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Christopher Reed, *The Chrysanthème Papers: The Pink Notebook of Madame Chrysanthème and Other Documents of French Japonisme*, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2010, ii + 165pp., acknowledgements, introduction, notes, index. ISBN: 978-0-8248-3345-9 (hardcover) \$US35, ISBN: 978-0-8248-3437-1 (paperback) \$US14, <http://www.uhpress.hawaii.edu/p-6196-9780824834371>.

Josephine Lee, *The Japan of Pure Invention: Gilbert & Sullivan's The Mikado*: Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010, 248 pp., introduction, acknowledgements, notes, index. ISBN: 978-0-8166-6579-2 (hardback) US\$75, ISBN: 978-0-8166-6580-8 (paperback) US\$25, <http://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/the-japan-of-pure-invention>.

For over a century and a half now, Western writers have made ample use of Japanese women – said by Lafcadio Hearn in 1904 to be the ‘most wonderful aesthetic product’ of Japan¹ – in their imaginings. Whether traditionally dressed in kimono and made up as a geisha or a modern (but usually still modest and retiring) woman, she has often been used in illustrations and cartoons as an archetypical gendered symbol of her country, often to the exclusion of all other symbols. The ‘exotic Japan’ romance genre of writing, which arose out of the contemporaneous Western fascination with the aesthetics of *Japonaiserie* (a term coined by Baudelaire in 1861), was pioneered by French writer Louis Marie Julien Viaud (1850-1923), otherwise known as Pierre Loti. Loti’s 1887 novel *Madame Chrysanthème*, researched on a visit to Nagasaki in 1885, had a

¹ Lafcadio Hearn, *Japan: An Attempt At Interpretation*, New York, Macmillan, 1913 (first published 1904), p. 393. Hearn himself married a Japanese woman.

stunning impact in the Japan-enthused West, including encouraging Hearn, soon to be a prominent Japan scholar and naturalised Japanese, in his decision to leave the United States for Japan.

As Christopher Reed notes in his substantial introduction to *The Chrysanthème Papers*, Loti's novel 'sparked numerous imitations and variations' [p. 1], including Loti's own sequel *Madame Prune* (1905). After considering Loti's impact upon many later writers and critics, Reed presents and examines one of the French-language 'variations' in his book for the first time in English translation: illustrator and writer Félix Régamey's 1893-4 *La Cahier Rose de Madame Chrysanthème* [*The Pink Notebook of Madame Chrysanthème*], which is essentially Loti's story from Chrysanthème's point of view. Régamey's novel was an open attempt to avenge Japan for what he, and many others, considered to be Loti's skewed presentation. Not only did Loti depict Japanese women very negatively, he also made no attempt to hide his distaste for his own character of Chrysanthème: asleep she was 'extremely decorative' but awake, she was 'quite ugly'.² Régamey described Loti in the preface to *The Pink Notebook* as the 'ungrateful deplorable friend of Madame Chrysanthème' and advised that:

His [Loti's] incomprehensible penchant for denigration seems made to confound anyone ... who has experienced Japan [p. 69].

Régamey concluded that Loti was:

surely to be pitied ... for having been overtaken by the sad hyperexcitability that made him parade a British spleen across the most laughing nation in the world [p. 73].

² Pierre Loti, *Madame Chrysanthème*, New York: Current Literature Pub., 1910 (first published 1887), quoted in David Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850-1939*, St. Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1999, p. 136.

Reed himself views Régamey's *The Pink Notebook* as a surprising nineteenth century example of more recently considered ambiguities and complexities in gender and other concepts of identities. While also critical of Régamey, Reed nonetheless appears to lament that it has been Loti's writings on Japan, not those of Régamey, that have endured.

In addition to the original French text and complete English translation of *The Pink Notebook*, Reed's volume is filled out with selections of text in English and French from Loti's *Madame Chrysanthème* and from Emile Guimet's 1878 and 1880 books *Promenades japonaises* [*Walks Through Japan*], which were generously illustrated by Régamey (he travelled to Japan in 1876 with Guimet at his invitation). Guimet's writings, Reed contends, are useful for understanding how and why Loti so provoked Régamey. Despite seeing many of the same features of Japan when arriving and travelling there, Loti and Guimet (and through his illustrations, Régamey) present differing attitudes about, for example, Japanese womanhood, Japan's modernisation and its agency.

The latter sections of Reed's introduction – as the introduction really forms the only substantive analysis in the book – are the most interesting, for they question what can be learned from Loti and Régamey's writings, not about Japan itself, but about devotees of Japan, or Japonistes, in nineteenth century France. The inclusion of the original works and their translations also opens up the possibility of the book being useful to researchers as a primary source. Most appropriate for a volume written by a professor of English with a doctorate in art history, *The Chrysanthème Papers* is delightfully illustrated (albeit in black and white) with drawings and pictures from the original magazine issues and book volumes of the various works, as well as some other useful contextual material of the period, such as Van Gogh's 1888 painting *La Mousmé*.

Continuing along the theme of Western views of Japan formed out of nineteenth-century *Japonaiserie*, Josephine Lee considers in her *The Japan of Pure Invention* the Gilbert and Sullivan

comic opera *The Mikado*. Obviously the product of considerable research, *The Japan of Pure Invention* was the runner-up for the American Society for Theatre Research's 2011 Barnard Hewitt Award. Lee's particular interest in *The Mikado* is not, however, in placing the opera within the Gilbert and Sullivan oeuvre, or in the far-reaching history of theatre, or in considering the aesthetic merit or otherwise of the various productions but in the opera's 'long history' of images and perceptions of race [p. viii]. She argues that there is something exceptional in *The Mikado* by reason of the 'manner in which the "oriental" is imagined and performed' [p. viii]. It is this exceptionalism, she suggests, that has allowed the opera's 'patently nonsensical vision' [p. xi] of Japan to be played in yellowface almost continuously in the United States, Britain and elsewhere, including Japan, from its first production in 1885, with only small outbursts of protest and censorship. As Lee points out, however, *The Mikado* is not just useful for analysis of race on Caucasian and Asian terms, as the inclusion of African American performers in casts changed the racial dynamics of the tale and wove in the tradition of blackface.

While the volume may appear to be presented chronologically – after the introduction (which includes a useful précis of the opera's plot), part I considers the opera's first classic production in 1885, part II considers the period 1938-39 and part III considers 'contemporary *Mikados*' – it is anything but chronological. Part I, for example, includes discussion of Mike Leigh's 1999 film based on the opera entitled *Topsy-Turvy* while Part III opens with discussion of the British Lord Chamberlain's notice prohibiting performances of *The Mikado* in 1907, allegedly for fear of offending Japan. There are inevitably repeated themes in *The Mikado*'s history which belie a strict chronological analysis of the opera for, as Lee observes, new productions do not replace the old; they fuse together the old and the new. This has formed what Lee describes as 'multiple layers' of 'racial sedimentation' [p. xxi]. While Lee is always careful to specify to which period she refers in her thematic approach, the constant movement back and forth in time throughout the book can be quite disconcerting. Some of her conclusions also suggest that Lee overdraws the connection

between real world issues or events involving Japan and *The Mikado*. I quite agree that the concept of the ‘yellow peril’ and World War II-era propaganda probably affected productions of *The Mikado* but I remain unconvinced that the famous *New York Times* cartoon in 1943, which depicted Japan as an ape about to be killed by a gun labelled ‘civilization’ and was captioned ‘Let the punishment fit the crime’, demonstrated a ‘marriage’ between *The Mikado* and propaganda [p. 149]. For my part, the most interesting sections of the volume, which were dispersed through several chapters, particularly in Part III, were Lee’s analysis of the criticism of and opposition to productions of *The Mikado*, which suggests that not everyone finds the opera’s supposed ‘nonsensical’ exceptionalism sufficiently convincing to warrant continued productions of the opera.

Perhaps the major failing of this volume, however, is that it ends with the final substantive chapter and, therefore, lacks a conclusion, which surely would have tied up the themes presented throughout into the coherent argument which was suggested in the introduction. Moreover, for such a detailed volume, the two-page index is far too brief, making it very difficult to locate particular points or themes of interest in the book. There are no entries, for example, for the ‘yellow peril’, ‘propaganda’ or ‘World War II’ or for ‘criticism’, ‘opposition’ or ‘protest’, although at least ‘censorship’ is included. Not much assistance in locating material is rendered by resorting to the contents page, since the chapter subheadings – which are descriptive of the themes – are not included. Lastly, while the notes section is comprehensive, the omission of a bibliography means that a reader looking for a full reference often has to scan all footnotes for a chapter looking for the first use of it. The volume is, however, usefully illustrated with copies of playbills, the cover images of programmes and sheet music editions of *The Mikado*, amongst other images, which are often expressly dealt with in the text rather than being merely illustrative.