.42.  
\(^9\) ibid, p.45.  
\(^10\) ibid, p.67.
Figure 6: Interior of Dr. William H. Hammond house from Clay Lancaster, *The Japanese Influence in America*, p. 56.
Japonisme in Nineteenth Century France

The 1860s in the United States are memorable for the Civil War and its aftermath, and Japan must have seemed more than half a world away. In France, though, the revolution seemed to be taking place in the visual arts, and it is here that the most celebrated case of Japonisme occurs: the influence of the Japanese woodblock print on Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painters. The term Japonisme was apparently first used in 1872 by Philippe Burty, a French collector and critic, but the influence had begun much earlier. The near-legendary discovery of Katsushita Hokusai's Manga, or book of sketches, by Parisian printmaker Felix Bracquemond occurred in 1856, although Japanese prints may have been known in Europe even earlier. Beginning with this apparently serendipitous find, an astounding number of the major figures of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism became admirers and collectors of the humble Japanese woodblock print.

By 1857 Claude Monet was buying prints in Le Havre, and in Paris in 1862 Mme Desoye opened La Porte Chinoise, which, in spite of its name, proved a great disseminator of Japanese art. Siegfried Bing became an important figure not only through his Paris shop, which, among others, American expatriate Whistler frequented, but also later in the United States. Although often ignored in order to retain the purity of artistic inspiration, such commercial motives played a significant role in creating a taste for Japan.

Several formal characteristics of the woodblock print are often considered to be relevant to the Impressionist artists: flat, bright colors; strong diagonal elements; non-traditional angles of view; lack of scientific perspective; strong, sinuous line; foreground framing elements. Though these qualities were apparent to any observer, the Japanese influence manifested itself quite differently in the work of different artists. Even in this limited, artistic sphere, there seemed to be no one idea of Japanese principles.

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11 Siegfried Wichmann, Japonisme: The Japanese Influence on Western Art in the 19th and 20th Centuries, p.9.
Manet's Fifer of 1866 is one of his works most often compared with Japanese prints. The relatively unmodulated background seems to be tilted upwards, denying a traditional perspective view. Often compared to a playing card, the figure is defined by flat colors instead of by careful modeling, and seems to almost float against its backdrop. "The painting illustrates all the new elements that had been introduced to French art by the Japanese colour woodcut."\textsuperscript{13} Japanese prints provided an alternative to the academic, realistic style, suggesting simpler means in creating form.

Edgar Degas' collection of woodblock prints and his friendship with Philippe Burty suggest that he greatly admired Japanese art. However, the Japanese elements which marked his work were not the same ones that Manet adopted. Many of Hokusai's prints and drawings captured women at a specific, informal moments. Degas continually explored this theme, trying to find particularly revealing moments and positions. In their apparent informality and immediacy, the poses and viewpoints of his paintings and drawings of women can be directly compared to those of Hokusai. "Thus, as was the case with Monet, the appeal of the Japanese for Degas lay in their suggesting a means to render contemporary life more vividly than the painstaking realism of academic art permitted."\textsuperscript{14}

Vincent van Gogh made his appreciation for Japanese prints obvious by painting several painstaking copies of Hiroshige prints. The juxtaposition of radiant colors was what he found most appealing in the prints. "For him, the influence of Japanese art would sweep away the old academic, classical concepts of European art."\textsuperscript{15} Although Van Gogh was fervent Japanophile, he was apparently not a well-rounded one. Other than woodblock prints, Pierre Loti's novel \textit{Madame Chrysanthème} (later the basis for Puccini's \textit{Madame Butterfly}) apparently provided much of his knowledge.\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{13} Wichmann, p.23.
\bibitem{14} Gabriel Weisberg, \textit{Japonisme: An Annotated Bibliography}, p.121.
\bibitem{15} Wichmann, p.40.
\bibitem{16} Sullivan, p.208.
\end{thebibliography}
To each of these artists, and one could add many more, the Japanese print meant something different: Manet found an appealing simplicity of means; Degas emulated the immediacy of the caught moment; van Gogh reveled in the stark, brilliant colors of Hiroshige. How could the lowly woodblock come to influence so many different painters in so many ways?

The vogue for Japanese prints seemed almost fortuitous; they appeared on the scene at a time when French artists happened to be pursuing similar goals. Phylis Anne Floyd simplifies matters, noting that Japanese art was embraced because it was available and because the "artistic milieu was ripe to accept it."¹⁷ Mid-nineteenth century European art showed a strong historicism, a conservatism which offered little artistic originality amidst otherwise rapid social change. Traditional realistic representation seemed cumbersome and lifeless, and it was easy for dissatisfied artists to see its opposite in the abstracted immediacy of the woodblock print.

In truth, many currents aided in the creation of the taste for Japanese art: the entrepreneurship of S. Bing and others, lingering elements of Romanticism and exoticism, criticism of current Western industrialism, and others. These elements, however, were secondary to this occurrence of Japonisme. Regardless of its importance to art historians, the focus and constituency of this movement were quite limited if examined from outside the ivory tower. First, only a relatively few artists were involved. Second, the realm of influence was tightly defined: effects were felt mainly in painting and drawing, and much less in public taste. Third, the serious artistic interest in Japan was confined mainly to ukiyo-e prints. In the realm of the arts, Japanese painting and sculpture remained relatively ignored, as did literature and calligraphy. More generally, the affection for Japanese prints failed to extend to Japan as a whole.

Ideas of Japan in Anglo-American Art Movements: Craftsmen, Aesthetes and the Japan Craze

In 1862, an exhibition at the London Exposition introduced a broad spectrum of Japanese crafts to Europe. "The contrast in cultures was indeed stark and provided critics of industrialization with an argument that challenged the West's most basic measures of progress." Japanese arts and crafts had almost no history in England, and could be easily appropriated for a variety of arguments. The Arts and Crafts, Pre-Raphaelite, and Aesthetic movements all found Japanese art to be an attractive model. Major themes in English art reappeared in the United States, and the American versions of these movements involved Japan in much the same way their English predecessors did. "Instead of exploiting their lead, the Americans came to learn more about the value of Japanese creativity, not from the Japanese themselves, but from the way other Western countries assimilated Japanese aesthetics." 

The Arts and Crafts movement praised Japanese architecture and furnishings because they seemed to exemplify important Arts and Crafts ideals. In Japan there seemed to be a national concern with creating beautiful, finely crafted, functional objects. Instead of impersonal mass-production, Japan presented skilled individual craftsmen. Household objects of all types seemed to be characterized by a deep feeling for materials and a belief in honest construction. There seemed to be no division between the fine arts and the decorative arts, a unity which appealed to Arts and Crafts followers.

"It is not a coincidence that of the Americans working in the United States at the turn of the century, the two today probably most associated with Japanese aesthetics, Louis Comfort Tiffany and Frank Lloyd Wright, are also leading figures in the American Arts and Crafts movement." As the founder and editor of The Craftsman, Gustav

Stickley, though, deserves credit as the oracle of Arts and Crafts ideals in the United States. The first issue, in 1901, spotlighted William Morris, and the second, John Ruskin. The appeal of Japanese design was once again in its honesty of materials, simplicity of form, and hand-made production. Many articles appeared on non-Western cultures, emphasizing the wholesomeness of pre-industrial culture. Frequent articles on Japan illustrated Japanese screens, lighting, gardens, flower arrangement, and other architectural and decorative elements. The July, 1907 issue features a review of Cram's *Impressions of Japanese Architecture and the Allied Arts*, under the title, "The Trail of Japanese Influence in Our Modern Domestic Architecture."

For Alcock and others, the feudalism of Tokugawa period Japan seemed to parallel the middle ages in England. "As one of Britain's leading medievalists, the architect William Burges was the first to associate Japanese craftsmanship and naturalistic ornament with the much-venerated art from Britain's medieval past, then regarded by aesthetes as a golden age."21 Japan's medievalism, though, was current and vital, at least in the minds of certain English proponents. In fact, the Meiji restoration and associated reforms would soon eliminate feudalism in Japan, but such changes were not always noted.

The Arts and Crafts movement was not the only one to adopt ideas of Japan. "Members of the Pre-Raphaelite circle, such as William Rossetti in 1863, prepared articles that discussed the value of Japanese art."22 Disenchanted with academic painting, the Pre-Raphaelites found in Japanese art the close observation of nature which Ruskin proposed as the only proper way of painting. Actually, it might be said that Japanese graphic art was as convention-bound as any English art, but at least the conventions were new and unfamiliar. The feudalism of Japan also attracted the Pre-Raphaelites, who turned to English medievalism for social and artistic inspiration. The Rossettis, among others, were collectors of Japanese prints.

21 Hosley, p.30.
22 Meech and Weisberg, p.36.
The United States accepted the Pre-Raphaelites to a much lesser extent than it did the Arts and Crafts movement. John La Farge is probably the pre-Raphaelite-associated artist most involved with Japan. Married to the granddaughter of Commodore Matthew Perry, he journeyed to Japan in 1886, writing *An Artist's Letters from Japan*. His affection for Japanese art was clear in his "self-consciously decorative Orientalism, with attendant asymmetry, tilted perspective, and narrow horizontal or vertical formats."\(^{23}\)

Following the Pre-Raphaelites, the Aesthetic movement adopted Japanesque elements.

It [Japanese influence] reinforced the mission of America's pre-Raphaelites, whose way of seeing and depicting nature, first inspired by the art of medieval England, qualifies them as the natural forerunners of Japanism in America. It flourished in the Whistlerian aestheticism practiced by American painters who participated in the British Aesthetic movement.\(^{24}\)

To a greater extent than with the Pre-Raphaelites, Japanese art became a part of the English Aesthetic movement. Clearly indebted to changes in painting prompted by the Pre-Raphaelites, the Aesthetes discovered a simplicity and directness in Japanese art which contrasted with popular Victorian taste. The movement was widespread by 1880, and "Aesthetes laid down standards of color, of ornament, and of form for all aspects of art..."\(^{25}\) To Americans, the most familiar artist is probably American expatriate James McNeill Whistler, who had contracted a passion for Japanese articles while in Paris. His borrowings from Japan and woodblock prints are evident in many paintings, especially in his Nocturnes. Domestic interiors also felt the Aesthetic reforms. The most famous example is probably Whistler's Peacock Room. Executed for an Englishman in 1877, it is now part of the Freer Gallery in Washington D.C.

\(^{24}\) Hosley p. 87.
The Aesthetic movement certainly affected a broader segment of English life than did the Pre-Raphaelite movement. A number of aggressive art dealers were instrumental in spreading the virtues of Japanese art. The most notable, Arthur Lasenby Liberty, opened his London shop of Oriental wares in 1875; his customers would include William Morris, Ruskin, the Rossettis, Burne-Jones, Whistler, Norman Shaw, and E.W. Godwin.\textsuperscript{26} Godwin was a designer whose interest in Japan was preceded by a similarly strong fascination with medievalism; he is known for his "Anglo-Japanese" furniture. Yet of all the arts and crafts, "Architecture was singularly untouched by Japanism throughout the whole Aesthetic Movement."\textsuperscript{27} That is, if architecture can be considered to be independent of interior design and decoration.

Out of the Aesthetic movement came Art Nouveau, whose adherents sought a new art free of historical styles. Nature was their ostensible source of inspiration, but it was inevitable that artists would also look to existing styles of art for examples of naturalistic form. One of these exotic sources was Japanese art, which possessed a tradition of stylized naturalistic forms and the "whiplash line." The dealers Liberty in England and Bing in France provided sources for Art Nouveau as they had for earlier movements.

In the Pre-Raphaelite and the Arts and Crafts movements, Japanese culture supplied convenient evidence for pre-existing motives. In both cases the artistic values sought were largely conservative, yearnings for Medievalism rather than Modernism. If the French Impressionists had found in Japanese art characteristics pointing to a new, modern art, many English critics saw in Japan a reaffirmation of values past. The Impressionists were largely unconcerned with Japanese culture outside of certain graphic arts; English reformers found desirable elements in feudalism and the decorative arts as well as in the graphic arts. The Aesthetes were somewhat more forward-looking, but also found desirable parallels between Japan and medieval England.

\textsuperscript{26} ibid, p.81.
\textsuperscript{27} ibid, p.93.
The lessons which America, the world, has learned from the Columbian Fair are more priceless than jewels; they have opened our eyes and understanding not only to the capacities of man, but help us to better appreciate the blessings of Christian civilization, and the loving direction and guidance of God.

J.W. Buel

The damage wrought by the World's Fair will last for half a century from its date, if not longer. It has penetrated deep into the constitution of the American mind, effecting there lesions significant of dementia.

Louis Sullivan

V.

Early Japanese Influences in American Architecture

The Japan Craze installed all manner of Japanese objects in American parlors, but the popular affection for things Japanese failed to extend so emphatically to architecture. At the Philadelphia Centennial, the craftsmanship of the Japanese buildings gained the admiration of fair-goers, but the carefully wrought decorative items captured imaginations and wallets. To Edward Morse and other admirers of the Japanese house, it must have seemed terribly ironic to see the taste for Japan made manifest in the Japanese bric-a-brac of a cluttered Victorian living room. Compared to the bronzes, ceramic items, fans, carvings and lacquer works, the Japanese house made its impact slowly and subtly, as architects found ways to integrate Japanese elements into eclectic American building styles.

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The 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition

Fine as the craftsmanship of the Philadelphia Centennial buildings might have been, they were largely utilitarian structures, and it was the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition which introduced more aesthetically refined Japanese architecture to the United States. Architectural discussions of the Chicago Fair often lead to discussions of Burnham, the Great White Way, and the City Beautiful movement. Easily obscured by the plaster giants was the Ho-o-den, the Japanese pavilion. The Ho-o-den was built in three different styles: the north wing was executed in the style of the Fujiwara period, the south wing in the style of the Ashikaga, and the central hall in the Tokugawa style. [see Chapter X for figures] The general plan layout was based on the famed Ho-o-do, or Phoenix Hall, of the eleventh century. The Ho-o-den was maintained as a garden and museum until a fire in 1946.

There was also a Japanese village on the Midway, though it was not part of the official Japanese submission to the fair. In the Expo as in the rest of the United States, more than one image of Japan was in the air. "On the Midway at the World's Columbian Exposition, evolution, ethnology, and popular amusements interlocked as active agents and bulwarks of hegemonic assertion of ruling-class authority," writes Robert Rydell. By any measure, the Chicago Expo was a landmark of cultural imperialism. Non-Western cultures were literally put on display for the edification, and more often, amusement, of the American public. In most ways the Japanese were treated with more respect than the inhabitants of other nations, such as the "Dahomey cannibals," of whom it was said that "in times of great scarcity of food it is common to kill and eat their own kin." The Japanese were held up as examples of "good" Orientals, in contrast to the Chinese, who were seen as "replicas of the old stereotype of the shrewd, cunning, and threatening 'John

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3 Rydell, Robert, All the World's a Fair, p.41.
4 Buel, unpaged.
Chinaman." Distinctions between the two were not always made, though. "The Japanese are too closely identified with their very close Chinese neighbors to be free from the gruesome superstitions which particularly distinguish the latter people," read one guidebook.6

Through its costly and elegant exhibitions, Japan escaped some of the derogatory epithets assigned to most of the non-Western cultures. "Gozo Tateno, Japanese minister to Washington, explained that his country was enthusiastic about participating in the exposition because of Japan's interest in furthering commercial ties with America as well as proving 'that Japan is a country worthy of full fellowship in the family of nations.'"7 The exhibitions were part of a conscious effort to project a positive image of Japan, and like any self-promotion involved a good bit of propaganda.

"To the eye of the Oriental it fulfills all that is required"

Morse's Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings was the archetypal work on Japanese residences, but it did not deal with other aspects of Japanese architecture. In the 1890s, C.T. Matthews authored two articles in The Architectural Record. The first, "A Temple of the Tokugawa at Nikko," appeared in October, 1894 and the second, "Japanese Architecture," in April, 1896. One familiar theme is the admiration of the proper simplicity of Japanese homes, "for it is considered the height of vulgarity to spread one's valuables about the room as we do, and (if I may borrow a simile) as much as to say, 'look what a lot of expensive articles I've got; just look how jolly rich I am.'"8 Using the Japanese house to moralize about American homes became almost a cliche. Morse had sounded this theme and many later authors echoed his views. A 1906 article by Katharine C. Budd

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5 Rydell, p.51.
6 Buel, unpaged.
7 Rydell, p.48.
praised the simplicity of the Japanese house while maintaining that "Simple comfort appeals to us in theory only; an account of the simpler life seems like a charming fairy tale, not a practical example. A first impression on entering one of our ever crowded houses is bewildering, unrestful. No wonder we break down with nervous prostration!"\(^9\)

On the whole, though, Japanese architecture was not treated very seriously. Matthews writes, "For though Nikko has ever furnished the 'mise-en-scène' for all Japanese fairy tales, fairyland materializes when one stands before her shrines, and reaches its climax in the mausoleum of Ieyasu."\(^10\) His tone is sometimes condescending, and he leaves little doubt of Japan's place in the hierarchy of world architecture: "From the purely classic point of view, in which form and outline play so important a part, it may not rank very high on the scale; but to the eye of the Oriental it fulfills all that is required."\(^11\)

In some ways, Matthews is playing the typical Orientalist role in describing the architecture of Japan. Having gone to Japan, he is bringing the Orient back to show to his American audience. Even from the short passages quoted above it would probably be fair to say that he was secure in both the difference and inferiority of Japan and its architecture. That he thinks of Japan in terms of the West is clear when he makes the analogies, "Cho Denshu, the Fra Angelica of Japan," "Hidari Jingoro, the Pheidias of Japan," and "Motonobu, the Raphael of Japan."\(^12\)

Even the best-intentioned critics tend to fall into Orientalist habits. Clay Lancaster's comprehensive *The Japanese Influence in America* (1963) is a landmark work, but in the case of the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition Lancaster seems slightly myopic: "There was something prophetic about the little Phoenix Villa's remaining intact while the monstrous exhibition halls around it were being razed following the close of the fair...\(^\)"

\(^12\) ibid, pp.385, 392.
Their inherent connection with the dead past was becoming a reality. The Hoo-den, on the other hand, did not belong to a bygone age, but to the eternally living present."\(^{13}\) Actually, the model for the Japanese pavilion preceded the Renaissance models for the White City by several hundred years, and thus the Ho-o-den belonged to the "eternally living present" no more than did the hulks of the Great White Way. To believe otherwise, of course, is to believe that the Japan of 1893 was identical to the Japan of eight hundred years earlier.

**Early Japanese Influences on American Architecture**

In the development of a residential style in wood, mid-nineteenth century American architects looked to many historical styles. Vincent Scully has described the importance of the Philadelphia Fair in the evolution of the Shingle style. The British buildings were executed in the Queen Anne style, and the "Queen Anne shingles, panel work, and open interior space were reinforced by the architectural influence of another country represented by wooden buildings at the Centennial; that is, Japan."\(^{14}\) In fact, by the Philadelphia Centennial, American architects had already incorporated influences from the wooden architecture of Japan and Switzerland into the Stick style, the precursor of the Shingle style.\(^{15}\)

In the Shingle style as practiced by McKim, Mead and White, the Japanese influence was apparent in plan, framing, and wooden details. In the H. Victor Newcomb residence interior, the lightweight wood grills above the major openings are probably derived from Japanese *ramma*. [Figure 7] The space of the main hall is not tightly defined, but flows into recesses in a manner reminiscent of Japanese houses.\(^{16}\) Another McKim, Mead &

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\(^{13}\) Clay Lancaster, *The Japanese Influence in America*, p.84.


\(^{15}\) ibid, p.3.

\(^{16}\) Clay Lancaster's *The Japanese Influence in America* is the source for this examination of the Newcomb house. This work is a remarkably broad treatment of the influence of Japanese architecture in the United States.
Figure 7: The Victor Newcomb house, by McKim, Mead, and White from Clay Lancaster, *The Japanese Influence in America*, p.58.
White work, the Newport Casino, suggests Japanese influences in its exterior lattice-work and delicate framing. In these two examples, the Japanese-inspired elements fit comfortably into the aesthetic of the rest of the building. McKim, Mead & White were among the finest designers in the Shingle style, and foreign influences from England, Japan, and Switzerland were gracefully integrated. Even though Japanese architecture was considered in American terms, it seemed to be treated in much the same manner as its Swiss and British counterparts.

More literal Japanese motifs also appeared for picturesque effect. One of the more obvious examples is a house by Bruce Price in Tuxedo Park, New York, from the late 1890s. The roofs are Japanesque, as is the timber and stucco wall of the upper storey. In plan and massing the house appears rather conventionally Japanese. Using Japanese elements for picturesque value suggests a particular mindset; Japan is imagined to be distant, unfamiliar, exotic, and, all in all, not a very serious source of motivation. Though the Japanese influence on the McKim, Mead & White buildings above was less obvious, it was more fundamental than were the tacked-on details of the Bruce Price design.

With both McKim, Mead & White and Bruce Price, Japanese architecture played a minor role. Even the more effective borrowings were used within the context of American wooden construction. Without the knowledge of Japanese architecture, the evolution of the Shingle style would probably have been little different. In fact, outside the examples at the Philadelphia Centennial, Americans had relatively little accurate knowledge of Japanese homes until Morse's *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings* was published in 1885. More fundamental influences from Japanese architecture arrived only the 1893 Chicago Exposition, where Frank Lloyd Wright and the Greene brothers first saw authentic Japanese buildings.

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17 ibid. p.59.
They [Greene & Greene's houses] are so very consciously adaptations from Japanese sources and so eloquent of Japan that one is tempted to believe that Greene and Greene must have studied the architecture on its native soil.

Aymar Embury II

He [Charles Greene] took it from the shelf, turned almost automatically to the page and remarked sadly that he had never gotten to Japan.

L. Morgan Yost

VI.

Greene & Greene

Compared to the work of their contemporaries Frank Lloyd Wright and Ralph Adams Cram, the career of Charles and Henry Greene seems rather limited. The Greenes produced no monuments on the order of Cram's St. John the Divine design or Wright's Guggenheim Museum, and their reputation is built almost exclusively on residential work executed in California between 1903 and 1910. Neither of the brothers were prolific writers as Wright and Cram were. Yet within certain boundaries, "we see that in statistical terms (if no others) C.F.A. Voysey and Charles and Henry Greene have been the most influential architects of the Twentieth Century so far, in their own countries for certain, but also to some extent beyond their native shores."3 This breadth of influence derives from their medium, the bungalow, which they developed to an unprecedented level, to what have been called, paradoxically, the "ultimate bungalows."4

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1 Aymar Embury II, *One Hundred Country Houses*, p.220.
3 Reyner Banham, in the introduction to Makinson's *Greene & Greene. Architecture as a Fine Art*, p. 23.
4 Randell Makinson, *Greene & Greene. Architecture as a Fine Art*. I have taken most of the biographical data on Greene & Greene from this book, the most comprehensive treatment of the brothers Greene and their architectural work. Makinson uses this term to describe residences such as the Gamble and Blacker houses, which were anything but small, simple, and inexpensive.
The Arts and Crafts movement

Greene & Greene are often described as Arts and Crafts architects, and indeed it was almost inevitable that the bungalow would become allied with the Arts and Crafts movement. The dream of an unpretentious but carefully crafted dwelling for the common citizen paralleled aims of the Arts and Crafts movement. The Greene's affinity for Arts and Crafts ideals had been fostered during their high school career at Calvin Woodward's Manual Training School in St. Louis, where, in addition to the academic curriculum, woodworking, metalworking, and toolmaking were required. After high school both brothers entered the architecture program at M.I.T, but they later complained that the rigid, historical academicism of the M.I.T. course prevented individual creativity.

In 1901, Charles Green encountered the Arts and Crafts movement in England, and again in the United States through the first issue of Stickley's The Craftsman. The hand-worked aesthetic, expression of structure, and unity of the arts were only several Arts and Crafts ideas picked up by the Greenes. In fact, Charles Greene's writings were saturated with Arts and Crafts ideas. "Beneath all this haste of speculation and the sordidness of commercialism, there is an impulse of wholesome enthusiasm born with the sight of the soil and sun of the wonderful land," wrote Charles in an article titled "Impressions of Some Bungalows and Gardens."

In the Arts and Crafts manner, the Greene brothers personally oversaw every aspect of construction, carefully examining all building material. When the clients permitted it, they designed furnishings, doors, glass, lighting and other elements to an almost obsessive degree. C.R. Ashbee, the English Arts and Crafts proponent, met Charles in 1909 and wrote:

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5 As Makinson notes, Woodward was the "father of manual training" and was strongly influenced by Ruskin and Morris. The school motto was "The Cultured Mind--The Skillful Hand."
I think C. Sumner Greene's work beautiful; among the best there is in this country. Like Lloyd Wright the spell of Japan is on him, he feels the beauty and makes magic out of the horizontal line, but there is in his work more tenderness, more subtlety, more self effacement than in Wright's work. It is more refined and has more repose.7

Ashbee's reference to Japan comes as no surprise. As noted earlier, Arts and Crafts exponents found support for their position in certain elements of Japanese architecture.

Japan and The Craftsman


Even more important than the new light on a great style in architecture hitherto almost unknown to the Western world, is the fact that the fundamental principles of that architecture are, aside from the universality of the principles underlying all great art, identical with the elements that promise permanence in the new thought that is steadily gaining strength in this country as well as in England, Germany, France... a return to honesty and simplicity in construction, rejection of all false ornamentation, and the meeting of all actual requirements in the simplest and most direct way.8

In other words, whatever value Japanese architecture might have in its own right was secondary to its value in affirming the merit of the coming Arts and Crafts style. The diversity of Japanese architecture was suppressed in order that it provide only those lessons which fit Arts and Crafts ideals, concisely stated as "...a return to honesty and simplicity in construction, rejection of all false ornamentation, and the meeting of all actual

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requirements in the simplest and most direct way." Just as Said's typical Orientalist writer defines the Orient in Western terms for Western purposes, The Craftsman defined Japanese art in order to affirm its own (Western) principles. Clearly, for those whose knowledge of Japanese architecture was derived from Arts and Crafts sources, only a narrow understanding of Japanese architecture was possible.

Greene & Greene and Japan

For the Greenes, the "spell of Japan" might have been cast as early as their student days in the Boston area, the center of American intellectual interest in Japan. En route from Boston to Pasadena, the Greenes visited the 1893 Chicago Exposition. Both Charles and Henry were deeply impressed by the framing, joinery, and careful siting of the Ho-o-den.9 Prompted in part by their experience in Chicago, the Greenes attended the San Francisco Mid-Winter Exposition a year later and again found much to admire in the craftsmanship and siting of the Japanese buildings.

Greene and Greene's next documented encounter with Japanese art came about 1900 through a client, John Bentz. A dealer of Oriental art, he supplied books and photographs which revived the Greenes' interest in Japanese architecture. Charles, especially, was fascinated by Japanese buildings, especially the timber construction of the temples.10 In about 1903, a traveling book-seller provided him with another book on Japanese architecture. "Idly, Charles Greene leafed through the pages until his attention was arrested by pictures of Japanese homes and gardens. This was what he had been seeking. Here was the expression of post and beam construction, of articulated structure. Here, too, were the house and garden as one, an informal yet carefully conceived whole."11

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9 Makinson, p.32.
11 Yost, p.13. Yost refers to this book only as a "book on travel," but Janann Strand, in A Greene and Greene Guide (p.5) claims that it was Morse's Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings.
If this account is accurate, then it would appear that Charles Greene did indeed evaluate Japanese architecture through Arts and Crafts principles. If he already knew what he was looking for, there was little chance that he would find in Japanese architecture anything except that which confirmed his existing beliefs. Generally, the depth of the Greenes' involvement with Japan during their most active period (1903-1910) remains open to question. Though Charles had the greater interest in Asian culture, there is little suggestion of that interest in his published writings.

Between the 1894 San Francisco Exposition and their turn-of-the-century encounter with Bentz, there is no evidence that the Greenes were involved with Japanese art. Though much has been made of the Greenes' encounters with Bentz and the itinerant bookseller, these fortuitous meetings hardly suggest a deep or persistent fascination with Japan.

**Japan in the Architecture of Greene & Greene**

Since their writings and biographies provide no clear conclusion concerning the importance of Japanese architecture to the development of their work, it is not surprising that their architecture is also somewhat equivocal. Frank Lloyd Wright's profound and prolonged relation with Japan demands that the question of Japanese influence be raised, but with Greene & Greene the issue seems perhaps less urgent and certainly less resolvable. For the Greenes, Japanese architecture and Arts and Crafts principles became conflated to the point that it is impossible to disentangle them.

The meshing of Japanese and Arts and Crafts principles in Greene & Greene's work became clear by about 1903, in the Bandini house in Pasadena. The Greenes used redwood board-and-batten walls, finished with a rough stain outside and a light oil inside. Notably Japanese was the use of concave stones for column bases. [Figure 8] Inside and out, structure played a visually emphatic role.
Figure 8: The Bandini residence
The 1904 Jennie A. Reeve house has been described as the first mature Greene & Greene design.\textsuperscript{12} [Figure 9] The structure of the multi-gabled roof is strongly expressed and the casement windows are arranged in horizontal bands. Inside, the architects designed leaded glass, cabinets, and other furnishings. The Tichenor house of the same year is one of the Greene & Greene houses most overtly influenced by Japanese design. [Figures 10,11] The green tile roof, arched bridge, and second-floor railings all suggest Japanese models, as does a roofed gate at the rear of the garden. Three years after the Tichenor house, the Greenes incorporated "Oriental" motifs into one of their "ultimate bungalows," the Blacker house.

The Blacker house was the largest, most elaborate bungalow design by the brothers Greene.\textsuperscript{13} [Figures 12-16] The uncharacteristic symmetry of the plan derives from the client's wish to retain a previously executed plan by Myron Hunt and Elmer Grey. In spite of this restriction, the Blacker house is undoubtedly one of the Greenes' masterworks. As in all of their most distinctive work, the structural details are painstakingly articulated, often with "Oriental" motifs.

The apparent Japanese influence on the Greenes may be divided into general principles and specific formal elements. In the Tichenor house, the railings and tile roof are undoubtably derived from Japanese examples. [Figure 17] In the Blacker house and many others, joinery details show inspiration from the bracketing of Japanese temple architecture. In the Gamble house garden, the irregularly shaped pond and a lantern recall certain Japanese gardens. Some of the Greenes' interior woodcarving also appears influenced by Japanese examples. [Figure 18] There is no doubt that Japanese architecture inspired elements of the Greenes' work; it is the extent and nature of the influence which is impossible to determine.

\textsuperscript{12} Makinson, p.83.
\textsuperscript{13} Makinson makes this point without noting the irony of a 12,000 sq.ft. "bungalow." Though the Greenes' aesthetic had developed in smaller houses, the best expression of their ideas demanded an enormous amount of skilled labor and a consequent outpouring of wealth.
Figure 9: The Jennie Reeve house
from Randell L. Makinson, *Greene and Greene. Architecture as a Fine Art*, p.82.
Figure 10: The Adelaide Tichenor house
from Randell L. Makinson, *Greene and Greene. Architecture as a Fine Art*, p.95.
Figure 11: The Adelaide Tichenor house
Figure 12: The Robert R. Blacker house
Figure 13: The Robert R. Blacker house.
Figure 14: The Robert R. Blacker house
Figure 15: Japanese bracing detail
from Edward Morse, *Japanese Homes and Their Surroundings*, p.23.

**Fig. 13.** OUTSIDE BRACES.
Figure 16: The Robert R. Blacker house
Figure 17: The Adelaide Tichenor house from Randell L. Makinson, *A Guide to the Work of Greene and Greene*, p.28.
Figure 18: Wood panels from the James Culbertson house
The general impression of the Greene's work, both inside and out, is far from Japanese. The somber, heavily carved wooden interiors owe a great deal to Arts and Crafts ideas, but look little like Japanese interiors of any kind. [Figure 19] Spatially, the Greene's do not seem to have been strongly influenced by Japanese architecture. On the exterior, the basic elements of wall, window, roof, and chimney are modified in the Greene fashion, but remain distinctively Western and residential in character. The exterior bracketing, for instance in the Gamble house porch, is the major element most reminiscent of Japanese prototypes. [Figure 20]

**Orientalist Greenes?**

The basic foundation of Orientalism is of course the separation between East and West. While the Greene brothers did not specifically assert this division, to them Japan must have been rather distant. It was a culture experienced only through surrogate texts, too remote to see in person. Yet Switzerland, another country frequently mentioned as an influence, was probably imagined as equally remote. Thus, it seems possible that the Greene's distinction between Japan and the United States may not have relied on the "ontological and epistemological" difference between East and West that is characteristic of Orientalism.

One potentially Orientalist attitude is obvious: the Greene's knew Japan only through texts. While Charles apparently studied Japanese architecture with great affection, his knowledge came mainly from books and photographs. Even the Japanese buildings at the Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco Expositions were texts of a sort; they were buildings which Japan chose to represent Japanese architecture to the United States. Given that the Greenes knew Japan only through texts, the question is to what extent they confused these texts with the real thing. Unfortunately, their buildings can provide little in the way of confirmation or denial, and their writings contain virtually no references to Japan.
Figure 19: The James Culbertson house from Randell L. Makinson, *A Guide to the Work of Greene and Greene*, p.23.
Figure 20: The David B. Gamble house
from Randell L. Makinson, Greene and Greene. Architecture as a Fine Art, p.161.
The representation of Japanese architecture in the Greenes' work varied. At times, they used Japanese motifs for a picturesque effect. The arched bridge of the Tichenor garden is one good example. However, the client, Adelaide Tichenor, was an avowed admirer of "Oriental" art, and the overtly Oriental touches in the project may reflect her tendencies as much as the Greenes'.  

14 Such picturesque uses of Japanese elements are typically Orientalist; they provide a representation of Japan to and for the West and typically trivialize their "exotic" source.

Less picturesque examples which show a reasonably clear Japanese influence are heavily articulated bracketing [fig: Gamble house porches] and interior carved wood panels. [fig: Culbertson house] In these cases, the Japanese influences are integrated fairly convincingly into the Greene & Greene aesthetic. After all, what the Greenes admired in Japanese art was in all probability what they admired in the Arts and Crafts movement, and in their finest work they incorporated many influences. Although the precise nature of the Japanese influence is impossible to know, the Greenes took Japanese architecture serious and were probably affected at a fairly profound level. From the relatively few relevant sources, it appears at least that the Greenes did not believe in the inferiority of Japanese architecture or culture.

As noted previously, the Greenes almost certainly understood Japan through a Western framework. In addition, during the first decade of the century, their understanding of Japanese culture was probably not very deep. Much of what they did know was understood through Arts and Crafts filters, and little of their knowledge was first hand. It is uncertain whether their interest in Japan extended beyond formal elements which paralleled their existing views.  

14 Makinson, p.96.
15 Later in life, one of Charles' great passions was Buddhism, but it is uncertain when his serious interest began.
Japan in the Minds of the Critics

Whatever the actual place of Japanese architecture in the Greenes' work, critics inferred certain Japanese influences. To them, the Tichenor, Blacker, and other houses became representations of Japan. Just as accounts of the Orient frequently say more about the author than the Orient, accounts of Greene & Greene's work have a great deal to say about the critics, and often little to say about the Greenes.

First, it becomes clear that most observers of the time had relatively little accurate knowledge about Japanese architecture. Their references to Japanese qualities in Greene & Greene's work are usually vague and specify no specific Japanese model. For instance, in the chapter of One Hundred Country Houses titled "Japanesque", Aymar Embury II writes about several "Japanesque" houses, including the Tichenor and Irwin houses, without once mentioning any specific Japanese buildings or places. Of the Tichenor house, he notes, "The various materials used in this house are quite along Japanese lines, although each by itself is a well-known one." In fact, the Tichenor house uses half-timbered walls infilled with clinker brick, a combination that would have seemed more foreign to the Japanese than to Americans of the period.

Generally, it has been noted that the Greenes manipulated the inherent qualities of materials in a "Japanese" fashion. Two points deserve mention here. First, the notion of a "Japanese" use of materials is extremely vague. It seems to be a commonly applied label for the general attempt to exploit the qualities of a material. The second point is simply that the Greenes' exquisite use of wood was probably derived more from the Arts and Crafts movement and their own high school training than from Japanese examples. After all, the woodworking skills apparent in their architecture and furniture could only have been developed through first-hand experience and long hours in the shop.

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16 Embury, p.220.
Second, because of this lack of information, many elements could be construed as Japanese, or at least as Oriental. Such critics confused a "text," in this case a Greene & Greene building, for the real thing. Reyner Banham writes, "The work of Charles and Henry Greene is alien to the inmost traditions of the European art of architecture, partly by being in wood, and partly by being a true product of the American experience."\(^{17}\) The eclecticism of the Greenes' work, and its apparent strangeness, led critics to invoke exotic traditions, even if they were unaware of the precise nature of these traditions. Often the role of Japanese art seemed to be exaggerated, as in the *The Craftsman* article by Henrietta P. Keith called, "The Trail of Japanese Influence in Our Modern Domestic Architecture."\(^{18}\) This article focused on Charles Greene's own house, which was by any reasonable standard, hardly Japanese at all.

In fact, the bungalow style was generally eclectic, partaking of several "exotic" styles. Fellow Japanophile Cram wrote of the Greenes' work, "There are things in it Japanese; things that are Scandinavian, things that hint at Sikkhum, Bhutan and the fastnesses of Thibet, and yet it all hangs together, it is contemporary, and for some reason or another it seems to fit California."\(^{19}\) Cram's relatively broad knowledge of Japanese architecture perhaps prevented him from ascribing the strangeness of Greene & Greene's work solely to Japanese influences, but other observers were generally less conservative.

Third, "knowledge" about Japanese architecture was couched in stereotypes. The most dominant example is the Arts and Crafts appropriation of Japanese architecture noted above. The importance of the Arts and Crafts view of Japan becomes clear when the breadth of the movement is considered. In the West, the Greenes, Maybeck, and others were heavily affected. In the Midwest, of course, Wright and the prairie school comprised another group influenced by Arts and Crafts principles, though in different ways. Back in

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\(^{17}\) Banham, in Makinson, p.20.


the East, Cram and countless others espoused similar principles. For any of these architects, images of Japan would have been tempered by the Arts and Crafts understanding of Japan, in which Japanese architecture was reduced to a few, simple principles.

Fourth, Japanese elements were considered to be exotic and frequently incompatible with American living and architecture. As *The Craftsman* warned, "Charming and interesting as is the Japanese tradition in architecture, it is so for Japan and not for us, and it would be foolish indeed to attempt to naturalize in this country many of their local idiosyncracies."\(^{20}\) The wording is quite revealing; such words as "charming" and "idiosyncracies" reinforce the image that Japan is remote and perhaps not to be taken too seriously. Embury, too, suggests that Japanese and American architecture are incompatible, writing, "The Tichenor house at Long Beach, California, and the [Irwin] residence in Pasadena... seem like the utmost limits to which Japanese architecture could be stretched, and still meet American requirements."\(^{21}\) In retrospect, at least, neither of these houses appears to offer such great challenges to the American way of life, and indeed many of their Japaneseque details appear as just that: details.

It is tempting to dismiss the attitudes of Embury, Keith, and other writers of the early twentieth century as symptoms of a period of rather unenlightened cultural isolation. Two more recent books by Randell Makinson (1977) and William and Karen Current (1974) have been instrumental in reviving interest in the Greenes. Both books suggest that certain ways of understanding Japanese architecture have persisted.

Makinson, the most authoritative Greene & Greene historian, makes numerous references to Japanese and Oriental influences, especially in regard to the Tichenor and Blacker houses. In fact, Makinson notes that "the Blacker house reflects a greater influence of the Orient--particularly in the heavy timber work, the joinery, porch railings

\(^{20}\) Keith, p.446.
\(^{21}\) Embury, p.218.
and interior lanterns—than any other Greene and Greene building with the possible exception of the Tichenor house."22 By referring to "the Orient," rather than to "Japan", he suggests that Oriental architecture and Japanese architecture are interchangeable. Like the Orientalist writers, for Makinson it is simply enough to say "the Orient"—no other explication or specification is necessary. In addition, Makinson's own knowledge of Asian architecture may be such that he is unable or unwilling to hazard a guess as to which elements are modeled on Chinese examples, and which on Japanese.

Though he notes that "Publications of that period paid considerable attention to the touches of Oriental or Swiss architecture found in this house, sometimes with a degree of exaggeration,"23 Makinson himself is not at all precise in his descriptions of the "Orientalness" of the Blacker house. The only specific Japanese buildings mentioned are the Japanese exhibits at the 1893 Chicago Exposition and the 1894 San Francisco Exposition. No buildings on Japanese soil are referred to, either in his treatment of Greene & Greene's sources or in his comparisons of the Greenes' architecture to "Oriental" architecture.

Karen Current, the author of the text of Greene & Greene: Architects in the Residential Style, also seems to accept certain stereotypes about the Orient, writing, "...the brothers were still seeking their expression and their sights turned to the Orient. The brothers were following a well-traveled path. Fenollosa, Hearne [sic] and Morse, all of Bostonian heritage, had looked to the Orient. They had sought to combine the sense of mystery and sensuality of the oriental culture with their Bostonian upbringing and American sense of practicality, evolving free and inventive life styles."24 Needless to say, the idea of the "mystery and sensuality" of the Orient was not confined to the late nineteenth century.

22 Makinson, p. 155.
23 ibid
24 William and Karen Current, Greene & Greene: Architects in the Residential Style, p.34.
Current also makes some rather general claims about Japanese architects, writing, "Japanese architects believed that structure, that is, cage structure, derived from both architectural and natural sources; for them, seeing the essence of structure led one to perceive the structure of reality. ... It resolved multiple forces into a basic rectangular form that both inner contemplation of nature and centuries of skill revealed to them..."25 It is almost superfluous to note here that Current seems to imagine Japanese architecture as homogeneous and mystical, belonging to a timeless past. Naturally, no mention of specific Japanese examples is made.

**Representing Japan**

Ultimately, from their architecture it is difficult to gauge the extent of the Greenses' Orientalist attitudes. In comparison with a Gérôme painting, for instance, the Blacker house has a limited ability to express specific ideas about the Orient, and consequently says a good deal less about its creators' attitudes. For certain purposes, though, the intentions of the architects become secondary. Observers may and will believe that the Tichenor house is a representation of Japanese architecture regardless of the architects' original intent. The vagueness of architectural representation allows greater speculation by critics, and so long as observers believe that there are Japanese elements, in certain ways the architecture of Greene & Greene cannot escape the burden of representing Japan.

Rather than reflecting the Greenses' images of Japan, the Blacker, Tichenor, and other houses provide a sounding-board for the attitudes of architectural writers. At some point, probably during the period of Arts and Crafts popularity, the salient points of Japanese architecture became implicitly understood. Like Orientalist beliefs about the Orient, ideas of Japanese architecture seemed to gain a factual status which provided them longevity and freedom from reevaluation. The images Makinson and Current held in the 1970s are in many ways indistinguishable from those expressed in *The Craftsman* seven decades earlier.

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25 ibid, p.35.
Japanese architecture came to embody ideals of clear structure, honestly expressed materials, and simple ornamentation. However admirable these traits, they are also stereotypes, and, like Orientalist stereotypes, place great limits on what can be known about Japanese architecture.
For those who deny its existence except as a biological product of the working of purely physical forces, the democratic principle of the free movement, intercourse and mating of peoples of every known blood, race and status can only appear the blackest and most imbecile crime in the human calendar. Continued for another generation or two the result can only be universal mongrelism and the consequent end of culture and civilization.

Ralph Adams Cram

VII.

Medievalism and Japanism in the Writings of Ralph Adams Cram

Although born seven years after Louis Sullivan and four years before Frank Lloyd Wright, Ralph Adams Cram was an architectural and social reactionary. A fundamental dissatisfaction with early twentieth-century America led Cram towards medievalism, rather than modernism. At times he advocated social reforms as broad and basic as Wright's Broadacre City, though he was less utopian and far more historically retrogressive. Yet his prolific, polemic writings are almost forgotten today. After all, "It is easy to forget the revolutionary who fails. Who mourns the Mensheviks? Certainly not the Bolsheviks. And the modernists did not mourn Cram."2

Sins of Contemporary Culture

For Cram, architectural problems were fundamentally social problems:

No great art has ever appeared except at a time of high human endeavor and its corresponding achievement. Conversely, if there comes a time when this artistic manifestation is of inferior quality, or on very rare occasions, non existant (as during the fifty years from 1830 to 1880 in the United States) you may know that there is

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something basically defective, that the civilization is of the wrong type.\(^3\)

Cram was in no way hesitant to elaborate on what made contemporary civilization of the wrong type. In 1918, he named the three errors of modernism as Materialism, Imperialism, and the Standard of Quantity.\(^4\) These sins, though, can be seen to arise from another, more general trinity: industrialism, rationalism, and modern democracy.

"We were William Morris enough to hate industrialism,"\(^5\) writes Cram of his early years in Boston. He shared the not uncommon belief that mass-production deprived the artisan of his individuality and dignity. He also believed that industrialization and free enterprise encouraged the substitution of the standard of quality with the standard of quantity. The goal was no longer a finely crafted product, but a high output and a healthy profit.

An over-reliance on science and intellect was another cause of social decay. Cram quotes from Henri Bergson: "The intellect is characterized by a natural inability to comprehend life."\(^6\) Most broadly, by replacing religion as the primary motive, intellect denied the possibility of great art. The medieval cathedrals, the Parthenon, the Hagia Sophia, the Buddhist temples of Japan: the greatest works of architecture were all in the service of religion. Cram's most pointed attacks on science were reserved for theories of evolution.

The nineteenth century theory of progressive evolution, so honourable in its motivation but so inconsistent with historical and biological facts, raised it to a point where it became a sort of obsession, and the resulting system of universal, free, compulsory education, for kindergarten to post-graduate college, has now become a social and financial incubus....\(^7\)

\(^3\) ibid, p.135. My
\(^7\) Cram, *My Life in Architecture*, p.207.
The third unholy element of contemporary society was modern democracy, which Cram described as the democratic method, in contrast to the democratic ideal. "True democracy means three things: Abolition of Privilege; Equal Opportunity for All; and Utilization of Ability."8 In other words, he believed in a kind of benevolent meritocracy, where the wise would govern and the others would gratefully cede the way. Unfortunately, compulsory education, the expansion of voting privileges, and modern democratic methods had created a dangerous situation:

Democracy has achieved its perfect work and has now reduced all mankind to a dead level of incapacity where great leaders are no longer either wanted or brought into existence, while society itself is unable, of its own power as a whole to lift itself from the nadir of its own uniformity.9

Democratic government and democratic education were great sins to Cram, but the democratization of society provoked his most impassioned writing. What he means by the democratization of society is the "breaking down of the just and normal barriers of race, first through the so-called 'melting-pot' process, second through the substitution of the mongrel for the product of pure blood by reason of the free and reckless mixing of incompatible strains."10

The modern economic system also created all sorts of architectural questions unanswerable by historicism. While Cram could envision "correct" styles for church and school, new programs such as department stores and office buildings were difficult to accommodate.

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8 Cram, The Nemesis of Mediocrity, p.23.
9 ibid, p.21.
10 Cram, Nemesis of Mediocrity, p.35.
Architecture and Medievalism

"The Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia had, architecturally speaking, given a distinct shock even to national self-satisfaction, but no one knew what to do about it," wrote Cram in his autobiography, *My Life in Architecture*. By 1878, he was finding inspiration in Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* and *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* at a time when "the actual architecture in America had sunk to a depth of depravity unmarked in the annals of man since the days of Imhotep, under the reign of Zoser, Pharoah of Egypt." Cram's view of architecture and society demanded that he be a social and religious critic as well as an architectural one, and he authored essays with such titles as *The Ministry of Art, The Sins of the Fathers*, and *The Nemesis of Mediocrity*.

Although claiming to be a supporter of true democracy, he felt that contemporary society was democratic in name only, and that the Middle Ages had come closest to the democratic ideal: "So far as the development of civil liberty, the formulating of law, and the organization of constitutional government are concerned, it is possible to say that more was accomplished in the Middle Ages than during any equal period in human history."

The middle ages represented the great period of Catholicism, and chief in Cram's pantheon of sinners was Martin Luther, whose Protestant Reformation destroyed the unity of the Church. Prior to Luther, the strength of the Church had provided a stability and unity which, at least to Cram's mind, was painfully lacking in modern times.

Since the middle ages had been the apogee of civilization, they also represented the high point of architecture, and so in Cram's eyes, gothic architecture connoted the golden age. In England, the development of the church and its architecture had been interrupted

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12 ibid, p.26.
by Henry VIII and the break with the papacy. The style of the time had been perpendicular
gothic. As the cultural offshoot of England, the United States was also the proper heir of
its architecture. Cram believed that American church design should proceed from the point
where its English analogue had left off. Along with the church, other institutions with a
long history, namely the school and the home, should also be developed from suitable
historical precedents.

If Cram may rightly be called a Gothicist, it should be remembered that his
medievalism was not confined to architecture:

And this is what the Gothic restoration means, a returning to other
days--not for the retrieving of pleasant but forgotten forms, but for
the recovery of those impulses in life which made these forms
inevitable.15

Although Cram found gothic architecture to be the finest expression of Christianity,
for other programs he believed that other styles could be appropriate. Even Modernism
found some slight favor, although couched in slightly skeptical language:

I do not know what may be the exact and perfect architectural
expressions of Wall Street, yellow journalism, commercial colleges,
the Structural Steel Union, Christian Science, and equal suffrage: I
dare say they are, or may be made, as beautiful as Hellenic or
Byzantine or Buddhist architecture...."16

Since he considered that the roots of modern architecture stretched no further back
than 1885, those functions which had come into prominence since that time might
appropriately be expressed in the modern idiom, which in those cases could be "exact,
significant, and adequate."17 Cram's medievalism, then, did not prevent a kind of
eclecticism. His appreciation of a wide range of architecture was tempered by a strict logic

15 Cram, The Ministry of Art, p.46.
16 ibid. p.57.
17 Cram, My Life in Architecture, p.267.
which restricted the use of any given style to its appropriate function. Since the bulk of his commissions were for churches and schools, which possessed a gothic tradition, his eclecticism was not often in evidence. On occasion, for instance at Rice University, he attempted freer combinations when no historical style fit the climate and landscape. Yet most of his formal elements were not only historical, but drawn from a suitable, appropriate history.

Cram and Contemporary Artistic Movements

Cram’s mature medievalism was presaged by attachments to several artistic movements. The first of these was the Pre-Raphaelite movement. In Boston during the 1880s, Cram became a key figure in a group of young artists including his future partner, Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. Of the great men then living, he felt that "England furnished the greatest galaxy, with Cardinal Newman, Matthew Arnold, Browning, Swinburne, Du Maurier, Walter Pater, Stevenson, Kipling, William Morris, and all the Pre-Raphaelites, especially Rossetti and Burne-Jones."\(^{18}\) He remarks that somewhere around 1882-83 his personal consciousness became active as result of three events, the first being the performances of Wagner’s operas; "Almost simultaneously came the Pre-Raphaelites revelation. Through the small showing at the old Art Museum, and the appearance of the Rossetti poems..."\(^{19}\) the Pre-Raphaelite imagination impressed itself on Cram. The age of English medievalism began to exert an influence, and, along with several others, he founded the Knight Errant, devoted to a "resuscitated Medievalism." His own fiction writings were often set in medieval times; the 1893 Excalibur: An Arthurian Drama is a notable example.\(^{20}\)

\(^{18}\) Cram, My Life in Architecture, p.6.
\(^{19}\) ibid, p.7.
\(^{20}\) Robert Muccirosso, American Gothic: The Mind and Art of Ralph Adams Cram.
Cram and his peers also found inspiration in the Aesthetic movement, "We rather revelled in Oscar Wilde and the brilliant and epicene drawings of Aubrey Beardsley." 21 The mal du siecle, loss of faith, alienation, and materialism of the time prompted Cram to became a devotee of the Boston Decadent movement. If he would later describe these events as superficial, he did maintain that "If the world was indeed decadent, so much louder the call for crusading. Besides, it was rather fun to envisage a crumbling society in which we could look on ourselves as superior beings." 22 In fact, Cram's joy at seeing himself as a superior being was not just in jest; writings much after his Decadent dealings revealed that elitism had become a major part of his philosophy.

The Arts and Crafts movement, however, exerted the greatest effect on his mature work. At an early age he read Ruskin and William Morris and later he became a founding member of the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts. 23 In 1905 he wrote that "Some years ago the Arts and Crafts movement began in England: a little later its results were the only truly good industrial art in the Western world." 24 Modern industry in general found no sympathy with Cram. In his 1931 autobiography, he could reflect with nostalgia about the early 1880s, which seemed a time of optimism, before the horrors of modern science and industry; "As for airplanes, submarines, radio, high explosives, poison gases, long-range guns and other such products of the human process of progressive evolution, they existed only in the fertile brain of a Jules Verne and the unhampered imaginations of the inmates of lunatic asylums." 25

The unity of the arts prescribed by the Arts and Crafts movement remained one of Cram's strong beliefs. In his best works, sculptors, painters, and other artists worked

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22 ibid, p.18.
together with the architect in a supervisory role. This was best illustrated in his more lavish church commissions, such as the church of St. Thomas in New York.

Impressions of Japanese Architecture and the Allied Arts

In 1898, one of Cram's friends and clients, Reverend Arthur Knapp, had suggested that Cram submit a design for the proposed Japanese Parliament Houses. The prevailing architectural fashion for such projects was "Potsdam Renaissance," as Cram called it, and both Knapp and Cram felt that the Parliament Houses should be designed along traditional Japanese lines instead. Cram prepared a preliminary design based on Japanese precedents and left Boston for Japan. Although the project was well-received, it was ultimately not executed. Cram stayed in Japan for four months and gathered the material which would be published in Impressions of Japanese Architecture. Published in 1905, Impressions was the first broad American treatment of Japanese architecture. In 1930 a second edition was published with an additional, concluding chapter describing the further development of Japan.

Generally speaking, Cram is highly complimentary of Japanese architecture:

Carefully analyzed and faithfully studied, Japanese architecture is seen to be one of the great styles of the world. In no respect is it lacking in those qualities which have made Greek, Medieval, and Early Renaissance architecture immortal: as these differ among themselves, so does the architecture of Japan differ from them, yet with them it remains logical, ethnic, perfect in development.  

In this passage Cram's admiration for Japanese architecture is obvious, but there are also suggestions that his interpretation of Japan tends toward Orientalism. For instance, he evaluates Japanese architecture by the standards he uses for Western architecture. In fact,

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a thorough reading of Cram's writings on Japan reveals that he can be viewed as the prototypical Orientalist.

**Orientalism in the Writings of Ralph Adams Cram**

Cram's almost unequivocal praise for Japanese architecture, painting, sculpture, crafts, and printmaking was certainly far from the assumption of Eastern inferiority manifest in the texts Said considers in *Orientalism*. However, this praise only masks assumptions which closely parallel many Orientalist tendencies.

The most basic of Cram's assumptions is the one which still has the greatest acceptance today: the essential separation between East and West.

Somewhere, somewhen, two roads diverged in the immemorial past, and they struck out in opposite directions, losing themselves in the jungle of the unachieved. A race, till then united, then divided, the half to the east, the half to the west. With every forward step something of the old community of thought and action and aspiration was cast aside.... The strands stretched east and the strands stretched west, and between East and West was no meeting of any sort whatsoever.  

The twist that Cram offers is the conviction that East and West were originally one, even if now essentially separated. Like Emerson, who he read as a youth, Cram believed that despite specific differences, there was a fundamental unity between all men, "that away down beneath the lauded and much bepraised show of each is a fundamental soul that is identical." On top of this base, though, was *racial character*, the essential nature of a race determined over the countless centuries since the "two roads diverged." Cram's belief that all men shared a basic soul is probably derived from his strong Christian beliefs, but he also believed that from some primeval origin the races of man had developed separately, and that some had developed more fully. Finally, layered atop racial character

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27 ibid, p.26.
28 ibid, p.28.
Cram postulated *racial convention*, the set of relatively superficial traits less permanent and more specific than racial character. Compared to racial character, racial convention was conceived to be more superficial and thus more open to change.

Such a framework of racial characteristics allowed Cram a remarkable flexibility. On one hand, as most writers of the time did, he subscribed to the idea that East and West were deeply divided, allowing him to keep all things Oriental at a comfortable distance. He believed that racial character was indeed strongly fixed in Japan, where "Shinto, Confucianism, Buddhism, all beat and broke against the adamant of a racial character fixed for ages eternal."29 On the other hand, believing in a fundamental unity meant that certain ideas were true for all peoples at all times. As Cram writes, "For the two fundamental truths in the world are religion and art, and these two are mysteries; rationalize them and they cease, for their motive power is gone."30 Even though these truths might be universal, they were based on Western principles: Christianity on one hand and Cram's medievalist beliefs about art on the other.

For Cram, the separation between East and West created the impossibility of true mutual comprehension. In his chapter, "The Genius of Japanese Art," Cram maintains "I have no intention of trying to express in a few phrases the essence of the esthetic manifestation of a great people, but rather to call attention to the fact that, in the ultimate winnowing, the essential residuum is to Occidental hands impalpable."31 Yet his recourse to a universal soul allows him to say that "I do not mean to imply by what I have said above that it is impossible to judge it by Western standards: in so far as these are universal and neither local nor special, Japanese art stands the test as well as that of our own

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29 Ibid., p.31.
race."32 Outside religion and vague ideas about the universality of great art, though, Cram believed that East and West were divided and mutually incomprehensible, thereby affirming the first principle of Orientalism.

In addition to his explicit statements about the separation of Orient and Occident, Cram distanced Japan by imagining it as a fairyland, a utopia far from the modern industrial West:

In Koshoji we found the bell, and much more; a little oasis in the desert of steam trams and beer and liberal politics, and we wanted to stay there forever. The old Japan has this charm, and I think it concentrates itself and becomes really quite irresistible, in the form of a scented temple garden in some forgotten monastery, where the odour of incense mingles with that of box, where the patterned sand retains the lines of a thousand years ago, where tonsured bonzes in yellow robes move silently through the shed petals of a pink cherry, and a thunderous bell gives tongue at the rising of the moon.33

In the content, and perhaps more importantly, in the language, Cram describes what he really wants to believe of Japan. This image, complimentary yet condescending, and a little bit askew from contemporary reality, is a siren's song nonetheless. The fairyland image of Japan, propagated by Hearn and others, proved remarkably pervasive.

That Cram believed Japan and the West to different and incompatible is shown by his reaction to the opening of Japan: "Then Commodore Perry opened the ports, and like a house of cards the marvelous dream-fabric crumbled into ruin."34 This is of course another paradox of Japan, since the dream-fabric only existed for Westerners-- presumably the Japanese themselves did not continually remark on what a wonderful fairyland they

32 ibid. p.32.
33 ibid. p.120.
34 ibid. p.158.
inhabited-- and would therefore not have existed at all without the entry of the West into Japan.

**Oriental Silence**

Another Orientalist habit visible in Cram's writings is the assumption of Oriental silence and passivity. Whatever Cram's motives, he is speaking for Japan, explaining Japan for the sake of his English-speaking audience. He is also attempting to save traditional Japanese architecture, the "true" Japanese architecture, from being spoiled by the West. He believed that Japan had given up its artistic traditions after contact with the West, and noted that "In three centuries we have sold our birthright for a mess of pottage. Japan bartered hers in less than forty years."\(^{35}\) Like Fenollosa, Cram is part of the "salvage" paradigm, with all the concomitant implications of American superiority.

In the 1930 conclusion to *Impressions of Japanese Architecture*, Cram writes with apparent sincerity, "It would be a singular turn of fate if that very West that forced Japan into the modern world and made her subject to Westernism in its most exaggerated form, should be the agency which preserved the old ways of national art for a new day."\(^{36}\) It is quite accurate to say that Fenollosa and other non-Japanese were at the forefront of the movement to save traditional artistic techniques, but what is more interesting is the assumption that the West "forced Japan" and "made her subject to Westernism." Japan seemed to have no will of its own, no ability to choose its own future; in other words, it was the silent, passive, supine Orient all over again.

The point is not that Cram is a hypocrite or cultural bigot. Rather, it is that he envisioned himself as a kind of savior, saving the Japanese from themselves. This role was most convincingly played by Fenollosa, who supported the maintenance of traditional

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\(^{36}\) ibid, p.235.
Japanese painting when official and aristocratic tastes ran otherwise. Said presents Arthur James Balfour in a somewhat parallel role when he quotes Balfour saying "We are in Egypt not merely for the sake of the Egyptians, though we are there for their sake; we are there also for the sake of Europe at large."\textsuperscript{37} Cram, too, is in Japan not just for the sake of the Japanese, but also for the sake of the West. The Japanese must be prevented from extirpating their traditional culture and ruining it for Western consumption.

**World War I and Racism: Political Knowledge**

Cram was neither a politician nor a diplomat, but his "knowledge" of Japan was certainly affected by political events. Race and Darwinism were in the air in when Cram wrote *Impressions of Japanese Architecture* in 1905, and his averral of the unbridgeable gap between Eastern and Western races was hardly eccentric. By 1917 and his essay *Nemesis of Mediocrity*, Cram had become a vociferous critic of modern society; World War I seemed the culminating act of depravity, and mongrelization was partly to blame. When writing *Impressions of Japanese Architecture* Cram had apparently envisioned no such sinister consequences of intermarriage. Of Japan before Buddhism he writes, ":the mixture of Tartar and Malay blood had resulted in a race that was waiting only for the impulse that should start it on its career of greatness."\textsuperscript{38}

By 1917, Cram's views on race had polarized, and in *The Nemesis of Mediocrity* he scoffs at the belief that any race may be educated towards advancement. If that were true, "Mongol and Slovak, Malay and Hottentot stand on the same plane with Latin and Saxon and Celt, for it is merely a question of education, environment, and continued breeding;..."\textsuperscript{39} This statement which seems reasonable to me is anathema to Cram. For

\textsuperscript{37} Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.38.
\textsuperscript{39} Cram, *The Nemesis of Mediocrity*, p.36.
him, Mongol and Latin are so clearly and essentially not on the same plane that to believe that mere education could raise the one to the other would be laughable. Cram also lists "blood, race and status" as elements not to be mixed; it is clear that he believes that status is as bound into inheritance as are blood and race, and that status can be considered an inherent trait to certain people.

If Cram had journeyed to Japan in 1918 instead of in 1898, his newfound racism certainly would have changed the nature of his perceptions. By the first World War, though, Cram's Japan experience was already deeply in his past, and the passages about Japan in his autobiography (1931) and in the second edition of *Impressions of Japanese Architecture and the Allied Arts* (1930) suggest that he never reevaluated his views of Japan. For Cram, Japan was temporally, geographically and conceptually distant, and thus never provided the threat that might have spurred a racist reevaluation.

**Textual Readings of Japan**

Like the Orientalist authors, Cram examines Japan as a text, a finite object to be studied. As a text, Japan is seen as static and general, allowing Cram to speak of "the Japanese" or "Japanese art" as a single, monolithic entity. His belief in the strength of racial character is one component of this tendency; if racial character is uniform and unchanging, then it is possible to generalize to all Japanese, or more broadly, to all Orientals. With regard to East and West, Cram can say, "All the art of Europe is individual; all the art of the East is communal."\(^{40}\)\(^ {41}\) In the case of Japan, he can maintain that, "In Japan one mode, one civilization, held for more than a thousand years, essentially changeless and unchanged,"\(^ {42}\) further affirming the timelessness of the Orient.


\(^{41}\) in fact, Cram specifically contradicts himself on this point, remarking at other times that all great art, such as the medieval cathedrals, is necessarily communal.

On a larger scale, Japan comes to stand for the entirety of the East:

Japan is the vortex of the East. Into her has been drawn the essential elements of India, China, Korea: she stands now, preserved to our day by the wisdom of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the sole representative of Asiatic civilization.\(^{43}\)

Thus, Japan somehow comes to embody the essential Orient, all the more curious given Japan's long isolation from China during the Tokugawa period and the lack of any direct contact with India.

Since Cram believed that some archetypal essence of Japan permeated all things Japanese, any Japanese person or artifact may stand for Japan as a whole. In this spirit, Cram is free to speak, for instance, of the "Japanese painter" as if there were only one Japanese painter, or as if all Japanese painters were identical. In one notable passage he suggests that there is one, unchanging school of Japanese painting and repeats the pronoun he as if it stood for one man, rather than myriad: "The object, then, of the Japanese painter is the attainment of pure beauty. To him, nourished as his fathers before him for unnumbered generations....He does not .... He does not ....he takes....he chooses....he lays stress....he goes on...."\(^{44}\) This kind of language, whether intended to or not, removes individuality and emphasizes labels. There are, of course, a number of schools of Japanese painting and printmaking, ranging in subject from Zen to eroticism, in client from Emperor to laborer, and in medium from black ink to gold leaf.

Cram's textual attitude towards Japan involves not only treating the real Japan as a text, but also using texts to provide his knowledge of the actual Japan. For example, he Japanese Parliament Houses design was intended to be based on traditional Japanese architecture, yet at the time he had never been to Japan. Instead, as he writes, "For a few weeks (!) Goodhue and I applied ourselves to an intensive study of Japanese architecture,

\(^{43}\) ibid p.32.
\(^{44}\) ibid. p.184.
I developed a set of plans, he produced one of his most brilliant and beautifully rendered perspectives, and I set forth...."45

**Oriental Inferiority**

Cram's great admiration of Japanese art at first suggests that he does not agree with the Orientalist assumption of Occidental superiority. In art, as in religion, "the same test that justifies them of the West vindicates them of the East: it is one impulse, one genius, one achievement."46 In fact, Cram specifically derides what he calls the "condescending patronage" of some critics:

"A very high type of artistic production indeed, for an Asiatic race."
"Admirable decoration, perhaps the very best, but hardly what one would call pictorial, or High Art." "Wonderful artisans no doubt, with a marvelous sense of the decorative, but curiously limited in their knowledge of anatomy, modeling, and perspective." Phrases such as these are worse than a frank and brutal denying of the very name of art to the work of the painters of the great Japanese schools."47

On the highest level, though, Japan is found wanting. As a good Christian and fervent advocate of Catholicism, Cram had no doubt that Christianity was the true faith. Unlike many other ardent Christians, though, Cram did not automatically impeach Japanese religion, noting of Japan that:

she is possessed of two highly developed systems, dwelling side by side in perfect harmony--Shinto and Buddhism; one of incalculable age, with a thorough system of Christian ethics...; one, also vastly old... a philosophy so profound and at the same time so scientific that it has always commanded the deep respect of all Western scholars.48

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47 ibid, p.183.
48 ibid, p.81.
Ultimately, though, Cram thought that Japan was destined to become Christian. Cram's avowal of respect for Shinto and Buddhism was not to suggest that they were the true religion, but rather to explain that they could be used to speed the conversion to Christianity:

Now a good half of Shinto, and even more of Buddhism, are wholesome, helpful, and true: still more is capable of modification to bring it into harmony. Let us accept these things, win confidence by our charity, and little by little bring the desired reforms to pass....In twenty years Japan would be a Christian nation, still possessing the splendid qualities of her national character that we should try to supplement, not to supplant.\(^{49}\)

So if Cram was remarkably respectful of most things Japanese, he had no doubt that the ultimate destiny of Japan lay in Christianity. Regardless of its many achievements, without Christianity Japan could never evolve to its full potential.

Japan for Western Use

Another characteristic of Orientalism is the use of the Orient for Western purposes. This is very much the case with Cram. At times there is a clear didacticism in his writings which suggests that his purpose is to address Western ills, rather than to present an objective Japan.

Certain qualities of the Japanese house have been appreciated by a wide range of architects, from medievalists (Cram) to modernists (Gropius): straightforward plan; sensitive use of materials (especially wood); honest structure; studied relationship to site and exterior space. In Cram's book, these qualities are presented as a condemnation of modern American residential practice. For instance, "The Japanese house is a revelation of the possibilities of exactly the opposite course"\(^{50}\) of contemporary American work;

\(^{49}\) ibid, p.96.
\(^{50}\) ibid, p.141.
"amongst the simple forms and wide spaces of a Japanese house there is nothing to break
the spell of perfect simplicity and perfect artistic feeling; the chaos of Western houses
becomes an ugly dream."\textsuperscript{51} Cram spends a full page on the horrors of the contemporary
American house, using Japanese residences as a foil for his argument.

Cram also tends to evaluate Japan through a preconceived, Western framework. It is
clear that his views about Japanese art and government were filtered through Arts and
Crafts and medievalist values. For example, Japan confirmed his belief that feudalism led
to the unity of the arts. In Japan, "ultimately ennobled by a splendid feudalism that
enhanced every inborn trait of honor and chivalry," the Japanese created a condition where
"It was all art; that is, the achievement of the highest visual beauty, the expression of joy in
life and exultation in well-doing, and the communication of spiritual and emotional
enthusiasm."\textsuperscript{52} Japan is teaching Cram nothing new-- Japanese artistic values are seen as
analogues of Western Arts and Crafts ideals, and Japanese feudalism as an equivalent of
English feudalism.

\textbf{Japanism}

It is a trait of Orientalism that certain implicit ideas about the Orient became
canonical, forming a \textit{latent} Orientalism which remained a constant foundation for
knowledge about the East. While the more explicit facts about the East might change,
underlying assumptions such as the insuperable gulf between East and West remained the
basis of knowledge. Thus, if Cram was progressive in his genuine admiration for Japanese
architecture, he remained conservative through certain implicit but basic elements in his
writing. He might easily be considered a "Japanist:" one who believes in an essential
separation between Japan and the West, who speaks and acts for Japan, who treats Japan

\textsuperscript{51} ibid, p.128.
\textsuperscript{52} ibid, p.159.
as a text to be analyzed, who believes in the ultimate superiority of the West, and who places Japan on display for Western consumption.
It may be that this spirit of an old culture that lasted in Japan so much
longer than elsewhere is only the immutable call: "come over and help us."

Ralph Adams Cram

VIII.
Japanism in the Works of Ralph Adams
Cram

If Cram can in many ways be considered a Japanist writer, to what extent can he be
considered a Japanist architect? Said considers three categories of writers who choose to
make the physical or metaphorical journey to the Orient: first, the scientific researcher
seeking objective knowledge for scholarly purposes; second, the adventurer wishing to
provide useful information without completely submerging his own voice; third, the author
who seeks in the Orient the satisfaction of an urgent, personal need. The first kind,
especially, is likely to claim truth, in the form of objective, impersonal findings.

As a writer, Cram is all three of these types. Ostensibly, his account is scholarly, his
writing quasi-objective if occasionally prone to exaggeration. In light of Cram's views on
contemporary Western civilization and architecture, though, it is clear that Japan provided
a potential, if partial, solution, and in this way became part of a personal quest. Cram's
personal voice is never wholly suppressed, and is particularly strong when describing the
decadence of the American dwelling.

"The original mission failed, writes Cram in Impressions of Japanese Architecture
and the Allied Arts, "but a by-product was the revelation of the wonder of Japanese
history, culture and art, one of the results being the series of papers making up this
volume...."² If his physical trip to the East had been for a commission, his later, mental

² ibid, p.22.
voyages seemed to be partially for reform purposes, to propose certain characteristics of Japanese architecture as antidotes to American habits.

**Gothic and Eclectic**

Without the knowledge that Cram had visited and written about Japan, it would be all but impossible to infer his interest in Japan from his designs. Cram's medievalism made gothic his preferred style of design, but in non-ecclesiastical commissions other considerations sometimes produced other styles. At Phillips Exeter in New Hampshire, Sweet Briar College in Virginia, and Wheaton College in Massachusetts, he designed in a colonial mode which better fit the site. Rice University and Doheny Library at the University of Southern California were designed in a very loose and rather eclectic pseudo-Byzantine style. While English collegiate gothic had been appropriate for Princeton, conditions in Houston and Los Angeles suggested styles produced in the brighter, warmer Mediterranean. Though some specific details may be non-historical, the basic elements (column, arch, et al.) and massing are anything but unfamiliar, and the general inspiration was derived from within the Christian tradition. His use of loosely adopted Byzantine forms suggests that, in the right context, he might use Japanese forms in a similar manner.

**Cram's Japanesque Projects**

Only two of Cram's projects show the use of non-Western forms: the house for Reverend Arthur Knapp and the project for the Parliament Houses of Japan. Both grew out of Cram's relationship with Knapp, a devout Japanophile. Knapp desired a home in Fall River, Massachusetts, to display his collection of Japanese artifacts.³ The success of this house prompted Cram's Parliament Houses project and trip to Japan several years later in 1898.

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³ The date of the Knapp house is unknown. In his 1898 article, "An Architectural Experiment," Cram notes that the house has been vacant for a few years, suggesting that it was built in the early 1890s.
The Knapp House

Along with the Parliament Houses, the Knapp house obviously presented exceptional circumstances which made Japanese motifs allowable. Given Cram's unwillingness to mix radically different styles, he faced a dilemma with the Knapp house. Knapp requested a design which would complement his collection of Japanese objects, yet he also needed a livable house. Cram writes, "At first the decision was in favor of the simplest form of construction with slight 'Colonial' details, but immediately the ungrammatical nature of this combination of Puritanical architecture and Oriental furnishings asserted itself, and it seemed intolerable." Naturally, for Cram, a purely Japanese house was out of the question given the American client and location. The final solution was a curious compromise: "In plan and construction the house was to be absolutely western... all the details, both exterior and interior, were to be studied faithfully from Japanese examples...." A replica of a Japanese teahouse was attached to a rear corner of the main house.

The completed main house looks, indeed, like a mongrel. [Figures 21,22,23] The flaring roof fights with the two-story block below, the carved panels beneath the second-floor windows squabble with their neighboring shutters, and in back, two stubby chimneys and various other elements poke through the smooth contour of the roof. The interior looks like a mix of Arts and Crafts and Japanese motifs. In architectural terms, surely this house is an example of what Cram might call "the free and reckless mixing of incompatible strains." Cram maintained theoretical reasons to oppose the mixing of Japanese and American houses, and the Knapp house no doubt provided him aesthetic ones as well.

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4 Ralph Adams Cram, "An Architectural Experiment," p.82.
5 ibid, p.83.
Figure 21: The Reverend Arthur Knapp house
from Ralph Adams Cram, "An Architectural Experiment," p.84
Figure 22: The Reverend Arthur Knapp house
Figure 23: The Reverend Arthur Knapp house
The Houses of Parliament Project

Reverend Knapp had spent enough time in Japan to be displeased with the style of contemporary architecture there. Japanese government building projects at the time were being executed in a dry and dull "Potsdam Renaissance" manner, and for the Japanese Houses of Parliament Reverend Knapp suggested to the government that a more uniquely Japanese building would be desirable. With the approval of Prime Minister Ito, Cram prepared a preliminary design and embarked for Japan in January 1898. As Cram writes:

All went well with the Marquis Ito and his Government, the idea of a recrudescence, development and adaptation of Japanese secular architecture was looked on with favor and when, some four months later I sailed for home it was with the promise that an item appropriating twenty thousand yen would appear in the next budget and that I should be authorized to prepare preliminary sketches for new Parliament Houses more or less along the lines already indicated.

Unfortunately, for Cram at least, Ito's government fell while Cram was en route back to the States, and the project vanished.

Although it is composed of fairly convincing Japanese elements, Cram's proposal for the Parliament Houses manages to appear unlike any historical Japanese building.\(^6\) [Figure 24] At first glance, the tiles and gentle curves of the roofs appear quite Japanese, as does the bridge in the foreground. The tall building in the center of the composition is almost certainly modeled on the tower, or tenshu of the Momoyama period (1573-1615) castle, which had strongly appealed to Cram. [Figure 25]

In the middle of the castle complex "rose the great keep, three or five stories in height, each story somewhat smaller than the one below, the roofs curving outward in noble lines."\(^7\) The same description could apply to Cram's tower, which like the Momoyama tenshu rises from great stone walls. Although Cram claimed that his sources here were secular, the Buddhist pagoda is the other clear antecedent: like the pagoda, each

\(^6\) only one rendering of this project has been illustrated, and it is unknown if other drawings exist.

Figure 25: Hikone Castle
side of Cram's tower is identical and symmetric, and the crowning finial is undoubtedly derived from the nine-ringed Buddhist spire. [Figure 26] The placement of the tower in the center of the complex, though, is probably not derived from the castle or the pagoda.  

To the extent that the overall plan can be inferred from the perspective rendering, Cram seems to have found inspiration not in the Momoyama castles, but in the palace and temple complexes of the Nara (645-784), early Heian (794-897), and late Heian, or Fujiwara, (897-1185) periods. As far as Cram was concerned, these were the eras of greatest architectural achievement; "After the time of the Fujiwara, Japanese architecture certainly degenerated steadily...." The Buddhist temple compounds of Yakushiji and Todaiji (both eighth century) were both rectangular compositions with a major building in the center, though it was the kondo, or image hall, rather than the pagoda. The kokyo, or imperial residence, of the Heian imperial palace compound was built between 793 and 806.  

Like Cram's project, the kokyo was a largely symmetrical complex of many interconnected buildings, with the most prominent building near the center. [Figure 27] The central building in both the religious and secular groupings, was not, however, a strongly vertical element such as the pagoda or tenshu.

In fact, the overall massing of the Parliament Houses looks decidedly un-Japanese. With a central tower and lower end pavilions, if the Japanese roofs were omitted the complex might suggest Blenheim Palace more than Katsura Palace, for instance. If a great leap in scale is made, the Phoenix Hall, or Ho-o-do, of Byodoin might be the closest Japanese analog. [Figure 28] Cram remarks that "No description and no photograph can give any idea of the almost inconceivable grace and dignity of this unique building." Though it was a Buddhist temple, the Phoenix Hall was "in the purest palace style"

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8 the Hokoji temple complex, completed in 596, contained a pagoda near its center. However, the site was not excavated until 1956, so Cram would not have been familiar with it.
Figure 26: Yakushiji, east pagoda
Figure 27: Kokyo, or imperial residence
Figure 28: Ho-o-do of Byodoin (Phoenix Hall)
making it a reasonably appropriate model for the houses of parliament. The Phoenix Hall had also been the source for the Ho-o-den of the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Only to some extent, then, were the Parliament Houses the "recrudescence, development and adaptation of Japanese secular architecture"\textsuperscript{12} which Cram had claimed.

**East and West**

The absence of recognizably Japanese elements in the vast bulk of Cram's work suggests that, in buildings as well as writings, he believed in an essential distinction between Japan and the United States. Part of this belief was grounded in cultural differences. For instance, the tatami mats of the Japanese house were ideal for a culture which lived largely on the floor, but impractical for American shoes and furniture. As previously noted, though, Cram also believed strongly in racial traits that were difficult to overcome. Later in his career, Cram would vehemently express his views on racial mongrelization, and since he considered race and architecture to be tightly intertwined, it is logical to assume that hybrid architecture would merit his scorn as well.

The Knapp House, however, is nothing if not an East/West hybrid. Even though Cram felt that a simple Western house with Colonial details would clash with the Japanese furnishings, he somehow believed that a simple Western house would not clash with Japanese details. In certain ways, then, it seems that its designer must have believed in a possible rapprochement between Japanese and Western architecture. Cram's own description suggests that he was pleasantly surprised at the result. "People came to wonder, and went away convinced, while to those most interested the experiment has justified itself absolutely. The house was rational and livable."\textsuperscript{13}

Cram's position prior to the Knapp house seemed to be that Japanese houses were basically ill-suited for American living; hence the decision to build the main house with a

\textsuperscript{12} ibid, p.20.
\textsuperscript{13} Cram, "An Architectural Experiment", p.85.
typical, American plan. In the end, though, to Cram the attractive features of the main house were the Japanese ones, and the teahouse was more successful still. "Compare the view of the interior of the tea house with that of the parlor. Does not the effect improve the further one gets from western suggestions?"14

Regardless of Cram's eventual satisfaction with the Japanese elements of the design, the Knapp house provides a physical example of how Japanese architecture can be marginalized. The hierarchy from front to back suggests the relative importance of the various styles of architecture. The most important element conceptually, the main house, is the most Western in appearance and plan. The teahouse, on the other hand, is appended to a back corner, as if to say that Western and Japanese architecture touch only tangentially.

For Cram the style of the Parliament Houses project was quite problematic. The function of the building was derived from Western principles having no precedent in Japan, suggesting that no existing Japanese forms would be appropriate. However, to build with decadent Western forms in a nation with such a storied and lengthy architectural tradition was less than appealing, but what did the Japanese pagoda and tenshu have to do with representative government? In fact, Cram probably would have opposed the introduction of parliamentary government into Japan in the first place. There is a slightly bitter tone to the epilogue of the 1930 second edition of Impressions of Japanese Architecture and the Allied Arts, and Cram seems resigned to the passing of traditional Japanese architecture:

> After all, though, given the great distinction and the dominance of a new economic and social system, what else could logically have been done? One can hardly visualize Standard Oil offices raised on the lines of Kumamoto Castle, or a department store or garage or moving picture palace aping Byodo-in in steel and concrete. Probably the same is true in the case of a palace for the housing of Parliament with its full complement of political parties and blocs, responsible ministries and legislative committees, log-rolling "pork

14 ibid, p.85.
barrels” and multitudinous unnecessary laws, and all the other rather futile paraphernalia of representative government…. The new thing cannot be housed in recreated forms out of the past, no matter how well they may be fashioned…. 15

By this time, Cram seems to have determined modern civilization to be neither Western nor Japanese, but only modern; the vast bulk of what he admired in Europe and Japan was long past and found little place in modern times. If in 1930 he believed that a Japanese movie theater might as well be built along Western lines, it was only that he believed that both societies were decadent and therefore had no use for traditional architecture.

Cram's writings on Japan are interlaced with visions of fairyland. The attempt to design the Parliament Houses project in a traditional Japanese style was perhaps a means to restore the fantasy. Fittingly, beneath the rendering of the Parliament Houses reads the title, "The Dream of a Parliament House." 16 Cram's intent may have been to provide an encounter such as his with the Ho-o-den, or Phoenix Hall: "as one first sees it in the dusk of early evening perhaps, rising above the dark little tarn clogged with pale iris, it seems like a dream or some magical fancy of Kublai Khan. It is a figment of the imagination, not a solid fabric in time and space." 17

Silent Japan

Cram's knowledge of Japanese architecture prior to the design of the Knapp house was likely rather cursory, although he claims that the teahouse of the Knapp House is a faithful replica. Presumably, Cram's knowledge was gained from books, illustrations, and whatever information Reverend Knapp could offer based on his stays in Japan. He mentions no assistance from Japanese craftsmen in the building of either the main house or the teahouse, nor does he refer to any specific sources. In his own minuscule way, Cram

16 ibid, p.230.
17 ibid, p.97.
has taken the teahouse as Napoleon took Egypt, without the aid or request of the original owner.

Cram and his partner Goodhue studied Japanese architecture for a few weeks before executing the Houses of Parliament design, apparently relying once again on texts for their knowledge. In this manner, Japan played a passive role, but the commission itself suggests a slightly more complicated relationship. By the time Cram arrived in 1898, though, the tradition of Western architecture in Japan was already well-established, beginning with the English and Josiah Conder about 1880. Edward Seidensticker writes of Conder, "He was a very important man. No other foreign architect who worked in Japan, not even Frank Lloyd Wright, was as influential as Conder, and probably none will be.... The grand style in public building derives from him."\(^{18}\) As further evidence of Japan's own desires, Westernization continued even without Western agents. The 1896 Bank of Japan "is held to mark the beginning of a new phase in Meiji architecture--the design and construction of buildings by Japanese architects, quite without foreign assistance, in the courtly and classical styles of Europe."\(^ {19}\)

The West forced Japan out of its isolation, but to say that Japan's rapid modernization was only the result of Western action is to see Japan as yet another passive and silent Oriental nation. In the transfer of European and American culture, Japan was as much an active recipient as a supine victim. Japan's active acquisition of Western culture was prompted by its previous impotence. The decision to Westernize was made under duress, to be sure, but was a conscious choice all the same.

**Political Knowledge**

In the most superficial way, Cram's Parliament Houses project was expressly political, of course. The eventual fate of the project was also politically determined, since

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\(^ {18}\) Edward Seidensticker, *Low City, High City. Tokyo From Edo to the Earthquake*, p.68.
\(^ {19}\) ibid. p.74.
the fall of Ito's government removed Cram's sponsor. The more interesting political circumstances have to do with the cultural hegemony of the United States. What factors allowed a relatively unknown Boston architect to be commissioned for a major Japanese federal project? At the time it would have been absurd to propose the converse, that a Japanese architect design a major American government building.

The Japanese vogue for things Western was in part a political gambit, and the taste for Western architecture was part of a conscious effort to improve its image. Conder's best-known work, the Rokumeikan, was "in those days when the 'unequal treaties' were the great sore to be healed, a means of demonstrating to the world that the Japanese were as civilized and enlightened as anyone else...." writes Seidensticker. 20 Part of Said's thesis is that political hegemony allowed Orientalism without a corresponding Occidentalism; the Orient lacked the power to penetrate or disseminate canonical views about the West. However, if Japan lacked the power to reject the Western presence, it did not necessarily lack the power to accept it, and by so doing reshape the act of cultural imperialism.

**Textual Japan**

The teahouse appended to the Knapp house is described simply as a replica of a Japanese teahouse. Cram does not describe its source in any way. It is simply a "Japanese teahouse," without a time, place, or any specificity at all. It is the physical equivalent of the Orientalist figures of speech:

They are declarative and self-evident; the tense they employ is the timeless eternal; they convey an impression of repetition and strength; ... For all these functions it is frequently enough to use the simple copula *is*. 21

For Cram, too, it is enough to say that the Knapp teahouse *is* a faithful rendition of a Japanese teahouse.

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20 ibid, p.69.
The historical eclecticism of the Japanese Parliament Houses borrows Japanese elements from disparate times and programs. Compare this approach to Cram's strategy for American church design. In the latter case the prototype was clear: the English perpendicular style in use during the reign of Henry VIII. Cram believed the development of the gothic church to be logical and continuous until that time, when the split of the Church had artificially arrested its development.

In *Impressions of Japanese Architecture and the Allied Arts*, Cram outlines the evolution of Japanese architecture: "in Japan we see the advent of a style coincident with the civilization of which it was the artistic manifestation, and then for twelve hundred years we can watch it develop, little by little, adapting itself always with the most perfect aptitude to the varying phases of a great and wonderful civilization...."22 One might guess, then, that he would attempt to develop Japanese architecture from the point where external events had halted its evolution, the point when Western influence had begun.

Instead, Cram presents the Parliament Houses as a kind of grab-bag of secular and religious pieces appropriated from different eras, problematizing the continuous history of Japanese architecture that he himself has written. Things Oriental are once again treated as if immutable and undifferentiated. This Orientalist tendency is conflated with other factors as well. For instance, Cram's knowledge of Japanese architecture at the time was probably rather cursory, not allowing him the synthetic ability he would later show in his gothic designs. In addition, the peculiar (for Japan) program made drawing on precedents difficult.

Said writes, "Two situations favor a textual attitude. One is when a human being confronts at close quarters something relatively unknown and threatening and previously distant.... A second situation favoring the textual attitude is the appearance of success."23 Cram seems to fit both criteria. After all, with regard to Knapp house, he wrote "to the

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many Japanese who saw the work the outcome was satisfactory...."24 and in reference to
the Parliament Houses he claimed that the Japanese government approved of his work.
Thus, Cram probably had little reason to reevaluate his textual attitudes.

**Inferior Japan**

American culture may have enjoyed great prestige in Japan in the late nineteenth
century, but Cram's designs for the Knapp house and the Parliament Houses do not
unequivocally assert an imagined American cultural superiority. In fact, Cram seemed to
find Japanese and American architecture separate but unequal, tilted in favor of the
former. Certainly in Japan, he felt Western-style architecture to be inappropriate, and even
in Massachusetts he found more to like in the traditional Japanese style than in the
contemporary American.

However, it is the *traditional* Japanese style he likes, not the contemporary, and his
favorite work dates from before 1185. He considered the current production of
architecture in Japan to be even worse than that of Europe and the United States, being
only an imitation of second-rate work, the blind following the blind. "So far as one can
see," he writes, "the period of good architecture is over in Japan. The native attack on
Buddhism two centuries ago was the beginning of the end; the restoration of Shinto was
its continuation, and the acceptance of Western civilization was its consummation."25

**Japan for and by the West**

The completion of the Knapp house prompted Cram to write, "All of this seems to
show that there is something in Japanese domestic architecture which is good apart from
its perfect adaptation to oriental conditions, something that could be advantageously
adopted in western building."26 This theme is the one sounded by Morse in *Japanese

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Homes and Their Surroundings, Stickley in The Craftsman, and by Cram in Impressions of Japanese Architecture and the Allied Arts. Cram's affection for the Japanese features of the Knapp house suggest that he, too, found Japanese architecture to be a convenient means for criticizing contemporary Western work.

Said writes of Oriental phenomena that "they are always symmetrical to, and yet diametrically inferior to, a European equivalent, which is sometimes specified, sometimes not."^{27} Cram writes, "The 'tea house' was built more or less as an amusement; no one ever expected it could be used except in summer, and then only as a tea house, or garden shelter."^{28} It is hardly necessary that the Japanese teahouse be considered "diametrically inferior" to the Western garden shelter in this case; equating the teahouse to a garden pavilion is probably insult enough. The equation of the teahouse with the garden pavilion also suggests that Japanese architecture was pleasant but frivolous, in keeping with the common fairyland image.

The Parliament Houses project presents a number of ironies, though they are perhaps not completely evident to Cram. In considering the proper style for the Parliament Houses, he muses:

Why should we not work out a scheme for the proposed parliament houses, based on the indigenous architecture of the Ashikaga and Fujiwara periods, but sufficiently adapted to modern conditions?^{29}

The question is rhetorical, but tempting to answer. What, indeed, might dissuade Cram from executing such a project? Perhaps he might be slowed by his own admission that "Partly by inheritance, partly by education, we have been qualified for thinking in one way, and in one way only... We can think forward in the terms of the West, we can hardly think backwards in the terms of the mysterious East."^{30} Cram's insistence on the strength

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^{27} Said, Orientalism, p.72.
^{29} Cram, Impressions of Japanese Architecture and the Allied Arts, p.??
^{30} ibid, p.89.
of racial character makes it quite clear that designing in the Japanese mode would be impossible for a Westerner. Considering Japan's taste at the time for "Potsdam Renaissance" though, Cram must have felt his own intentions to be rather less misguided.

If the typical Orientalist project interprets the Orient for the West, Cram interprets it for the East as well. In 1930 he remarks on the strange state of architecture in Japan, noting, "It is a curious fact that in this art at least it is foreigners who chiefly ask for some continuance of the ancient style and foreign architects who try in their ardent but blundering way to reproduce it,"31 perhaps a self-deprecating reference to his own project of 1898, or to Wright's Imperial Hotel.

Japan in Cram's Career

In spite of the fact that the Knapp house suggested that Western life and Japanese architecture were more compatible than Cram had thought, his later work shows no literal or obvious Japanese influence. The reasons for this are many. First, many of his commissions were churches, and for Cram the forms of the gothic church were nearly as sacred as the rituals within. Other major commissions were for schools, which also possessed a specific formal tradition. Second, Cram later became more extreme in his views on racial intermingling, and these views must have colored his ideas about architectural mixing as well. Third, the values Cram admired in Japan and its architecture were largely the same ones he had found earlier in the Arts and Crafts and Pre-Raphaelite movements. For instance he admired Japanese feudalism as he had previously praised English feudalism. The honesty and simplicity of the Japanese house paralleled principles from the Arts and Crafts movement. Given Cram's explicit written affirmation of these virtues, it would be surprising if the Japanese house failed to advance his work in some manner, even if only in familiar directions.

31 ibid, p.235.
Conclusions: Japanist Architecture

Cram's architectural designs can be interpreted to be as Orientalist as his writings. In various ways the two projects he designed with Japanese forms suggest a deep division between Japan and the West, the muteness of Japan, and a textual reading of Japan. The nature of these projects was determined by the relative cultural strength of the United States, although Japan did play an active role in exporting and importing architecture. It could also be said that the Parliament Houses were an attempt to save or restore the traditional Japan, as much for Western aesthetes as for Japanese citizens.

Finally, Cram's tributes to Japan and its art are really eulogies. If Japan's greatness had passed away more recently than the West's, it had died (at least in Cram's eyes) nonetheless, and contemporary Japan was only an echo of the modern West. "I should not like to see Tokyo now," he writes, "for the two Americas furnish a sufficiency of this sort of thing and do it quite well enough."32

32 ibid, p.228.
Such people! Where else in all the world would such touching warmth of kindness in faithfulness be probable or even possible?

Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography*  

The fanaticism and cruelty of Orientals is something we can stay away from but that we can't change by fear of us or of our power any more than we can level their eyelids to a perpendicular with their noses.

Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography*  

IX.  
Fact and Fancy in the Writings of Frank Lloyd Wright

Wright may well have been aware of Emerson's "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds"; almost nobody, least of all Wright, would argue that his mind was either little or foolishly consistent. Wright's experiences with Japan are a case in point. From the woodblock print to the Imperial Hotel, Japan played many roles for Wright, even providing the name for his horse, Kano. One of the foremost print collectors in the United States, Wright sold numerous prints to both fellow collectors and museums, and "It is awesome that many of the best Ukiyo-e in American museums passed through his hands," including almost four hundred sold to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

On the other hand, he insisted that Japanese architecture had exerted no influence at all on his own. Several elements of his prairie houses have made some critics believe otherwise. It is quite easy to see Japanese qualities in the broad hipped roofs and the relatively unrestricted spaces of the Robie house, the Darwin D. Martin house, and other famous examples. Other critics have concentrated on the influence of Japanese prints on

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2 ibid, p.560.  
4 this is most clearly stated in Wright's *A Testament*, (p.205) and is also implied in other writings.  
5 notably Jane Preddy, K. Harwood Nute, and Julia Meech.
his architecture. For Wright, though, the appeal of the Japanese print reached beyond its formal qualities. As with Cram, Wright found in Japan a myth of a faraway fairyland, a myth which confirmed an alternative to contemporary society.

Lies of the Contemporary House

As with many advocates of democracy, Wright sought to reconcile the rights of the individual with the good of the state, "Believing, too, that the whole to be worthy as complete must consist of individual units, great and strong in themselves, not units yoked from outside in bondage but united by spirit from inside with the right to freely move, resist aggression or invasion, but only each in its own sphere... Individuality then is a great, strong national Ideal."6 Here he follows Emerson, who believed that strong individualism could form the basis for a true community.

The traditional American house, a box with holes, seemed thematically inappropriate not only because of its physical restrictiveness, but because of its unimaginative repetition. "But it was easy for the architect. All he had to do was call: 'Boy, take down No. 37, and put a bay-window on it for the lady!'"7 Modified only slightly for variations in context, climate, and terrain, in Wright's eyes the American house of the late nineteenth century was an effective tool for suppressing the individuality of its owner. "There should be as many kinds (styles) of houses as there are kinds (styles) of people and as many differentiations as there are different individuals."8

The existing houses of the time, though, failed in many ways to meet Wright's criteria:

What was the matter with the kind of house I found on the prairie? Well--let me tell you in more detail. Just for a beginning, let's say that house lied about everything. It had no sense of Unity at all nor any such sense of space as should belong to a free man among a

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6 Frank Lloyd Wright, Writings and Buildings, p.92.
7 ibid, p.41.
8 Frank Lloyd Wright, "In the Cause of Architecture," March 1908, p.156.
free people in a free country.... Floors were the only part of the house left plain and the housewife covered these with a tangled rug-collection, because otherwise the floors were "bare"--bare, I suppose, only because one could not very well walk on jigsawing or turned spindles or plaster-ornament....I will venture to say that the aggregation was the worst the world ever saw--at the lowest esthetic level in all history.9

Organic Architecture

Typically pithy, this statement reveals several of Wright's concerns. First is his desire for honesty in building. Second, is the call for unity, not only between the parts of the house, but with a greater whole. Third is the need for a suitable expression for the free individual. Last is his disdain for typical, tacked-on ornament. These principles of honesty, simplicity, individuality, and unity became fundamental to his building philosophy. Obviously, too, these principles were not merely architectural; like Cram, Wright believed in the unity between architecture and society.

Honesty in building required that materials and structure were used logically and openly. In a long essay, "In the Nature of Materials," Wright examines the particular qualities of the basic architectural materials: stone, brick, wood, glass, steel, and concrete. "Materials in primitive architecture were most important. Stone, brick and wood spoke truly of stone, brick and wood. Later builders lost sight of nature in this integral sense."10 For the Gothic cathedrals, for instance, Wright had high but not unequivocal praise: "It was as though stone blossomed into a thing of the human spirit. As though a wave of creative impulse had seized stone and, mutable as the sea, the noble material had heaved and swelled. It had broken into lines of surge, peaks of foam--images of organic life caught and held in its cosmic urge--a splendid song!" Yet in spite of this achievement, he found the Gothic builders lacking, as he continues, "The song of stone? No--because stone

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9 Wright, An Autobiography, p.163.
10 Frank Lloyd Wright, Architecture. Man in Possession of his Earth, p.56.
was used as a negative material neither limitations respected nor stone nature interpreted.
Stone was not outraged but neither was it allowed to sing its own song--to be itself."^{11}

Allowing a material to be itself was not a matter of leaving it in its most natural
state, but of interpreting and heightening its more abstract qualities, as the Japanese
craftsman did with wood. "The possibilities of wood came out richly as he rubbed into it
the natural-oil of his palm, ground out the soft parts of the grain to leave the hard fibre
standing--an erosion."^{12}

Honesty in architecture applied to means as well as materials. "The Mayan used
stone most sympathetically with its simple nature and the character of their own
environment,"^{13} but modern techniques were different, and thus modern stone-working
must be different. "So if the architect now will work with stone using the new power
which the machine has given him, he will gain a spiritual integrity to compensate him for
the losses of the storyful beauties of the period, since passed, when a building was a block
of ornamentally sculptured stone."^{14} However, using this new power properly was more
easily said than done, and its dishonest use had grave consequences. "We must walk
blindfolded not to see that all that this magnificent resource of machine and material has
brought us so far is a complete, broadcast degradation of every type and form sacred to
the art of old...."^{15}

Simplicity in organic architecture called not for minimalism, but for judicious
selection:

Five lines where three are enough is stupidity. Nine pounds where
three are sufficient is stupidity. But to eliminate expressive words
that intensity [sic] or vivify meaning in speaking or writing is not
simplicity; nor is similar elimination in architecture simplicity--it,
too, may be stupidity... To know what to leave out and what to put

^{11} ibid. p.70.
^{12} ibid. p.88.
^{13} ibid. p.72.
^{14} ibid. p.74.
^{15} Wright, *Writings and Buildings*, p.60.
in, just where and just how--ah, that is to have been educated in knowledge of simplicity.\textsuperscript{16}

A visually simple form did not necessarily possess true simplicity. Each element had to be a useful part of the entire design, as Wright's above analogy to speaking and writing makes clear. Regardless of its own brevity, any given element might be superfluous, distracting from the greater whole. "Only as a feature or any part becomes an harmonious element in the harmonious whole does it arrive at the estate of simplicity."\textsuperscript{17}

These ideas of individuality, simplicity, and honesty were all elements in the unity of organic architecture. Wright's drive to unify operated on all scales and in society as well as in architecture. Elements of the prairie house exterior, such as the low roofs and horizontal lines, allowed the building to "associate with the ground and become natural to its prairie site."\textsuperscript{18} Between inside and outside, "The outswinging windows were fought for because the casement window associated the house with out-of-doors--gave free openings, outward,"\textsuperscript{19} unlike the predominant double-hung "guillotine" windows.

Inside, the cutting up of the big box, or typical house, into smaller, separate boxes was to be avoided. Instead, goal should be to "make all come together as enclosed space--so divided that light, air and vista permeated the whole with a sense of unity."\textsuperscript{20} The unity must also be created by furnishings designed integrally, rather than added arbitrarily. Service features such as heating and lighting were also to become part of the architecture. In organic architecture, "environment and interior and life itself become as one."\textsuperscript{21}

Nature was the great teacher of unity. When asked if he attended church, Wright replied, "Yes, I go occasionally, to this one and then sometimes to that one, but my church--put a capital N on Nature, and go there."\textsuperscript{22} In nature were analogues of the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[16] ibid, p.48.
\item[17] ibid, p.47.
\item[18] ibid, p.43.
\item[19] ibid, p.44.
\item[20] ibid, p.45.
\item[22] ibid, p.97.
\end{footnotes}
principles of honesty, simplicity, individuality, and unity. Each element of a wildflower, for example, was honest according to its materials and structure; the stem and leaves had different constructions and different appearances. No part was superfluous, and each was a clear component of the whole. Although any given flower might vary only slightly from its kin, each species was individual, with different needs, different construction, and different appearance. Each plant was a unity of many parts administering to specific needs, and each plant was in turn part of the grand functioning of nature. The lesson to find in nature was not in the copying of forms, but in the recognition of pattern and the ability to abstract nature to its essences. "It seems that the geometry and the rhythm (interior rhythm) of nature manifest themselves in these various poetic forms that we see in the flowers, and trees, and everwhere as a matter of fact."23

Wright and Japan

Wright's contact with Japanese art dated back to his first architectural employer, J.L. Silsbee, who, "an enthusiast over Oriental art, had a kakemono hanging to the right of his dining room fireplace, and a large gilded image of a Lamaist Bodhisattva and a pair of porcelain vases on the mantel in the hall of his home."24 Wright's brief tenure with Silsbee coincided with a peak of the Japan craze, so this kind of collection was less rare than it might at first appear.

The 1893 Columbian Exposition was a watershed event for American architecture in general, and perhaps for Wright in a much different way. Wright was working for Louis Sullivan at the time, and in all likelihood visited the fairgrounds to oversee the construction of Sullivan's building. In any event, the wide publication of the Japanese display suggests that Wright would have had at least some knowledge of the art and

23 ibid, p.97.
24 Clay Lancaster, The Japanese Influence in America, p.84.
architecture on view.25 By about 1900, he began collecting woodblock prints, which would become his greatest hobby and at times a source of income as well.

Wright first visited Japan in 1905, accompanying Ward Willets and in search of Japanese woodblock prints. Eight years later, he returned to Japan with Mamah Cheney, where, according to one account, he secured the commission for the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo.26 From 1916 to 1922, he would spend most of his time in Japan, working on the Imperial Hotel and several smaller projects. His print collecting continued unabated, sponsored by John and William Spaulding, generous Boston collectors. Wright had nothing but praise for these clients: "I would cable for money from time to time as 'finds' turned up during the five-month campaign. The money always came, no questions asked. Nothing from me until I had spent about one hundred and twenty-five thousand Spaulding dollars for about a million dollars' worth of prints, I believed."27

Writings on Japan: Orientalism and Egotism

Wright wrote *The Japanese Print. An Appreciation*, in 1912, and though he wrote nothing to rival Cram's *Impressions of Japanese Architecture*, written references to Japanese architecture were not uncommon. As self-appointed champion of Japan, he wrote on things Japanese from art and architecture to aesthetic of the human body: "The finely molded leg rising from the shapely shoe indicates our heaven The finely modulated breast and arm and expressive hand indicates theirs. There is a difference."28

For Japanese culture in general Wright had unusual praise. "Later I found that Japanese art and architecture really did have organic character. Their art was nearer to the

25 Lancaster writes in *The Japanese Influence in America* that "He [Wright] saw and admired the display of Hokusai and Hiroshige prints at the exposition," (p.85) while Preddy notes that "there is a question whether or not he actually attended the fair himself." (p.4) Circumstantial evidence suggests he did see the fair but Wright himself does not specifically mention any visits.
26 In his autobiography, Wright claims that the Japanese scoured the world for the right architect, and finally were referred to him by architects in Germany. Brendan Gill, on the other hand, writes that Wright was contacted by Japanese agents while on his 1913 trip to Japan (p.225, *Many Masks*).
28 ibid, p.223.
earth and a more indigenous product of native conditions of life and work, therefore more nearly modern as I saw it, than any European civilization alive or dead."\textsuperscript{29} Architecture, of course, was part of this organic character: "The simple Japanese house with its fences and utensils is the \textit{revelation} of wood. Nowhere else may wood be so profitably studied for its natural possibilities as a major architectural material."\textsuperscript{30}

At least in one way, then, Wright seems to stands apart from Orientalist writers: his admiration for Japan, or at least for his own idea of Japan, is unqualified. Cram, too, had said of Japanese architecture that "it stands alone as the most perfect mode in wood the world has known,"\textsuperscript{31} but as the architecture of Buddhism it fell short of Christian achievements. Wright, on the other hand, claimed his religion to be "Nature" and believed that the Japanese lived closer to Nature than did anyone else. However, the several years Wright spent in Japan did not necessarily produce consistent opinions, nor did they free him from some of the Orientalist stereotypes common to the late nineteenth-century United States.

\textbf{The East/West Division}

Though perhaps not to the extent that Cram did, Wright often assumed the division of East and West. Although he finds the Japanese house honest, high praise in his eyes, he also maintains of the West, "For once, it can't very well copy. The ethnic eccentricity is too great. The West can copy nearly everything easier than it can copy the Japanese house or Japanese things for domestic uses."\textsuperscript{32} For the Orientalist, the division of humanity into Occidental and Oriental is an ontological fact. For Wright as for Cram, the distance between Japan and the West seemed to vary according to the situation.

\textsuperscript{29} ibid, p.217.
\textsuperscript{30} Wright, \textit{Architecture. Man in Possession of his Earth}, p.88.
\textsuperscript{32} Wright, \textit{An Autobiography}, p.223.
On the subject of the print Wright wrote, "It is a safe means of inspiration for our artists because, while the methods are true methods, the resultant forms are utterly alien to such artistic traditions as we acknowledge and endeavor to make effective." The last phrase is telling: Wright's hope is to invigorate American, or as he preferred, Usonian, art; imported forms, whether Japanese or German, were inappropriate seed. It might also be said that Japanese forms were attractive because they had developed into a part of a whole, and transplanted into another culture would lose that organic unity.

Wright's first strong impressions of Japan were apparently derived from prints showing old Japan. From his early collecting days until WWII, this romantic image persisted:

Samisen notes come from all directions like pervasive insect-notes in a summer field. We hear the tender wail of flutes more distinctly here as though a door had opened; we see moon-lanterns glowing under spreading pine trees as high moonlight streams down over all; soft light of the new moon gleams on the still water, softly glances from the cool splashing of gently falling water over great black stones.

The Japan he wanted was not contemporary Japan; instead, he "looked forward to Japan as refuge and rescue. The lands of my dreams--old Japan and old Germany." Although the description is superficially complimentary, it serves to reinforce the difference and mystery of Japan in the traditional Orientalist manner.

Wright's reaction to the modernization of Japan was quite predictable. "How our 'good taste' reacts upon and poisons them! By contact with us they have suddenly seen how difficult and unnecessary such painstaking aesthetic integrity is." The later editions of his autobiography include more pointed passages:

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33 Frank Lloyd Wright, The Japanese Print. An Interpretation, p.3.
35 ibid, p.217.
36 ibid, p.222.
Japan (and this is hard for the West to understand) went to hysterical self-abnegation, began to destroy her beautiful works of art, casting them on sacrificial bonfires in public places surrounding the palace moat in Tokio: virtually throwing her civilization away upon fires as on a funeral pyre, a national form of hara-kiri also incomprehensible to the West.\textsuperscript{37}

For Wright, as for all the Western believers in fairyland, the loss was particularly dear because a dream was being dismantled. There were gains to be had in modernization, such as political and economic strength, but these were to accrue mainly to the Japanese. Knowing that Japan was on its way to political autonomy or a higher material standard of living was hardly enough to compensate for being evicted from fairyland.

Although only his late writings on Japan emphasized racial qualities, Wright was nonetheless keenly observant of race and ethnicity. On his first day at Sullivan's office, he observes: "Next table to mine Jean Agnas, a clean-faced Norseman. To the right Eisendrath--apparently stupid. Jewish. Behind me to the left Offenheimer--alert, apparently bright. Jew too. I turned around to survey the group. Isbell, Jew? Gaylord, no--not. Weydert, undoubtedly. Directly behind, Weatherwax. Couldn't make him out--probably Jewish.\textsuperscript{38} Whether Wright was directly involved or not, the environment at Adler and Sullivan was racially charged. "Dankmar Adler was a Jew. Louis Sullivan an Irishman. The clients all being Adler's, many objected to Sullivan."\textsuperscript{39}

Wright was also well able to mock ethnic characteristics when the circumstances allowed. Proud of the new transparent plate-glass doors in his offices, he recalls, "I see one of the consequences as I write, in the yellow face and evil eyes of Shimoda, a Japanese draughtsman fired for cause.... 'Very rough business for me,' said Yerrow Socks as his familiairs always called him because 'T' was not in his vocabulary."\textsuperscript{40} The relevant point is not that Wright was a racist, but that he, along with Cram and their

\textsuperscript{37} ibid. p.548.
\textsuperscript{38} Wright, \textit{An Autobiography}. p.117.
\textsuperscript{39} ibid. p.129.
\textsuperscript{40} ibid. p.138.
contemporaries, was part of an era that placed a great deal of importance on race and racial qualities. Thus, the differences between Japanese and American culture were likely to be seen as essential, racial traits.

**Print Collecting and the Supine Orient**

For Orientalist writers, the passivity and silence of the Orient made it a place requiring Western attention. To outsiders, Japan had been quite literally silent for the two centuries before 1853, and in the last decades of the nineteenth century had actively solicited Western attention. To Wright Japan often played the passive role, and at times he appeared to feel some guilt over his activities. It was his voracious pursuit of the print which caused this regret. "I who had crowded out other buyers by now--practically had things my own way, accustomed to getting about three for one anyway, which was not greedy as things were going in Tokio. Ten for one is about what the West expects from the East, and takes."41 It was largely the Western taste for prints which had inflated the market, and Westerners were accumulating Japan's treasures. "You may well say, the East got the money didn't it? But what did the West get? Priceless art treasures running into millions. And it was always the same story, in either Japan or China. Wrieto-San's 'avocation' was great pastime, but profitable to him and to the West until I grew ashamed of it finally and resolved to get 'collecting' out of my system."42 Wright's avowal to stop collecting might also have been prompted by a less noble reason: he was duped out of thousands of dollars by counterfeit prints, some of which he had sold to fellow collectors. To make good he held a print party to allow his clients to exchange their faked prints; "That party cost me about thirty thousand dollars."43 Notably, this account of his print collecting adventures is part of the section added to his autobiography after Japan and the United States went to war.

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41 ibid, p.555.
42 ibid, p.554.
43 ibid, p.556.
World War II and Racism: Political Knowledge

Political events seem to have significantly changed Wright's imaginative geography. The final, 1977 version of An Autobiography includes passages written both before and after Pearl Harbor, and certain themes appear only in the late chapters. Most notable is the appearance of the Yellow Peril image:

The West was riding this new horse. Not only had Japan made that discovery but she soon learned how to ride the horse. She felt she was therefore the savior of the sleeping Orient, the unaware yellow-races of all Asia. Her leadership, even if their ignorance of danger had to be fought for among themselves, was Japan's great Destiny.\textsuperscript{44}

Wright was familiar with Homer Lea, and he noted that the Yellow Peril "seemed entirely to escape the military eye of the purblind dominant race except for one intelligent mind: the mind of the hunchback Homer Lea and one ruler--the Emperor Wilhelm's Yellow Peril."\textsuperscript{45} The Yellow Peril was premised on the essential division between the "Western white-eyed peoples" and the "slant-eyed yellow-men,"\textsuperscript{46} now an apparent truism to Wright. He was now able to make generalizations such as "Japan is an entirely different racial quantity and spiritual quality... She is really Asia for the Asiatics, dead or alive, and for whatever that may mean she will fight to the death. Anything that will serve that end she will embrace with indescribable Oriental faith and fatalistic fervor."\textsuperscript{47}

Compare these alarmist statements to a passage about the tea ceremony that Wright wrote before W.W.II.:

We are not yet civilized enough to go that far in idealizing everything in life, not to mention our environment. Or be capable of making our living into ceremonial [sic] of any kind except occasionally: for the moment.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{44} ibid. p.550.
\textsuperscript{45} ibid. p.549.
\textsuperscript{46} ibid. p.549.
\textsuperscript{47} ibid. p.560.
\textsuperscript{48} ibid. p.223.
The tea ceremony was part of a culture that Wright held in remarkable esteem:

In the morning land I found this simple everyday singing of the human spirit--a 'song to heaven' I am calling it--to be the everyday, Shinto-made dwelling place of the Japanese people. I see that song just as truly a blossom of interior-nature as trees and flowers and bees are blossoms."49

Wright presents us with two alternatives, organic Japan and Yellow Peril Japan. In fact, it is doubtful that Japanese culture was ever so thoroughly "civilized" or so rabidly intent of enslave white race. Like other Orientalist writers, Wright seems unwilling to believe that Japanese culture may be characterized at any given time by a number of complex traits, rather than a single, dominant one--such as civilized, organic Japan or Yellow Peril Japan.

With political changes and the rise of Yellow Peril beliefs, Wright also begins to think in terms of the opposition of the East and the West, another Orientalist tendency. He recalls his conversations with a Chinese author, Dr. Ku Hung-ming, who he calls one of the few wise men he ever met. "Dr. Ku's philosophic [sic] view was perhaps whatever biologic basis there was in the Emperor Wilhelm's 'Yellow Peril': an overwhelming opposite, an entirely separate race genius--one which we do not and cannot even if we cared to, understand."50 Wright's affirmation of this view hardly agrees with his earlier, pre-War statements about Japanese culture, a culture which he seemed to empathize so closely with.

Like the Yellow Peril advocates, Wright did not necessarily blame Japan for its aggression. It was simply a matter of East and West, two expanding but incompatible worlds. "I am sure they should not meet, not yet because, except for a few culture-hunters (and exploiters?) like myself, the West has no tolerant comprehension whatever to give to the East--from first to last. And the East has conceived a thorough, grossly exaggerated

49 ibid, p.224.
50 ibid, p.559.
contempt for the culture, honor and character of the West." Thus the Western treatment of Japan was largely to blame for the latter's anti-Western stance. Tokyo in 1800 had been "quiet but gay.... Commodore Perry not yet insisted upon international cooperation," remarks a sardonic Wright. After Perry, the West had exploited Japan, and Wright had played his part in print collecting: "But now you have here before you a perfect picture of the West looting the Orient. I make no apologies. You may judge for yourself my feelings--pro and con."

**Textual Japan**

Even before his conversion to Yellow Peril sentiments, Wright carried a textual attitude towards Japan. The most glaring example is his wish to understand Japan through woodblock prints: "And ever since I discovered the print Japan had appealed to me as the most romantic, artistic, nature-inspired country on earth." He most admired the older prints, prints showing landscapes of the past or birds and flowers. This Tokyo of the print was the one he preferred to live in, "Yedo was a presence always in which to search for the invaluable record of that time, in the print: a window through which I looked upon my own work." This parallels closely the textual approach taken by many Orientalists. "What seems unexceptionable good sense to these writers [Voltaire and Cervantes] is that it is a fallacy to assume that the swarming, unpredictable, and problematic mess in which human beings live can be understood on the basis of what books--texts--say; to apply what one learns out of a book literally to reality is to risk folly or ruin." Yet this is almost exactly what Wright chooses to do, although he prefers graphic texts to written.

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51 ibid. p.548.
52 ibid. p.553.
53 ibid. p.217.
54 Julia Meech, "Frank Lloyd Wright and the Art Institute of Chicago," p.67.
The textual approach to the Orient also tends to assume a static, general Orient. Wright was well enough aware of the changes that the West had brought to Japan, yet he chooses to ignore the new elements of Tokyo in his descriptions. What he wishes to find is old Japan, the Japan of his favorite woodblock prints, and he succeeds. After a long, loving description of one of his experiences in "Ancient Yedo" he concludes, "Yes, it all looks, it does—just like the prints!"

Related to the assumption of a static Orient is the assumption of the ancient Orient; given that the Orient is static, then it is also ancient, having no ability to evolve. In the post-Pearl Harbor editions of his autobiography, when his Orientalist beliefs became more extreme, Wright concluded that, "Being a more ancient people, the Asiatics were more easily degenerate and demoralized by the West even than the relatively cold whites and the demoralization began." Few of Said's Orientalist authors ever put it so succinctly.

**Oriental Inferiority**

Given his admiration for organic Japanese society and its concomitant art, it is difficult to claim that Wright considered Japan to be inferior to the West. There are, however, certain conditions attached to Wright's praise. It is old Japan, rather than new Japan, that Wright idolizes. Once he began writing about contemporary Japan, his opinions changed, as the above Yellow Peril sentiments make clear. A 1936 letter to Aisaku Hayashi, former manager of the Imperial Hotel, clarifies Wright's sentiments on modern Japan. "Japan has no civilization now. She threw hers away to borrow one and henceforth can never be more than number two anywhere. She is the monkey nation among the other nation-animals." This dissatisfaction with Japan's modernization was shared with Hearn, Cram, and countless others. Modernization, after all, did destroy their romantic fantasies.

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58 ibid., p.550.
59 Frank Lloyd Wright, *Letters to Architects*, p.95.
Japan for the Use of Frank Lloyd Wright

Wright quite convincingly represents a particular Japan that satisfies his own personal needs, and this is the case with both prints and architecture. Of the former, "The elimination of the insignificant, a process of simplification in art in which I was myself already engaged, beginning with my twenty-third year, found much collateral evidence in the print."60 Given his remarkable passion for the print, evidenced in his writings as well as his travels, it is notable that prints were only "collateral evidence" for principles he was already aware of. In other passages he does admit the didactic power of the prints, for instance when he notes, "The print is more autobiographical than may be imagined. If Japanese prints were to be deducted from my education, I don't know what direction the whole might have taken."61

Such inconsistencies suggest that Wright's evaluations of his own abilities cannot always be taken at face value. Brendan Gill, a friend and biographer, writes, "He was a virtuoso at bearing false witness, which is to say that he sometimes lied in the name of self-promotion or self-protection and at other times he seems to have lied simply for the pleasure it gave him."62 His conflicting statements about the influence of the Japanese print on his work provide one example. Wright also noted, "... I knew little or nothing of the East until 1906 when I first went to Japan."63 Four years before that trip, though, Wright referred to Japanese architecture in his address at Hull House, saying that the machine "made it possible to wipe out the mass of meaningless torture to which wood has been subjected to since the world began, for it has been universally abused and maltreated by all peoples but the Japanese."64

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61 ibid. p.228.
63 Wright, *Letters to Architects*, p.100.
64 Wright, *Writings and Buildings*, p.66.
Wright claimed, "I went to Japan sympathetic to interpret her own philosophy in terms of modern (Western) building. The Imperial Hotel is such interpretation." If the typical Orientalist interprets East for the West through Western eyes, Wright chose to interpret the East for Eastern eyes, assuming of course that the East was incapable of doing so itself. After the outbreak of W.W.II., Wright clearly saw himself as Japan's Western champion, writing, "Owing so much to Old Japan, it would be absurd for me to leave her culture to the mercy of of the 'patriotic', destructive, 'white-eyed' ignoramus who will write and rate her now." Such a statement is slightly unexpected considering that thirteen pages later in his autobiography he describes the "fanaticism and cruelty of Orientals." However, since Wright divided Japan's history into an idyllic "Old Japan" and a Yellow Peril contemporary Japan, it was possible for him to retain his fantasies.

Wright explicitly denied influences on his architecture to the extent that one wonders why the issue was so sensitive. In his own words, "Resemblances are mistaken for influences. Comparisons have been made odious where comparison should, except as insult, hardly exist." He continues slightly later in the same vein:

My work is original not only in fact but in spiritual fiber. No practice by any European architect to this day has influenced mine.

As for the Incas, the Mayans, even the Japanese--all were to me but splendid confirmation.

In other words, Wright claims to have found only what he already knew.

According to the particular commentator, Wright was either remarkably self-confident or outstandingly arrogant. For Wright, denying the role of outside influences was part of his personal mythology. If the ideal American was the solitary genius breaking free from the past, Wright could hardly admit influences from other times and places. The

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65 Wright, Letters to Architects, p.100.
67 Wright, A Testament, p.204.
68 ibid, p.205.
mere thought seemed to depress him. In the wake of the Larkin Building, he received Okakura Kakuzo’s *The Book of Tea*:

Reading it, I came across this sentence: "The reality of a room was to be found in the space enclosed by the roof and walls, not in the roof and walls themselves."

Well, there I was. Instead of being the cake I was not even the dough… I was like a sail coming down; I had thought of myself as an original, but I was not. It took me days to swell up again.69

His beleaguered pride recovered when he realized that no one else had ever consciously *built* the idea, and he concludes, "I have been going along--head up--ever since."70

Wright found the principles of Japanese (and all other great) art to be analogous to his own, in a manner not unlike the Orientalist treatment of Islam. If for the Orientalist Mohammed was an Oriental equivalent of Christ, then for Wright Japanese architecture was the equivalent of Wright’s organic architecture. Although Japanese architecture may have been defined in Western (or, rather, Wrightian) terms, it was not defined as "symmetrical to, and yet diametrically inferior to, a European equivalent…."71 For Wright the Usonian, Europe would be a most unlikely source of ideals.

*A Testament*, the work in which Wright most vigorously protests that his work remained uninfluenced by Japanese architecture, was Wright’s last major written work. Forty-five years earlier he had written his appreciation of the Japanese print, *The Japanese Print. An Interpretation*, in which his attitudes toward exterior influences were considerably different. "It has already spoken to us a message of esthetic and ethical import. Indeed, its spirit has already entered and possessed the soul and craft of many men of our race and spoken again through them more intimately and convincingly than ever."72

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69 Wright, *Writings and Buildings*, p.300.
70 ibid, p.300.
The various conflicting statements about the influence of Japanese prints and architecture point out Wright's difficulty in acknowledging influences. On one hand, he wished to adduce Japanese work in support of his own principles. On the other hand, his ego and his Emerson-inspired self-reliance would not allow him to admit outside influences.

Like Cram and the Greenes, Wright was involved with the American Arts and Crafts movement. In 1897 he had been a founding member of the Chicago Society of Arts and Crafts at Hull House, and wrote in 1901, "All artists love and honor William Morris. He did the best in his time for art and will live in history as the great socialist...." On the subject of the machine the two men disagreed. Morris would not likely have argued with Wright's statement, "That the Machine has dealt Art in the grand old sense a death-blow, none will deny." The American, though, had come to the conclusion that "in the Machine lies the only future of art and craft--as I believe, a glorious future; that the Machine is, in fact, the metamorphosis of ancient art and craft;...." Where the two did agree, at least in Wright's mind, was in the need for "simplicity as the basis of all true art," and in the wish to bring forth the essential qualities of materials. Another link between Wright and the Arts and Crafts movement was his friendship with C.R. Ashbee, the Englishman who wrote the introduction to the 1911 Ausgeführtte Bauten. Issued a year after the publication of the famed Wasmuth portfolio of drawings, the Ausgeführtte Bauten showed photographs of Wright's built work.

If Greene & Greene had seen Japanese architecture only through Arts and Crafts filters, Wright was more original in his interpretations. The extent to which his knowledge of Japan was flavored by people such as Stickley is uncertain, but it seems likely that Wright's prolonged stays in Japan allowed him to develop his own mythology.

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73 Wright, Writings and Buildings, p.56.
74 ibid, p.56.
75 ibid, p.55.
76 ibid, p.65.
To cut ambiguity short: there never was any exterior influence upon my
work, either foreign or native, other than that of Lieber Meister, Dankmar
Adler and John Roebling, Whitman and Emerson, and the great poets
worldwide.

Frank Lloyd Wright¹

Though he were never so original, never so wilful and fantastic, he cannot
wipe out of his work every trace of the thoughts amidst which it grew. The
very avoidance betrays the usage he avoids.

Ralph Waldo Emerson²

X.
Orientalism and the Architecture of
Frank Lloyd Wright

Emerson is one of the select few to whom Wright acknowledged an intellectual debt.
In fact, Wright's ideals of Nature and self-reliance might easily have been copied from the
titles of Emerson essays. Unlike Emerson, though, Wright never developed a philosophy
which reconciled individual genius with exterior influence. "Genius is always sufficiently
the enemy of genius by over-influence,"³ wrote Emerson, knowing that genius inspires,
but also inspires imitation. Wright pretended otherwise, loudly denying any allegations that
other architects (except Sullivan) or other styles might have affected his work. Only non-
architectural inspirations were admitted, and those were kept at a safe distance. Wright's
words cannot be fully trusted, though, and the question remains: what role did Japanese
art and architecture play in the shaping of Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture?

At some point, the issue becomes moot; if it is impossible to believe him at his word,
it is also impossible to prove definite influences upon such innovative work. Yet
circumstantial evidence may build a strong case, and it is my belief that Japanese art and

¹ Frank Lloyd Wright, A Testament, p.205.
² Ralph Waldo Emerson, Art.
³ Ralph Waldo Emerson, The American Scholar.
architecture played a significant role in several aspects of Wright's design work. A number of authors have published formal analyses of Wright's work and its possible Japanese models, and it is not my intent to present an encyclopedic analysis of Japanese influences in Wright's work. Instead, I have chosen several examples from his architecture which illustrate his complicated and often contradictory approach to Japan and its arts.

**Woodblock Prints and the Drawings of Frank Lloyd Wright**

Critics have considered how both Japanese prints and Japanese architecture have affected Wright's design work. Wright himself tended to admit that he learned more from the print. The lesson of the woodblock print reached deeper than form. "It has spread abroad the gospel of simplification as no other modern agency has preached it, and has taught that organic integrity within the work of art itself is fundamentally the law of beauty."4 In Wright's opinion, the Japanese artist employed a process of abstraction from nature to geometric pattern. "No matter how informal, vague, evanescent the subject he is treating may seem to be, he recognizes and acknowledges geometry as its esthetic skeleton;...."5 These principles of simplification, unity, and geometric structure are recurring themes in Wright's own philosophy of art.

In learning these principles from Japanese culture, Wright seems to be admirably free of Orientalist tendencies. The most fundamental rule of Orientalism is the essential dichotomy between East and West, but Wright's ideals of organic architecture have little to do with Occident and Orient. However, this reading of Wright's Orientalist tendencies depends on whether he learned only general, abstract principles from Japanese prints. Most critics believe that Wright learned more than simplicity and organic unity, and if this is true then his potentially Orientalist attitudes must be reexamined.

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5 ibid, p.7.
In comparing the Francis W. Little house with two prints, a Shunko actor print and a Hiroshige landscape, Jane Preddy finds many formal similarities. Between Wright's plan drawing and the Shunko print she finds a wide variety of connections: the linear plan of the house is similar to the vertical dimensions of the print; both the plan and the print combine stark geometric shapes with curvilinear shapes; negative space is important in both; the calligraphy of the print and the vegetation of the plan occur in analogous places. Of the completed living room she writes, "Everywhere one finds the elongated rectangles which can be interpreted as expressing the shape of the format of the Shunko and other Edo prints." To attribute a rectangular plan to the influence of prints may be a little bit of a stretch, given the rectangle's not inconsiderable history in architecture. Similarly, of the Hiroshige landscape print Preddy notes, "Features in his Little House might be directly traced to influences in this print which is in turn so typical of its period." Unfortunately, there is little except formal similarity to link these prints with Wright's work, and, perhaps, as Wright claims, "Resemblances are mistaken for influences."

Some of the drawings coming from Wright's office show more specific and believable influences from Japanese prints. As Julia Meech notes, a tall, narrow perspective drawing of the 1904 Hardy House seems to imitate the similarly vertical "pillar" print shape. [Figure 29] In the extreme foreground Wright has arbitrarily placed a flowering branch, and the sky is striated, like the rain in many of Hiroshige's prints. The house is seen from a low and oblique viewpoint, reminiscent of Japanese composition. A drawing of the K.C. De Rhodes House executed by Marion Mahony, one of Wright's chief assistants, is similarly convincing: perched on a branch in the lower left-hand corner is a rather Japanese-looking bird, and the house itself is framed by trees in the foreground, a

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7 ibid, p.14.
8 Wright, A Testament, p.204.
Figure 29: Perspective of the Hardy house from Julia Meech and Gabriel Weisberg, *Japonisme Comes to America: The Japanese Impact on the Graphic Arts, 1876-1925*, plate 161.
device used by Hiroshige. [Figure 30] A note in one corner reads, "Drawn by Mahony after FLLW and Hiroshige."\(^9\)

In the last sentence of his introduction to the 1910 Wasmuth edition, Wright wrote, "Their debt to Japanese ideals, these renderings themselves sufficiently acknowledge."\(^10\) In other places, Wright adamantly denied that he copied forms. As Gill says, "The glory of Wright's whoppers is that they pay no heed to mere pedestrian verisimilitude."\(^11\) It is when Wright's words disagree with his works that the issue of Japanism becomes interesting.

Wright's adoption of elements from Japanese prints provides a good example of how Orientalism can hide behind apparent praise. Wright does not seem to affirm the East-West division that is fundamental to Orientalism; he seems perfectly willing to use Japanese motifs in American drawings. However, his admiration of Japanese compositional elements is tied to his appreciation of Japan as an organic culture, and his admiration of Japanese organic culture is based on several Orientalist attitudes.

First, from the print, Wright inferred a particular, idealized image of Japan. As Julia Meech has noted, Wright's favorite prints showed only pre-modernized Japan. Second, in a kind of circular reasoning, the images Wright found during his visits then reaffirmed the organic character of the print. This is very much the kind of self-perpetuating, textual Orientalism that Said decries.

Two main factors allow Wright this enduring fantasy: the remoteness of Japan allowed Wright the freedom to speculate in the first place, and the cultural strength of the West allowed him to maintain these fantasies. Wright could not have maintained such fantasies about England, for instance. By using prints as a literal representation of Japan, he is also guilty of holding a textual attitude.

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\(^9\) Julia Meech and Gabriel Weisberg, *Japonisme Comes to America*, p.197.


Figure 30: Rendering of K.C. De Rhodes house from Julia Meech and Gabriel Weisberg, *Japonisme Comes to America: The Japanese Impact on the Graphic Arts, 1876-1925*, plate 160.
Without these Orientalist beliefs, it is unlikely that Wright would have been able to maintain his admiration for the Japanese print.

The *Gongen-Zukuri* and the Plan of Unity Temple

K. Horwood Nute proposes that Wright may have learned another, very different lesson from the print. In *The Japanese Print*, Wright refers to diagrams that Hokusai used to illustrate how complex forms could be derived from simple geometric figures. "In just the same way Hokusai employed repeated simple geometric forms to generate more complex living ones, Wright used simple inorganic geometric forms to generate the organic forms of each of his buildings, from complete plans right down to the smallest of decorative details," writes Nute.¹² Obvious examples include the many circles of the Jester House and the colored-glass designs of the Dana House and other prairie houses. The belief that geometry lies behind more complicated forms is one which Wright expressly stated: "It seems that the geometry and the rhythm (interior rhythm) of nature manifest themselves in these various poetic forms that we see in the flowers, and trees, and everywhere as a matter of fact."¹³ Hokusai's diagrams may have provided Wright a convenient mechanism for getting from geometry to architectural forms.

Nute's analysis also provides a logical connection between Wright's own philosophy and his apparent formal borrowings from Japanese architecture. First abstracting elements of Japanese architecture down to a geometry which carried relatively little cultural baggage, Wright could then adopt these abstracted forms as a starting point for his own work. From that point, he could elaborate in the inimitable Wrightian fashion, leaving any specific Japanese forms far behind. The Ho-o-den from the World's Columbian Exposition could be abstracted and then transformed into the Hardy House or the living area of the Darwin D. Martin House.

¹² K. Horwood Nute, "Frank Lloyd Wright & the Arts of Japan--A Study in How to Borrow Properly," p.29.
Nute notes that, in plan, Unity Temple, so seemingly innovative, looks suspiciously like the *gongen-zukuri* of Taiyu-in at Nikko. [Figure 31] The *gongen-zukuri* is a three-part, dumbbell plan in which two main buildings are connected by a wide corridor.\(^\text{14}\) Wright had apparently been strongly impressed by this building during his visit to Japan in April, 1905. He had accepted the Unity Temple project in the summer of 1904, but the evolution of the design is unclear. In September, 1905, it was announced that Wright was working on the design, but that it was a "brick and stone" building. Bids were not let until March, 1906.\(^\text{15}\) The "brick and stone" description in September implies that the design was far from its final state, in which case Nute's hypothesis seems viable. "Do not accuse me of trying to 'adapt Japanese forms' however, *that is a false accusation and against my very religion,*" wrote Wright to his friend Ashbee in 1910.\(^\text{16}\) It would be a great Wrightian irony if he had committed such a sin in the most renowned religious building of his career.

In Unity Temple, Wright modifies his model to the extent that it becomes unrecognizable and so to the typical observer, Unity Temple has nothing to do with Japanese architecture. On another level, the complete submergence of the Japanese prototype is an interesting case of cultural appropriation. In the same letter to Ashbee mentioned above, Wright wrote, "Do not say that I deny that my love for Japanese art has influenced me--I admit that it has but claim to have digested it."\(^\text{17}\) In light of Nute's argument above, it appears that Wright's way of "digesting" form was to abstract it. This abstraction provided a way to get around the "ethnic eccentricity" which Wright claimed made Japanese forms inappropriate for American use.

\(\text{14}\) Paine and Soper (p.435) describe the *gongen-zukuri* as "a three-part complex in which sanctuary and raiido are separate blocks, connected by a wide, room-like corridor."

\(\text{15}\) Grant Carpenter Manson, *Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910. The First Golden Age*, p.158.

\(\text{16}\) Alan Crawford, "Ten letters from Frank Lloyd Wright to Charles Robert Ashbee," p.69.

\(\text{17}\) ibid, p.69.
Figure 31: Unity Temple and the gongen-zukuri plan from K. Horwood Nute, "Frank Lloyd Wright & the Arts of Japan-- A Study in How to Borrow Properly," p.31.
Said writes that the Orientalist "makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West." With Wright, the case is a little bit more complicated. With apologies, in the process of abstracting and then modifying Japanese forms, Wright makes Japan speak, describes Japan, renders its mysteries plain for and to Frank Lloyd Wright. He has no wish to let his fellow Westerners see anything Japanese in his designs, since his goal is an original, organic Usonian (American) architecture. By completely submerging the original Japanese source, Wright is denying any Japanese voice whatsoever. Said considers how Western hegemony is manifested in representations. Yet the West can also express its power by choosing not to represent the East. Unity Temple might be contrasted with the teahouse of Cram's Knapp House. Because it is so literally Japanese, Cram's teahouse cannot escape representing Japan. It appears to be an objective, "true," representation of Japanese architecture. Unity Temple does not appear to be representation of Japan at all, although its model may be Japanese. Yet both Cram's teahouse and Wright's Unity Temple might be considered manifestations of cultural hegemony. In both cases, the Westermer is controlling the terms of representation.

The Ho-o-den and the Winslow House

It is in Wright's residential work that most observers point to formal influences from Japanese architecture. The prairie houses of the first decade of the century are perhaps the greatest works of his early career, but their very maturity makes Japanese influences difficult to prove. "As with the aftermath of the other influences that had their effect on him in the 1890's, however, once the classic mode of the Prairie House had crystallized in 1900, the originality of the newly created architectural form was all but absolute whatever the catalysts that must have been present during the period of its gestation."  

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18 Said, Orientalism, p.20.
Curiously enough, just before his mature prairie houses, Wright designed several projects with rather literal Japanese details. The 1900 Judge Foster House is one example. [Figure 32] "The buildings have Japanese roofs, with rising ridgepoles and flaring eaves, and there is a little wooden torii through which one enters the grounds," writes Manson. A boathouse for Fred Jones is another example. This group of houses with Japanese motifs is unimportant in the further development of the prairie houses, and they are infrequently mentioned by historians. They do present the most explicit proof of early Japanese influence on his work, confirming that Wright was indeed familiar with Japanese architecture before his first trip to Japan in 1905.

These literal borrowings from traditional Japanese architecture are not unlike Cram's efforts in the Knapp House. Like the Knapp House, Wright's Judge Foster House combines a Japanese-looking roof above with a more conventional mass below. Wright is much less archeological in his borrowings, though, and his hybrid design has a pleasingly informal quality. In fact, the general effect is quite picturesque and slightly exotic, like the common stereotype of Japan. The Japanesque roof is neither a critique of, nor a challenge to, the American house. This minor appropriation of Japanese forms is not unlike the superficial and stereotyped representations that Said considers.

Preceding the superficially Japanesque Judge Foster House were a number of more interesting houses which reveal an evolution from highly derivative to unquestionably original. In 1893, the year of the Columbian Exposition, Wright left Adler and Sullivan to begin his own practice. During the Sullivan years Wright had designed ten "bootlegged houses" outside the Sullivan office. None of these houses, with the exception of minor elements, suggest the remarkable originality of Wright's post-1893 work. Manson writes that "it is not their Sullivan-ism which is so notable or disappointing as their Silsbee-ism."21 Perhaps as a young, unknown architect, Wright found it difficult to persuade his

21 Ibid, p.19.
Figure 32: The Judge Foster house
from Grant Carpenter Manson, *Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910. The First Golden Age*, p.96.
clients to build radical designs. No doubt his attention was also occupied by his official work with Sullivan. There were other reasons, too, for the conservatism of these pre-1893 houses. Says Wright, "I couldn't invent terms of my own overnight."\(^{22}\)

With the opening of his own office, Wright's designs became strikingly innovative. The Ho-o-den of the Expo provided a chance for Wright to experience Japanese architecture in person, and connections between the Ho-o-den and the 1893 Winslow House have been proposed.\(^{23}\) Although the main house is far more familiar to the Wright observer, the stables show a much closer identification with the Ho-o-den. [Figures 33,34] In the center of both the Ho-o-den and the stables is a high roof with lower wings to each side. A lower roof connects forward-projecting end pavilions to the central element, although in the stables the pavilions are closer in. The elevations of the end pavilions share a quadripartite composition: the wall is made up of a wide element below and a narrower one above, separated by a horizontal break. The wall rests on a low base and is surmounted by a wide, protective roof. Horizontality is the dominant effect. [Figures 35,36] In defense of the conservative projects just prior to the Winslow House, Wright commented, "At that time there was nothing in sight that might be helpful. I had no Sullivanian models, even, for any of these things."\(^{24}\) Wright's breakthrough in the Winslow House, coupled with his love for Japanese art, strongly suggest that he found a suitable model in the Ho-o-den of the Columbian Exposition.

Another house contemporary with the Winslow House shows some of the same innovations. With its steep and picturesque roofline, at first glance the Chauncey Williams house looks like the work of a different architect. However, beneath the dramatic roof certain similarities are evident. As with the Winslow House, very broad eaves protect a horizontally banded wall. In both the Winslow and Williams houses, Wright reverses the

\(^{23}\) K. Horwood Nute's article, for instance.
Figure 33: The Ho-o-den of the Chicago Columbian Exposition from Clay Lancaster, *The Japanese Influence in America*, p.79.
Figure 34: The Winslow house stables
from Grant Carpenter Manson, *Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910. The First Golden Age*, p.67.
Figure 35: The Ho-o-den of the Chicago Columbian Exposition from Clay Lancaster, *The Japanese Influence in America*, p.80.
Figure 36: The Winslow house stables
from Frank Lloyd Wright, *Studies and Executed Buildings by Frank Lloyd Wright*, unpaged.
solid-open relationship of the Ho-o-den wall. In the Ho-o-den the openings were placed in the lower section of the wall, while in the stables Wright place windows in the upper area. Suggestions of this bi-partite wall had been appeared earlier, especially in the Warren McArthur House, but the Winslow and Williams houses were the first coherent examples. After the Winslow House, Wright claims, "My sense of 'wall' was no longer the side of a box. It was enclosure of space affording protection against storm or heat only when needed. But it was also to bring the outside world in and let the inside of the house go outside."  

Clearly, 1893 was a crucial point in Wright's conception of the house.

Through the turn of the century, Wright's residential work continued to evolve toward greater unity. Wright continued to explore new treatments of roof and wall. At the same time, he was also reexamining the nature of the interior wall. In the conventional house, "The interiors consisted of boxes beside boxes or inside boxes, called rooms. All boxes were inside a complicated outside boxing... I could see little sense in this inhibition, this cellular sequestration that implied ancestors familiar with penal institutions...." The Ho-o-den provided a timely example of how to design without boxes. Its sliding doors could be pushed aside to create large openings which linked adjacent spaces. The progression of Wright's 1890s plans suggests that he was trying to incorporate this foreign influence into his own work.

Prior to the Winslow House, the plans of Wright's houses were rather unexceptional for the day. The 1892 McArthur House is an example from this period. Each box-like room has only the most pedestrian connection with the others. A year later, the Winslow plan shows a more studied relationship between the library, hall, and living room, but each room is still essentially a box. The cruciform shapes of the living and dining areas in the 1897 Heller House reveal that by this time Wright had moved emphatically away from the accumulation of boxes. With the Husser House of 1898 the destruction of the box has

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25 ibid. p.166.
26 ibid. p.166.
been emphatically achieved. The main spaces of the living and dining areas form an "L" connected by subsidiary spaces, not separated by doors.

In this sequence of houses, the Winslow House clearly marks the point when Wright begins to explore unfamiliar compositions. Its transitional status is evident in the uncomfortable relationships between certain traditional and innovative features. For instance, the traditional "guillotine" windows look uncomfortable set into the newly conceived, horizontally banded walls. The Husser House marks the other end of this period, the point just before Wright's designs reach convincing maturity. "It is the first truly centrifugal plan of Wright's career, forecasting those pinwheel and windmill plans of later date, while in ornament and richness it is the last flare-up of Sullivanism, glowing most brightly and illogically just before it expired." 27

The extent of Wright's innovations during this period suggests that a major event had just altered his architectural philosophy. The freedom of his own office allowed more radical design, but the nature of the innovations implies that the watershed event was Wright's initial contact with genuine Japanese architecture, at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. To some extent the Ho-o-den was corollary evidence for Wright's existing views; pre-1893 designs reveal that Wright had already begun exploring the nature of roof and wall in directions that made the Ho-o-den an appropriate model. "Because he was endowed by inheritance and environment with a foreknowledge of such natural concepts of architecture as those embodied in traditional Japanese design, it is entirely possible that Wright might have evolved them from within if there had never been a Ho-o-den to be seen in America; but there was," writes Manson. 28 Or, in Emerson's words, "The only problem with Hamlet is that it exists." 29

27 Manson, Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910. The First Golden Age, p.77.
28 ibid, p.39.
29 Ralph Waldo Emerson, Journals, 1841.
The Winslow House stables provide an insightful contrast with other instances of Japanese influence. With Unity Temple, Wright performed a kind of Orientalist cultural domination by almost completely suppressing the Japanese model. In the Judge Foster House, he used Japanesque elements to suggest the exotic and picturesque, reinforcing common stereotypes. In contrast, Cram represented the Orient by the wholesale copying of a teahouse. One of the problems with such literal representation is that it is too easily taken as the "true" Orient. In the Winslow stables Wright avoids the extremes of literal representation (Cram) and complete nullification (Unity Temple). Because Wright transforms the Ho-o-den into his own vocabulary, there is no chance that the Winslow stables will be taken as a literal representation of Japanese architecture. Wright is not so interested in presenting an image of Japanese architecture as he is in creating a viable American architecture. At the same time, the stables can be seen as a reinterpretation of the Ho-o-den. As in Cram's Knapp house, though, the Japanese-influenced elements are placed in the rear of the house. Reinterpreting the Ho-o-den as stables is perhaps even a more demeaning act than using a Japanese teahouse as a garden pavilion. In a literal way, Wright is marginalizing Japanese architecture.

Old Japan and the Imperial Hotel

From 1916 to 1922, Wright spent most of his time in Japan working on the Imperial Hotel. As Gill writes, "The Imperial Hotel commission was to usurp a far greater proportion of Wright's life than he had expected it to, or wished it to." The Imperial Hotel offered Wright a chance to design on a scale absent from his earlier commissions. Each of the main wings would be five hundred feet long. Japan also offered an escape. "Yes, I was eager to go," Wright recollects, "for again I wanted to get away from the United States. I still imagined one might get away from himself that way—a little." In the

30 Gill, Many Masks. A Life of Frank Lloyd Wright, p.236.
summer of 1914, "a thin-lipped Barbados Negro" servant had killed seven people at Taliesin, Wright's home and studio. Among the victims was Mamah Cheney, his great love and the woman for whom he had left his wife, Catherine.

"I went to Japan sympathetic to interpret her own philosophy in terms of modern (Western) building. The Imperial Hotel is such interpretation," wrote Wright. This interpretation involved no literally Japanese forms. Wright claimed that the ties between the Japanese tradition and his own work lay in the organic unity he perceived in both, rather than in any formal similarities. In fact, the Imperial Hotel is original to the point that different observers see different influences. Gill says that at first glance Wright's rendering of the project "appears to be a product of the turn-of-the-century offices of McKim, Mead & White."[Figure 37] Indeed, if the smaller details are ignored, the symmetric, strongly axial composition is reminiscent of a Beaux-Arts project. [Figure 38] Nute claims that Wright derived the Imperial Hotel plan from the Ho-o-do, the model for the Ho-o-den of the Columbian Exposition. [see Figure 28] To my eyes, the plan is most similar to the Kokyo, or imperial residence compound, in Kyoto. [see Figure 27] Like the mature prairie houses, the Imperial Hotel is far enough removed from any possible models that speculation on Japanese influence tends to remain only speculation. However, when its forms are combined with what Wright has to say about it, a certain image of Japan appears.

Formally, the Imperial Hotel is most similar to Wright's Midway Gardens of 1913. Wright said of the latter, "To many it was all Egyptian. Mayan to some, very Japanese to others. But strange to all, it awakened a sense of mystery and romance in the beholder."[34] This sense of mystery reappeared in the Imperial Hotel, propelled by Wright's own romantic ideas about Japan. "A mysterious, quiet,--deep in the Oriental Soul beneath the

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32 Wright, *Letters to Architects*, p.100, previously quoted in the preceding chapter.
Figure 37: The Imperial Hotel
Figure 38: The Imperial Hotel
Oriental surface,—fruit of an experience ages older than any culture the Occident yet knows," wrote Wright. His syntax may not always be clear, but perhaps that is part of his effort to make the Orient all the more mysterious.

Wright found the Westernization of contemporary Japan to be quite unnerving. In this context he intended the Imperial Hotel to be both a tribute and a lesson: a tribute to the old but a lesson to the new.

The Imperial stands true to the spirit of old Japan, it speaks a truth slumbering in those ancient depths; ... It is a conservation of space, energy and time by concentration and the invention of practical ways and means to this end. This is just such conservation as existed in old Japan. That selfsame principle is here at work and should help the Japanese to re-establish that wonderful thing in the new life that appears inevitable to them."36

Wright is playing the role of savior, as Cram had done with his Parliament Houses project. As previously noted, this role of "salvaging" another culture is closely tied to Orientalism. Although Wright hopes that his building will be influential in the "new life" of the Japanese, he believes modern Japan should follow old Japan. "Yet with all its grace and modernity," writes the proud architect, "the Imperial has the strength of the primitive--it harks back to origins."37 For Wright, unlike most Orientalists, "ancient" and "primitive" are largely complementary terms. However, they still serve to distance the Orient.

**Wright and Orientalism**

Wright seldom did anything conventionally, and his reactions to Japan are no exception. Orientalism is characterized by a certain set of consistent attitudes towards the Orient, and while Wright was in many ways an Orientalist, the Orientalist framework does not quite do justice to his imagination. Some of his impressions were derived from popular attitudes, such as the Yellow Peril or fairyland beliefs. Others were products of his unique

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36 ibid, p.139.
37 ibid, p.138.
philosophy and psychology. Although his images of Japan are manifold, certain general tendencies can be inferred from his architecture.

**East and West**

Several factors were involved in Wright's need to affirm the remoteness of Japan. Like Cram, his preferred images were of a Japan culturally and temporally removed from contemporary America. The romantic fairyland ideal appealed to him no less than it did to other Westerners of the time. Outside of these common Western attitudes, Wright's personal philosophy provided him further motives to distance Japan. His Emersonian self-reliance and his peculiar egotism required that any possible influences be denied. At the same time he privately used Japanese architecture to support his own development, he also felt the need to claim its unsuitability for American use. With the woodblock print, he specifically pointed out that its remoteness from American art made it a suitable teacher, since it could not be copied. Thus for Wright, Japan was paradoxically both near and far.

**Silent Japan**

The Imperial Hotel was one of Wright's architectural attempts to speak for Japan in the Orientalist way. Perhaps because of its location, he felt that it was safe to say, "The Imperial stands true to the spirit of old Japan, it speaks a truth slumbering in those ancient depths;..." In other cases, though, he preferred not to admit such inspiration, thereby effectively silencing Japan. Said's Orientalists felt the need to speak for the East, but Wright carries this tendency a step further. At times, as with his book *The Japanese Print. An Interpretation*, he chose to speak for Japan. More generally, he attempted to control the voice of Japan in his work. Often, this meant denying the role of Japan altogether.

**Political Knowledge**

Wright's writings make it clear that his images of Japan were deeply affected by political events. His architecture, too, was caught up in the politics of the day. Like Cram's
Parliament Houses project, Wright's Imperial Hotel was part of a planned Westernization to gain international respect. Wright was well aware of his rather privileged place as the architect of a major project, and this certainly boosted his self-confidence. Backed on one hand by his wealthy Japanese clients, and on the other by his wealthy Chicago print collectors, Wright must have seen Japan from a particularly advantageous viewpoint.

Textual Knowledge

In spite of his long residence in Japan, the role of Japanese art and architecture in Wright's works suggests that he never relinquished his textual approach. The affection for old, rather than new, Japan, was often accompanied by textual attitudes. Wright, Cram, Hearn, and others chose to accept old Japan as the true Japan, suggesting that Japan was timeless and unchanging. Wright's statements about the Imperial Hotel are explicit proof of his belief that only old Japan was the true Japan.

Inferior Japan

Given Wright's apparent copyings from woodblock prints, the gongen-zukuri plan, the Columbian Exposition pavilion, and other Japanese sources, it seems clear that Wright greatly respected old Japan. On the other hand, it is equally certain that he had little regard for contemporary Japan. Just as Wright needed to distance Japanese architecture to avoid impugning his own originality, he also may have felt the need to distance the Japanese influence in general by consigning admirable Japan to the past.

Japan for Western Purposes

The typical Orientalist Orient is the East for and by the West. In other words, it is the Western perception and use of the East which is important, rather than the East itself. For Wright, too, it is often not Japan itself which is important, but how it can further his own work. It is probably true that Wright had a deep and genuine respect for Japan, or at least for his idea of Japan. His fervent and extended print-collecting career is evidence of
this love. Ultimately, though, it was his architectural career that was of greatest importance, and Japan proved an aid to this end. If Japan had been important in and of itself, Wright would have been less likely to deny its influence. In his mission as architectural visionary, Wright made Japan speak for and to himself, rather than to the West in general. Only through Wright, and then anonymously, was Japan allowed to speak to the West.

Ralph Adams Cram and Frank Lloyd Wright shared many general attitudes toward Japan. Both genuinely admired traditional Japanese architecture and wished to salvage the old traditions. Both admired the unity of arts present in traditional Japanese culture, a value nurtured by their involvement with the Arts and Crafts movement. Yet Cram remained essentially the almost archetypal Orientalist. His beliefs about architecture and Japan were too deeply rooted in conservative thought to allow him to be anything but "a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric,"38 as Said would describe it. Wright, however, cannot be so easily categorized. To call him an Orientalist would be accurate in certain ways, but would oversimplify his complex relationship with Japan.

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38 Said, Orientalism, p.204.
Conclusions

Kipling’s tautology "East is East..." is evidence for what Said claims is true: the notion of the Orient is so clearly, if implicitly, defined, that no further explanation is necessary. The same kind of assumption is made by most chroniclers of the Japanese influence in American architecture-- Japanese architecture is a set of objective facts understandable by any American. In reality, there was indeed a quasi-objective body of "knowledge" available to architects in the early twentieth century, but rather than being objective fact this knowledge can be considered as the Japanist architectural equivalent of Orientalist literature.

American Japanism

Perhaps the most basic general issue here is to what extent the American knowledge of Japan paralleled the Orientalist attitudes originally produced in Europe. Although the examination of four architects and a few other writers is hardly the last word on anything, it appears that for many Americans, the identifying traits of Orientalism reappeared in interpretations about Japan.

The East/West dichotomy was almost inevitably affirmed, although there were a couple of different readings of the essential differences between Occident and Orient. Late in the nineteenth century, many Americans viewed Japan as a remote, charming fairyland, a vision which was no doubt provoked largely by contemporary dissatisfaction with Western industrialization. Generally, Japan was kept at a safe distance when possible, as Wright did by denying Japanese influences. When this strategy proved impossible, for instance after Japanese military triumphs, paranoia set in. After the Sino-Japanese war, the Yellow Peril reaction defined the East as fanatic, militant, and bent on conquering the world and subjugating the white race. Some Americans, such as Wright, managed to subscribe to both views.
Americans also took great pride in speaking for Japan, whether it was Ernest Fenollosa cataloguing and collecting art treasures or Cram setting an example through his Parliament Houses. Like most of his compatriots, Cram managed to acquire his knowledge of Japan largely without Japanese aid, once again assuming the silence and passivity of Japan. However, in one major way Japan differs from the typical "Oriental" nation; when it became clear that political autonomy depended on industrialization, Japan actively adopted Western customs and recruited Western aid. Japan also sent major exhibits to the World's Fairs in Philadelphia and Chicago in an attempt to better the Japanese image. Perhaps the landmark events in dismantling the silence of Japan were the Sino-Japanese war and the Russo-Japanese war. After 1905, few Westerners could still believe that all of the Orient was passive and silent.

Like Orientalist knowledge of the Near East, American perceptions of Japan were often explicitly shaped by political events- the Yellow Peril is only the most obvious case. Said argues that Orientalism was in part a justification for imperialism and colonialism. Similarly, after the opening of Japan, assumptions of Japanese difference and inferiority were used as justifications for exploitative treaties and one-sided relations.

Wright, Cram, and the Greenes all shared in the tendency to treat Japan with textual attitudes, frequently relying on texts for the source of their knowledge. Even Wright, with his years spent in Tokyo, preferred images from woodblock prints to actual, contemporary Japan. In the Orientalist vein, Wright and Cram both envisioned the true Japan as a timeless past.

Orientalist attitudes about the relative positions of East and West took a minor turn in American/Japanese relations. A number of Americans, including Hearn, Cram, and Wright declared that old Japan was superior to the decadent West. New Japan, on the other hand, was only an inferior copy of the modern West, though, thereby ensuring that the West's superiority persisted unchallenged. It was always temporally remote Japan that
Americans delighted in, no doubt because it was distant enough so that it could never contradict their fantasies.

Japanese architecture tended to be analyzed in Western terms, especially through Arts and Crafts ideals. For Greene & Greene and others who had access to Japan only through texts, The Craftsman and other publications played a dominant role in defining Japanese architecture. Later, Bruno Taut and other modern European architects would reinvent Japanese architecture along different lines. Part of the motivation for defining Japan by preexisting frameworks was to use it to support a personal viewpoint, as Stickley and Wright sometimes did. Wright, especially, struggled with the need to adduce Japanese principles as evidence without compromising his own self-sufficiency.

Japan’s desire for Western aid provided Cram and Wright the opportunity to not only interpret Japan for the United States, but for Japan as well. Each architect was well aware of the possible didacticism of their buildings and seemed to revel in the role of savior.

Thus, it seems that late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century attitudes were highly derivative of Orientalist thought. Although Japan presented a few modifications in the relationship between Orient and Occident, it is probably safe to say that the latent principles of Orientalism provided the foundation of American knowledge of Japan. Once this general background of Japanism has been suggested by architectural writings, perhaps the next issue is to consider the potential attributes of buildings as manifestations or perpetuators of Japanist knowledge.

**Architecture as a Disseminator of Orientalist Knowledge**

The use of architecture, rather than literature, as a medium for examining Orientalism and Japanism brings up the immediate question of whether architecture can represent the Orient in the way that literature does. The work of Greene & Greene,
especially, suggests that architecture and literature certainly have different characteristics, but that architecture is quite capable of carrying Orientalist information.

Greene & Greene's architecture is a Rorschach blot for architectural Japanism. The examination of the Greenes' work for Japanese influences seems at first unproductive because so few supportable conclusions can be reached. This has not prevented attempts, of course, and it is the assumptions of these critics, rather than the Greenes' Japanesque architecture, which provide a barometer of American architectural images of Japan.

From Greene & Greene's critics, it may be inferred that Japanese architecture was thought to be charming and picturesque, appropriate only for Japanese living. Its relevant characteristics had become codified to the point that it has come to mean expressed structure, simple decoration, wooden construction, and a few other easily summarized points. It was, if certain critics are to be believed, timeless and homogeneous and exotic. In other words, it had been quite thoroughly Orientalized.

At first, the ambiguous readings of the "Japanese-ness" of the Greenes' work call into question the role of architecture as a representation of the Orient. The analogy between literary Orientalism and architectural Japanism cannot always be sustained. For instance, a follower of Kipling might copy his syntax, sentence patterns, and much of his vocabulary without necessarily borrowing his formal subject matter. Style and subject might be thought of as largely separable. A protege of Greene & Greene, though, who copies the Greene & Greene style will tend to copy formal elements for the sake of those formal elements.

Writings have a specificity which suggests that they are more capable of creating and perpetuating images of another culture. It is easy for Said to determine which writings concern the Orient, thanks to the mutually agreed-upon meaning of words. Selecting which buildings choose the Orient as their subject is more problematic. As Geoffrey Broadbent describes it, "Let us note in passing that with a few exceptions, no such social
contract exists to the meaning of architecture, this is a fundamental difference between architecture and language." A garden pagoda may be almost unanimously received as an Oriental element, but what of the roofs of the Ward Willets house or the bracketing of the Gamble house?

With the Blacker house almost all observers seem to infer a significant Japanese influence, even if the Greenes' knowledge of Japan was only second-hand. Yet what of the countless bungalows which adopted and adapted various elements from the Greenes' oeuvre? At what point does an element inspired by the Greenes' bracketing cease to become a representation of Japan? Does Orientalist architecture simply fade away as each generation moves further from the ostensible source?

Inarguably, there is some point where only the slightest representation of Japan can be found in a formal elements of a building. In this sense, the building is apparently no longer a representation of Japan, and it is tempting to say that the issue of Japanism/Orientalism is no longer relevant. Along the way from exact copies to far-flung and unrecognizable descendents, though, it is worthwhile to note that it is even easier to unconsciously pass along architectural stereotypes than written ones. This is the case for Greene & Greene, whose architecture may or may not have been strongly Japanese. Because observers found it to be, though, it succeeded in indirectly supporting architectural stereotypes, providing a platform from which the critics could display their own Japanist knowledge.

The difference between the representational roles of architecture and literature might be described as one of type rather than strength. Literature as Said treats it is implied to be either about the Orient or not about the Orient. With architecture, there are innumerable positions between the extremes. Followers of Kipling choose whether or not to write about the Orient, and that choice will determine whether their works can be analyzed through Orientalism. Followers of Greene & Greene, though, might imitate formal
elements which will then perhaps give their work a vaguely Japanesque look. The
dichotomy of Oriental subject vs. non-Oriental subject is not evident. Thus, architecture is
not necessarily a weaker or less evocative representation of the Orient, then, but perhaps
only a more complicated one.

In fact, it can even be argued that architecture can provide the most convincing
imitation of the Orient. Architecture certainly provides a range of sensations that literature
cannot match. Visitors to the Japanese pavilion at the Chicago Columbian Exposition
probably felt they actually experienced part of the Orient. In this situation, architecture
masquerades as reality. Readers of literature, however, rarely convince themselves that
they are experiencing the Orient first-hand. Similarly, in certain ways Cram's Knapp
teahouse simulates the Orient in a manner more convincing than any written account,
especially given Cram's statement that it is an exact replica of a Japanese teahouse. Like a
photograph, it dissembles objective reality even though it is displaced from its origin. If
architecture lacks the specificity of literature, literature lacks the seeming realism of
architecture.

**Architecture as Evidence of Orientalist Learning**

Representation by the imitation of forms is only one way to analyze architecture as
an Orientalist representation. In reality, buildings do not so reflect Japan so much as they
reflect the architect's views of Japan. Architecture can therefore be considered as a
representation of a certain mode of knowing, in this case Orientalism. This connotation of
"representation" is similar to Panofsky's third level of representation. Typically, this
relationship has been ignored, and architectural knowledge has implicitly been assumed to be objective.

One of Said's assumptions about literature and representation is perhaps more
problematic than he would want to admit. Simply stated, he tends to assume that the
writings of Orientalist authors are simple reflections of their beliefs about the Orient.
However, just as it would be foolish to confuse a text about the Orient with the Orient itself, it may be inaccurate to confuse a text with the author's actual beliefs. This distinction is perhaps not critical for Said, whose interest seems to lie in the texts themselves.

However, in order to infer the way Americans imagined the East, it is useful to consider more than one type of source. For architects, this means examining design projects as well as writings. Cram's writings present a relatively conventional case of Orientalism, closely paralleling the writings of Said's Orientalist authors. His two Japanesque projects, the Knapp house and the Parliament Houses design, also fit easily into the Orientalist framework. They provide textbook examples of how architecture can corroborate and verify the attitudes expressed in an architect's writings.

The question considered by countless critics is how Japanese architecture affected Wright's architecture. With a career as original and diversified as Wright's the answer can only remain a guess, but by considering his mental images of Japan, that guess may at least become an educated one. In his writings he generally asserts the remoteness, or "ethnic eccentricity" which makes Japanese art and architecture impossible for the West to copy. At the same time, though, he continually extols the virtues of this culture that he finds so organically vital. These and other seemingly contradictory written statements make it difficult to infer Wright's true ideas about Japan.

Architects, like parents, are often faced with the situation where their acts do not agree with their statements. Writings are useful as a guide for ideal situations, perhaps, but extenuating factors often require minor adjustments. For instance, Wright's Emersonian individualism and personal egotism disallowed the possibility of admitting Japanese influences. The Japanism evident in his writings also made him less likely to borrow from Japanese sources. However, the timing and nature of the innovations in the Winslow stables and Unity Temple suggest that Japanese architecture did indeed provide formal
models. Although as Nute suggests, Wright tends to abstract elements to geometric patterns rather than copy them literally, the model for the Winslow stables was not so distantly removed in either form, time, or location. When he writes, "At that time there was nothing in sight that might be helpful," he may be exaggerating his predicament in order to aggrandize his achievement.

What, then, can be concluded about the way Wright imagined Japan? His writings display various perceptions of Japan, generally tending towards Japanist/Orientalist attitudes. His design work also implies that Japan played various roles: woodblock prints suggested formal techniques for renderings, the gongen-zukuri supplied a plan strategy, the Ho-o-den suggested innovations in massing and wall composition. The Imperial Hotel offered him the chance to play savior by reinterpreting and restoring old Japan for contemporary Japan.

Said claims, "What interests me most as a scholar is not the gross political verity but the detail, as indeed what interests us in someone like Lane or Flaubert or Renan is not the (to him) indisputable truth that Occidentals are superior to Orientals, but the profoundly worked over and modulated evidence of his detailed work within the very wide space opened up by that truth."1 Similarly, with Wright, the Orientalist framework provides only a hint at Wright's perceptions of Japan. Like Cram, he was surrounded by Japanist images, but although they provided a starting point for his understanding of Japan, he eventually created a complex and not occasionally contradictory Japan of his own. He liked to quote the family motto, "Truth Against the World," but with Wright, one must also ask, "Whose Truth?"

Visiting Japan

Once it is accepted that architectural Japanism does exist, two questions immediately present themselves: So what? and What do we do about it?

1 Edward Said, Orientalism, p.15.
The first question, especially, is likely to be asked in defense of artistic freedom. So what if Kipling was a racist, an imperialist, and an Orientalist—*Kim* is a fine aesthetic achievement, and justifies itself by literary criteria alone. Wright may have been a Japanist, but is that such a price to pay for Unity Temple, the Winslow house, and the Imperial Hotel? The artistic value of the borrowed Oriental elements surely outweighs whatever Japanist attitudes they suggest, and it can hardly be suggested that we cease borrowing from other cultures simply because we don't want to engage in Orientalism.

This kind of argument, though however appealing, is in some ways besides the point. The issue is not whether the artistic end justifies the means—that argument seems to me wholly and rightfully unresolvable. My intent is not to condemn Wright and his contemporaries for their attitudes toward the East, nor is it to suggest that Unity Temple is any less of an achievement because of Wright's racist beliefs. Rather, it is my hope to reveal the particular manner in which these architects interpreted Japan in order to make it clear that their works and writings do not reflect the Orient, but only a narrow and stereotyped view of the Orient. Once it is understood that a great deal of knowledge about Japan was derived from an extremely limited and limiting set of assumptions, then Japanist works of architecture take on a different reading.

For example, is a picturesque garden pavilion based on a Japanese teahouse a trivializing copy or is it a sincere attempt at flattery? The observer whose knowledge of Japanese architecture begins and ends with this kind of representation will no doubt infer that Japanese architecture is charming, whimsical, and not to be taken seriously. The observer who knows that the garden gazebo is not the sum of Japanese architecture will find the quaintness more in Cram's mind than in Japanese architecture.

The next issue is, once Japanism is admitted to be a narrow parody of Japan, what can be done to work around it? One criticism of Said's Orientalism is that his claims come close to suggesting a universally valid meta-narrative. His desire to push home the
argument that Orientalism permeates all Western knowledge about the Orient leads him to
the conclusion that it cannot be escaped. The same claim might be made for Japanism, heir
of Orientalism. The acknowledgement of Japanism is the major step in beginning its
dismantling; as Emerson argues, you can’t jump into the water without pushing off from
the shore. The pervasiveness of Orientalism does not necessarily imply its homogeneity,
and although it has tended towards self-perpetuation, its descent in identical form from
one generation to the next is not guaranteed.

Orientalism was a manifestation of political hegemony, but the West can no longer
exert this kind of political control over Japan. Other motives will create other types of
representation, and given an awareness of Japanist attitudes, attempts at more expansive
representations will be made. There are, however, groups with strong motives to continue
many parts of Japanist representations. The tourist industry would probably attract few
foreigners with descriptions of a Japan that is more or less like the United States.
Adventure novels which thrill with exotic geisha and mystical martial arts masters would
bore with the contemporary Japanese "O.L.", or office lady, and her co-worker, the blue-
suited "sarariiman", or salaryman. The end of Western political supremacy does not by
itself mean an end to Japanism, but it does imply that other understandings may be
propagated.

Texts are at the core of Orientalism, and it is my perhaps over-optimistic belief that
first-hand attempts at a complex understanding are ultimately more engaging than one-
sided stereotypes. In other words, first-hand experiences are more interesting than texts. A
visit to Ryoanji in Kyoto would be enough to convince most architects of this, I believe.
However, in the form of photographs, architectural texts have become more and more
influential, and photographs may carry their own Japanist content. The analysis of the role
of the visual arts in Japanism is obviously far from complete, but it can at least be safely
said that the understanding of a text as a text, rather than as objective information about its purported subject, must be at the root of attempts to de-Orientalize Japan.

The troubling assumption about Kipling's "The Ballad of East and West" is not so much the statement that East and West will never meet; he does, after all, include the exceptional situation where East and West may temporarily cease to exist. What is truly disconcerting is that East and West are assumed to exist at all. Once that distinction is made, to say that they will never meet is only stating the obvious. How could it be otherwise, when they are defined as each other's opposite?

Is Kipling's claim equally true almost a century after it was written? Wilkinson claims, "On the contrary, it is one of several distinguishing features of the new age that the old, false dichotomy between 'East and 'West', between the Orient and the Occident, is less sustainable than ever before."^2^ This note of optimism is based on the recent international trade patterns, though, and not on public opinion. It is probably safe to say that this assumption remains unquestioned and unchallenged in most parts of the United States. Once the perversity of this assumption is admitted, there are several reasons why the Occident/Orient schism may gradually heal. The increasing number of Asian-Americans, the continuing economic development of East and Southeast Asia, and Japan's expanding role in the world economy may cause some observers to reevaluate this truism.

As a final note, it should be noted that the East/West division is probably the Orientalist issue which has the most personal relevance. For instance, if "East" is replaced by "Japan", and "West" by "America", then Kipling's verse has slightly unsettling implications for those who wish to call themselves Japanese-American. Orientalism, though, took centuries to acquire its status as unalloyed truth, and may take as long to relinquish it. In the words of Frank Lloyd Wright, though, we are willing to pursue this goal "with indescribable Oriental faith and fatalistic fervor."

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