

John La Farge's Discovery of Japanese Art: A New Perspective on the Origins of Japonisme

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For some time scholars have recognized that in the early 1860's John La Farge was collecting Japanese prints and making use of Japanese effects in his work. Indeed, in 1951 Ruth Berenson Katz devoted a chapter to "Japanism" in her Radcliffe doctoral dissertation on La Farge.¹ The precise date at which La Farge first became interested in Japanese art, however, has not been established. In addition, references to his enthusiasm have been almost entirely restricted to passing remarks in histories of American painting, and he has hardly been mentioned in general studies of Japonisme.² La Farge's accomplishments have seldom been evaluated, as they deserve to be, in relation to the work of modernist European painters. The omission is the more surprising when one considers the role the United States played in opening Japan to world trade, and in light of the unrivaled avidity with which Americans of the nine-

teenth century collected Japanese art — for more than half the Ukiyo-e prints in the world are now in the United States.³

The chief goal of this essay is to document, with as much accuracy as possible, when La Farge first encountered Japanese art, when he began collecting it, and when he began making use of Japanese ideas in his artistic work. This article will propose that La Farge was in advance of European artists both in his initial acquisition of Japanese prints and in the application in his painting of Japanese principles of design.⁴ That is to say, it will attempt to demonstrate that La Farge began to acquire Japanese prints in 1856, to exploit Japanese ideas about 1859, and to make pictures that were entirely Japanese in style by 1864. This would place him before the earliest comparable Japonistes in Europe: before Bracquemond, who first acquired some prints by Hokusai

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¹ Katz, 1951, chap. 5, 60-96, on "Japanism."

² Most writers who have mentioned La Farge's interest in Japanese art have assumed that he did not begin to collect Japanese prints until the mid-1860's, although this view has sometimes been questioned, for example by Adams, 1980b, and Mills. Bromfield, 380; Sutton, 14, and Berger, 262-63, seem to be the only writers on developments in Europe to have mentioned La Farge's interest in Japan, although none of them was aware of his early Japonisme of the 1860's. La Farge's work of the 1860's was omitted from Clay Lancaster's *The Japanese Influence in America*, New York, 1963. Surprisingly, also, Benjamin Rowland, one of the readers of Ruth Katz's doctoral dissertation on La Farge, did not mention the early date of La Farge's interest in Ukiyo-e in his 1972 publication. In fact, he declared (p. 85) that an account of Japanese influence on American artists "must begin with the familiar story of Whistler's conversion to Oriental, specifically Japanese, art forms." Several writers have maintained that La Farge's work falls outside the true development of American art, an attitude exemplified, for example, in the discussions of La Farge by Barbara Novak in *American Paintings of the Nineteenth Century*, New York, 1969, 257-261, or John McCoubrey, *The American Tradition in Painting*, New

York, 1963, 35. The first writer to recognize the significance of La Farge's Japonisme was Katz. See also Walsh, Wiest, Susan J. Clarke, "A Chapter in East Meets West: The Japanese Print and the Work of John La Farge, William Morris Hunt and Winslow Homer, 1858-1870," Master's Essay, University of Michigan, 1973; Weinberg (particularly 38, 40); Elizabeth Lyons, *From Hokusai to Homer: The Impact of Japan on American Art and Culture in the Gilded Age*, Master's thesis, Wayne State University, 1975; Lefor, and Adams, 1980a, 1980b, 1984a and 1984b. La Farge's enthusiasm for Japanese art has sometimes been mentioned in passing in surveys of American art, for example in Milton Brown, *et al.*, *American Art*, New York, 1979, 288. La Farge's influence on other American artists, however, has seldom been discussed.

³ Michener, 240-42. Whitford, 256, who enumerates the major Western collections of Ukiyo-e, lists thirty-nine major American collections (including that at Worcester, consisting mainly of the bequest of La Farge's friend John Bancroft), as opposed to five in Great Britain and three in France. In addition, "The oldest and greatest collection of Japanese art outside Japan, in the estimation of the Japanese government, belongs to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts" ("A New Climate," *Art News*, March, 1979, 22). The official report of Perry's expedition, which gave an enthusiastic account of Japanese art, also contained three full-scale replicas of Japanese prints, which set a new standard for fidelity of reproduction (Francis L. Hawks, *Narrative of an American Squadron's Expedition to the China Seas and Japan*, Philadelphia, 1856; the color prints appear opposite 462 and 487; some black-and-white reproductions appear on 459, 460, and 461). Even earlier, within a year of the return of Perry's expedition, the American publisher Lippincott's produced a perfect black-and-white facsimile of a Japanese flower book titled *Japanese Botany*; a copy of this entered the British Museum in November of 1855 (Bromfield, 80).

⁴ This has already been proposed, but with less complete documentation than here, in Adams, 1980a, 1980b, 1984a, and 1984b.

in 1857 or 1858, and before Whistler, who painted his first "Japanese" pictures in 1864.⁵ I will first present the written testimony supporting this belief; then consider the visual evidence; and finally will discuss La Farge's essay "Japanese Art" of 1870, which marks the end of the first phase of his interest in Japanese prints.

My intention, needless to say, is not to give La Farge sole credit for the development of *Japonisme*. While he was certainly a pioneer, La Farge was by no means unique, isolated, or unprecedented in his enthusiasm for the Orient. He drew on precedents such as *Chinoiserie*, was encouraged by travelers who had visited Japan, and shared his enthusiasm not only with American friends but apparently also with painters and critics in Europe with whom he is known to have corresponded. Thus, his contributions were a complex mixture of imitation, stimulus diffusion, and independent invention. While La Farge's work may be to some extent underrated, I should also stress that this essay is not intended to defend the artistic quality of his work but simply to show that he was an innovator of some significance. The works illustrated have been chosen because they are useful as evidence rather than because they necessarily possess artistic merit. Understanding La Farge's achievement, I hope, will deepen our understanding of *Japonisme*, and perhaps it will also shed light on some of the general mechanisms for stylistic change and innovation in the nineteenth century and on the complex interrelationships between avant-garde and academic art.

Written Testimony

By good fortune, La Farge's earliest display of interest in the Orient is recorded, as it was one of his few youthful acts of misbehavior. In the early 1840's, when he was six or seven years old, his father took him along on a business visit in downtown New York to a merchant who imported Oriental wares. As John had hitherto known only the French porcelain his parents used, his delight in the odd Oriental scenes led him to slip a piece of pottery into his pocket. The guilt he felt when he realized his misdeed engraved the event on his memory.⁶

La Farge's childhood reading may well have encouraged his interest in the East, for when he was six his parents gave him a shelf of books with tales of exotic places, among them a volume of *Robinson Crusoe* with illustrations by Grandville, and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*.⁷ La Farge's continuing predilection for the bizarre and the exotic is indicated by the books he auctioned late in life from his library, among which appear titles such as *Sir John Mandeville's Travels, Narrative of a Journey Round the World, Eothen, or Traces of Travel in the East, Private Life of an Eastern King, Three Years' Slavery Among the Patagonians, and An Authentic Narrative of Four years' Residence at Tongataboo*.⁸ Several books dealing with Chinese subjects seem to have been works La Farge knew in childhood, as for example *Chinese Novels* (London, 1822), or *Ju-Kiao-Lo* (Paris, 1826, with frontispiece), the latter a book that had come from the library of the French antiquarian

⁵ The most influential account of the influence of Japanese prints is that given by J. Rewald in *The History of Impressionism*, 1946, 176-77. This narrative was directly based on Bénédictine, 1905b. Similarly French in their focus are Hahn, Thirion, Klöner, Van Rappard-Boon, Weisberg, Whitford, Roskill, 1969, chap. 2, 57-85; and Jacques Dufwa, *Winds from the East: A Study in the Art of Manet, Degas, Monet and Whistler*, Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1981. Bromfield is the only writer to give a balanced account of the interest in Japanese prints in both England and France. A gradual move away from exclusive concentration on France is evident in several recent books, for example, Yamada, Berger, and Siegfried Wichman, *Japonisme: The Japanese Influence on Western Art in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, New York, 1981. For a discussion of these and other new works see Adams, 1983. Traditional accounts of *Japonisme* usually begin by mentioning Bracquemond's alleged discovery of Japanese prints (for example, Rewald, as above, 146). The first really solid documentation of an interest in Japanese art in Europe begins around 1861: on June 8 of that year the De Goncourts mention Japanese prints in their *Journal*, and Baudelaire mentions them in a letter to Arsène Houssaye, dated "fin décembre, 1861" (Goncourt, I, 931; Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres*, IV, *Correspondance*, ed. J. Creolet, Paris, 1948, 33-34; Schwartz, 902; van Rappard-Boon, 112-13; and Jacques de Caso, "1861, Hokusai, Rue Jacob," *Burlington Magazine*, CXI, 1969, 562-65). Bromfield, 45, proposes that "1862 is the most convincing date for the intensification of European interest in Japanese art." The seminal role of Whistler's paintings in the spread of *Japonisme* has been noted by Arthur Jerome Eddy, *Recollections and Impressions of James A. McNeill Whistler*, Philadelphia, 1904, 55, 60. In the case of the De Goncourts it is particularly difficult to distinguish *Chinoiserie* from *Japonisme*. As early as 1851 a novel by the De Goncourts refers to "une fort belle japonaiserie" (Schwartz, 799),

but they seem to have had no awareness of Japanese prints at this date, and their use of this phrase seems to have had no deeper significance than Balzac's reference to the "Japanese salon" in his residence (see below, n. 46). The first unmistakable reference by the De Goncourts to Japanese prints, as noted above, occurs in 1861. Schwartz, 802, suggests, I think rightly, that the De Goncourts phrased their claims to priority in the discovery of Ukiyo-e in response to Ernest Chesneau's "Le Japon à Paris" of 1878, in which Chesneau listed about a dozen early collectors of Japanese art, but pointedly omitted the De Goncourts (Chesneau 387: see below, n. 155). In general, Schwartz's article is far more critical and demanding in its standard of evidence than most writings on such artists as Bracquemond or Manet. As a consequence, the claims of the De Goncourts seem consistently to have been undervalued in the recent literature on *Japonisme*. Japanese prints, of course, were certainly available in Europe even before Commodore Perry's opening of Japan. See Denys Sutton, *Nocturne: The Art of James McNeill Whistler*, Philadelphia, 1964, 46; Michener, 238, 239; Whitford, 101; Weisberg, 2, and n. 10 on 15-16; Takahashi, 174; Michael Sullivan, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art*, 1973, 95; Aslin, 779, 781; Dorival, 27. For a discussion of the early literature on Japan and of the early availability of Japanese prints, see Sandberg; Deborah Johnson, "Japanese Prints in Europe Before 1840," *Burlington Magazine*, June, 1982, 343-48; and particularly Floyd.

⁶ Cortissoz, 1911, 54.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 56. See n. 92, below.

⁸ Book sale of 1866, Nos. 194, 89, 234; book sale of 1881, No. 172 (second title listed); book sale of 1911, No. 733. Stendhal (Henri Beyle) has a chapter on "Le vase de Japon" in *Le rouge et le noir*, Paris, repr. 1923, II, 235-244.

Emeric David, a friend of La Farge's great-uncle, Jacques-Maximilien de Saint-Victor.⁹

As La Farge's uncle, Louis Binsse, was an importer of French "fancy articles," it seems likely that as a boy La Farge was familiar with items of French *Chinoiserie*.¹⁰ Indeed, while still schoolboys, La Farge and his brothers composed a magazine in French titled "Le Chinois."¹¹

Through his Catholic schooling La Farge must have learned of Saint Francis Xavier, the famous Jesuit missionary to Japan. According to an anonymous obituary of La Farge that appeared in *Catholic World*, it was a Jesuit who awakened his interest in that country. This reported:

It was an Irish Jesuit who first aroused his interest in China and Japan, an interest which in time so effectively expressed itself in his decorative work. I can well remember only three winters ago [in 1907], in calling upon Mr. La Farge, to find him absorbed in reading a big dusty old book written in a curious Latin, which he told me was the diary of a Chinese priest and missionary, a convert of the 17th century.¹²

La Farge's son, Father John La Farge, himself a member of the Society of Jesus, identified this Jesuit as Father William Monroe. He reported that the painter met Monroe while enrolled at Saint John's College, Fordham, and that Monroe was a former naval officer and missionary in Japan who possessed a collection of Japanese curios.¹³

John La Farge was a student at Fordham for only a single year, the academic year 1851-52, so if his meeting with Monroe did occur at Fordham it was probably at that time. Unfortunately, the account of the artist's son is inaccurate in several particulars. The name of the Jesuit was not William Monroe but Andrew Francis Monroe, and he was of

Scottish rather than of Irish descent, the nephew of President James Monroe. Brought up as a Protestant, he served in the American Navy where he rose to the rank of lieutenant. He may indeed have visited Fordham in 1851, for he was in New York in that year, where he converted to Catholicism. When he set off in 1852 on Commodore Perry's expedition to Japan, he carried with him a life of Saint Francis Xavier given to him by Father Doucet, a professor of rhetoric at Saint Xavier's College in New York. On his return to the United States, Monroe resigned his naval commission and became a member of the Jesuit Order.¹⁴ It is uncertain whether John La Farge met Father Monroe while a young student or later, and whether their contact preceded or postdated Monroe's visit to Japan.

La Farge always maintained an interest in the experiences of the Jesuits in Japan. Among the many books on Japan that he owned at the time of his death were Augustin Cochon's *Les martyrs du Japon*, and two titles by Father Charlevoix, his nine-volume history and description of Japan (Paris, 1836) and his two-volume history of Jesuit missionary activity in that country (Louvain, 1821-29).¹⁵

Although his interest in the Orient had begun earlier, La Farge apparently did not encounter actual Japanese prints until the 1850's. He made several passing allusions to this event which made it possible to infer the date and probable location of his discovery. In a letter to the critic James Huneker written in 1908, shortly after the first auction of his Oriental collection, La Farge noted: "It is just fifty years ago that I bought my first Hokusai book — imagine the joy of first discovery. So I lit off and have had my likings for Japan. In fact I know of no artists before me."¹⁶ The volume of Hokusai that was his first purchase — presumably a volume of the *Mangwa* — may well be one of those still owned by his descendants.

⁹ Book sale of 1909, No. 120; book sale of 1866, No. 529. The book sale of 1911 included thirty-five books on China, No. 148-183.

¹⁰ Louis Binsse's business activities are listed in the New York directories for 1842-43, 1847-48, 1848-49, and 1851-52.

¹¹ La Farge, S.J., 17.

¹² "Obituary — John La Farge," *Catholic World*, xcii, 1910, 423. This was published anonymously, but may have been written by Father Thomas F. Meehan, who repeated some of the same phrases in "Some Records of the La Farge Family," *United States Catholic Historical Society Historical Records and Studies*, xviii, 1928, 120. I have not been able to identify any book in Latin by "a Chinese priest and missionary, a convert of the 17th century." This description, however, might refer to the journal of the imposter George Psalmanazar, a native of the south of France, who pretended to be a pagan Japanese, a native of Formosa. See the entry on "Psalmanazar, George," in *Dictionary of National Biography*, London, 1909, xvi, 439-442.

¹³ La Farge, S.J., 17; and also, *idem*, "The Mind of John La Farge," *Catholic World*, cxi, 1935, 701. That the members of Perry's expedition did bring home prints and curios is confirmed by the journal of Lieutenant George Preble. Thus, on May 24, 1854, Preble visited the bazaar at Hokodadi but discovered that: "Nearly everything had been carried off before I got on shore. I succeeded in purchasing a few Japanese Picture

Books, some straw covered boxes and two pieces of silk . . . The officers have a perfect mania for the Japanese things and buy anything, handsome or ugly." On June 22 Preble confided to his journal that: "The shopping mania which has seized upon our officers is very amusing. The gallant gentlemen pounce upon everything that in any way represents Japan. Their attics will in a year or two groan under their Japanese barthens. My collection is very miscellaneous." (Rear Admiral George Henry Preble, U.S.N., *The Opening of Japan: A Diary of Discovery in the Far East, 1853-1856*, ed. Boleslaw Szczexniak, Norman, Okla., 1962, 196, 212.)

¹⁴ "Biographical Supplement: Fr. Andrew Francis Monroe," *Woodstock Letters*, xix, 1890 (pub. Woodstock College), 404; Charles G. Herberman, "Reverend Andrew Francis Monroe, S.J.," *United States Catholic Historical Society Historical Records and Studies*, x, 1917, 152-161. I am indebted to Edward M. Cashin, former archivist of Fordham University, for locating these references for me. For the colleges in which La Farge was enrolled and the dates of his attendance, see Adams, 1980a, 32-33 and 74-76.

¹⁵ Book sale of 1911, Nos. 433, 430, 431. La Farge also owned J. Crétineau-Joly's history of the Jesuit Order, published in Paris in 1845 (book sale of 1909, No. 98).

¹⁶ Cortissoz, 1911, 243 (this letter is now in the Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.). Huneker was an art and music critic in Philadelphia.

Twelve years earlier, in a talk at the Century Association on March 28, 1896, La Farge had described his first purchase:

I can quite remember — just forty years ago — seeing for the first time some of the woodcuts, for which we have one or two drawings at least, here in Mr. Weldon's collection. I saw them in the usual way, coming upon them by chance among Japanese curios in some shop, and though I had seen a little of Japanese work, such as we know in lacquer and porcelain, these were the first drawings.¹⁷

Here also La Farge advanced a claim of priority over other artists in the appreciation of Japanese art. After stating that his interest in Hokusai was *forty* years old, he declared that "Mr. Whistler, Mr. Rossetti, Mr. Vedder, most of the French artists, have for the last thirty years admired him."¹⁸

These accounts give a rough date of about 1856 for La Farge's discovery, and in a letter of January, 1894 to Samuel Bing, the Parisian art dealer, La Farge explicitly declared that it occurred in that year. He stated: "I began my artistic studies . . . with no intention of becoming a painter. I was led to form very early an admiring appreciation of what between 1856 and 1859 we were able to know about Japanese art."¹⁹

La Farge never stated where he encountered his first book of Hokusai, but probably it was in France where he spent most of the year 1856, having left New York in April on

the steamship *Fulton*. La Farge's son, Bancel, in a letter of 1896 to the French landscapist Jean-Charles Cazin, implied that his father had first encountered Japanese prints in Paris, and this view was also expressed in 1911 by John C. Van Dyke.²⁰ This assumption gains credibility from the sequence of associations in La Farge's letter to James Huneker in which he noted: "My French people laughed at me for 'les amours exotiques.' But here people thought moral ill of a lover of Jap art — as for the lover of Blake or Goya."²¹

The initial mention of his French relatives implies that he was with them at about the time he discovered Japanese prints. If we accept this admittedly tenuous conclusion, it allows us to date La Farge's discovery within a few months. On his arrival in France in mid-April, La Farge went first to Paris where he stayed with his cousins, the Saint-Victors; by June he had left Paris to stay with another set of cousins, the La Barre de Nanteuils, who lived in Saint-Pol-de-Léon in northern Finisterre, on the tip of Brittany. These were apparently the last relatives he visited, for by autumn he was in Belgium on his way to Denmark.²² The sort of curio shop La Farge mentions could only have existed in Paris, hardly in Saint-Pol, and consequently his discovery of Japanese prints probably occurred in Paris at some point between April and June of 1856.

If we trust Félix Bracquemond's account of his discovery of Japanese prints, works by Hokusai were indeed to be seen in Paris in that year. Bracquemond, however, did not actually acquire the prints he saw until 1857 or 1858. Thus, La Farge was apparently slightly in advance of him as a collector of Japanese prints: as John Walsh has speculated,

¹⁷ La Farge, 1897b, 1897, 5-6. The Weldon referred to is apparently Charles Dater Weldon (1844-1935), who was elected an academician of the National Academy of Design in 1897. For information about him, see "American Notes," *Studio*, VII, No. 9, 1892 (mentioning that he was living in Yokohama), and "C.D. Weldon," *Art Age*, III, 1885-86, 145 (information courtesy of Gerds Art Reference Library and Archive, City University Graduate School). One of his paintings of Japan came up for auction recently in New York (*Important 19th and 20th Century American Paintings and Sculpture*, Wednesday, April 4, 1984, William Doyle Galleries, No. 71).

¹⁸ La Farge, 1897b, 5. Significantly, when this essay was reprinted in John La Farge, *Great Masters*, New York, 1903, this phrase was altered and updated to the vaguer "some fifty years ago" (p. 221).

¹⁹ La Farge, "Letter to Samuel Bing," 1894, 1.

²⁰ Van Dyke, 1919, 129. The letter from Bancel La Farge is in the Beinecke Library, Yale University. Dated "May 2" it was evidently written in 1896, as it refers to John La Farge's exhibition at the Champs du Mars in Paris of that year. Walsh, 8, has speculated that "La Farge probably bought his first prints in Paris during his sojourn in Europe from the spring of 1856 to the winter of 1857-58." Wiest, 33, has noted that La Farge's sale *Oriental Art Objects* of 1909 gives an import date of 1856 for a Surinomo print by Hokusai (No. 482). This, however, is evidently a misprint for 1886, as the caption that follows indicates that it was purchased in Japan from Yamanaka. The date 1866 given for Nos. 154 and 155 is also apparently a misprint for 1886. John La Farge's departure for Europe is described by Cortisoz, 1911, 73; and also in an undated newspaper clipping (in the Cortisoz papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University) giving a letter from La Farge to the editor of the *New American Journal*. La Farge remembered

the date of his departure as "April, I think, or March." On April 1, 1856, La Farge and his brothers Henry and Alphonse were jointly issued Passport No. 12059 (Passport Records, National Archives, Washington, D.C.). La Farge sailed on April 7, 1856, as recorded in the list of "Passengers Sailed in the Steamship *Fulton*," *New York Times*, April 7, 1856, 8, col. 5. He probably arrived in Paris about the 20th of April. See Yarnall, 21-22.

²¹ Cortisoz, 1911, 243. The connection that La Farge suggests here between the works of Hokusai and Goya was one that had been discussed by French critics. In 1866, Champfleury, for example, compared Hokusai to Goya in *Les chats* (Bromfield, 262-63). Hanson, 188, maintains that Manet's dependence on Goya in *Mademoiselle Victorine as an espada* makes it unlikely that he also made use of Japanese sources. It could be argued, however, that the unquestionable borrowings from Goya make it all the more likely that Manet also borrowed from the Japanese.

²² La Farge's itinerary is described in his "Notes," and in the third chapter of Cortisoz, 1911, but unfortunately the order in which he visited different places is often unclear from this account. La Farge evidently left Paris in June, about the time that Couture's studio closed for the summer. A portrait La Farge made in Saint-Pol of his uncle by marriage, Pierre Antoine August, Comte de la Barre de Nanteuil, is inscribed "June 1856" (the drawing is reproduced in Adams, 1984b). A watercolor of *A Brittany Beadle*, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, is dated "Aout '56." By the fall of 1856 La Farge was evidently in Belgium, for watercolors he made there were sold at Moore's, 1885, No. 84, and Reichard, 1890, No. 13. For a full account of La Farge's European tour see Adams, 1980a, 84-130.

"La Farge may even have been the first painter to discover them."²³

It should be noted that La Farge's cousin, Paul Saint-Victor, with whom he stayed in Paris, mingled with precisely the group in France that would first show interest in Japanese prints. The De Goncourts dedicated a book to Saint-Victor and stood as godfathers to his illegitimate child, and Saint-Victor was also an acquaintance of Charles Baudelaire, Félix Bracquemond, Phillipe Burty, Théodore Duret, Ernest Chesneau, and other leading enthusiasts of Japanese art. Saint-Victor accompanied the De Goncourts during the trip to Holland of 1861 in which they visited the Von Siebold collection of Japanese curiosities.²⁴

In the summer of 1857 La Farge visited Dresden and must have seen some of the extensive collections of Japanese por-

celain that had been assembled there in the eighteenth century, which he would later mention in his essay on Japanese art.²⁵

He continued his interest in Japanese things after his return to the United States early in 1858. Cecilia Waern's biography of 1896 confirms that La Farge had developed an enthusiasm for Japanese art before he went to study with William Morris Hunt, that is, before the spring of 1859.²⁶ La Farge himself, in a letter of 1878 to Richard Watson Gilder in which he chronicled the tepid reception of his early work, immodestly noted: "Part of my want of success was owing to the fact that I admired Japanese art which no artists but one or two would look at. Ask yourself who in 1858 either here or in England was to say what they would today. I was merely a quarter of a century ahead of

²³ Walsh, 8. Bénédite, 1905a, 39 asserts that Bracquemond saw a volume of Hokusai in 1856 at the printing establishment of Delâtre, but that he did not acquire it until "a year or eighteen months later," that is to say in 1857 or 1858, when he found it again in the hands of the wood engraver Lalvielle. A memorable element in this account is Bracquemond's recollection that the Japanese prints he saw had been used to wrap porcelain. Curiously, Ernest Chesneau, in his essay "Le Japon à Paris" (1878, 386-87) also mentioned this detail in his account of the "discovery" of Japanese prints, although unfortunately without naming the artist involved. Chesneau, however, dated the incident to 1862.

Because of its late date (1905), the self-serving nature of the story, the complete absence of any other supporting evidence, and the lack of any indication in Bracquemond's work of this period that he was aware of Japanese prints, the reliability of Bénédite's account has sometimes been questioned. Indeed, a close reading of Bénédite's text suggests that Bracquemond himself could not specify the exact moment of his discovery ("je ne sais pas," noted Bénédite, "si Bracquemond pourrait en certifier le mois et le jour") and this implies that Bénédite arrived at the date through a process of deduction. Bromfield, 71, very plausibly suggests that Bénédite arrived at his date after consulting Henri Beraldi's *Les graveurs du dix-neuvième siècle*, Paris, 1885, and noting that Bracquemond's print of *Les canards l'ont bien passé*, there given a date of 1856, was printed on Japanese paper (III, 62).

Two pieces of circumstantial evidence suggest that Bracquemond's discovery occurred not in 1856 but about 1858. First, it is unlikely — though perhaps not impossible — that items would have been shipped to Delâtre from Japan until the French trade mission reached that country in 1858 (Thirion, 117-18, n. 1). Second, we may infer the most likely reason why Delâtre refused to part with his book of Hokusai at the time Bracquemond first encountered it, and yet, at a slightly later date, gave it to Lavielle. In 1859 Delâtre published a book of designs for decorative work which included some illustrations from the *Mangwa* of Hokusai, and it is likely that he wished to reserve his prints by Hokusai, to serve as models for this volume (Adalbert de Beaumont and Eugène V. Collinot, *Recueil des dessins pour l'art et l'industrie*, Paris, 1859; a page from this is reproduced by Martin Eidelberg and William R. Johnston in Weisberg, 142; see also Martin Eidelberg, "Bracquemond, Delâtre and the Discovery of Japanese prints," *Burlington Magazine*, cxxiii, 1981, 221-27). It is noteworthy that this pattern book reproduced plates from the first volume of the *Mangwa*, for this was also the volume that Bracquemond seems to have seen, as his descriptions mention subjects that occur nowhere else in the work (Kloner, 39). Once his pattern book was published Delâtre would no longer have needed his original Japanese prints, and, as Bénédite's account implies, he seems to have willingly parted with them. If this reconstruction of events is correct, it would imply that Bracquemond encountered the volume of Hokusai not long before Delâtre's book was published, that is to say, about 1858-1862.

Further reasons to question the accuracy of Bénédite's story are provided by an earlier account of Bracquemond's discovery, which was writ-

ten by "Saint-Juirs" (the pseudonym of Louis René Delorme), and published in "Chronique," *La vie moderne*, No. 47, November 20, 1880, 738-39. This article was recently discovered by Floyd, 134, 156. This version closely parallels Bénédite's story, but places the discovery at a shipping company rather than at the printing shop of Delâtre, and implies that the discovery took place in the early 1860's, sometime after Théophile Gautier had become interested in Far Eastern art.

It is not easy to unravel all the inconsistencies of these accounts. While there is no outside evidence supporting Bracquemond's claims, neither can they actually be disproven. Indeed, if La Farge encountered Japanese prints in 1856, it suggests that Bracquemond's claims may be accurate. Japanese art certainly was available in Paris by that date, as is indicated below in n. 147. For further discussion of Bracquemond, see the additional works cited in n. 60.

²⁴ Cortissoz, 1911, 75-79; Waern, 11; André Billy, *The Goncourt Brothers*, New York, 1960, 118. The best study of Saint-Victor is Alidor Delzant, *Paul de Saint-Victor*, Paris, 1886. For Saint-Victor's trip to Holland, see Weisberg, 16, n. 15, and M.A. Belloc and M. Shedlock, *Edmond and Jules de Goncourt*, London, 1895, 183. Alphonse Daudet in his *Contes de lundi* of 1866 (repr. Paris, 1963, 229-231) includes an account of Van Siebold, an indication that Dutch collections of Japanese curiosities were known to French intellectuals.

It is unclear whether La Farge met the De Goncourts in the 1850's. He undoubtedly met Edmond de Goncourt many years later, for on Sunday, June 16, 1895, De Goncourt noted in his journal: "The American painter La Farge is brought to my Grenier by Raffaelli. He has done watercolors of India and Japan, where he passed six months, and says some interesting things in the singsong voice of the English. He speaks briefly of the importance that written characters have in Japan and the scorn that painters of the Kano school feel for the characters of the vulgar school, for those of Hokusai, whom they accuse of having his drawings almost always signed for him by his literate friends" (Goncourt, XXI, 68-69; Jules and Edmond de Goncourt, *Paris and the Arts, 1851-1896, Extracts from the Goncourt Journal*, Ithaca, New York, 1971, 332; Hedley H. Rhys, "Afterword on Japanese Art and Influence," *ibid.*, 327-335). For a good short account of the De Goncourts and *Japonisme*, see Denys Sutton, "'Japonaiserie for ever': The Goncourts and Japanese Art," *Apollo*, cxx, 1984, 59-64.

²⁵ Cortissoz, 1911, 93; La Farge 1870, 195. In 1861 Clément de Ris published "Le Palais Japonais à Dresden," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, sér. 1, II, 1861, 180-85.

²⁶ Waern, 14. Waern also noted that this interest in Japanese prints coincided with the time of La Farge's subscription to the engravings after Giotto published by the Arundel Society. These were printed in London by the Dalziel brothers, engraved by W.O. Williams, and issued in installments from 1853 to 1860. To be contemporary with this series, La Farge's interest in Japanese art had to have begun in the 1850's.



1 William Morris Hunt, *Bird on a Cherry Bough*, 1868, inscribed, lower left "for BAY from PARR," charcoal on paper, 22.2 x 29.5cm. Private collection

the boys of today. I think I am still so in that and other directions."²⁷

It is unclear whether William Morris Hunt had begun collecting Japanese prints at the time La Farge came to him as a student. It is reported, however, that shortly after Hunt's move in 1862 from Newport to Boston, he hung Japanese prints on the walls of his studio.²⁸ Japanese influence is often visible in Hunt's work: in 1863 he executed a painting on a Japanese tea tray, and he once amused his children by sketching a Japanese-looking bird and flowering branch with a piece of charcoal he had plucked from the fireplace (Figs. 1, 2).²⁹ In his *Talks on Art*, published in 1882, Hunt declared: "Look at the work of the Japanese. They *knew* the thing and put it down. No high light in their decorations: flat tints with due regard to values."³⁰

According to Hunt's biographer, Helen Knowlton, Japanese prints were discovered in Boston sometime before 1859 by the Bostonian architect Edward Cabot. As she wrote in 1899:

Over forty years ago the first Japanese picture-book came to Boston, and was bought of a ship-wrecked sailor by Edward C. Cabot, an architect and water-color painter. His room in the studio building was the scene for many a symposium, composed of the progressive artists of those days — Hunt, Vedder, Bicknell, La Farge, and occasionally some other painter who understood the value



2 Katsushika Hokusai, *Bullfinch and Drooping Cherry*, woodblock print, later 1820's

of a new discovery. The little book proved to be a powerful incentive to progress in the minds of these artists, and their work began at once to wear an impress of the new stimulus it has received.³¹

Some aspects of this story seem dubious. The reference to a "ship-wrecked sailor" seems somewhat romanticized, although perhaps no more so than Bracquemond's claim that volumes of Hokusai were used to wrap porcelain. In addition, the Boston studio building was not completed until 1862, although Knowlton's account does not explicitly state that the symposia in Cabot's rooms were held at precisely the same date as his first acquisition of Japanese

that the influence was in the opposite direction, from La Farge to Hunt.

²⁷ The letter from La Farge to Gilder is owned by Rosamund Gilder, New York. It was evidently written in 1878 as it takes issue with an article by Clarence Cook on "Recent Church Decoration" which had appeared in *Scribner's Monthly* in February of 1878. At the time Gilder was an editor of *Scribner's*; his wife, Helen de Kay Gilder, had studied painting with La Farge.

²⁸ Knowlton, 126. James Thrall Soby and Dorothy Miller suggest, in *Romantic Painting in America*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1943, 30, that "La Farge's interest in the Orient had probably been stimulated by Hunt's collection of Japanese prints." It seems more likely, however,

²⁹ The drawing of a bird on a cherry bough is reproduced in Shannon, 156. Hunt's study of *The Flight of Night*, on a Japanese tea tray, is now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. It is mentioned by Knowlton, 81; its date of 1863 is provided by Frederic P. Vinton, "William Morris Hunt, II. — The Memorial Exhibition. — The Paintings at Albany," *American Art Review*, 1, Pt. 1, January, 1880, 103.

³⁰ William Morris Hunt, *Talks on Art: Second Series*, Boston, 1882, 103.

³¹ Knowlton, 126.

prints.³² Yet despite these questionable details, the story is probably largely accurate. Knowlton's book is generally reliable, and Edward Cabot, whose chief artistic monument is the Italianate façade of the Boston Atheneum, is such an unlikely figure to select as the discoverer of Japanese prints that Knowlton would hardly have mentioned him without some factual basis.³³ There are, in fact, independent accounts of the existence of Japanese curios in the Boston of the late 1850's and early 1860's. William Sturgis Bigelow, for example, who would become one of the greatest collectors of Japanese art, recalled two volumes of Hokusai that his father purchased in this period from Leonard's auction house, along with a lacquer drum, a pipe, some small repoussé metal ornaments, and a two-handled sword.³⁴ Elihu Vedder must have been familiar with Japanese art by about 1860, since in that year his brother settled in Japan.³⁵ It seems likely, in short, that at about the same time that Japanese prints began to interest La Farge, other American artists were independently discovering them.

In addition to the names Knowlton mentions — La Farge,

Hunt, Cabot, Bicknell, and Vedder — several other figures seem to have been interested in Japanese prints in the 1860's, among them Winslow Homer (as is suggested in the comparison between Figs. 3 and 4), Russell Sturgis, Samuel Coleman, Louis Tiffany, and James Jackson Jarves.³⁶ All of these men, however, were friends of La Farge, and it seems that he was the American who most actively promoted Japanese art and experimented with Japanese effects in this period.

In his letter to James Huneker of 1908, La Farge noted that he had parted with most of his initial acquisitions of Japanese art forty years before, that is to say in the mid-1860's — possibly about 1865, when he was forced to leave Newport because of unpaid debts and he sold his personal library.³⁷ Some of his early acquisitions, however, were still in his possession in 1909, at the time of his auction *Rare Oriental Art Objects*. In the preface to this catalogue, La Farge wrote: "Some of the prints are mainly interesting to me, besides any artistic merit, because they were gathered so far back. There are some that have been here as far back

³² According to Neil Harris, *The Artist in American Society*, New York, 1970, 267, the studio building in Boston was not constructed until 1862.

³³ I have not been able to locate additional confirmation of Cabot's interest in Japanese art. Bibliography on Cabot includes "Cabot, Edward," by Talbot Faulkner Hamlin, *The Dictionary of American Biography*, New York, 1929, III, 394; C. A. Cummings, "Edward Cabot," *American Architect and Building News*, LXXI, 1901, 45; "Edward Cabot," *American Art Annual*, IV, 1901, 137; L. Vernon Briggs, *History and Genealogy of the Cabot Family*, Boston, 1927; Richard L. Elia, "Edward Clarke Cabot, Watercolorist," *Antiques*, November, 1978, 1068-1075.

³⁴ Shannon, 90-91.

³⁵ Soria, 43 suggests that Vedder's landscape paintings of the early 1860's were affected by the stimulus of Japanese prints shown to him by La Farge. Vedder's overtly Japanese paintings, however, such as his *Japanese Still Life* of 1893, in the Los Angeles County Museum, were made after 1871, when he received three trunks full of Japanese objects as a legacy from his brother who had died in San Francisco on his way home from Japan (Elihu Vedder, *The Digressions of V.*, Boston, 1910, 471). The correspondence between Vedder and his brother in Japan is now in the Archives of American Art.

³⁶ According to Van Wyck Brooks, in *Fenollosa and His Circle*, New York, repr. 1962, 6, Russell Sturgis had a collection of Japanese objects in 1869. This statement has been repeated in other sources, for example in Frances Steegmuller, *The Two Lives of James Jackson Jarves*, New Haven, 1951, 271. Another American collector of Japanese art was Thomas Gold Appleton, who donated his collection to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and to the Boston Public Library.

By the early 1870's critics frequently commented on Japanese qualities in the work of Winslow Homer ("Fine Arts. Close of the National Academy Exhibition. The Last Sunday," *New York Evening Post*, July 6, 1872, 1; "Fine Arts. Ninth Exhibition of the Water-color Society," *The Nation*, XXII, February 17, 1876, 119-120; "Fine Arts. Eleventh Exhibition of the American Water-color Society, I," *The Nation*, XXVI, February 14, 1878, 120-21; "The Academy Exhibition," *Appleton's Art Journal*, V, 1879, 159-160). Albert Ten Eyck Gardner has even declared (I think with considerable exaggeration) that "from 1868 to 1910 every drawing and painting produced by Homer shows in some degree the results of profound study

and sympathetic understanding of Japanese prints" (Albert Ten Eyck Gardner, *Winslow Homer, American Artist, His World and His Work*, New York, 1961, 114).

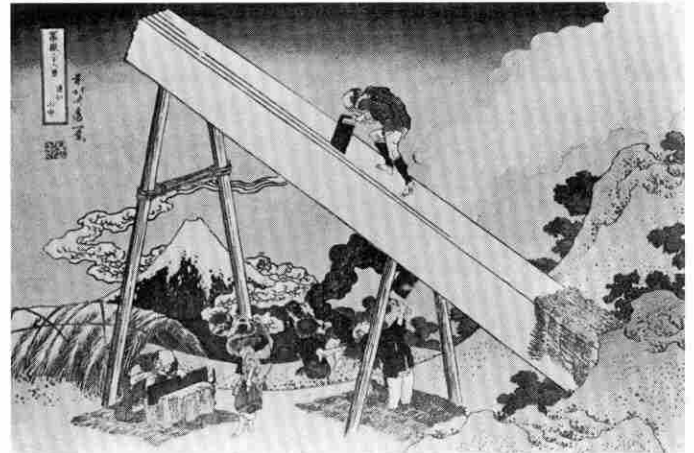
Gardner proposed (p. 99) that Homer discovered Japanese prints when he journeyed to Paris in 1867. While Japanese prints were certainly on display in Paris (contrary to the assertions of Walsh, 15, and Barbara Novak, *American Paintings of the Nineteenth Century*, New York, 1969, 310; see Bromfield, 229-233 and Floyd, 111-14), the qualities of design and color and the feeling for flat pattern which Gardner sees as Japanese are fully visible in paintings Homer made before his trip to France, for example in his *Croquet Players* of 1865 in the Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York. Indeed, as noted by Walsh, the paintings Homer executed in France are less Japanese in appearance than those he made in the United States both before and after his trip.

As suggested by Mills, 20, it is likely that Homer discovered Japanese art in the United States through his friendship with John La Farge. La Farge and Homer were certainly acquainted by 1865, when they were both members of the Century Association (Walsh, 11, 81). La Farge owned three oil sketches by Homer, all painted during his trip to France (sale of 1911, Nos. 619, 623, and 657; one of these is now with Peter H. Davidson Inc., New York); and Homer once declared that La Farge was the only person with whom he enjoyed discussing art (Philip Beam, *Winslow Homer at Prout's Neck*, Boston, 1966, 162). The similarity between La Farge's work and that of Homer is indicated by an oil painting of Newport from ca. 1868 which has been attributed to both Homer and La Farge (see James L. Yarnall, "John La Farge's 'Paradise Valley Period,'" *Newport History*, LV, Pt. 1, No. 185, Winter, 1982, 17-20). On May 23, 1984 I delivered a lecture at the Reynolda House Museum of American Art, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, on Winslow Homer's interest in Japanese prints and Impressionism, and I hope to develop this into a future publication. That La Farge's *Japonisme* influenced Thomas Dewing has been proposed by Susan Hobbs, "Thomas Wilmer Dewing: The Early Years, 1851-1855," *The American Art Journal*, XIII, Spring, 1981, 21.

³⁷ Cortissoz, 1911, 243. In April of 1864 La Farge fled secretly from Newport at night due to the pressure of his debts (Leon Edel, ed., *Henry James Letters*, Cambridge, Mass., 1974, I, 52). Not long afterwards, La Farge sold his personal library (sale of 1866).



3 Winslow Homer, *The Morning Bell*, 1871-72, oil on canvas, 61 x 96.5cm. New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery



4 Katsushika Hokusai, *In the Mountains of Totomi Province*, from *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji*, woodblock print, later 1820's

as half a century.³⁸ The catalogue itself specifies that several prints were acquired at an early date. A print by Sadashige came from an "early importation, 1860"; seventy prints by Hiroshige (one of them a diptych) came from "an old importation, about 1860"; and thirty-five more prints by Hiroshige came from "an early importation from Japan."³⁹

Though the wording could be construed as ambiguous, it is evident that La Farge collected these prints himself around 1860, as throughout the catalogue he indicated any instances in which he had obtained works from other collectors. Indeed, such use of the impersonal form is not unusual in La Farge's writings about his own innovations and discoveries. Thus, for example, he almost entirely avoided the first person in his pamphlet *The American Art of Glass*.⁴⁰ It is unclear whether La Farge based the dates of importation on his recollections or on some form of documentation, and they may not always be precisely accurate. The existence of La Farge's collection in this period, however, is confirmed by Russell Sturgis, who became a

friend of the artist in the 1860's, and who declared that La Farge "began, as long ago as 1860, to buy and study what few pieces of Japanese art and handicrafts he could find."⁴¹ By 1860 La Farge also knew at least one publication that reproduced Japanese prints, as he subscribed to the British magazine *Once a Week*, which illustrated them in a series of articles on Japan that began on July 7, 1860.⁴²

In October of 1860 La Farge married Margaret Perry, a grand-niece of Commodore Perry, who had opened up Japan.⁴³ It was probably at this time that La Farge acquired or was given Commodore Perry's account of his expedition to Japan, which included three color facsimiles of Japanese prints, as well as other illustrations of Japanese art: the book was included in the sale of La Farge's personal library in 1881.⁴⁴ Commodore Perry died in 1858, and it is doubtful that La Farge ever met him. But the Commodore was vividly remembered by the family of La Farge's wife and had visited them in Newport before setting off on his Japanese expedition.⁴⁵

³⁸ *Oriental Art Objects*, sale of 1909, 3. The Japanese prints that La Farge owned have been widely scattered, and the various auctions of his collection list only a portion of what he owned. Thus, for example, according to the American expatriate artist Charles Fromuth, Humphries Johnston, who assisted La Farge in his decorative work in the 1880's, owned several volumes of Hokusai that he obtained from La Farge. In his manuscript memoirs in the Library of Congress, in his notes on the year 1902, Fromuth states that Johnston "lent me some books of the original edition of Hokusai, which he possessed through La Farge his instructor, who had been to Japan" (p. 70).

Some of La Farge's prints can still be located. The Art Institute of Chicago owns a print by Haranobu which is stamped with La Farge's personal seal (Margaret O. Gentles, *Clarence Buckingham Collection of Japanese Prints*, Art Institute of Chicago, 1965, II, 50, No. 79). In addition, the Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Maine, owns a group of prints which La Farge purchased in Japan in 1886. La Farge sold them to the artist Samuel Coleman, who gave them to the museum. Finally, a large number of Japanese prints that belonged to La Farge are owned by his descendants. For further information on La Farge's collection, see Appendix II.

³⁹ *Oriental Art Objects*, sale of 1909, Nos. 521, 76, 79-114, 448-480, 266-300 (see Appendix II).

⁴⁰ John La Farge, *The American Art of Glass, to be read in connection with Mr. Louis C. Tiffany's paper in the July number of the 'Forum,' 1893*, New York, 1893. La Farge inscribed his own copy of this publication with the notation: "N.B. When I use the word 'we' in speaking of what was done in glass in America at first, it is a polite escape from the too much use of 'I.' I had no associations other than those I employed" (*Members*, 364). See Weinberg, 364.

⁴¹ Russell Sturgis, "John La Farge," *Scribner's Magazine*, xxvi, July 26, 1899, 10. For La Farge's friendship with Sturgis, see "Sturgis, Russell," by Talbot Faulkner Hamlin, *Dictionary of American Biography*, New York, 1929, xviii, 181-82. Sturgis seems to have befriended La Farge about 1865, for he inscribed the fly-leaf of a book printed in 1905 to "John La Farge after 40 years of friendship" (La Farge's book sale of 1911, No. 883).

⁴² Book sale of 1866, No. 226; see Katz, 96.

⁴³ La Farge, S.J., 25.

⁴⁴ Sale of 1881, No. 285 (see Appendix I).

⁴⁵ Lefor; John T. Morse, Jr., *Thomas Sergeant Perry: A Memoir*, Boston, 1929, 2; Samuel Eliot Morrison, "Old Bruin," *Commodore Matthew C. Perry*, Boston, 1967, 278.

In 1860 La Farge also painted a ceiling decoration in Japanese style. As he noted in his letter of 1894 to Samuel Bing:

The first opportunity which I had for use of my studies and desires in decoration was the painting of a ceiling. This ceiling was a small one in a bay-window, and I treated it in what I conceived to be a good Japanese style of design and color, though in execution different from theirs because of the difference in materials. This was in 1860, too early for such an attempt to meet with sympathy, and the architect gave me no support.⁴⁶

That La Farge was beginning to incorporate Japanese elements into his paintings at this time is apparent also from an event mentioned in Royal Cortissoz's biography. On a sketching excursion with William James, La Farge painted a landscape of the Glen at Middleton, Rhode Island, on a Japanese tea tray. This must have occurred by the spring of 1861, the date that William James abandoned painting.⁴⁷

Direct evidence that La Farge was collecting works from Japan by 1863 is contained in a small sketchbook in the Addison Gallery in Andover, Massachusetts. With the exception of one drawing, made in 1854, the book was filled between 1862 and 1863, as is indicated both by two inscriptions by La Farge in the book, and by the associations between the sketches in it and documented works of those years. On one page is the cryptic notation " — School Jap

⁴⁶ La Farge, "Letter of Samuel Bing," 1894, 2. I have not been able to identify securely any sketches for this project. The architect was almost certainly Richard Morris Hunt, the only one of La Farge's acquaintances who was actually making buildings at this time. In the summer of 1860 Hunt planned additions to the houses of William Beech Lawrence and of Edward Willing in Newport, Rhode Island. In addition, he designed a group of three houses in Boston, all of them now destroyed, for a Dr. Williams. These stood at 13, 14, and 15 Arlington Street, facing the Public Gardens, on the site of the present Ritz-Carlton Hotel (Paul R. Baker, *Richard Morris Hunt*, Cambridge, Mass., 1980, 109). If La Farge's "Japanese" ceiling decorations were in one of the Boston houses, they probably were seen by Charles Freeland when he commissioned La Farge to make paintings for the dining room at 117 Beacon Street (see n. 103, below).

Writers have often assumed that Whistler was responsible for introducing Japanese motifs in decorative interiors. Robert Koch has declared, for example, that: "The first painter to introduce the use of Japanese forms for domestic interiors was James McNeill Whistler, whose Peacock Room, now in the Freer Gallery in Washington, D.C., was completed in 1877 (Robert Koch, "The Stained Glass Decades," Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1957, 43). La Farge's ceiling decoration was installed seventeen years prior to Whistler's project. La Farge seems, however, to have drawn on a still earlier tradition of "Japanese" decoration, which is discussed by Honour, 43, 65-67, and 70-76. Balzac, for example, mentioned a "Japanese salon" in his apartment in a letter of 1850 (Stefan Zweig, *Balzac*, New York, 1946, 378).

In England "Japanese" interiors existed in the early 1860's. Thus, for example, in 1862 E.W. Godwin decorated his home with a few sparely hung Ukiyo-e prints, reputedly the first house in England to be decorated according to Japanese principles (Aslin, 781; Dudley Harbron, *The Conscious Stone: The Life of Edward William Godwin*, London, 1949, 33); and in about 1865 Japanese motifs were employed by Richard Norman Shaw at Cloverly Hall (Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Harmondsworth, 1971, 260). La Farge's later decorative work often made use of Japanese ideas, although often in combination with other influences. Henry Van Brunt, for example, perceptively noted that La Farge's neo-medieval decorations for Trinity

— \$40.00 —," evidently a reference to the price for a group of Japanese prints or curios.⁴⁸ The 1909 sale *Oriental Art Objects* lists several prints that La Farge acquired directly from Japan in 1863: a set of four prints by Hiroshige, two triplets by Kunisada, and additional triplets by Kuniyoshi, Toyokuni, and Shigenobu.⁴⁹

In an uncompleted memoir, partially incorporated into Royal Cortissoz's biography of 1911, La Farge noted that he and his friend John Bancroft sent to Japan for prints as early as 1863. He wrote: "Bancroft and myself were very much interested in Japanese color prints and I imported a great many in the early sixties for us both, through A.A. Low. I think it was 1863. We had to risk our purchases entirely and got few things as we would have chosen them, as we had at that time no persons interested in such things. We had nobody over there in Japan to buy for us with any discretion."⁵⁰

This passage has often been considered an account of La Farge's first exposure to Japanese art, but surely such a reading is incorrect. Such an interpretation contradicts what other evidence is available, and of course it would make no sense to send to Japan for prints without some prior knowledge of their existence. The date of 1863 evidently seemed significant to La Farge: about that time he began personally to import prints rather than to make do with the few that arrived haphazardly on the American market; and it was then that he began his fruitful association with

Church in Boston showed "a very intelligent study of Oriental methods" (Henry Van Brunt, "The New Dispensation of Monumental Art," *The Atlantic Monthly*, XLIII, May, 1879, 635).

The motivations for La Farge's interest in Japanese art, and also for his later interest in the art of the South Seas, are suggested by a passage written by Charles Eastlake, declaring: "When I look into the windows of a fashionable establishment devoted to decorative art, and see the monstrosities which are daily offered to the public in the name of taste — the fat gilt cupids, the coarse and clumsy mouldings, the heavy plaster cornices, and the lifeless types of leaves and flowers which pass for ornament in the nineteenth century — I cannot help thinking how much we might learn from those nations whose art it has long been our custom to despise — from the half-civilized craftsmen of Japan, and the rude barbarians of Fiji" (Charles Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery, and Other Details*, 3rd ed., London, 1872, 196).

⁴⁷ Cortissoz, 1911, 118-19; Gay Wilson Allen, *William James, A Biography*, New York, 1967, 70.

⁴⁸ This sketchbook contains drawings for a water-lily painting of 1862, and for a Crucifixion of 1862-63, which La Farge designed for his friend Isaac Hecker, founder of the Paulist Order. The price given in La Farge's notation seems too high to refer to a single print, as these were relatively inexpensive in the 1860's. Claude Monet, for example, recalled buying cheese wrapped in Japanese prints, and it is reported that a grocer near London bridge gave away a free Japanese print with every pound of tea (Whitford, 103; E.G. Underwood, *A Short History of French Painting*, London, 1931, 249; E.R. and J. Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, Philadelphia, 1908, 117). Bromfield, 89, however, observes that in Paris Ukiyo-e prints were more expensive in the 1860's, when they cost four francs each, than in the 1870's, when their price fell to only fifteen centimes.

⁴⁹ Sale, *Oriental Art Objects*, 1909, No. 77 (four prints), No. 321 (triplet), No. 503 (triplet), No. 330 (triplet), No. 534 (triplet), and No. 151 (triplet). See Appendix II.

⁵⁰ Cortissoz, 1911, 122.

John Bancroft who had only returned to the United States in the previous year.⁵¹

Bancroft, the son of the noted historian George Bancroft, had been exposed to exotic art before when he had worked as a draftsman on a scientific expedition to Surinam. Like La Farge, he may have first encountered Japanese prints in Paris where he had studied art in company with Whistler, Poynter, and Du Maurier. One of the major early collectors of Japanese art, Bancroft left over three thousand Japanese prints to the Worcester Art Museum at his death. Deeply interested in color theory, he encouraged La Farge to analyze the color relationships employed in Japanese prints. With their shared interest in painting, it was natural that the two should become friends, particularly as they lived not far apart in Newport and were both acquainted with the James brothers.⁵²

Abiel Abbot Low, who in 1863 was President of the New York Merchant's Association, was the natural importer for La Farge to consult. Owner of a fleet of clipper ships which carried drugs, tea, India ware, and Japanese silk from the Orient, Low maintained offices at 31 Burlington Slip in New York City and, like Bancroft and La Farge, had a summer home in Newport. It is likely that William Morris Hunt as well as La Farge acquired prints from Low, for Helen Knowlton noted that Hunt's Japanese prints were "purchased in New York."⁵³

In *An Artist's Letters from Japan* of 1890, La Farge recalled what had impressed him about Japanese art:

I remember many years ago looking over some Japanese drawings of hawking with two other youngsters, one of them now a celebrated artist, the other a well-known teacher of science. What struck us then was the freedom of record, the acute vision of facts, the motions and actions of the birds, their flight, their attention and their

resting, the alertness and anxiety of the hunters, and the suggestion of the entire landscape (made with a few brushmarks). One saw the heat, and the damp, and the dark meandering water in the swamps; marked the dry paths which led over sounding wooden bridges, and the tangle of weeds and brush, and the stiff swaying of high trees. All was to us realism, but affected by an unknown charm.⁵⁴

The "two other youngsters" La Farge referred to could only be Henry and William James. The discussion may well have occurred about 1866, when La Farge was himself making drawings of hawking as illustrations for Longfellow's "The Skeleton in Armour."⁵⁵

In 1867 La Farge's knowledge of Japanese art was further expanded by his meeting Raphael Pumpelly, a mining geologist who had just returned from a circumnavigation of the globe, during which he had spent nearly three years in Japan. As Pumpelly noted in his reminiscences:

One of the first friendships I made at the Century [the Century Association in New York] was with John La Farge. He became interested in my collection of Japanese and Chinese things. There were hundreds of old Japanese prints, and representation of good periods of Chinese art in jade and rock crystal, cloissonné and bronze.

They had been carefully selected from the vast accumulations in Chinese shops, and without any expert knowledge, or other guidance than my own feelings. So I was greatly pleased by the appreciation of the artist.⁵⁶

La Farge is known to have drawn on this collection for inspiration, for a letter of 1875 that discusses his earliest known stained-glass window makes reference to Pumpelly's Japanese book on which the design seems to have been

⁵¹ John Bancroft wrote to his father regularly every week, and many of these letters are preserved among the *George Bancroft Papers* at Cornell University, Collection of Regional History and University Archives, John M. Olin Library, Ithaca, New York. They were microfilmed in 1965. Reel five, which covers the period from 1856 to 1866, contains correspondence from John to his father telling of his artistic study in Europe, and documents that John returned to the United States late in 1862. I have recently located more of John Bancroft's letters in a private collection in England, including a letter of May 3, 1863, in which John Bancroft mentioned La Farge to his father for the first time. "I should like you to see him," Bancroft wrote. "He is more thoroughly artistic in his feeling and knowledge than anyone I know — and is very clear about his aim and the art."

⁵² La Farge, 1901, 581; L[ouis] D[resser], "John Chandler Bancroft," *Worcester Art Museum News Bulletin and Calendar*, xvi, October, 1950, 1-2; Cortisoz, 1911, 121-22; Henry James, 1914, 335-39; Adams, 1983a.

⁵³ Benjamin R. C. Low, *Seth Low*, New York, 1925, 31-33, and 39; William G. Low, *A. A. Low and Brothers Fleet of Clipper Ships*, 1922 [no imprint]; Elma Lowes, ed., *The China Trade Post Bag of the Seth Low Family of Salem and New York*, Manchester, Me., 1953, 86, n. 1; Lefor, 26-27. The Peabody Museum in Salem owns all these books on Low, and also possesses Oriental objects which he donated to the museum. For Hunt, see Knowlton, 126.

⁵⁴ La Farge, 1897a, 144.

⁵⁵ Leon Edel, *Henry James: The Untried Years, 1843-1870*, Cambridge, Mass., 1953, 170. It appears from the circumstantial evidence that La Farge associated with William in the mid-1860's, when William was studying medicine at Harvard. Thus, ca. 1866, William made a portrait of La Farge, now in the Houghton Library, Harvard, in one of his medical-school notebooks (reproduced in Allen [as in n. 47] between 140 and 141, where it is misidentified as a self-portrait of William James). In addition, in 1864 La Farge and William James seem to have made sketches together of a snapping turtle (one of La Farge's sketches, which is dated, is in the Art Museum, Princeton University; the drawing by William James is in the Houghton Library, Harvard). Some of La Farge's drawings of hawks are in the larger sketchbook by him in the Bowdoin College Museum of Radical Empiricism," *American Art Journal*, xvii, 1, Winter 1985, Adams, "William James, Henry James, John La Farge and the Foundations of Radical Empiricism," *American Art Journal*, xvii, 1, Winter 1985, 60-67.

⁵⁶ Raphael Pumpelly, *Reminiscences*, New York, 1918, 582; M. A. de Wolfe Howe, "Raphael Pumpelly," in *Later Years of the Saturday Club*, ed. M. A. de Wolfe Howe, Boston, 1927, 188-192. The reference to "old Japanese prints" is particularly interesting, as it shows that La Farge must have known works other than those by recent masters. Bromfield, 253, maintains that late Yokohama prints were practically all that was available in Europe during the 1860's.

based.⁵⁷ By the mid-1860's, however, his own collection must have been quite substantial, as is apparent from the recollections of his eldest son, the architect Grant La Farge. In a letter of November 24, 1914 to Frank Weitenkampf, Curator of Prints at the New York Public Library, Grant La Farge remarked:

You have asked me about the Japanese influence. I cannot say just how my father first found his interest in Japanese art. Here again I may be able to get you some further information. I do know, however, that when I was a little boy just arriving at the age when children are interested in picture books, the Japanese picture book of all sorts was abundant in our house. I cannot remember a time when they were not as familiar to me as any other form of illustration; and I was very young indeed when my father and I used to look at them together, and he would call my attention to the accuracy and beauty of the Japanese drawings of birds, fish and flowers. Of course there were other things besides books — porcelain, lacquers, and all that sort of thing.⁵⁸

Grant La Farge was born on January 5, 1862. Presuming that he could remember events that occurred when he was five or six, this passage refers to the period around 1868 or 1869.

Putting together these different accounts, it can be inferred that La Farge was interested in the Orient from childhood; that he acquired his first volume of Hokusai in 1856 (probably in Paris, between April and June of that year); that he began making use of Japanese ideas in his own work by about 1860; and that he collected Japanese prints and art objects in increasing quantities throughout the 1860's. The key elements of this testimony are a notation La Farge made in 1866 recording the purchase of a Japanese item, and five rather more explicit statements, made in the thirty-year period from 1878 to 1908, which shed light on his initial discovery of Japanese art.

Several factors make La Farge's declarations seem plausible. First, many of his statements were made at a relatively

early date, so they would seem to have been generated by actual experience rather than simply manufactured to refute the allegations of other figures. La Farge's contention that he began collecting Japanese art in 1856, for example, was made in 1894, fourteen years before Bracquemond made a similar claim. Second, La Farge's statements are both numerous and internally consistent and, unlike the assertions of most French pioneers of *Japonisme*, seem frankly to unfold a process of developing awareness of the significance of Japanese art. Third, many of La Farge's claims are supported by statements by other writers, such as Russell Sturgis, Cecilia Waern, Helen Knowlton, Raphael Pumpelly, and his sons Grant and John.⁵⁹

Visual Evidence

The most important reason for believing La Farge's statements is that unlike those of certain French artists, notably Bracquemond, they are supported by his artistic work.⁶⁰ While by its nature visual material presents the challenge of stylistic interpretation, it seems likely that by 1860 nearly everything La Farge drew or painted was deeply affected by Japanese elements. A few examples may suffice to demonstrate the existence of Japanese influences and to show that they affected La Farge in ways that were remarkably varied.

It is convenient to distinguish three types of Japanese influence in La Farge's work, each of which presents a different kind of evidence. The first of these is the use of Japanese materials and the depiction of Japanese objects; the second, the creation of assertively Japanese effects, often in works that can be traced to a specific Japanese source; and the third, the exploitation of Japanese devices of presentation and visual structure within works that retain a predominantly Western character. These categories, of course, to some extent overlap, but they can serve at least to give a framework to our discussion.

La Farge used Japanese materials as early as 1861 when he executed several paintings on Japanese tea trays and began depicting flowers in containers of Japanese lacquerware. One of these paintings on a Japanese tea tray, *Water*

⁵⁷ These two letters, dated November 24 and November 27, 1875, are in the W.J. Linton Papers, Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. They are cited by Weinberg, 350. The windows to which they refer, the earliest known stained-glass windows by La Farge, are in the Hunnewell House, Waltham, Massachusetts. The book by Hokusai on which they were based is now in the possession of Henry A. La Farge.

⁵⁸ The letter is owned by the Print Division of the New York Public Library. This quotation is from p. 3.

⁵⁹ La Farge's letter to Richard Watson Gilder seems to predate most claims of this type. By the time of his essay on Hokusai, however, several French writers had made statements about their discovery of Japanese prints. Among them were the De Goncourts (see n. 5); Josse (the pseudonym for Lucien Falaize) in "L'art japonais: A propos de l'exposition organisée par M. Gonse," *Revue des arts décoratifs*, III, 1882-83, 333; and Champfleury, *Le musée secret de la caricature*, Paris, 1888. Bracquemond's claims were presented by Bénédite, "Félix Bracquemond," 1905, 39 (see n. 23).

⁶⁰ A description written in 1868 by Philip Hamerton commented on the

Japanese effect of Bracquemond's etching of 1862, *Lapwings and Teal*. While to modern eyes the print is hardly strikingly Oriental, given Bracquemond's reported interest in Hokusai it is likely that it does reveal Japanese influence (Philip Gilbert Hamerton, *Etching and Etchers*, Boston, repr. 1905, 225; Kloner, 39-40, and 225, n. 8). Bracquemond's first clearly "Japanese" works, however, were a series of direct copies of motifs from Japanese prints for the Rousseau dinner service (these are reproduced in Weisberg, 30-33). Jean-Paul Bouillon has shown that the earliest mention of Japanese art in Bracquemond's letters occurs in 1862 ("La correspondance de Félix Bracquemond," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, ser. 6, LXXXII, December, 1973, 351-386). In his published writings Bracquemond did not express much enthusiasm for Japanese art. In *Du dessin et de la couleur*, Paris, 1885, 99, for example, he declared that "L'art de l'extrême orient est incomplet dans la représentation de la nature." See also Jean-Paul Bouillon, "'A Gouche': Note sur la société du Jing-Lar et sa signification," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, ser. 6, XCI, March, 1978, 107-118, and Jean-Paul Bouillon, "Remarques sur le Japonisme du Bracquemond," in *Yamada*, 1980, 83-103.

Lilies in a Tray, is signed and dated 1861 and was exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1862; another, now unlocated, was executed during a sketching expedition with William James and, accordingly, must have been made by the spring of 1861, when (as has already been noted) James abandoned painting.⁶¹ Two more paintings on Japanese supports, *Meadow with White Swan* and *Roses on a Tray* (Fig. 5), can be dated through stylistic evidence to 1861-62; in the latter work, which was recently acquired by the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, a Japanese lacquer design of chrysanthemums is still visible on the back (Fig. 6).⁶²

Two of these paintings on tea trays, the *Water Lilies in a Tray* and *Roses on a Tray*, also depict flowers set in containers of Japanese lacquerware. Such Japanese containers also appear in other paintings of the period, for example in *Flowers in a Shallow Bowl* of 1861, *Calla Lily* of 1862, *Flowers in a Japanese Vase* of 1864, and the undated *Water Lily in a Red Lacquer Bowl*.⁶³ Other paintings of this period depict ceramics which are probably Japanese but whose origin cannot be established with certainty. *Flowers in a Japanese Vase* of 1864 (Fig. 7) shows a Japanese gold-leaf screen in the background, its stylized representation of pine branches just barely visible.⁶⁴

By 1862 La Farge was using Japanese paper for some of his sketches: two drawings on Japanese paper in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston are dated to this year.⁶⁵ La Farge's use of this material was noted by his son Grant, who wrote: "I recall that at a very early date he liked to draw on Japanese paper and had sketchbooks made up of such paper."⁶⁶ Until the end of his life La Farge favored Japanese papers, although they are not, in many respects, very well suited to sketching as they are thin and fragile and do not permit erasure. La Farge's fondness for them seems to have

stemmed from aesthetic rather than practical considerations: he evidently liked their delicacy and fineness, the opalescent shimmer of their surface, and the mental associations conjured up by their exotic origin.

About 1868 more varied Japanese accessories began to appear in La Farge's works. To indicate the Oriental origins of the three Magi, La Farge represented them in Japanese kimonos in his illustration of *The Halt of the Wisemen*, which was published in *The Riverside Magazine* in December of 1868.⁶⁷ Kimonos also appear in an uncut woodblock, dated 1868, showing a woman at an easel (Fig. 8), and in La Farge's ambitious figure painting of 1868-69, *A Sleeping Figure in Japanese Costume*, as is recorded both in photographs of the now-destroyed canvas and in surviving preparatory studies (Fig. 9).⁶⁸ An uncut woodblock of about 1868 shows a corner of La Farge's home in Newport in which an Oriental vase and ink painting are prominently displayed.⁶⁹ By this time La Farge had also begun experimenting with Japanese painting implements. For example, he executed his illustration of *The Wolfcharmer*, which appeared in *The Riverside Magazine* in December of 1867, with a Japanese brush, as is known from La Farge's later statements and as seems to be confirmed by a preparatory brush drawing for the work.⁷⁰

In his earliest works to incorporate Japanese materials, La Farge tended to manipulate them willfully to serve purposes quite different from those for which they were originally intended. In paintings such as *Roses on a Tray* (Figs. 5, 6) a tea tray is used as a painting support; in *Flowers in a Japanese Vase* (Fig. 7), a lacquer container is equated with the broken-column grave markers of Victorian cemeteries.⁷¹ The later works, on the other hand, tend to employ Japanese accessories in a manner somewhat closer to the original intentions of their makers. Kimonos are worn as

⁶¹ Katz, 63; reproduced by Adams, 1980b, 277. Interestingly, around 1860 Japanese lacquerware began to influence the design of the covers of American photograph albums (Floyd and Marion Rinhardt, *American Daguerrian Art*, New York, 1967, 89).

⁶² *Meadow with White Swan*, owned by Alvin Mann, bears on the back an inscription by Bancel La Farge identifying it as a color study for the painting of *Saint Paul* of 1862 (*Saint Paul* is discussed by Weinberg, 45). *Roses on a Tray*, which once belonged to La Farge's friend John Bancroft, is related to a series of paintings of flowers against white backdrops, for example *Flowers in a Shallow Bowl* of 1861, now owned by Henry La Farge (repr. by Foster, 14). For a discussion of *Roses on a Tray*, see Adams, 1984a.

⁶³ The paintings are owned by Henry A. La Farge; The Art Museum, Princeton University; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; and a private collector, Philadelphia.

⁶⁴ This painting is executed on gold leaf. In the year following this work, 1865, La Farge painted a portrait of his son Grant on a background of gold leaf (repr. in Cortisoz, 1936, pl. 13; now owned by Grant La Farge, Santa Fe, New Mexico). In addition, he executed three paintings for the Freeland house whose yellow ochre backgrounds are based on those of Japanese gold-leaf screens (Adams, 1980b).

⁶⁵ For example, *Near Red Spring, L.I./1862*, and *Newport, 1862, cloud form*, in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, bequest of Henry Lee Higginson.

⁶⁶ Frank Weitenkampf, "John La Farge, Illustrator," *Print Collector's Quarterly*, v, December, 1915, 472-494, 488. This is the same letter cited above, n. 57, but Weitenkampf did not publish the passage cited earlier.

⁶⁷ Lefor, 70.

⁶⁸ The woodblock is one of two never-published illustrations for the story "In the King's Garden." The other drawing for the title page, now in a private collection, also reveals Japanese influence. See the entry on this work in Henry Adams, et al., *American Drawings and Watercolors in the Carnegie Institute*, exh. cat., Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, 1985. The lost canvas of *A Sleeping Figure in Japanese Costume* is reproduced by Cortisoz, 1911, opp. 42, and, in a slightly different form by M[ariana] G[rismold] van Rensselaer, *Book of American Figure Painters*, Philadelphia, 1886, ill. No. 3. For a discussion of the painting, see Katz, 83-85; Weinberg, 69-70; and Adams, 1980a, 314-15. La Farge exhibited the painting under various titles. The one cited here was employed at the *Fifth Annual Exhibition of the Yale School of Fine Arts*, New Haven, No. 110. See Yarnall, 258.

⁶⁹ In the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh.

⁷⁰ Katz, 82; Cortisoz, 1911, 143. The brush-and-ink preparatory study is in the Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts.

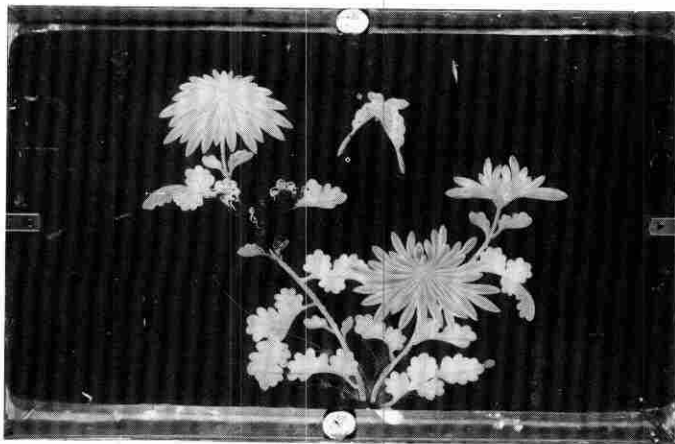
⁷¹ For the symbolism of *Flowers in a Japanese Vase*, see Wolfgang Born, *Still-Life Painting in America*, New York, 1947, 41; and Foster, 18.



5 John La Farge, *Roses on a Tray*, 1861, oil on Japanese lacquer panel, 44.45 x 25.73cm. Pittsburgh, Carnegie Institute, Museum of Art, Katherine M. McKenna Fund, 1983



7 John La Farge, *Flowers in a Japanese Vase*, 1864, oil on canvas, 46.36 x 35.56cm. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts



6 Verso, of Fig. 5, showing Japanese lacquer panel

clothing and are even depicted in the somewhat flattened manner of Japanese prints; a Japanese brush is employed in a way that suggests a desire to understand Oriental working methods. This general development, however, should not be stressed too strongly, for in all these works La Farge was quite whimsical and eclectic in his combination of Eastern and Western ideas. Moreover, these works do not form a unified series, and in all of them the use of Japanese materials is only a peripheral part of the expressive intention. The main significance of these Japanese elements is that they provide irrefutable evidence of La Farge's interest in Japan, and some documentation — though certainly of a very incomplete nature — suggesting the types of Japanese items with which he was familiar.

Fully Japanese effects first appear in La Farge's work in 1860, the year before his first known painting to employ Japanese materials. At this time La Farge's work was unquestionably going through a dramatic stylistic change. Before his trip to Europe in 1856 La Farge's drawings had been conventional and academic. This is apparent, for example, in a tree study executed in June of 1854 at Glen Cove, Long Island (Fig. 10), which follows the mode of draftsmanship promoted by the drawing books of James Harding (Fig.



8 John La Farge, *Woman at an Easel*, 1868, uncut woodblock, 14.6 x 11.61cm. Pittsburgh, Carnegie Institute, Museum of Art



9 John La Farge, *Sleeping Woman*, ca. 1868, pencil sketch, 17.46 x 13.34cm. Yale University, Beinecke Library

11).⁷² La Farge's drawings from 1859 on, however, are in a pronouncedly different style.

One of the most striking is a value study executed in Louisiana on April 25, 1860 (Fig. 12). It is immediately apparent that La Farge here completely violated the "correct" procedures of his earlier training, procedures that are followed in marsh scenes by such contemporary artists as Joseph Meeker, James Hamilton, and Hippolyte Sebron.⁷³ In the work of these artists, the horizon is invariably low, the objects are given form through modeling, and distance is conveyed both by perspective and by the carefully contrived overlapping of forms.

In the drawing by La Farge, however, the spatial effects are entirely Japanese. The horizon is nearly at the top of the page, there is no modeling but merely silhouette, and recession is conveyed not through perspective or overlapping forms, but through the use of superimposed levels — the objects are placed higher in the visual field as they become more distant. Significantly, when objects change their level, the viewpoint on them does not shift higher or lower, but they remain seen in strict profile. Even without locating a specific prototype, one would suspect Japanese influence. In fact, La Farge's source for these effects was probably the print *Gathering Horsetails* by Hokusai (Fig. 13) which employs the same general grouping of water, reeds, and trees as La Farge's drawing. There are, as has already been noted, written assertions that La Farge was importing Hokusai's prints by 1860. Evidently, he had adopted them as his new "drawing books," for his dependence on Hokusai in this work is remarkably like his dependence on Harding in his earlier drawing. Accustomed to the exercise of imitating another artist's style, he simply transferred this practice from a Western to an Eastern source.

The sketch in Figure 12 was a private one, shown to only a few friends, although it is known that La Farge considered it "among my best works."⁷⁴ It was not until four years later that he again made designs so completely Japanese in effect. This time they were intended for a popular audience, as they were used as illustrations for Tennyson's poem *Enoch Arden* in an edition issued by Ticknor and Fields of Boston

⁷² This drawing is now known only through a photograph taken when it was exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1910. A similar drawing, owned by Jean Delfino in Waterbury, Connecticut, is executed on one of the "Harding" papers manufactured by Winsor-Newton, which were sold in New York through Goupils. La Farge referred to Harding in his essay "Ruskin, Art and Truth," *International Monthly*, 11, July-December, 1900, 514. For a discussion of Harding's influence on La Farge, see Adams, 1980a, 52-53, and Adams, 1984a.

⁷³ The present location of La Farge's drawing is unknown, but the sketchbook from which it was taken, with other drawings of similar type, is now owned by Henry A. La Farge. A marsh scene by Sebron is in the Addison Gallery, Andover; marsh scenes by Hamilton and Meeker are discussed in M. and M. Karolik *Collection of American Water Colors and Drawings, 1800-1875*, Boston, 1962, i, 172, 235. For additional Louisiana marsh scenes see "Louisiana Lakes, Bayous and Swamps," in John A. Mahé II, *The Waters of America, 19th-Century American Paintings of Rivers, Streams, Lakes and Waterfalls*, exh. cat., The Historic New Orleans Collection and the New Orleans Museum of Art, 1984, 69, 74-78.

⁷⁴ La Farge indicated this judgment in a notation on the front cover of the sketchbook.



10 John La Farge, *Sketch of a Tree, Glen Cove, Long Island*, June 1854. Present location unknown (photo made 1910, when drawing exhibited at Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)



12 John La Farge, *View of the Bayou Teche, Louisiana*, April 25, 1860, probably 7.14 x 13.18cm. Present location unknown (from *Scribner's Magazine*, July, 1899, 9)



11 James Duffield Harding, *Plate 9 of "Elementary Art,"* 1834, 37 x 26cm

⁷⁵ The Ticknor and Fields edition of *Enoch Arden* was made as a Christmas "gift book" in competition with another edition published by J.E. Tilton and Company (Charles F. Richardson, "A Book of Beginnings," *Nation*, xci, December, 1910, 520-21). Elihu Vedder finished his illustrations for the book by November 2, 1864, as is documented by a letter from him to Kate Field (Soria, 42). La Farge probably was the last artist to complete his illustrations. According to a letter of March 27, 1868 from Horace Scudder to William Michael Rossetti, La Farge did his final work while ill and "bolstered up in bed," and the final blocks were "put into the press at midnight, fifteen minutes after the engraver had taken his proof" (Rossetti, 1, 1906, 349). It seems most probable that the Ticknor and Fields *Enoch Arden* was printed early in November of 1864, not long after Vedder's drawings had been completed, in order to be available for the Christmas market. One of La Farge's illustrations, *The Shipwreck*, was not included in some early printings of the book (several copies of the

in 1864-65. Two of La Farge's illustrations are particularly remarkable: *Shipwrecked*, which converts a Japanese print into a Western illustration, and *The Island Home*, which transforms a Western landscape into a Japanese print.⁷⁵

Shipwrecked (Fig. 14) is a somewhat cropped version of Hokusai's *Mount Fuji Seen Over Ocean* (Fig. 15). Though the added figure does somewhat Westernize the scene, the Japanese character of its source is still plainly apparent, particularly in the stylized fingers of foam.⁷⁶ *The Island Home* (Fig. 16), with its wonderfully grotesque gnarled trees and fractured cliffs, the band of shading in the upper part of the sky, the Oriental-looking hut at the lower right, the figures half cut out of the picture, and the unusual bird's-eye vantage point, is even more Japanese in appearance. Indeed, La Farge modified his signature to resemble the cartouche of an Oriental master. It would be fruitless, however, to search for a specific Japanese prototype for this image, for the scene can be identified as a view of the Par-

volume missing this illustration are in the Widener Library, Harvard University). This illustration must have been added during the second printing, either late in 1864 or early in 1865. However, there is no difference in the publisher's imprint between copies with and without this design. See also James L. Yarnall, "Tennyson Illustration in Boston, 1864-1872," *Imprint, Journal of the American Historical Print Collectors Society*, Autumn, 1982, 10-16.

⁷⁶ This print by Hokusai is considerably closer to La Farge's illustration than *The Great Wave of Kanagawa* which Katz, 77-78, cited as La Farge's source. See Tetsugi Yura, "The Pedigree of Waves by Hokusai," *Ukiyo-e Art*, xvi, 1967, 9-12, and Adams, 1980b, 277, n. 22. Lefor 98 (and figs. 26, 27), has noted that the water in the background of La Farge's illustration resembles Hokusai's print in Volume v of the *Mangwa* of a boat entering the cave of the three deities near Shimoda.



13 Katsushika Hokusai, *Gathering Horsetails*, color print, ca. 1830

adise Rocks in Newport looking out past Bishop Berkeley's Rock (in the middle distance on the right) towards Second Beach and the Atlantic Ocean. Even the Oriental hut probably had an analogue in the real scene, as it is known that La Farge constructed a hut on the Paradise Rocks to provide a storage place for his landscape paintings.⁷⁷

In a letter to *The Nation* written shortly after La Farge's death, Charles J. Richardson of Dartmouth College declared that: "La Farge's *The Island Home* . . . was purely Japanese, and, so far as I know, the first unmitigatedly Japanese picture by an American artist."⁷⁸ It is, in fact, just contemporary with the first paintings done in Europe that pay homage to the Japanese, Whistler's *The Lange Lijzen of the Six Marks* and *La Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine*. Whereas Whistler's paintings, however, are essentially Western genre paintings with a few Japanese accessories, La Farge's illustration employs Japanese compositional devices and spatial effects. It appears to be, in fact, the first imaginative representation by a Western artist to be entirely Japanese in style.⁷⁹

Early reactions to this experiment, not surprisingly, were far from enthusiastic. In 1881 George Parsons Lathrop, writing in *Scribner's Magazine*, noted of this work that it "seems to us somewhat warped by the draftsman's study of Japanese prints, and prepares us for similar eccentricities, or leanings toward imitativeness, in subsequent performances."⁸⁰ In Lathrop's view, La Farge was "too susceptible to the keen and persuasive genius of the Japanese."⁸¹

He had indeed become "susceptible." La Farge's subsequent illustrations of "fantastic subjects" for *The Riverside Magazine* borrow constantly from Japanese prototypes. The inverted genie in La Farge's *The Fisherman and the Djinn* (Fig. 17), published in July 1868, was based on Hokusai's *Ink Spectre* (Fig. 18) from the twelfth volume of the *Mangwa*.⁸² The giant in La Farge's *The Giant and the Travellers* (Fig. 19), published in May 1869, was based on *Kintoki Disporting Himself* (Fig. 20) from the tenth volume of

⁷⁷ Although the viewpoint is farther to the left, the scene shown in *The Island Home* is recognizably similar to that in the painting of *Bishop Berkeley's Rock* (Fig. 39) in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. La Farge's hut is described in Cortissoz, 1911, 129. Most of La Farge's other illustrations for *Enoch Arden* also represent identifiable locations in Newport. Not surprisingly, writers have not agreed as to the exact nature of La Farge's Japanese source. Katz, 78, saw it as a work by Hokusai, perhaps a print from the *Mangwa*, while Walsh, 99, proposed "landscape woodcuts in the manner of Hiroshige." Like La Farge, Whistler apparently first devised a cartouche-like signature in 1864 (Weintraub, 95). For the increasing use of monograms in Western art in the later 19th century, see Phillip Denis Cate, "Japanese Influence on French Prints: 1883-1910," in Weisberg, 67, n. 50.

⁷⁸ Charles J. Richardson, "A Book of Beginnings," Letter to the Editor, *The Nation*, xc1, No. 2370, December, 1910, 520.

⁷⁹ John Sandberg, "Japonisme and Whistler," *Burlington Magazine*, cv1, 1964, 500-07. Whistler finally achieved fully Japanese effects in 1867 in *The Balcony* (the Freer Gallery), a painting that Kenyon Cox described as "a picture more Japanese than any other, in which representation has almost ceased to exist" (*Architectural Record*, xvi, 1904, 474). Remarkably enough, *The Balcony* was very nearly acquired by La Farge's friend John Bancroft in 1891. This transaction is described in Andrew McLaren Young, Margaret MacDonald, Robin Spencer, and Hamish Miles, *The*

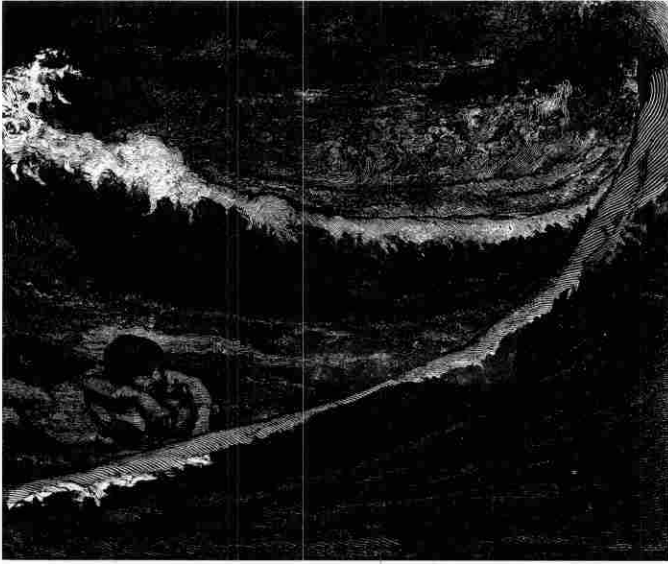
Paintings of James McNeill Whistler, New Haven, 1980, text vol., Cat. Nos. 223, 56, 39, 45, and 64. I have recently discovered a group of Whistler's letters to Bancroft which document this episode in more detail, and plan to incorporate this material into future publication. See also Adams, 1984a.

⁸⁰ Lathrop, 506. For the circumstances of this article, see Adams, 1980a, 456-57; and Yarnall, 314. Lathrop was a member of the Century Association and the brother of the painter Francis Lathrop, one of La Farge's assistants in the decoration of Trinity Church, Boston.

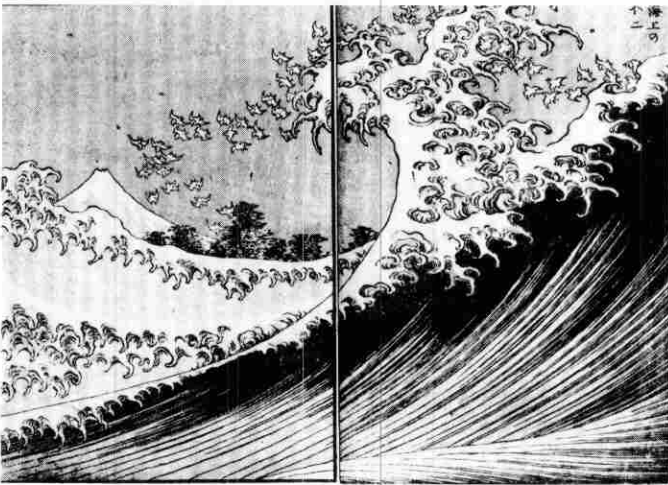
⁸¹ Lathrop, 506.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 506; Katz, 82; Weinberg, 62, has noted that an analogous image by Hokusai, showing a figure confronting a ghost, accompanies La Farge's essay of 1870 on "Japanese Art," opposite page 198. Lefor, 106, has correctly noted that La Farge's illustration is related to Elihu Vedder's painting of *The Fisherman and the Genie* of 1863, in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. La Farge's image also has an affinity with a drawing made about 1866 by William James (in the Houghton Library, Harvard) showing a severed head on a pike.

Katz, 82, has also noted that the rats in La Farge's illustration of *Bishop Hatto* recall Hokusai's depictions of rats in Volume xv of the *Mangwa*. For Hokusai's book illustrations, see Jack Hillier, *The Art of Hokusai in Book Illustration*, London, 1980.

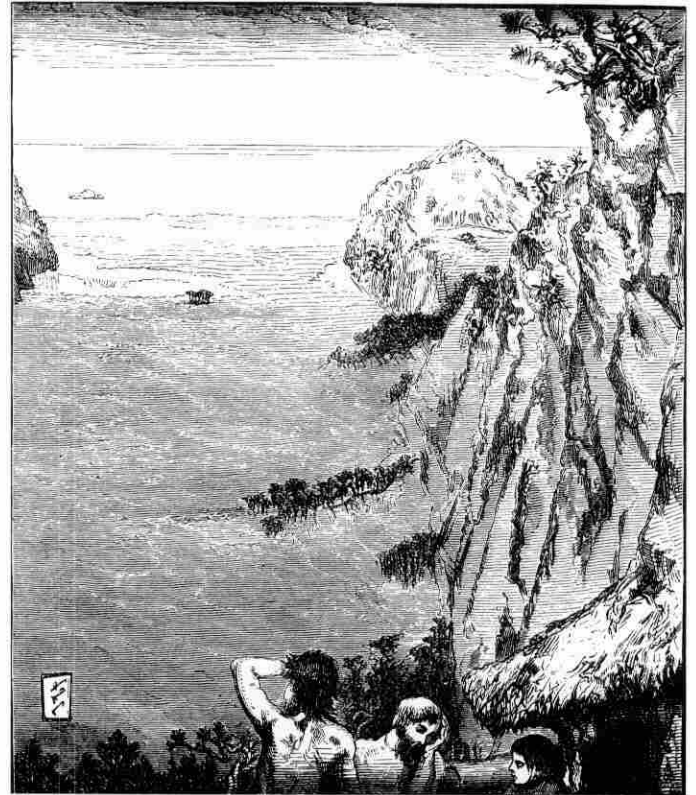


14 John La Farge, *Shipwrecked*, 8.4 x 10.16cm, wood-engraved ill. for Tennyson's poem *Enoch Arden*, Ticknor and Fields, Boston, 1864, facing p. 35



15 Katsushika Hokusai, *Mount Fuji Seen Over Ocean*, from *One Hundred Views of Fuji*, ca. 1830, each panel 18.09cm x 12.7cm

the *Mangwa*.⁸³ An unpublished design of *The Sea Serpent* (Fig. 21) made use of a background of waves from a scene of *Sea Ghosts* (Fig. 22) from the third volume of the *Mangwa*.⁸⁴ La Farge later noted to Royal Cortissoz that his objective in these works was "to take a Chinese subject and make it absolutely Chinese in character and design and yet to carry it out on the programme of a certain Western ac-



16 John La Farge, *The Island Home*, 9.68 x 8.22cm, wood-engraved ill. for *Enoch Arden*, facing p. 36

curacy of drawing and a different scale of coloring necessary on that account."⁸⁵

In some cases La Farge's use of Japanese sources is not readily evident in the finished work but only in preliminary sketches. La Farge's unpublished illustration of *The Enchantress* (Fig. 23), for example, seems altogether Western in treatment, but in an early drawing for it (Fig. 24) the enchantress has Japanese features. Her energetic pose recalls the effects of some of the later Japanese printmakers, perhaps one of the followers of Toyokuni such as Kuniyoshi or Kunisada.

The *Riverside* illustrations invariably transform Japanese designs into a more Western mode, albeit one in which the spatial anomalies, the sense of caricature, and the bizarre and often humorous qualities of the Eastern source are still quite visible. La Farge, however, also sometimes played this game in reverse, converting a Western prototype into a Japanese design. An interesting case is La Farge's *The Fisherman and the Mermaid* (Fig. 25). This was probably conceived for *The Riverside Magazine* in 1868, as La Farge mentioned the subject in a letter to the magazine's editor,

⁸³ Katz, 82; Lefor, 109-110. The image also has a certain affinity with the work of Goya (see n. 21 above).

⁸⁴ The subject of *The Sea Serpent* is one of those La Farge mentioned in a letter of October 26, 1868 to Horace Scudder, now among the Scudder Papers in the Houghton Library, Harvard. Another sketch by La Farge of this motif is in the Avery Library, Columbia University.

⁸⁵ La Farge, "Notes," p. 123. La Farge's use of the word "Chinese" to describe Japanese sources is a confusion also found among European artists and writers. Whistler, for example, first referred to *The Lange Lijzen of the Six Marks* as his "Chinese woman" (Weintraub, 113). For an amusing instance of this sort of confusion, see Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street*, New York, 1920, 78.



17 John La Farge, *The Fisherman and the Djinn*, 17.15 x 13.65cm, artist's photograph of uncut woodblock for ill. published in *The Riverside Magazine*, July, 1968. Private collection



19 John La Farge, *The Giant and the Travellers*, 17.78 x 13.97cm, artist's photograph of uncut woodblock for ill. published in *The Riverside Magazine*, May, 1869. Private collection

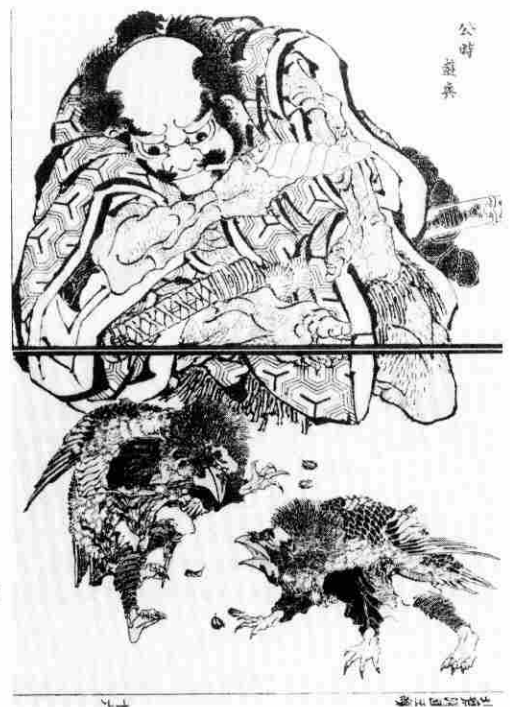


18 Katsushika Hokusai, *The Ink Spectre*, each panel 18 x 13cm, from *The Mangwa*, xii

Horace Scudder, on October 26 of that year.⁸⁶ The design was not published, however, until 1873, when it was used as the frontispiece for an anthology of Elizabethan poems, *Songs from the Old Dramatists*, published in Boston by Hurd and Houghton.

The initial source of inspiration for La Farge was certainly F.R. Pickersgill's *Water Nymph* (Fig. 26), an illustration for Willmott's *Poets of the Nineteenth Century*, published in London in 1857. The pose of the nymph with

⁸⁶ Among the Scudder Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard.



20 Katsushika Hokusai, *Kintoki Disporting Himself*, each panel 18 x 13cm, from *The Mangwa*, x

her hands upraised is almost exactly the same as La Farge's mermaid, while the shepherd with his pipes resembles the fisherman except that he is shown not kneeling but seated on a grassy bank. In both illustrations there is a leafy branch at the top of the design. While La Farge's print reverses the

21 John La Farge, *The Sea Serpent*, 10.16 x 8.89cm, uncut woodblock for an unpublished ill. Private collection



22 Katsushika Hokusai, *Sea Ghosts*, 18 x 13cm, from *The Mangwa*, III



composition of Pickersgill, his drawing on the block would have been in the same direction as the prototype.⁸⁷

La Farge's contribution was to transform Pickersgill's attractive but unmemorable illustration into a Japanese decoration. He added a partially cropped Japanese pine branch at the top, daisies resembling Japanese stencil patterns below, and divided the figures with a sinuous but geometrically regular line, like those later employed in Art Nou-

⁸⁷ *The Poets of the Nineteenth Century*, selected and edited by the Rev. Robert Aris Willmott, incumbent of Bearwood, illustrated with one hundred engravings drawn by eminent artists, and engraved by the brothers Dalziel, London, George Routledge & Co., 1857, 277. Joseph Pennell in *Modern Illustration*, London, 1895, xxiv, described this book as, "one of the earliest and best of modern illustrated books." The connection between Pickersgill's design and that of La Farge was first noted by Katz,



23 John La Farge, *The Enchantress* ("Charles De Kay Being Turned Into a Monster"), 17.15 x 13.65cm, uncut woodblock. New York, private collection (photo: Print Division, Boston Public Library)



24 John La Farge, *The Enchantress*, preparatory sketch, present location unknown

veau. Like many Japanese designs, La Farge's image contains a vital tension between representation and geometry. Though one could hardly deny that La Farge's concoction is quite derivative, paradoxically this is an indispensable aspect of his originality: it allowed him to avoid much of the mechanical effort required to construct a representation and to concentrate exclusively on style. Decorative effects, such as the interplay between figure and ground, take on a new importance. Particularly effective is La Farge's contrast between the dark-on-light pattern of the pine branch at the top and the light-on-dark pattern of the daisies below.⁸⁸

104. Walter Savage Landor, the writer whose lines Pickersgill illustrated, was a poet to whom La Farge was particularly attached (see Cortisoz, 1911, 40; book sale of 1866, No. 170; and Adams, 1980a, 77). Some of La Farge's drawings for this illustration are in a sketchbook in the Art Museum, Bowdoin College.

⁸⁸ Lefor, 111.



25 John La Farge, *Song of the Siren*, 14.6 x 9.05cm, frontispiece for *Songs from the Old Dramatists*, Hurd and Houghton, Boston, 1873



26 F.R. Pickersgill, *Water Nymph*, 12 x 9.5cm, ill. for Willmott's *Poets of the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1857, 277



27 John La Farge, *Songs of Sorrow*, 13.65 x 8.57cm, ill. for *Songs from the Old Dramatists*, facing p. 124

La Farge abstracted realistic motifs even more dramatically in his design of *Songs of Sorrow* (Fig. 27) in the same volume. Here he employed a pastiche effect, combining different patterns and motifs in an associative rather than a literal manner. This sort of juxtaposition was undoubtedly borrowed from Japanese Surinomo prints, several of which La Farge owned, and one of which was illustrated in Edward De Fonblanque's *Nippon and Pe-che-li* of 1862, a copy of which La Farge auctioned from his personal library in 1881.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 111-12.

Examples like these, in most of which La Farge employed a precisely identifiable Japanese source, show the artist deliberately drawing attention to the exotic and Oriental qualities of his designs. In a far greater number of instances, however, La Farge did not make single-minded use of Japanese effects but employed them in works that retain many Western features. In some cases his use of Japanese sources is clear although mixed with other elements; in others it is difficult to be sure whether La Farge made use of a Japanese source or of some prototype in Western art.

Enough evidence survives, however, to demonstrate that La Farge tended to experiment first with covert Japanese devices of presentation and visual structure within works of a predominantly Western nature, and only afterwards to make images of overtly Japanese character. While cases of La Farge's concealed borrowing from Japanese art are more difficult to identify than those making open use of Japanese sources, they are also probably of greater significance. Works of a completely Japanese appearance could be treated as humorous exercises in a foreign and alien style: in spirit they were often quite similar to the creations of eighteenth-century *Chinoiserie*. Combining Japanese and Western techniques, however, required a careful reassessment of the conventions of Western painting.



28 John La Farge, *The Children*, 8.73 x 10cm, ill. for *Enoch Arden*, facing p. 5



29 John La Farge, *Annie*, pencil sketch, 17.5 x 10.5cm. Princeton University, The Art Museum

La Farge's tendency to use Japanese effects covertly before doing so overtly is well demonstrated by his illustrations for *Enoch Arden*. Though only two of the illustrations are assertively Japanese, nearly all of them were significantly influenced by Japanese art. The illustration *The Children* (Fig. 28), for example, while seemingly Western in treatment, contains such Japanese devices as the high horizon, the solid bank of dark tone at the top of the picture (which contrasts with the white area below it), the absence of all textural indications in the area immediately below the figures, and even the curious little crab at the lower left, a whimsical element that might have been suggested by one of the pages of randomly disposed sea creatures in Hokusai's *Mangwa*. The figures themselves may have been partially inspired by Japanese models. If we look, for example, at the preliminary sketch for the figure of Annie (Fig. 29), it could almost be taken for a geisha in a Japanese print.

In general, the Japanese character of these works seems to have increased as La Farge progressed on the project. The illustration *The Solitary* (Fig. 30), for example, which was probably made after *The Children*, contains visible tensions between the Western manner of handling the figures and the Japanese execution of other parts of the design. A group of birds, for example, lifted from Volume II of Hokusai's *Mangwa* (Fig. 31), flies unexpectedly into the picture at the upper left; the figures at the lower right are dramatically cropped, and the bearded figure of Enoch stands out against the white background in sharp silhouette.⁹⁰ The use of shadows is inconsistent and arbitrary, and the horizon line is unnaturally high.

The two most Japanese of La Farge's illustrations were certainly the last to be executed, for *Shipwrecked* could not be engraved in time for the initial printing of the book. Thus, the two overtly Japanese designs represent not La Farge's first use of Japanese ideas but merely an increased willingness to make manifest his dependence on Japanese art.⁹¹

It seems hardly a coincidence that La Farge borrowed most directly from Japanese art for his illustrations. He must have felt that the strangeness of Japanese modes would find readier acceptance in illustration than in painting, as there was already a tradition there of representing the whimsical and grotesque.⁹² In addition, the Japanese prints he used were in most cases themselves picture books, were similar in general format to Western illustrations, and consequently could be adopted for Western purposes without too much modification. In making use of Japanese prints for his paintings, however, La Farge needed to adjust them to

⁹⁰ The source in the *Mangwa* was noted by Lefor, 101. Contrary to my view, Walsh, 99, has maintained that La Farge's use of Japanese prints began with "outright imitation," and that later La Farge was "more fully penetrated by the Japanese principles he was so quick to grasp." Mills, 15, has argued to the contrary, proposing that: "Unlike French artists of the 1860's, La Farge never went through a period of directly copying Japanese motifs and compositions. One reason past critics have overlooked the influence of these prints may be that he skipped over this stage."

⁹¹ Adams, 1984b.

⁹² There is, in fact, a specific precedent for such a use of Oriental effects, the volume of *Robinson Crusoe*, with illustrations by Grandville, that La Farge owned as a child (Cortissoz, 1911, 56). In contrast to most modern versions of the text, this included a sequel describing Crusoe's travels to the Orient, and contained several illustrations by Grandville of Chinese subjects. See Daniel Defoe, *Adventures de Robinson Crusoe*, repr., with illustrations by Jean Grandville, Granier Frères Editor, Rue de Saints-Pères 6, Palais Royal 215, Paris, 1853 (copy in the Houghton Library, Harvard).

a novel medium and to a new constellation of artistic issues.

My own belief, one consistent with the assertions of written accounts, is that La Farge had become interested in Japanese art even before he began to study with William Morris Hunt, and thus that his earliest oil paintings made under Hunt's tutelage in Newport in 1859 already reflected an attempt to incorporate Japanese effects. More precisely, La Farge seems to have wished to synthesize the methods of the Barbizon painters Hunt espoused with those of the Japanese and, at the same time, to work directly from the motif (in the case of landscape, out-of-doors). Thus, the strange and often awkward appearance of La Farge's earliest paintings should be attributed not simply to inexperience but to a remarkable originality of intention.

In still life, La Farge's early works have always been judged to possess an Oriental flavor. Thus, Marie Oakey Dewing, who studied painting with La Farge, wrote of these canvases that "The Japanese influenced La Farge more than the French." Arthur Bye similarly maintained of La Farge that "His interest in flower painting was due to his knowledge of and appreciation for Japanese art. . . . La Farge from the very first, and independently, saw the importance of this Oriental art."⁹³

This influence seems sometimes to be reflected in visual devices that have precedents in Japan. Thus, La Farge's use of raw wood for the background of his *Hanging Duck* of 1860, which preceded his paintings on tea trays by a year, may well have been based on Japanese still-life paintings of the Rimpa School, which also frequently leave sections of unpainted wood exposed.⁹⁴ In addition, La Farge's *Branch of Oranges*, probably of the same year, while partially inspired by the representations of hanging still life by Thomas Couture, seems to reflect the influence of Japanese kakemonos in its tall, narrow format, its emphasis on silhouette, and its simplicity of statement.⁹⁵ By about 1861 La Farge was undoubtedly experimenting with the type of asymmetrical arrangements found in Japanese art, as is apparent from his *Roses on a Tray* (Fig. 5) of ca. 1861, or *Calla Lily* of 1862.⁹⁶

⁹³ Maria Oakey Dewing, "Flower Painting and What the Flower Offers to Art," *Art and Progress*, vi, June, 1915, 256; Arthur Bye, *Pots and Pans, or Studies in Still-Life Painting*, Princeton, 1921, 193.

⁹⁴ In the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska, Lincoln; repr. in Adams, 1980b, 271. For Japanese paintings on wood executed in this Rimpa School style, see Hiroshi Mizuo, *Edo Painting: Sotatsu and Korin*, New York, 1972.

⁹⁵ *Branch of Oranges*, currently with Victor Spark, New York, is reproduced by Foster, 26. Katz, 82-83, has written of it that: "It is curiously reminiscent of some of Hiroshige's prints of flowers and birds, and we know that La Farge bought a number of prints by this master during the 1860's. The panel is long and narrow in the shape of a kakemono; the fruit is rather flatly modeled, with a minimum of light and shade, against a neutral background." Foster, 23, has maintained that: "The deliberate attention to surface design . . . becomes self-consciously Japanese in *Branch of Oranges*. . . . The narrow vertical format, neutral ground, and emphasis on silhouette intentionally borrow from the principles of Japanese kakemono painting." Katz dated this canvas to 1860, Foster to ca. 1870. The date 1859-60 seems the most plausible for reasons discussed in Adams, 1980a, 229, 270.

⁹⁶ *Calla Lily*, in The Art Museum, Princeton University, is reproduced by



30 John La Farge, *The Solitary*, 10 x 8.57cm, ill. for *Enoch Arden*, facing p. 41



31 Katsushika Hokusai, *Sketches of Birds*, 18 x 13cm, from *The Mangwa*, 11

Foster, 11. Katz, 67-68, notes of this painting: "The composition, which Mr. Born describes as 'so strikingly informal that few artists in the sixties would have chosen it for a painting,' seems to the present writer to resemble Japanese flower arrangements in its marked asymmetry. It seems more than likely that La Farge was already putting into practice a principle of Japanese design which he described in Pumpelly's book as 'a balancing of equal gravities, not equal surfaces.'" Foster, 17, has remarked of this work that "here . . . La Farge's asymmetrical Japanese sense of design also becomes apparent."

La Farge's choice of flowers also sometimes seems to reflect Oriental ideas, notably his depictions of water lilies. "Among the many flowers that he studied," noted La Farge's first biographer Cecilia Waern, "water lilies had for him an especial fascination. The lotus has always been preeminently the flower of the mystic."⁹⁷ Admittedly, La Farge's first painting of water lilies, *Water Lilies in a Bowl* of 1859, contains nothing in its setting that directly asserts an allusion to the Orient. But in his next depiction of the subject, *Water Lilies in a Tray*, the reference to the East became overt, for he set the flowers in a Japanese lacquer tray and painted them on a Japanese lacquer panel. In 1886, when La Farge visited Japan and viewed an ancient painting preserved at Nara, he was reminded of these early works. "And it was a delight to me . . ." he noted, "to recognize in the veilings and sequences of this painting of the lotus methods which I had used myself, working at such a distance of time and place, when I had tried to render the tones and transparency of our fairy water lily."⁹⁸

More generally, the influence of the Orient can be detected in the contemplative mood of La Farge's still life and in its sparseness of arrangement, traits that both stand in marked contrast to the cluttered table-top potpourris of fruit and expensive objects that were still the usual mode of American still life in this period.

In landscape La Farge's spatial effects often recall those of Japanese art, in particular his use of high horizons, dramatically flattened forms, and daringly balanced compositions. These devices can be seen in several of La Farge's earliest landscapes, painted in 1859, for example *Hillside Glen Cove*, *Portrait of the Artist*, and *Trees Against Sky* (Fig. 32).⁹⁹ The use of radically simplified tree silhouettes, particularly in the last of these works, brings to mind some of the landscape prints of Hiroshige, for example *Miyoanokoshi* in *The Sixty-nine Stages of the Kiso-Kaido* (Fig. 33). La Farge's *Barn, Newport* of 1859, with its dramatically cropped composition, may well have been affected by the unusual cutting off of forms found in certain Japanese prints, notably in Hokusai's views of Mount Fuji.¹⁰⁰ Though such cropping is admittedly rather rare in Japanese works, the device seems to have fascinated Western viewers, and La Farge's interest in it is demonstrated by his somewhat later illustration of *The Island Home* (Fig. 16).

La Farge's early snow scenes also suggest Japanese influ-

ence, for scenes of falling snow are relatively rare in Western art, and when they occur — as in the work of Aert van der Neer or Lucas Van Valckenburg — the snow is usually represented by individual flakes.¹⁰¹ La Farge's evocation of snow by means of graded tones thus falls outside any well-defined Western tradition, although it is similar to the manner of representing snow employed by Hiroshige, whose prints La Farge is recorded to have been collecting in this period. La Farge's first depiction of snow, *Old House in Snow* of 1860 (Fig. 34), recalls the work of the Barbizon School in its general composition, but it departs from Barbizon precedents in representing gusts of snow by means of generalized tonal areas of subtly differentiated whites. La Farge's later snow scenes continue to represent snow in this distinctive way but grow starker and more daring in arrangement. The composition of *Snowstorm, A Study* (Fig. 35), for example, consists entirely of relatively flat tonal areas, resembling the washes of color found in Japanese prints. The effect might have been inspired by one of the prints by Hiroshige that La Farge is recorded to have imported from Japan around 1860, such as *Snow Scene at Numadsu* or *Snow Scene at Kameyama Hill*; it also brings to mind Hiroshige's famous *Night Rain at Karasaki*.¹⁰² Indeed, La Farge once expressed his admiration for "the simple methods by which the Japanese opposes a mass of earth and trees to a sky, and manages, in two or three flat tones, to give the appearance of the one being behind the other or lighting it; and of one thin wash — I mean printed wash — looking solid and another looking transparent."¹⁰³

Instances of this type might easily be multiplied, although those cited here are of particular interest. If justified, they establish a date for Japanese influence that is a year or so earlier than that provided by truly unequivocal visual evidence, in which a work by La Farge can be associated with a specific print or object of Japanese manufacture. Thus, they would bring the visual data more closely into accord with verbal testimony.

The more general principle, that La Farge often sought to combine Japanese and Western effects in his paintings, can be adduced with many examples. A particularly interesting demonstration is provided by the decorative panels that La Farge executed in 1865 for the dining room of Charles Freeland at 117 Beacon Street in Boston. The series

Portrait [i.e. *Portrait of the Artist*]. . . . The curious S.-curved pose of the black-garbed figure seems to have a counterpart in the similar silhouette of a man in Volume 9 of Hokusai's *Mangwa*. . . . Moreover, the unusually high horizon of this and other early works recalls the Japanese."

¹⁰⁰ The painting is in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston. It is discussed in Cortisoz, 1911, 115.

¹⁰¹ Wolfgang Stechow, *Dutch Landscape Painting of the Seventeenth Century*, London, 1966, 95.

¹⁰² Sale, *Oriental Art Objects*, 1909, Nos. 80-81 (see Appendix II); Lefor, 62.

¹⁰³ John La Farge, "An Artist of Japan, Lecture Delivered Before the Architectural League of New York, June 1893," typescript, La Farge Family Papers, Series IV, Box 7, Folder 2.

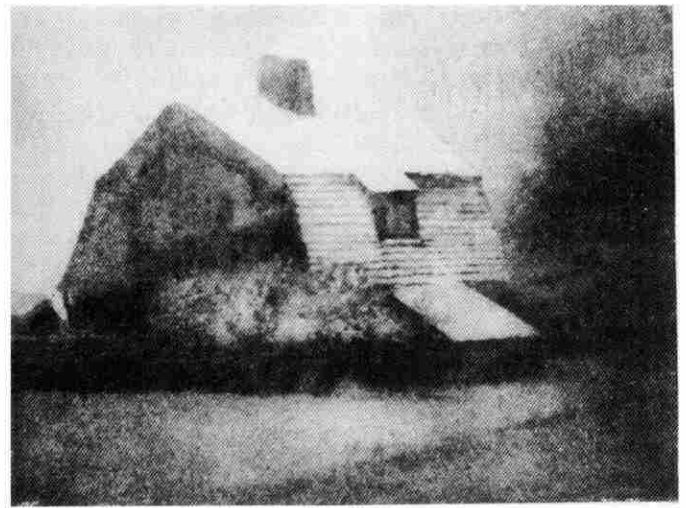
⁹⁷ Waern, 21.

⁹⁸ La Farge, *An Artist's Letters*, 1897. *Water Lilies in a Bowl* is owned by Mrs. Norman B. Woolworth, New York; *Water Lilies in a Tray*, which is now in damaged condition, by Samuel Yarnall, Chattanooga, Tennessee (for an early photograph of it, see Cortisoz, 1936, pl. 6).

⁹⁹ These works are in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and a private collection, New York. *Portrait of the Artist* is reproduced by Adams, June 1980, 273. Katz, 61-62, speaking of La Farge's discovery of Japanese art, remarks: "almost from the moment he began painting seriously we find evidences of its influence upon him. In the earliest works, however, this influence cannot be traced to a specific source, but appears rather in a general feeling for curvilinear flat pattern and a bold juxtaposition of contrasting color areas. . . . The first painting which seems to have a Japanese feeling about it is the *Self*



32 John La Farge, *Trees Against Sky*, 1859, oil on panel, 25.08 x 30.47cm. Private collection



34 John La Farge, *Old House in Snow*, 1860, oil on canvas, 22.22 x 26.67cm. Present location unknown (after Waern)



33 Ando Hiroshige, *Miyanokoshi*, from *The Sixty-Nine Stages of the Kiso-Kaido*, color print



35 John La Farge, *Snowstorm, A Study*, 1865, oil on canvas, 40.78 x 30.48cm. Atlanta, private collection

was never set in place as La Farge fell ill and was unable to complete the project, but three of the paintings have been identified.¹⁰⁴

In their decorative flatness and asymmetrical compositions, these paintings clearly make use of Japanese modes of design. Japanese gold-leaf screens evidently suggested both the inclusion of hollyhocks and morning glories, which are frequent subjects of such screens, as well as the imitation gold backgrounds of yellow ochre. In addition, the composition of the panel showing a *Fish* (Fig. 37) seems to have been based on a still-life print by Hiroshige (Fig. 36), another member of the group that La Farge apparently imported around 1860.¹⁰⁵

La Farge's brushwork and modeling in these panels, however, remains frankly Western in inspiration and shows the influence of progressive French painting. In addition, while his unbalanced composition is Japanese, La Farge chose to imitate an aspect of Japanese art — the representation of still-life — in which Japanese and Western modes are not greatly at variance. La Farge's *Fish*, in fact, which exemplifies the attempt of a Westerner to master Japanese prin-

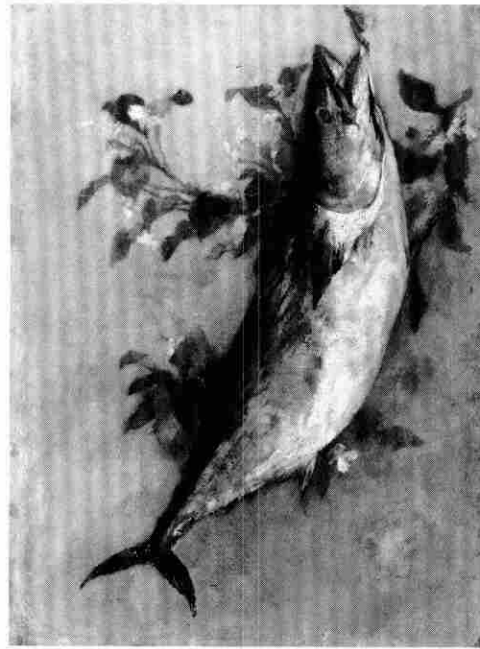
¹⁰⁴ Adams, 1980b. Dining rooms seem to have been a common location for Oriental decor. Thus, for example, William Michael Rossetti arranged a frieze of Japanese prints in his dining room at Endsleigh Gardens when he moved there in 1867 (Rossetti, 1, 277), and Claude Monet hung Jap-

anese prints in his dining room at Giverny. For Victor Hugo's "Chinese" dining room, see n. 151 below.

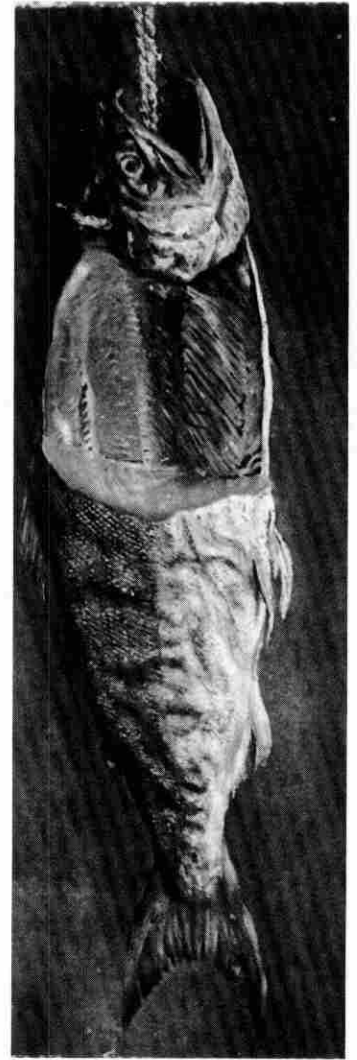
¹⁰⁵ Sale, *Oriental Art Objects*, 1909, No. 277 (see Appendix 11).



36 Ando Hiroshige, *Fish*, color print, 30.4 x 17.8cm



37 John La Farge, *Fish*, 1865, oil on panel, 60 x 44.13cm. Harvard University, Fogg Art Museum



38 Takahashi Yuichi, *Salmon*, ca. 1877, 139 x 46.6cm. Tokyo, University of Arts

ciples of design, has intriguing affinities with Takahashi Yuichi's *Salmon* (Fig. 38) of ca. 1877, one of the high points of Japanese Western-style painting of the Meiji era.¹⁰⁶ Takahashi was influenced by Western lithographs and by the reproductions of Dutch still-life paintings which served as his textbooks during his student days, but he deliberately depicted objects familiar to Japanese culture. Both La Farge and Takahashi, in short, were attempting to synthesize the traditions of East and West with a minimum of visual conflict. In these works, at least, they came to results that are surprisingly similar.

This sort of mediation was not limited to La Farge's still-life. Indeed, in landscape he achieved an even more subtle merger of Oriental and Occidental modes. *Bishop Berkeley's Rock* (Fig. 39) of 1868, for example, seems Western in concept until we realize that it restates the composition of the Japanese-inspired illustration of *The Island Home* (Fig. 16) of a few years earlier. Indeed, the unusual vantage point on the rocky promontory recalls that in one of Hiroshige's views of Kuwana Hakkei (Fig. 41). *The Paradise Valley* (Fig. 40), completed in about 1869, seems even more an outgrowth of the European tradition, but once again its bird's-eye viewpoint and composition of layered planes of luminous color areas show the direct influence of Japanese prints.¹⁰⁷ Here we see Japanese effects employed not as a self-conscious, self-advertising device, but as a way of seeing.

¹⁰⁶ Minoru Harada, *Meiji Western Painting*, New York and Tokyo, 1975, 22-23.

¹⁰⁷ There is a striking parallel between La Farge's description of *The Paradise Valley* in Cortissoz, 1911, 130, and his explanation of the most significant traits of Japanese landscape prints on 122-23 of the same volume.

La Farge's Essay on Japanese Art

The visual evidence, in short, supports the verbal accounts and suggests that by 1859, the year in which he decided to become a painter, La Farge had already begun to incorporate Japanese effects into his work. La Farge's contributions to the early appreciation of Japanese prints, however, did not end with his activities as a collector and artist. He was also the author of an article on Japanese art that appeared in 1870 as a chapter of Raphael Pumpelly's book *Across America and Asia*. That La Farge was asked to contribute the piece suggests that his interest in Japanese art was well known, and that he was considered a leading authority on the subject.

Often chatty and informal, this essay undoubtedly was intended to convey the impression of a personal discovery. Indeed, in speaking of the high quality of Japanese work-

adise Valley in Cortissoz, 1911, 130, and his explanation of the most significant traits of Japanese landscape prints on 122-23 of the same volume.



39 John La Farge, *Bishop Berkeley's Rock*, 1868, oil on canvas, 76.2 x 63.5cm. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art



40 John La Farge, *The Paradise Valley*, 1869, oil on canvas, 84.14 x 107.9cm. Boston, Mass., private collection

manship, La Farge slipped into the first person, beginning a sentence with the phrase, "I can remember a print."¹⁰⁸ His word-play vaunts his verbal virtuosity and intimates the dazzling conversational skills that deeply impressed the young Henry James. In a tortuous tongue-twister, for example, he describes the creatures in one of Hokusai's prints as "bicephalic, semi-centauric, many-legged, extensible, accustomed to send their heads on hawking expeditions or using their noses with more than elephantine sagacity."¹⁰⁹

By this date, of course, the significance of Japanese art was widely recognized. As early as 1866 we find the art critic of the *New York Daily Tribune*, Clarence Cook, faulting the still-life paintings of Thomas Farrer for their lack of the "poetic perception" found in the work of Japanese artists; and in the following year La Farge's friend Russell Sturgis, normally a proponent of French art, declared in



41 Utagawa Hiroshige I, *View of Kuwana Hakkei*, woodblock

¹⁰⁸ La Farge, 1870, n. on p. 196. La Farge's essay has recently been translated into Japanese by Seiichi Yamaguchi (*Ukiyo-e Art*, LXXV, 1982, unpag.).

¹⁰⁹ La Farge, 1870, n. on pp. 199-200.

The Galaxy that Americans "might better have studied of the Japanese than of the French."¹¹⁰

Yet as of 1870 there still were few extended discussions of Japanese art, and those which existed were generally mixed together with observations about Japanese history and culture or with anecdotes of travel in Japan. Consequently, La Farge's article not only has the distinction of being the first on Japanese art by a Western painter, but it stands out as remarkable for its period in its exclusive concentration on the visual characteristics of Japanese work.

In recent years several writers have drawn attention to La Farge's accomplishment. Lawrence Chisholm has noted that "La Farge's essay stands at the beginning of an understanding of Japanese art as the product of a distinctive way of seeing"; Sally Mills has recognized that "The precocity of his effort is evident when it is compared with James Jackson Jarves' *Glimpse at the Art of Japan*, published six years later"; and John J. Walsh, Jr., has maintained that "In every way it is the most sensitive and acute treatment of Japanese design written in this period, in Europe as well as the United States."¹¹¹

La Farge's text, however, should be approached with considerable caution. Misled by La Farge's verbal gymnastics and by his essay's very individual tone, scholars generally have assumed that his assertions were based almost entirely on his own experiences and thus can be used to elucidate his use of Japanese effects in his earlier paintings. The situation, however, is more complex. While some aspects of La Farge's essay are indeed original, much of it is cleverly spliced together from the accounts of earlier

writers. Close analysis is necessary to separate La Farge's borrowings from his original contributions.

La Farge made two direct references to previous literature on Japanese art: one to a pamphlet that Sir Rutherford Alcock published in 1862 and another to a derogatory comment in Ruskin's *Time and Tide* of 1868 — a passage that La Farge probably had come across while preparing for his lectures on Ruskin at Harvard.¹¹² La Farge failed, however, to acknowledge his most important sources, which were not English but French.

La Farge's borrowings were by no means straightforward, for often, even while lifting a phrase, he significantly transformed the original meaning. Champfleury, for example, had maintained in 1869 that "the idol cut in the trunk of a tree by savages is nearer to Michelangelo's *Moses* than most of the statues in the annual salons."¹¹³ La Farge echoed, but significantly moderated this assertion, observing that "the tattooing of the savage is connected with the designs of Michelangelo."¹¹⁴ Ernest Chesneau had written of the Japanese in 1868 that "They . . . apply higher principles in order to transform, into an artistic design, the elements furnished by nature."¹¹⁵ La Farge employed nearly the same words but expressed a more sophisticated appraisal of Japanese methods. "And so," he wrote, "by a principle familiar to painters, an appeal is made to the higher ideas of design, to the desire of concealing art beneath a look of nature."¹¹⁶

These borrowings make it clear that La Farge avidly followed the latest art criticism from Paris, for the accounts he made use of were available only in French and had been

¹¹⁰ Clarence Cook, *New York Daily Tribune*, June 1, 1866, 8; Russell Sturgis, *The Galaxy*, iv, 1867, 238; Patricia Hills, *The Painter's America*, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1974, 85 (for La Farge's friendship with Sturgis, see n. 41 above). Sturgis noted on p. 230 of his review that: "The persevering way in which Mr. Hennessy keeps his studies 'flat,' . . . aiming to achieve local truth of light and shade before he aims for 'effects,' is significant and good. If he is trying to gain through an almost Japanese flatness, a more than Japanese brilliancy of color, and to this add delicate and forcible drawing, he is trying for what is good." On p. 238 Sturgis continued: "But our American sky and sunshine are unmistakable, and nature surrounds us with lovely colors. If our painters lose sight of these, and think that French pictures are better because soft and gray, or even that they are not much worse for their coldness, they might better have studied of the Japanese than of the French."

Significantly, the painter whose "Japanese" flatness and brilliancy of color Sturgis singled out, William James Hennessy, had collaborated with La Farge on the illustrations to the Ticknor and Fields edition of *Enoch Arden*.

Bromfield, 261, maintains that Ernest Chesneau, in *Les nations rivales dans l'art*, Paris, 1868, 335, was "the first critic to see or claim to see the direct use of Japanese art in the work of contemporary Western artists." It is remarkable that Sturgis' remarks about an American artist were roughly contemporary with those of Chesneau, and rather surprising that he saw Japanese influence not as associated with French art, but as an alternative to it. In 1867 John Ruskin also noted that Japanese prints had affected Western painters (see n. 112 below).

¹¹¹ Lawrence A. Chisholm, *Fenollosa: The Far East and American Culture*, New Haven, 1963, 61; Mills; Walsh, 8-9. Most early books on Japan are

travel accounts, such as that of the captivity of Captain Golovnin or the report of Perry's expedition, and discuss art only in passing. Probably the first essay specifically devoted to Japanese art was that of John Leighton, delivered as a lecture to the Royal Institute, May 1, 1863 (John Leighton, "On Japanese Art — Illustrated by Native Examples," *Proceedings of the Royal Institution of Great Britain*, iv, Pt. 2, No. 38, Friday, May 1, 1863, 99-108; also fifty copies were privately printed, London, 1863; Whitford, 99, evidently confused this discussion with a later address of 1888 by Frederick, Lord Leighton, which is cited by Rossetti, 282). Zacharie Astruc, who wrote on Japanese art in the 1860's (Zacharie Astruc, "Beaux-Arts, l'empire du soleil levant," *L'étendard*, February 27 and March 23, 1867; Astruc had some practical experience as a painter, but most of his artistic work seems to postdate his writings on Japanese art (Flescher).

¹¹² Rutherford Alcock, *Catalogue of Works of Industry and Art Sent from Japan, International Exhibition*, London, 1862; John Ruskin, *Time and Tide*, London, 1867 (in the *Collected Works*, London, xvii, 340). Ruskin wrote that: "There has long been an increasing interest in Japanese art, which has been very harmful to many of our own painters, and I greatly desired to see what these people were and what they did." For La Farge's teaching at Harvard, see Linnea Wren, "John La Farge, His Critical and Aesthetic Views," Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1978, chap. 2, 23-24.

¹¹³ Champfleury, *Histoire de l'imagerie populaire*, Paris, 1869, xii.

¹¹⁴ La Farge, 1870, 197.

¹¹⁵ Chesneau, 452.

¹¹⁶ La Farge, 1870, 197.

published only a year or so before his own essay. His most important source was certainly Ernest Chesneau's pamphlet in 1868, "L'art japonais," which provided the armature for his entire discussion, as well as the basis for many turns of phrase. To what extent La Farge was familiar with other French writers on *Japonisme*, such as Philippe Burty or Zacharie Astruc, is hard to tell, for Chesneau had incorporated their best ideas into his own essay.¹¹⁷

Only one portion of a larger compilation on the art of different countries, Chesneau's "L'art japonais" reflected the new interest in national styles that was encouraged in this period both by the emergence of world's fairs and by the cultural determination of Hippolyte Taine. Four or five times as long as La Farge's article, it is filled with rambling and often highly speculative discussions of the nature of Japanese mythology and culture and of the racial origin of the Japanese, whom he regarded as superior to the Chinese because of their possession of some Aryan blood. His reasoning is sometimes difficult to follow, as when he accuses the Chinese of being at once atheistic and prone to fanciful religious speculation.¹¹⁸

Wisely, La Farge omitted Chesneau's racist rantings as well as many factual assertions that are incorrect, such as the claim that the Japanese know how to print several colors simultaneously from a single woodblock.¹¹⁹ Instead, he concentrated on the visual traits of Japanese art. Though Chesneau had dispersed this discussion throughout his essay, La Farge organized his entire presentation around them, stressing four characteristics of Japanese art: the skillful suggestion of pictorial depth by the use of a bird's-eye view and superimposed levels of distance; a delight in caricature; asymmetrical composition based on the occult balance of visual forces; and a skill in constructing color arrangements that were at once harmonious and true to the appearance

of nature.

There is good reason to believe that La Farge had been interested in the Japanese use of high viewpoints long before he read Chesneau's essay. In 1864 he jotted down the phrase "bird's-eye view" in a sketchbook containing studies for the Japanese-inspired illustrations for *Enoch Arden*, and high horizons appear in his own drawings and paintings as early as 1859.¹²⁰ Yet in this section of his essay he borrowed, almost without alteration, directly from Chesneau.

Chesneau argued that the absence of perspective in Chinese representations was the result of an intelligent decision, for it made it possible for them to place decorations on vases which, unlike representations in Western perspective, would not seem deformed when seen from unusual vantage points. The Japanese, however, had improved the methods of the Chinese by presenting their motifs as though seen from an elevated viewpoint and by presenting the different levels of distance as superimposed layers. By this means they could convey a convincing illusion of distance without utilizing Western perspective.

In this discussion, Chesneau briefly abrogated logic when he jumped from the case of a vase to that of a print, which is hardly intended to be seen from different vantage points. Only his assertion that Japanese prints are not so much representations as "decorative compositions" helps to bridge this gulf. La Farge, unfortunately, made the lack of parallelism between the case of the ceramic and the print even more apparent, both because he abridged the discussion, making the transition more abrupt, and because he went to greater lengths to defend the representational truth of the Japanese manner of depicting space.¹²¹

La Farge's discussion of the Japanese skill at caricature is also close to that of Chesneau, but here La Farge made some significant alterations in emphasis. Chesneau main-

¹¹⁷ Chesneau published his essay in three forms, in *Le constitutionnel*, January 14, January 22, and February 11, 1868 [copy in the Library of Congress]; in *Les nations rivales dans l'art*, Paris, 1868, and in *L'art japonais — discours fait au Union des Beaux-Arts*, Paris, 1869. These different versions are substantially the same. In a brief notation in a sketchbook in the Museum of Art, Bowdoin College, La Farge scribbled that Chesneau referred to "orchestration of colour" on "p. 96" (this sketchbook is inventory No. 1956.24.223.1). This suggests that La Farge probably made use of Chesneau's *Les nations rivales dans l'art* of 1868, the only one of Chesneau's three publications on Japanese art to which this pagination could refer.

Many of Chesneau's borrowings are quite easy to identify. His comparison between Hokusai and Ingres (Chesneau, 422-23) was lifted from Edmond and Jules de Goncourt's *Idées et sensations*, Paris, 1904 [1st ed., 1866], 15-17; his discussion of the superiority of the Japanese to the Chinese (p. 416) is derived from de Chassiron, 1861; his inclusion of the Japanese fairy tale of "The Tongue-Cut Sparrow" (pp. 428-430) is derived from Rutherford Alcock, *The Capital of the Tycoon*, London, 1863, II, 287-88 (Bromfield, 84-85). It is more difficult, however, to determine to what extent Chesneau drew on previous writers for the most important part of his essay, the discussion of the visual traits of Japanese art. While Zacharie Astruc later claimed credit for first drawing attention to the brilliant color and random placement of forms in Japanese prints, his articles of 1867 and 1868 in *L'étendard* do not substantiate this assertion (Flescher, 355). However, Philippe Burty was writing about the visual characteristics of Japanese art at about the same time as Chesneau, and may well have

anticipated or helped shape his ideas (Bromfield, 251). In addition, some of Chesneau's points had been made earlier, in less sophisticated fashion, by English writers such as Leighton and Alcock.

Given La Farge's contacts, through Horace Scudder and others, with the English Pre-Raphaelites, it seems likely that he was familiar with William Rossetti's essay on "Japanese Woodcuts," published in *The Reader*, October 31, 1863, 501-03, and November, 1863, 537-540, and reprinted in *Fine Art, Chiefly Contemporary*, London, 1867, 363-387. La Farge was also an acquaintance of James Jackson Jarves, who wrote an essay on "Japanese Art" published in *Art Journal*, VIII, June 1, 1869, 182-83 (and elaborated in "The Art of Japan," *Art Thoughts*, New York, 1870, 221-230).

¹¹⁸ Chesneau, 416.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 447.

¹²⁰ On a page in the smallest of the three sketchbooks in the Bowdoin College Art Museum, La Farge noted: "Bird's-eye view of India/Illustrated News, page 225, year 1863, vol. 43." This refers to "Birdseye [sic] view of the city of Amjere from the hill of Tarahurh," in the *Illustrated London News*, XLIII, a wood-engraving that was apparently one of the sources of inspiration for the illustration of *The Island Home* in *Enoch Arden*.

¹²¹ Chesneau, 419-421; La Farge, 1870, 200. Philippe Burty in *Masterpieces of Industrial Art*, 1869 (first published in Paris in 1868), 144-45, discusses Japanese prints in the chapter on porcelain, and maintains that the Japanese favor the use of "the bird's-eye view" and "aerial perspective."

tained that "The dominant tendency in Japanese art is accentuation. . . . This search for expression is pushed so far in Japanese designs that it seems frequently to touch the boundaries of caricature."¹²² La Farge noted this same trait but, unlike Chesneau, argued that the Japanese showed taste and restraint and that their tendency to accentuate was a positive feature derived from their concern for the inner significance of a gesture. La Farge observed:

A certain grotesqueness marks the Japanese drawings. . . . Their constant and delicate observation recalls with a smile the secret mechanisms of actions, from the slight indications of any habit to extravagances of gesture and demeanor which flourish in an open life like theirs. Their hand is light and never suffers from that Western spirit of caricature which underlines, and insists, and dwells upon its joke. A few lines give it.¹²³

A linguistic difficulty that troubled both Chesneau and La Farge was whether to class Japanese art as "realistic" or "idealistic." Chesneau noted that the Japanese had a talent for inventing imaginary creatures, and in this respect surpassed French masters such as Ingres.¹²⁴ One might conclude from this that the Japanese were not tied to the real forms of nature, but Chesneau spoke nonetheless of "the realism of a Jordaens, a Rubens or a Hokusai," and argued that Japanese art lacked "idealism" in the Western sense.¹²⁵ "It is well known," he remarked, "that one doesn't find in these designs the superior purification applied by Greek art to natural forms . . . for in the Empire of the Rising Sun the artists do not attempt to bring reality to an ideal form."¹²⁶

On this point La Farge saw subtleties that Chesneau had overlooked and he gently took issue with his unidentified adversary: "I have no space to consider [La Farge noted], whether if the Japanese have an ideal, it can be contained, as with the Greeks, in the dream of a perfected beauty. The sufficient ideal of realism is character."¹²⁷

In later writings La Farge elaborated this point more forcefully, arguing that Japanese art should indeed be considered "idealistic." In a book review of 1901, for example,

he declared: "The Japanese drawing is an idealized interpretation. It is often more faithful to tradition than to a realistic rendering; it always pursues the realizing of an idea. It prefers the beauty of type to individual beauty; thus agreeing with Buddhist ideas."¹²⁸

Unlike Chesneau, La Farge placed the Japanese — somewhat cautiously, to be sure — on an equal plane of artistic genius with the ancient Greeks. He could not have known of the most significant precedent for this assertion. On February 25, 1867, the De Goncourts had noted in their journal that "The architectural lines of Greece are tedious . . . while a Japanese gateway charms and pleases the eye."¹²⁹ This remark, however, was not published until the 1890's, and, in any case, implies that the appeal of Japanese art was as much in its novelty as in its intrinsic merit. While comparisons between the art of Greece and that of Japan were a commonplace in early discussions of Japanese art, La Farge stated with unprecedented clarity that Japanese art could be as influential for modern painters as that of classical antiquity. "Their work," he declared of the Japanese, "can be for us a storehouse as ample and valuable in its way as the treasures of form left to us by the Greeks."¹³⁰

La Farge's discussion of Japanese modes of composition is also more sophisticated than that of Chesneau. Diderot in his *Encyclopedia* had noted the irregularity of Oriental art which he described as "without visible intellectual pattern; a bizarre mode without order or symmetry."¹³¹ Chesneau fixed on this same trait of asymmetry, but considered it a positive rather than a negative quality, as it created an "element of fantasy and surprise."¹³² Following Chesneau, La Farge also observed that the Japanese made use of "a principle of irregularity, or of apparent chance arrangement."¹³³

Beyond this lack of symmetry, however, Chesneau observed no organizing principle in Japanese arrangement, although he was aware that "It is with an exquisite tact, with the most penetrating, the most exact, the most subtle artistic intuition, that these masters have chosen the exact place where an ornament must be."¹³⁴ Here La Farge was more perceptive and recognized that Japanese design is indeed based on a principle of order, that of the occult bal-

¹²² Chesneau, 440-41.

¹²³ La Farge, 1870, 199.

¹²⁴ Chesneau, 442.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 422-23.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 440.

¹²⁷ La Farge, 1870, 201.

¹²⁸ John La Farge, "A History of Japanese Art" [book review], *International Monthly*, 111, 1901, 593.

¹²⁹ Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *Journal des Goncourt*, Paris, 1888, 105-06.

¹³⁰ La Farge, 1870, 196.

¹³¹ Van Rappard-Boon, 110-11.

¹³² Chesneau, 434-35.

¹³³ La Farge, 1870, 197.

¹³⁴ Chesneau, 435. This lack of regularity had already impressed English writers on Japanese art. The Gothic Revival architect William Burges, for example, in a review of 1852, noted of a Japanese lacquer box: "It is singular that the artist in his horror of regularity, has actually made one side of the heart and one corner of the fan to go over the edge and round on to the side of the box. One can imagine how the whole school of design would call out if one of its pupils attempted so audacious a departure from European precedent, but somehow it looks alright and the eye is satisfied." (William Burges, "The Japanese Court at the International Exhibition," *The Gentleman's Magazine*, September, 1862, 249.)

ance of visual forces, "a balancing of equal gravities, not of equal surfaces."¹³⁵ La Farge wrote:

A Western designer, in ornamenting a given surface, would look for some fixed points from which to start, and would mark the places where his mind had rested by exact and symmetrical divisions. These would be supposed by the Japanese, and his design would float over them, while they, though invisible, would be felt underneath. Thus a few ornaments — a bird, a flower — on one side of this page would be made by an almost intellectual influence to balance the large unadorned space remaining.¹³⁶

Though to some extent foreshadowed by the discussion of Chesneau, La Farge's excursus, unlike that of the French writer, is directly applicable to the work of modernist Western painters. John J. Walsh, Jr., has noted: "La Farge sees the Japanese primarily as imaginative composers, and in seizing on the principle of 'equal gravities' he identifies an element of Japanese design that appealed most directly to his contemporaries Degas, Manet, and Whistler."¹³⁷

Even more original than La Farge's analysis of Japanese principles of design was his discussion of the Japanese use of color. To be sure, Chesneau commented on the luminosity of Japanese hues and noted that the Japanese possessed skill in constructing harmonious effects through "relationships of color."¹³⁸ But La Farge went much further in his assertions, attributing to the Japanese artists not only brilliance of hue and a desire for color harmony but also a naturalistic intention of capturing the colors of a particular moment and time of day.

After the advent of Impressionism many critics suggested that the Impressionist use of color had been largely inspired by Japanese prints. Thus, for example, in 1886 Théodore Duret made a clear statement to this effect in the preface to the catalogue of an exhibition of Impressionist paintings: "Well it may seem strange to say it, but it is nonetheless true, that before the arrival among us of the Japanese picture books, there was no one in France who dared to seat

himself on the banks of a river and to put side by side on his canvas, a roof frankly red, a white-washed wall, a green poplar, a yellow road, and blue water."¹³⁹

La Farge's essay, although written before Impressionism was a recognized movement, stressed the most impressionistic aspect of the Japanese use of color. He wrote:

For the Japanese, no combinations of colors have been improbable, and their solution of such as are put aside by Western knowledge, recall the very arrangements of Nature. . . . Their colored prints are most charmingly sensitive to the coloring that makes up the appearance of different times of day, to the relations of color which mark the different seasons, so that their landscape efforts give us, in reality, the *place where* — the illuminated air of the scene of action. . . . Like all true colorists they are curious of local color, and of the values of light and shade; refining upon this they use the local colors to enhance the sensation of the time, and the very colors of the costumes belong to the hour or the season of the landscape. Eyes studious of the combinations and oppositions of color, will enjoy these exquisite studies, of whose directness and delicacy nothing too much can be said in praise.¹⁴⁰

Recently David Bromfield has termed this "the first clear statement of the 'naturalistic' quality of Japanese prints," and has maintained that it marks "the beginning of the attitude to Japanese prints which was to enable them to have a major influence on the development of impressionism."¹⁴¹

La Farge recognized, however, that Japanese art was not simply naturalistic but was at once realistic and abstract, at once a system of representation and a system of design. It achieved a "successful blending," he noted, of "the two opposites of realism and decoration," and consequently "takes a distinct place, never before filled in the logical history of art."¹⁴²

Although it is hard to excuse La Farge's failure to give credit to Chesneau, his skill in modifying and transforming Chesneau's ideas recalls the ingenuity with which, in his

¹³⁵ La Farge, 1870, 197.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹³⁷ Walsh, 9-10.

¹³⁸ Chesneau, 454, refers to "leur sentiment si juste du contraste des couleurs." James Jackson Jarves later reaffirmed La Farge's interpretations of the Japanese use of color, as noted by Floyd, 249.

¹³⁹ T. Duret, *Works in Oil and Pastel by the Impressionists of Paris*, New York, 1886, 5. The connection between the color effects of Japanese prints and the work of the Impressionists has often been noted. There are statements on this subject by Emile Zola, Armand Silvestre, Alfred Stevens, Camille Pissarro, Paul Gauguin, and others (Whitford, 166-67; Weisberg, 118, 122; and Michener, 238).

¹⁴⁰ La Farge, 1870, 201.

¹⁴¹ Bromfield, 380. In his later writings La Farge particularly emphasized

his early appreciation of the Japanese use of color. In 1901 he noted that his friend John Bancroft, with whom he collected Japanese prints, had been interested in them as "proofs of some of his general theories in the representation of colored light" (La Farge, 1901, 581). In the unfinished memoir that he sent to his biographer, Royal Cortissoz, La Farge again described his association with Bancroft, noting that: "The point that interested us both has not yet, I think, been studied out. . . . The very serious point to me was the display in certain of these color prints of landscape relations in color. This is done so simply as to give a continuous explanation of how the painter built up his scheme, and for Bancroft and myself, interested in constructing similar schemes, according to modern scientific analyses, this Japanese confirmation and occasional teaching was full of most serious interest" (Cortissoz, 1911, 122-23).

¹⁴² La Farge, 1870, 200. This statement, which is of key significance, has been discussed by Adams, 1983, 502.

paintings, he adapted the visual traits of Japanese prints to serve his own pictorial needs. Both Chesneau and La Farge viewed the Japanese as skilled in "decorative arrangement," but La Farge placed greater stress on the naturalness of effect that the Japanese artists achieved, and several of his assertions go beyond anything in Chesneau's essay. Chesneau, somewhat diffusely, described an aspect of Japanese culture; La Farge discoursed on the philosophy of design as it is expressed in the work of Japanese artists. As a consequence, La Farge's essay is far richer in its suggestion of new artistic possibilities. More than any other article of its period, that of La Farge singles out precisely those aspects of Japanese prints which would appeal to the Impressionist painters.

The essay marks the termination of the first phase of La Farge's interest in Japanese art. By the date it was written, La Farge's enthusiasm for Japanese prints had been unequivocally expressed in his work, and Ukiyo-e were beginning to find widespread artistic acceptance. In addition, 1870 marked a turning point in La Farge's career, for he briefly abandoned painting to accept a lectureship at Harvard, and then, after an illness the following year, took a long-deferred trip to Europe. By the time he returned to the United States the style of his work had changed, and his interests had shifted away from easel painting towards murals, stained glass, and the decorative arts. Though La Farge continued to employ Japanese effects in his later work, often in quite original ways, his discovery of them had already been accomplished.¹⁴³

Conclusion

It is unclear to what extent La Farge was aware of European *Japonisme*. It would appear that he kept informed through reading and had little access to the work of his fellow painters. He was a subscriber to the *Revue des deux mondes*, corresponded with his cousin Paul de Saint-Victor and with Charles Blanc, and, as his essay of 1870 shows, kept up with the most recent English and French writings on Japanese art.¹⁴⁴ His exploitation of Japanese sources, however, in his drawings, illustrations, and paintings, does

not closely resemble that of any European artist. Indeed, many of the manifestations of his *Japonisme*, such as his paintings on Japanese tea trays, appear to be unparalleled outside of his immediate circle.¹⁴⁵ If La Farge's interest in Japanese art could not be termed purely original, on the other hand, it was by no means simply a passive echo of European tendencies. Both artistically and intellectually La Farge's early *Japonisme* of the 1850's and sixties was as advanced as, and in several important respects anticipated, the most adventurous European developments.

Yet to conclude merely with the claim that La Farge was "first" in appreciating Japanese prints would be to overlook those points which make his case such an instructive and interesting one. The development of La Farge's interest in Japanese art, which can be traced in more detail than with any other artist of this period, suggests that three frequently repeated assertions about the nature of *Japonisme* should be re-examined.

First, the case of La Farge demonstrates that the early development of *Japonisme* cannot be restricted to any one country, and in particular did not occur exclusively in France. There is no doubt that by the late 1860's Paris had become one of the chief centers for *Japonisme*, but the origins of the movement seem to have been far more varied and complex than has generally been supposed.

By its nature *Japonisme* is a topic ill-suited to a parochial or a nationalistic approach. Not only did an interest in Japanese prints spring up almost simultaneously in America, England, and France, but also the most creative figures of both *Japonisme* and the latest phases of *Chinoiserie* were often men cut adrift from clear national ties — such as La Farge, an American of French orientation and descent; Victor Hugo, a Frenchman exiled to the Channel Isles; or James McNeill Whistler, an American resident of London who had spent his childhood in Russia. Even the De Goncourts, although they lacked an actual double nationality, were so consciously at odds with their own time and place as to be, in a real sense, exiles in their own country.¹⁴⁶ The very term used to describe the enthusiasm for Japanese things, *Japonisme*, has a tangled cultural lineage, for it was devised

¹⁴³ Adams, 1980a, 456, and Adams, 1984a.

¹⁴⁴ La Farge, S.J., 10; Cortisoz, 1911, 69; James, 74, 86. Unfortunately, La Farge destroyed his personal correspondence (Weinberg, 5-6), so the nature of his contact with European figures must be deduced from circumstantial evidence.

¹⁴⁵ As mentioned, William Morris Hunt made at least one painting on a Japanese tea tray (see n. 32, above). For more about this painting and its context, see Henry Adams, "The development of William Morris Hunt's 'The Flight of Night,'" *American Art Journal*, xv, 1983, 48, 52, n. 26, and 49, fig. 6; and *idem*, "William Morris Hunt's 'Chef d'Oeuvre Inconnu,'" *Proceedings of the New York State Capital Symposium*, Albany, N.Y., 1983, 100.

¹⁴⁶ Aslin; Watanabe; Bromfield, 22; Escholier, 53; Gaeton Picon, Roger Coraille, and George Herscher, *Victor Hugo, Dessinateur*, Paris, 1963, 95, and figs. 212-18.

The notion that Whistler derived his knowledge of Japanese prints from Bracquemond was first expressed by Léonce Bénédict in "Whistler," 1905b,

142-44, and has been popularized by writers such as Whitford, 31, who describes Whistler as a painter "of the French avant-garde," and maintains that he played "a major role in the introduction of Japanese prints into Britain." Actually, Whistler's early "Japanese" paintings, *The Lange Lijzen of the Six Marks* and *La Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine* (both completed in 1864), are strikingly Pre-Raphaelite in effect. The willowy languorous female figures are like those in any number of Pre-Raphaelite paintings; the somewhat flattened interior space recalls Rossetti's *Ecce Ancilla Domine*, which Rossetti described in a letter of 1853 as a "China-ese" picture; and even the inclusion of Oriental porcelain has a direct English precedent, for Rossetti had represented Japanese blue-and-white ware in his *Girl at Lattice* of 1862 (Virginia Surtees, *The Paintings and Drawings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti 1828-1882: A Catalogue Raisonné*, Oxford, 1971, 1, 12-14, 88). Interestingly, in 1862 the English travel writer Edward de Fonblanque termed some Japanese designs, "the perfect works of an Eastern Pre-Raphaelite school" (Edward Barrington de Fonblanque, *Nippon and Pe-che-li: or Two Years in Japan and Northern China*, London, 1862, 32).

by a French critic who was describing some illustrations in an American magazine.¹⁴⁷

This is not to say, of course, that some national tendencies did not exist, but that they must be viewed in the context of continual cross-cultural influences. Travel and transmission of goods and information was relatively easy in the nineteenth century, as the very diffusion of Japanese prints demonstrates. La Farge's friend Thomas Gold Appleton, for example, is said to have crossed the Atlantic forty times before 1860.¹⁴⁸

Second, the case of La Farge reveals that writers have not yet done justice to the complexity of the impact of Japanese art. Several accounts of *Japonisme* begin with a checklist of the stylistic traits of Japanese prints and assume that when these characteristics are found in a Western painting that Japanese influence is present.¹⁴⁹ Unfortunately, none of the traits that appear on these lists are in any sense unique to Japanese prints. Flattening of forms and elimination of shadow, for example, are found in the work of Ingres, whom Théophile Silvestre once described as "a Chinese lost in Athens."¹⁵⁰ The Japanese use of a high horizon — to cite a characteristic that is known to have interested early Western viewers — was actually derived from Western topographical scenes, which were known to the Japanese both from trade with the Dutch, and through the intermediary of Soochow *vues d'optiques*.¹⁵¹

This checklist approach also does not take into account the great range of Japanese art that became available in the West — which included porcelains, lacquers, and paintings as well as prints. Finally, and most seriously, it tends to impose twentieth-century views about Japanese art onto the minds of nineteenth-century observers. As Anne Hanson has perceptively noted: "Today we speak of Japanese forms in terms of their abstract qualities, but it would be an anticipation of later history to claim that French artists who were influenced by Japanese art in the 1860s and 1870s

were mainly interested in trying to develop synthetic forms. Their concerns were still too focused on questions of perception."¹⁵²

These fundamental failings of the checklist approach are evident when we consider La Farge's complex appropriations from the Japanese. For La Farge's borrowings from Japanese art cannot be reduced to any simple formula: they are varied, not always obvious, and often combined with other influences. La Farge was affected not only by Japanese prints, but also by gold-leaf screens, ink paintings, lacquerware, ceramics, and other art forms. Sometimes, particularly in his illustrations, it is possible to identify a specific Japanese source, or an effect that is indubitably Japanese. Sometimes also, Japanese influence is apparent in the use of Japanese materials, such as Japanese paper, a Japanese brush, or a Japanese tray. Often, however, Japanese ideas are reflected more indirectly through compositional devices — such as the use of a high horizon, or of decorative flatness and dramatic silhouettes, or of the balancing of asymmetrical forms, or of intense colors similar to those found in Japanese prints — and in these cases it is quite difficult to determine when La Farge was influenced by the Japanese and when he derived these effects from precedents in Western painting.¹⁵³

Certain general characteristics of La Farge's early work, such as the importance he awarded to flower painting, an interest in weather effects that recalls the work of Hiroshige, or the mood of reverie and contemplation that characterizes many of his paintings, seem associated with Japanese influence, although this is difficult to prove. Most puzzling of all are the works of an entirely Western appearance, whose preparatory sketches reveal that La Farge made use of a Japanese model (Fig. 23). It is possible that many more seemingly ordinary works of this type were actually based on Japanese prints, but that the evidence documenting this connection has been destroyed.

¹⁴⁷ Philip Dennis Cate, "Japanese Influence in French Prints," in Weisberg, 54.

¹⁴⁸ Gibson Danes, "William Morris Hunt and His Newport Circle," *Magazine of Art*, XLIII, 1950, 144.

Some differences in national attitudes towards Japanese art do seem to be apparent. The French, for example, seem to have been particularly enthusiastic about Japanese erotic and pornographic prints. Degas hung a bathhouse scene by Kiyonaga over his bed (Weisberg, 12); according to George Moore, Emile Zola decorated his house in Medan with "Japanese prints of furious fornications" (Whitford, 122); and Gerald Needham (in Weisberg, 135, n. 31) suggests that the cat in one of Shunsho's pornographic prints may have inspired the cat in Manet's *Olympia* (the print in question is reproduced in P. Rawson, *Erotic Art of the East*, New York, 1968, pl. 24). American artists, on the other hand, including such diverse figures as John La Farge, Arthur Dow, and Frank Lloyd Wright, seem to have been particularly interested in the spiritual dimension of Japanese art. For a discussion of the internationalism of *Japonisme*, see Adams, 1983, 495. Beongcheon Yu has recently written a study of the influence of the Oriental traditions on American writers, *The Great Circle: American Writers and the Orient*, Detroit, 1984.

¹⁴⁹ This method has been followed by most writers on *Japonisme*, but is seen in its most extreme form in Roskill, 58.

¹⁵⁰ Théophile Silvestre, *Histoire des artistes vivants*, Paris, 1856, 39. Victor Hugo once referred to "cette odalisque de M. Ingres, peinte à la manière Chinoise, sans ombre et sans relief" (Escholier, 52). On *Chinoiserie*, see Honour; Adams, 1980a, 335-343; and Norman L. Goldberg, "The Romantic Engraver of England's Past," *Art News*, March 12, 1976, 65.

¹⁵¹ Takahashi, 64; Julian Jinn Lee, "The Origin and Development of Japanese Landscape Prints: A Study in the Synthesis of Eastern and Western Art," Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1977.

¹⁵² Hanson, 187.

¹⁵³ To cite just one example, the high horizon in La Farge's *Portrait of the Artist* of 1859 may well reflect the influence of Japanese art (see above, n. 99). However, this device was also probably modeled in part on Jean-François Millet's *The Sower*, now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, which in 1859 was in William Morris Hunt's collection. For a discussion of the sources of *Portrait of the Artist*, which included not only paintings and probably Japanese prints, but also photographs, see Adams, 1980a, 185-89.

It seems quite possible that the sort of complex borrowings found in La Farge's work are not unusual, but in fact are typical of artists attempting to assimilate an unfamiliar style. The implications of this are two-fold. On the one hand, it indicates that attempts to identify Japanese influence purely on the basis of a checklist of visual traits will very often lead to error.¹⁵⁴ On the other hand, it suggests that scholars may have failed to recognize Japanese influence in cases where it took a form that does not fit their preconceptions. Effects inspired by Japanese art, for example, seem largely to have been overlooked in the work of artists of conservative or only moderately avant-garde sympathies, such as Jean-François Millet or Théodore Rousseau.¹⁵⁵

Third, the case of La Farge does not conform to the frequently held assumption that Western artists were initially attracted only to the superficial and exotic aspects of Japanese art, and only gradually turned their attention to compositional matters. On the contrary, in La Farge's work the use of "devices of structure and presentation which match those found in actual Japanese works" invariably precedes his use of "Japanese motifs and accessories" which are utilized to conjure up an exotic mood.

Such a progression is evident, for example, in La Farge's illustrations for *Enoch Arden*, which progress from images that covertly employ the compositional devices of Japanese art to designs that are explicitly Japanese in style. Even in the most advanced of these designs, however, La Farge never employed paraphernalia that are specifically Japanese, but merely presented Western objects in an entirely Japanese manner (Fig. 12). Indeed, with the exception of the lacquerware trays and vases which appear in some of his early still-life paintings, it was not until 1868 that La Farge depicted recognizably Japanese articles, such as kimonos, kakemonos, or fans. An interest in Japanese accessories, in fact, is characteristic only of certain works La Farge made in a very late phase of his career — notably his travel watercolors of Japan, which were executed in 1886.¹⁵⁶ It is certainly worth asking whether La Farge's procedure was bizarre and atypical, or whether it was char-

acteristic of artists attempting to assimilate Japanese ideas.

In general, the case of La Farge suggests that the underlying motivations of *Japonisme* should be explored in more detail. La Farge drew upon a remarkable variety of sources in developing this new interest, and most of these sources have been neglected, or only mentioned in passing, in previous studies of *Japonisme*. Cultural influences played a role, and it seems significant that La Farge was an enthusiast of *Chinoiserie* and the literature of travel, had read of the Jesuit missionaries in Japan, and was familiar with the cultural determinism of Taine. Also significant was the politics of trade, in particular the drive in America to unite East and West by railroad, and thus to open the way to organized shipping and distribution of Far Eastern products. It is notable that La Farge had connections (through his wife and Andrew Monroe) with Commodore Perry, who opened up Japan, and was also acquainted with merchants such as A.A. Low, and adventurer-entrepreneurs such as Raphael Pumpelly. There were artistic spurs also, for La Farge's ability to make use of Japanese prints seems to have been dependent on his acquaintance with progressive movements in painting both in England and France, with his familiarity with the latest critical developments in Europe, and with his interest in the decorative arts. Finally, personal factors were significant, particularly La Farge's bilingual, multi-lingual upbringing, and his personal sense of estrangement from many features of American culture.

To be sure, La Farge's use of such sources seems richer and more complex than that of any other early figure in the development of *Japonisme*, and some of these forms of inspiration, such as his links with Commodore Perry's expedition, are inherently American. But more could be done to explore the interaction of these factors in the work of European figures. An interest in *Chinoiserie*, for example, must have been a key element in the *Japonisme* of the De Goncourts; and writers have not as yet done justice to the impact of commercial expositions, first in England and later in France, in developing the taste for Japanese art.

Often represented as a movement that took place primarily in France, *Japonisme* may well emerge as a truly

¹⁵⁴ For an example of such visual reasoning, see Hélène Touissant, *Gustave Courbet, 1819-1877*, Grand Palais, Paris, 1977, 134, who sees Japanese influence in Gustave Courbet's *The Winnowers* of 1855.

¹⁵⁵ Possibly there was some connection between La Farge's interest in Japanese prints and that of the Barbizon masters, for La Farge's teacher, William Morris Hunt, had studied with Millet. La Farge discussed Japanese influence on Théodore Rousseau in *The Higher Life in Art*, New York, 1908, 138, probably basing his discussion on that of Alfred Sensier, *Souvenirs sur Th. Rousseau*, Paris, 1872, 271-73. For further information on Rousseau's interest in Japanese prints, see *Frick Collection Catalogue*, Princeton, N.J., 1968-1977, 11, 178-181; J. Bouret, *The Barbizon School*, Greenwich, Conn., 1973, 213; Dorival (an essay to be used with caution, as it contains some inaccuracies); and Floyd, 247, 248, and 259. Rousseau sold some Japanese prints in 1868 as is documented by the *Catalogue de la vente de Theodore Rousseau*, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 1868, 122. Robert Herbert, in a letter of July 12, 1978, informed me that in November of 1863, Jean-François Millet wrote to Sensier about several Japanese albums

being sold through the offices of their friend Charles Tillot.

Zacharie Astruc, in his article "Le Japon chez nous" of 1868 (see bibliography), gives a list of the chief French enthusiasts of Japanese art at that date. The names he includes are those of Stevens, Diaz, Tissot, Villot, Favard, Alphonse Legros, Chesneau, Champfleury, Solon, Bracquemond, Fantin, Burty, the De Goncourts, Manet, Lambron, and Claude Monet. Astruc's preparatory notes list three names not included in the final article, those of Thiers, Count Morny, and Whistler (Flescher, 364). Ernest Chesneau in his essay "Le Japon a Paris" gives the names of several *Japonistes* not mentioned by Astruc; Alphonse Hirsch, Carolus-Duran, Zola, Charpentier, Barbedienne, Christoffe, Bouilhet, Falize, Cernuschi, Duret, Guimet, and Regamey (Chesneau, 387).

¹⁵⁶ For La Farge's illustrations of Japan, see La Farge, 1897b, and Lefor, chap. 4, 125-152. For a fuller discussion of La Farge's tendency to move away from an interest in Japanese principles of design towards a more literal presentation of Japanese motifs and accessories, see Adams, 1984b.

international tendency, in which French artists often lagged far behind those of other countries. Often described as if it were directly linked with the avant-garde, *Japonisme* may well have first found support among artists of eclectic and even academic sympathies. Often portrayed as a movement with a distinct beginning, *Japonisme* may prove, when pushed back toward its origins, to merge imperceptibly with the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century enthusiasm for *Chinoiserie*. If the phenomenon itself takes on a new character, new motivations for it may also emerge — stylistic dilemmas, feelings of estrangement, desires for renunciation and release. Perhaps the case of La Farge, by providing a new perspective, will encourage a general reassessment of the impact of Japanese art on Western painters.

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Appendix I

Books on Japan Published Prior to 1870 Owned by La Farge

La Farge avidly collected books on Japan: the catalogue of the posthumous sale of his library alone enumerates over 119 titles on Japanese art, culture, and language, even including a German treatise on the Japanese sense of humor. The present list, based on the catalogues of all the successive sales of La Farge's books, gives only those works on Japan which were published before 1870, and thus could have been in the artist's possession in the 1860's. The references are first grouped by sale and then arranged chronologically. The compilation is similar to that given by Lefor, who, however, omits one or two references and fails to cite the sale in which each book appeared.

The list gives a *terminus* for when La Farge owned a book, but does not indicate when he acquired it. In some cases this may have been years earlier. In addition, in the 1860's La Farge certainly owned books on Japan that are not listed here, notably Ernest Chesneau's *L'art japonais*, which provided the basis for much of his own essay on Japanese art.

Copies of most of these titles are owned by the Harvard University Library, many of them from the bequest of La Farge's friend John Bancroft.

Sale of 1866

#226 — Sherard Osborn, "Japanese Fragments," in *Once a Week*, III, 1860, 33-37, 110-12, 157-161, 201-05, 313-16, 383-88, and 437-444.

Sale of 1881

#285 — Francis L. Hawks, compiler, *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan, Performed in the Years 1852, 1853, and 1854, Under the Command of Commodore M.C. Perry, United States Navy*, 2 vols., Washington, D.C., 1856.

#149 — Edward Barrington De Fonblanque, *Nippon and Pe-cherli; or Two Years in Japan and Northern China*, London, 1862.

#276 — Walter Dickson, *Japan, Being a Sketch of the History, Government and Officers of the Empire*, Edinburgh, 1869.

#276 — R. Mountenay Jephson and Edward Pennell Elmhirst, *Our Life in Japan*, London, 1869.

Sale of 1911

#495 — Jean Nieuhoff, *Ambassades memorables de la Compagnie des Indes Orientales des provinces unies vers la Empereurs du Japon*, Amsterdam, 1680.

#727 — Archibald Campbell, *A Voyage Round the World from 1806 to 1812, in which Japan, Kamschatka, the Aleutian Islands and the Sandwich Islands were Visited*, New York, 1817.

#430 — Le R.P. de Charlevoix, *Histoire de l'établissement, des progrès et de la decadence du Christianisme dan l'Empire du Japon*, 2 vols., Louvain, 1821-29.

#431 — ———, *Histoire et description generale du Japon*, 9 vols., Paris, 1836.

#517 — Thomas Rundall, ed., *Memorials of the Empire of Japan in the XVI and XVII Centuries*, London, Hakluyt Society, 1850.

#448 — Edouard Frassinetti, *Le Japon*, 2 vols., Paris, 1853.

#450 — Vasilli Mikhailovich Golovnin, *Japan and the Japanese*, 2 vols., London, 1853.

#434 — Kinahan Cornwallis, *Two Journeys to Japan*, 2 vols., London, 1859.

#208 — Sherard Osborn, *Japanese Fragments*, London, 1861.

#432 — Charles de Chassiron, *Notes sur le Japon, la Chine et l'Inde*, Paris, 1861.

#433 — Augustin Cochon, *Rome. Les martyrs du Japon et les évêques du dix-neuvième siècle*, Paris, 1862.

#447 — Edward Barrington De Fonblanque, *Nippon and Pe-cherli* [also listed above in the sale of 1881].

#412 — Rutherford Alcock, *The Capital of the Tycoon: A Narrative of Three Years Residence in Japan*, 2 vols., London, 1863.

#413 — Anne de Almeida, *A Lady's Visit to Manilla and Japan*, London, 1863.

#522 — Rev. James Summers, ed., *The Chinese and Japanese Repository of Facts and Events in Science, History and Art, Relating to Eastern Asia*, 3 vols., London, 1863-65.

#439 — Walter Dickson, *Japan* [listed above in the sale of 1881].

Appendix II

Japanese Prints Owned by La Farge in the 1860's

In the text I have referred in passing to the group of Japanese prints that La Farge sold in 1909, which he stated had been imported from Japan in the early 1860's. This appendix, compiled from the auction catalogue *Oriental Art Objects, The Property of John La Farge*, lists these prints, arranging them first by the date of importation and then by artist.

This is not a complete list of the Japanese prints La Farge owned in the 1860's, as, according to his own testimony, he disposed of most of his prints in undocumented transactions, and others are owned by his descendents. He also had access in the 1860's to the collections of such friends as John Bancroft and Raphael Pumpelly. For further information on La Farge's collection, see n. 38.

The auction catalogue was written chiefly by La Farge's Japanese personal servant, Rizio Awoki, and not only is the English often somewhat curious, but the transcriptions of Japanese names and phrases are sometimes inaccurate. I have not attempted to make any corrections, but have fully and exactly transcribed both the titles and the descriptions.

Identifying the images to which these titles correspond is a more difficult task than might at first appear. Hiroshige, for example, made three sets of prints of the stops on the Tokaido road, and

several of his followers, who also signed their name "Hiroshige," made prints of this subject also. Consequently, in some cases a single title could refer to as many as twelve different prints.

In some cases La Farge seems to have based a work on one of the prints on this list. For example, number 277 in the catalogue *Oriental Art Objects* may well correspond with Hiroshige's *Long-Scaled Barbel* (Fig. 36) which seems to have inspired La Farge's painting of a fish (Fig. 37), executed in 1865. In short, the visual evidence suggests an identification for the print listed in the sales catalogue. In addition, it suggests that, since La Farge used the image in 1865, the date of 1863 he ascribed for its importation might well be accurate. Even where it is not possible to relate one of the images on this list to a work by La Farge, the list helps establish the sorts of Japanese prints with which La Farge was probably familiar.

One of the most striking features of this list is the extraordinary predominance of works by Hiroshige. I suspect that this is not fortuitous, but indicates that even by this early date La Farge had begun to exercise discrimination in his purchases, and had singled out Hiroshige as the greatest master of the Japanese landscape print. As the quotation in n. 141 makes clear, both La Farge and John Bancroft seem to have been particularly interested in landscape prints.

Notably lacking in this list are works by Hokusai. From the evidence of La Farge's art we can be certain that he knew Hokusai's *Hundred Views of Fuji* by 1864, and also was familiar with the *Mangwa* by the mid-1860's, making use of Volume II in 1864, Volume XII in 1868, Volume X in 1869, and Volume III ca. 1868-69. Possibly Hokusai's name does not appear on this list because La Farge was collecting his picture books rather than his single-sheet prints. In any case, he, along with Hiroshige, seems to have been the Japanese artist whose work most interested La Farge.

I have seen two Ukiyo-e prints stamped with La Farge's Japanese seal (one owned by Henry La Farge, the other in the Art Institute of Chicago), and the Art Museum in Portland, Maine owns a number of prints that La Farge acquired in Japan, which were purchased from him by Samuel Coleman. (Please see n. 38.) I have not, however, been able to locate the prints from his collection listed here.

Sadashige: "From Japan, early importation, 1860."

#521. JIZO WATCHING OVER THE LITTLE CHILDREN AT PLAY, who are supposed to come into the world pure and sinless. UKIYOYE: DOUBLE PRINT. These religious prints are difficult to obtain.

Hiroshige: "The Hiroshige prints come from an old importation, about 1860."

- #76. VIEW OF TAMAGAWA RIVER, Mount Kora, province of Kisiu. Clear impression. UKIYOYE (PRINT).
- #79. UKIYOYE (PRINTS) MOONLIGHT SCENE AT OMI.
- #80. SNOW SCENE AT NUMADSU.
- #81. SNOW SCENE AT KAMEYAMA HILL.
- #82. IRIS BLOSSOMS AT HORIKIRI.
- #83. THE GREAT BRIDGE AT SANJIO, KIOTO.
- #84. VIEW OF YEDO BAY.
- #85. VIEW OF MOUNT FUJI, FROM SOSHO MIURA.
- #86. CHERRY BLOSSOMS, AFTER KOGANEL, TOKIO.
- #87. VIEW OF MINAGUCHI.
- #88. VIEW OF YAHAGI BRIDGE, OKAZAKI.
- #89. VIEW OF MT. FUJI, FROM ASHITAKA HILL.
- #90. THE PINE GROVE AT FUJIZAWA.
- #91. OVERLOOKING MT. KAMAKURA.
- #92. VIEW OF FUJIYEDA.

- #93. TEA HOUSE AT FUCHU.
- #94. VIEW OF MT. FUJI, FROM TAGONO URA.
- #95. FLYING KITES AT FUKUROI.
- #96. VIEW OF OKITSU RIVER.
- #97. OHASHI BRIDGE, YOSHIDA.
- #98. VIEW OF MT. FUJI, FROM ONOGA HARA.
- #99. VIEW OF MT. FUJI, FROM OIGAWA RIVER.
- #100. VIEW OF SYONO NAKAYAMA.
- #101. VIEW OF FUJIGAWA RIVER.
- #102. TEA HOUSE AT OTSU.
- #103. VIEW OF TOTSUKA.
- #104. VIEW OF VARIOUS HOTELS AT ONABURA.
- #105. VIEW OF MIWONO MATSUBARA.
- #106. VIEW OF NISHIDIO IYO.
- #107. THE CELEBRATED PINE TREE AT HAMAMATSU.
- #108. TEMPLE OF MIYATA.
- #109. VIEW OF KUCHU RIVER.
- #110. SHINSHA BRIDGE, HODOGAYA.
- #111. ANOTHER COPY OF THE SAME.
- #112. NIGHT TRAVELLING AT MT. HAKONE.
- #113. TEMPLE MISHIMA, DAIMIOZIN.
- #114. VIEW OF MT. FUJI, FROM FUZISWA.

Hiroshige: "The Hiroshige prints come from an old importation, about 1860."

- #448. PEEPING. Meanwhile dog steals the food entrusted, and the wine is spilled. The next, while fighting, the birds and dog carry off the food of the boys. DOUBLE PRINT.
- #449. ILLUSTRATION FROM A FAIRY TALE. Rabbit and badger, and the difficulty of their being together in case of mutual help.
- #450. VIEW OF SHINAGAWA, in low tide. Women gathering shellfish, in picnic way.
- #451. VIEW OF GOLD MINE AT SADO.
- #452. DISTANT VIEW OF MT. FUJI, FROM OMIYA SHIKU.
- #453. VIEW OF TENRIU RIVER.
- #454. VIEW OF TOYOKAWA BRIDGE, YOSHIDA.
- #455. DISTANT VIEW OF MIYO, FROM YEZIRI.
- #456. INTERIOR VIEW OF HOTEL, AT AKASAKA VILLAGE.
- #457. VIEW OF MT. FUJI, FROM TAMAGAWA RIVER.
- #458. VIEW OF OKITSU RIVER.
- #459. VIEW OF SHONO IN A RAIN.
- #460. NIHONBASHI BRIDGE, TOKIO.
- #461. VIEW OF KANOGAWA BAY, moonlight.
- #462. VIEW OF MT. FUJI, FROM HARA.
- #463. TEA-HOUSE AT FUCHU.
- #464. ONE OF THE SERIES OF CELEBRATED 53 VIEWS.
- #465. VIEW OF MT. FUJI, FROM MEGURO.
- #466. AUTUMN MAPLES OF KIOTO.
- #467. VIEW OF MISHIMA.
- #468. VIEW OF TENRIU RIVER.
- #469. VIEW OF KODZUKE.
- #470. VIEW OF LURAMIDAKI WATERFALL.
- #471. VIEW OF TOTSUKA.
- #472. MT., KASOZAN KATSUSA.
- #473. FIREWORKS, AT RIOGOKU BRIDGE.
- #474. VIEW OF KANDA MIOZIN TEMPLE. Good.
- #475. TEMPLE DANCING. Very good.
- #476. PICTURE FROM THE STORY OF YOSHITSUNE ICHIDAIKI.
- #477. MOONLIGHT AT TAMAGAWA RIVER

* This print is classified as a first impression, showing the grain of the wood on the block taken in printing, and with

beautiful sapphire blue and gold moon effect. One of his master works.

- #478. VIEW OF AKASAKA IN THE MOONLIGHT.
#479. VIEW OF OIGAWA RIVER.
#480. THE CELEBRATED PINE TREE AT KOSHU.

Hiroshige: "The Hiroshige prints were an early importation from Japan."

- #266. DISTANT VIEW OF MT. FUJI AND YENOSHIMA ISLAND, from the Beach of Hichirigahama, with ladies of a picnic party gathering shells. Triplet.
#267. "AUTUMN MOON." at Shiu Yoshiwara, Yedo.
#268. VIEW OF NINOKAWA.
#269. VIEW OF SHIOMI HILL, overlooking the sea.
#270. VIEW OF MOUNT OKABE.
#271. ONE OF THE 53 VIEWS OF TAKAIBO.
#272. OVERLOOKING YEDO BAY, FROM GOTEMYAMA HILL.
#273. VIEW OF FUJI, FROM SATA TOGE.
#274. VIEW OF MAISAKA.
#275. VIEW OF TAMAGAWA RIVER.
#276. VIEW OF YAMASHIRO IDE.
#277. FISH.
#278. DAIMO'S PROCESSION AT YATSU KOGI.
#279. VIEW OF HAKONE LAKE.
#280. VIEW OF ABEGAWA RIVER.
#281. VIEW OF MINAGUCHI.
#282. ROKUGO RIVER, KAWASAKI.
#283. SETO RIVER, FUJIYEDA.
#284. VIEW OF MT. FUJI, FROM YOSHIWARA.
#285. VIEW OF FUJIGAWA RIVER, FROM KANBARA.
#286. FISHING AT THE COAST OF ODAWARA.
#287. BANIUGAWA FERRIES, AT HIRATSUKA.
#288. VIEW OF OISO.
#289. VIEW OF HIROSHE. Good.
#290. VIEW OF A RAINBOW, FROM ATAGO HILL.
#291. WATERFALL AT MT. OYAMA.
#292. COMBAT OF YOSHITSUNE AND BENKEI ON GOZIO BEACH.
#293. VIEW OF MT. FUJI, FROM TATSUKA.
#294. VIEW OF MT. FUJI, FROM KAWAKSAKI.
#295. VIEW OF KANAGAWA BAY. Clear impression.
#296. VIEW OF MT. FUJI, FROM YUI.
#297. VIEW OF NARUMI.
#298. VIEW OF FUJISAWA.
#299. VIEW OF HAKONE LAKE.
#300. VIEW OF ODAWARA.

Hiroshige: "From Japan, 1863."

- #77. SET OF FOUR PRINTS, one of Ozi Temple, another cherry blossoms at Mukojima, maple at Kaianzi Temple, and peony blossoms at Fukagawa. Recall various things for which they are noted as cake carried by the women at Mukojima.

Kunisada: "From Japan, 1863."

- #321. INTERIOR SCENE AT TEA-HOUSE. Owariya. With eleven ladies. The views of the distant rooms are beautifully carried out. Triplet wrongly mounted. A little poem says that so many live flowers will surely attract many people.
#503. STORY OF GENGI MONOGATARI. Court ladies admiring cherry blossoms at night in the Royal Garden. Printed on embossed paper, by special order, to bring out the bril-

liant colors in printing. Very rare. TRIPLET.

*Picture roll, in the title "fifty-fourth."

Kuniyoshi: "From Japan, 1863."

- #330. A DEVIL'S DEN, with the Devil and his followers at Mt. Oreyama; great festivities going on and the chief is surrounded by beautiful women who were captured by devils. Watanaba Tsuna invites himself to the gathering, gains the confidence of the chief, and finally he saves the women and escapes from the den. He then dances with a minor dancer. TRIPLET. Printed on crepe paper.

Toyokuni: "From Japan, 1863."

- #534. LORD AND TWO LADIES. Playing on the Samisen, Koki and Koto at the summer pleasure house, Futamiya. Peach blossoms surrounding the balcony and a distant view of artificial garden, stone lanterns and bridges scattered here and there, giving a beautiful view. TRIPLET. Very fine color, particularly the green. Imitation of Genju story.

Shigenobu: "From Japan, 1863."

- #151. A WARRIOR, YOSHITSUNE, ON HORSEBACK, and his two retainers, Benkei and Kisanda, before the great battle of Haki. TRIPLET.

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