

早稲田法学部 THEME 16 春  
P.A.C. O'CONNOR

## THE IDEA OF JAPAN [I]

### WEEK 3: A POSTCARD FROM JAPAN:

#### JAPAN AS A WOMAN

INTERLAPPING IMAGES AND MERGED ASSOCIATIONS

#### THE GO-ANYWHERE SHOGUN



#### Reading 1

“THIS ONE shows the eyes a treat, also the carmine patch they put on the lower lip. I don't care much for it myself.”

The Musmée has brown-velvet eyes,

Curtained with satin, sleepily;

You wonder if these lids would rise

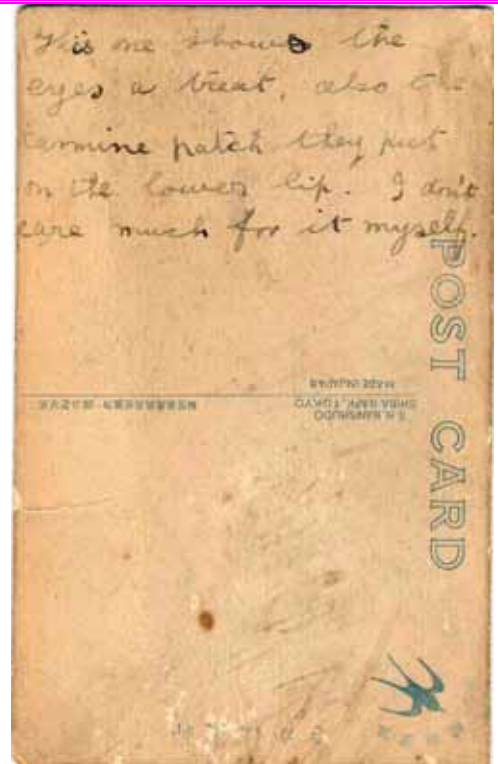
The newest, strangest sight to see!

Yet when she chatters, laughs, or plays

Koto, or lute, or samisen  
No jewel gleams with brighter rays

Than flash from these dark lashes then.

Edwin Arnold, *The Musmée*



THIS IS Harry Farrant in 1914, the year he left his home in Paignton, in Devon, England, and became a medical orderly, part of the British Expeditionary Force in Northern France, Belgium and Flanders: the Western Front in the war against Germany. Private Farrant served in the medical corps in Flanders for two years. He was then sent to join a small force in Japan, Britain's ally since 1902. In Japan, probably in Tokyo, Private Farrant bought this postcard of a young woman arranging her hair. The card had been retouched in carmine to highlight her kimono pattern and her lips. Harry's postcard is a representative example of the way Japan has been seen for long periods in 'her' history: as a woman.



## READING 2: THE EXOTIC



**IN LOTUS LAND**, the home of the Exotic. “As the sun’s yellow rim comes into sight, fine thin lines of warmer tone – spectral violets and opalines – shoot across the flood, treetops take fire, and the unpainted facades of high edifices across the water change their wood-color to vapory gold through the delicious haze.” Nobody put it better than Lafcadio Hearn, whose sense of colour found him a home forever in the Japanese

aesthetic. Here were cherry blossoms by the cloudful, and more gaggles of gorgeous geisha, swaggering sumo and samurai, (gallant practitioners of bushido) than anyone could reasonably wish for. The shogun might be in retreat reverse, but the old foundations of the land bend like the bamboo of time immemorial to the strain of the new and spring back renewed than ever.

**ALL THESE** have their place in the pantheon of Japan the Exotic. But over time, each has been transplanted to other phases of the image, and thrived. The geisha, the eternal feminine, has gone through so many changes of association, not the least a change of sex. The shogun is so many things to so many people today, impressive and vulgar. The sumo of old has grown massive with new meanings and new powers. The bushido of the 1900s and the bushido of the 1930s were very different basket of values as far as the Western world was concerned, and the bushido of the 1950s was a bitter joke among British adult males.

The images of Japan are not distinct but interlapping. Certainly, they come in phases, but the interlapping persists and the images recur. Thus the images of the Exotic return in a different form during the Menace phase, and the images of the Menace adapt to the ironies of the Phoenix and Busy Bee phases.



### Reading 3: Japan as a woman, from the Exotic to the Menace, and after

Two views of Japanese military prowess:



#### A LESSON IN PATRIOTISM.

JOHN BULL. "YOUR ARMY SYSTEM SEEMS TO WORK SPLENDIDLY. HOW DO YOU MANAGE IT?"

JAPAN. "PERFECTLY SIMPLE. WITH US EVERY MAN IS READY TO SACRIFICE HIMSELF FOR HIS COUNTRY —AND DOES IT!"

JOHN BULL. "REMARKABLE SYSTEM! I MUST TRY AND INTRODUCE THAT AT HOME!"

**IN 1902,** the Anglo-Japanese Alliance brought Britain and Japan into partnership in East Asia. Bushido and Japan's military prowess were talked up and the shiniest aspects of Japanese culture and civilisation picked up and wondered at. Throughout, the conventional image of Japan was feminine. However strong her army and navy (and however useful they were to Britain) Japan remained feminine, and therefore (the world hoped) malleable.





#### READING 4 FROM FEMININE EXOTIC TO MALE MENACE.

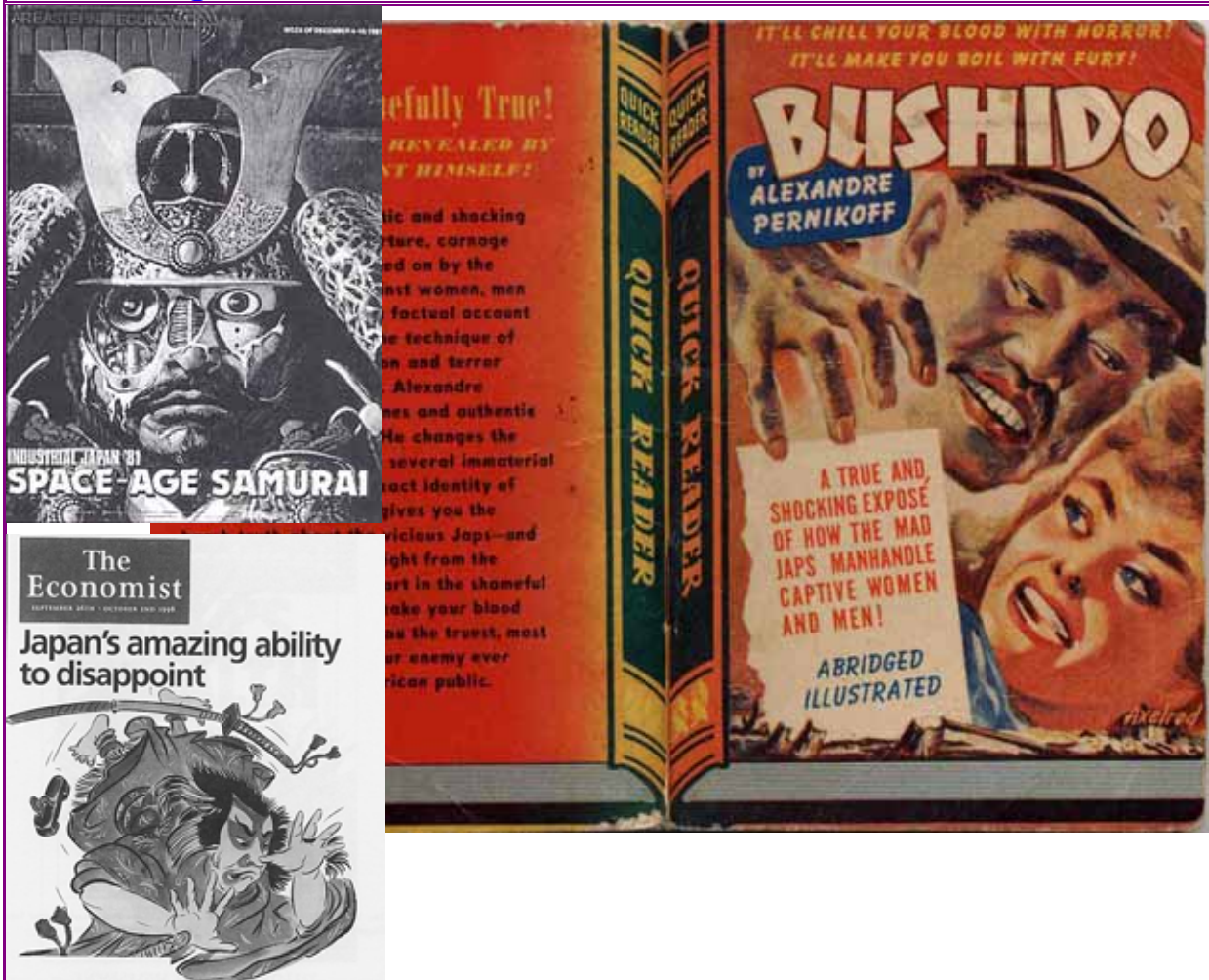
- **EARLY 1930S CHINA:** When Japan defies the League of Nations and refuses to withdraw forces from China, Japan is no longer feminine. In the thirties, Japan was a loutish sailor, a hoodlum determined to have his evil way with the newly feminised China, whatever the bumbling local policeman may think.



- **POST-WAR COMMENT ON COMMUNIST CHINA:** In the early 1950s, America has 'lost' China to Communism and now 'Red China' is the neighbourhood bully, leering at sweet young Japan. Safe in the folds of Pax Americana, Japan is America's ally, her bulwark against Communism in East Asia. China is the new enemy, alien and inscrutable, full inheritor of Japan's old mantle. Japan is a reformed character, firmly back in her kimono and parasol, and brutish China wears the trousers again.



## Reading 5: Samurai and Bushido: from Exotic to Menace to faintly risible danger



**AFTER THE WARS WITH RUSSIA AND CHINA**, and as the only non-Western colonizer of Asia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, 'brave little Japan' greatly exercised the imagination of the reading public in the West. 'British Tories helped create this myth of a heroic Japan; and behind the myth has matured a monster Frankenstein that threatens those who helped to create it' (Vespa 1938: 284). These lines were written by a paid-up Italian Fascist, Amleto Vespa, but so strong was anti-Japanese sentiment in Britain in the late 1930s that Vespa's publisher was Victor Gollancz's Left Book Club. In twenty years, Japan had gone from a Tory favourite to a bipartisan demon. Meanwhile, the appeal the Japan story held for the Western imagination encouraged Japan's leaders and official storytellers both to challenge and to coopt the tools and terms of the European imperial master narrative for their own.





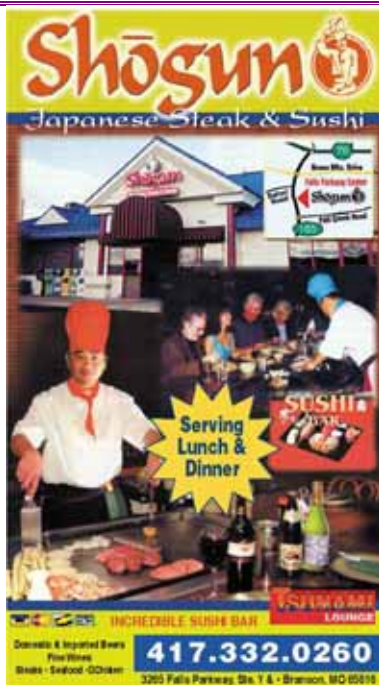
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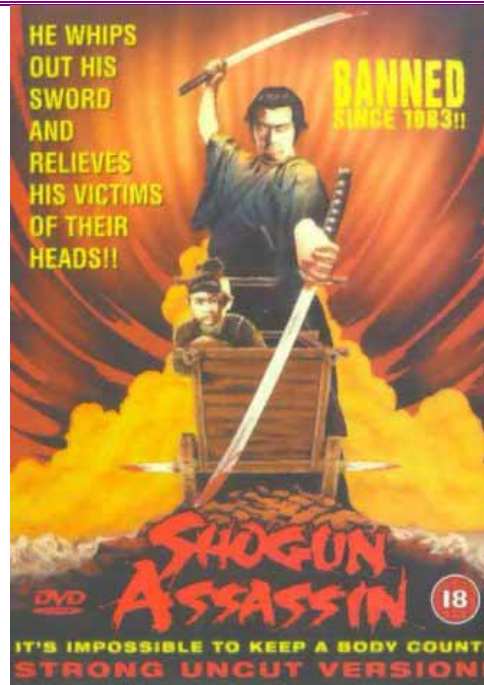
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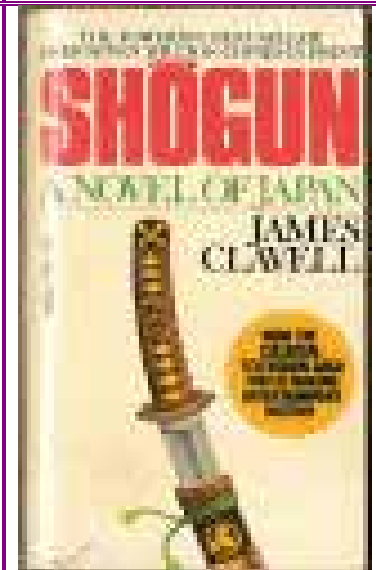
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**READING 6: THE UNCUT TASTY SHŌGUN IN YOUR DRIVEWAY.** It all started with James Clavell's Blockbuster, but the branding didn't really take off until the Mitsubishi Shōgun 4X4 grunted onto US highways: the 1990s gas guzzler of choice for LA homeboys, drug dealers, British estate agents and multi-tasking mothers (the 'Chelsea tractor'). Then there's the world's most potent tea, the restaurant, and the slasher video (Strong uncut version!)



QUESTIONNAIRE	CLASS NAME	WEEK No.
NAME	STUDENT No.	DATE
1. WHAT WAS THIS CLASS/FILM ABOUT?		
2. WHAT ARE THE MAIN QUESTIONS IT RAISES?		
3. WHAT IS IMPORTANT ABOUT THIS SUBJECT?		
4. ANY OTHER COMMENTS?		