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The Americanization of Tsuru Aoki: Orientalism, Melodrama, Star Image, and the New Woman

Sara Ross

The film career of Tsuru Aoki in the teens and twenties has largely been overshadowed by that of her husband, Sessue Hayakawa. Indeed, it would be impossible to extricate Aoki's star persona from that of the more famous Hayakawa, who became not only a major screen star and critical favorite in films that Jesse Lasky produced for Paramount but also a producer in his own right when he launched Haworth Pictures in 1918. The construction of Aoki as adoring wife was extremely important to the rather remarkable success of Hayakawa as a romantic lead in the late teens and twenties.¹ If Hayakawa's popularity rested on the suggestion that his exotic and inscrutable exterior hid a soft and romantic side, his "little wife" was held up time and again as the proof of his hidden tenderness. But Aoki was much more than a one-dimensional better half for Hayakawa. She was a significant star in her own right, playing opposite her husband in numerous films and in starring roles under a contract with Universal in 1920. That Hayakawa and Aoki both achieved the level of stardom that they did in early clas-

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sical Hollywood is extraordinary, particularly when one considers how few Asian stars have broken through to this level of success in the decades since. In addition to their considerable talent and promotional savvy, their success can be attributed in part to the confluence of a fascination with Orientalism and questions about the assimilation of immigrants in the teens and twenties.

Constructing a sympathetic persona for Aoki that exploited interest in this charged ideological territory would prove a delicate balancing act, which could only be accomplished by careful handling of the Oriental aspects of her public image. As a consequence, her on-screen and offscreen star image was tremendously complex. Aoki's persona blurred the boundaries between Japanese and American (read European-American) identities, playing off stereotypes of the Oriental woman while pushing toward recognition of her as a Japanese American. The splicing of her seemingly disparate racial and cultural identities was mapped onto other troubling cultural divides of the period, most notably the gap between the traditional and the New Woman and between Victorian and contemporary models of sexuality, marriage, and divorce. Her assimilation was thus characterized as a move not only from East to West or from primitive to civilized but also from traditional to modern, at a time when definitions of the modern woman were hotly contested.

While her film roles in some ways reiterated stereotypes of the Asian woman—such as the innocent flower, the self-sacrificing Madame Butterfly, and the picture bride—Aoki's performances must also be understood to fit into larger patterns of change in screen heroines. Victorian melodramatic types were being transformed and, as time went on, merged with modern types to better match the social and sexual mores of the modern audience. Films like *The Wrath of the Gods* (dir. Reginald Barker, US, 1914) and *The Courageous Coward* (dir. William Worthington, US, 1919) picked up the timely subject matter of generational conflict, displacing struggles over the rigidity of traditional patriarchy onto the East-West dichotomy. Japan was posited as a kind of hyper-Victorian society at odds with the modern West, opening up a space for Aoki's characters to reject outmoded social restraints as part of

an overarching assimilationist discourse. As figures in transition from East to West, the characters in these films thus evoked the fantasy of open rebellion against restrictive patriarchal tradition. Her publicity further complicated her screen persona by introducing a decidedly modern, unconventional edge to her image. She was apparently equally adept at welcoming her husband home with “lilting songs . . . about plum trees in bloom,” modeling the latest French fashions, racing through the Hollywood hills with Hayakawa in their roadster, and joining him in teaching jujitsu to the Los Angeles police department.² Though she never entirely escaped the overwhelming discourses of Orientalism, Aoki came to be a model of cultural as well as racial adaptability, all wrapped up in an unthreatening, chic, and “doll-like” package.

Certainly Aoki’s career is worth studying on the basis of how her race was managed as an aspect of her performances and star persona. Within the general context of Hollywood Orientalism, Aoki’s Japanese heritage and her marriage to Hayakawa gave specificity to her image as Oriental, demonstrating the mutability of this classification. Her roles and publicity further illustrate the limits to the representation of racial mobility in the period. However, it would be a mistake to take a myopic approach to Aoki that viewed her work only through the lens of Orientalist discourse. My purpose here, instead, is to contextualize issues of race and Orientalism in Aoki’s career within changing representational strategies and ongoing cultural struggles over women’s public and domestic roles in the modern age. Charles Musser has suggested that film discourses in this period helped to allay anxieties over shifting patterns in marriage and gender roles by suggesting that these changes could be overcome.³ Aoki’s ability to traverse the racial divide, even if only provisionally, made her artful balance of traditional and modern expectations of feminine, and particularly wifely, behavior seem reassuringly simple by comparison. The distance supplied by her Oriental otherness was a double-edged sword, consigning her to outsider status, but at the same time making her a metaphor for the potential for change in American women’s lives.

Japan as Hyper-Victorian in the Melodramatic Context

Edward Said has famously demonstrated that the Orient helps to define the West as its contrasting image. In practice, how this contrast is delineated is contingent on the specific historical forces that shape a particular set of representations. Perhaps the most salient feature of Hollywood Orientalism in the teens and twenties is that which Said notes in the work of Edward William Lane, Gustave Flaubert, and others: an “almost uniform association between the Orient” and sexual promise and threat. Oriental women, Said argues, were disturbing in their embodiment of carnal female temptation and “luxuriant and seemingly unbounded sexuality,” while the Oriental male was a leering predator of white women.⁴

Though largely associated with what Said terms the Near East, the sensual mode of Orientalism certainly played a role in the on-screen depiction of Japanese and Chinese characters.⁵ Indeed, one need not look very deeply to see how this aspect of Orientalism emerges in Hayakawa’s star image. Though his characters covered the spectrum from the heavy to the tragic hero, in films such as Cecil B. DeMille’s *The Cheat* (US, 1915), his performance clearly conveys the threatening sexuality of the exotic man present in screen depictions of Arab characters in the teens and twenties. Hayakawa’s Japanese roles and those of contemporary Arab characters also show significant narrative similarities, further demonstrating the conflation of different Oriental types.⁶

Japanese characters, and the performers who played them, were thus often linked to the sensual mode of Near Eastern Orientalism, with its attendant fantasies of exoticism and romance. However, this was not the only, or indeed even the dominant, way in which the image of Japan was mobilized in this period. Imbricated with the typical elements of Hollywood Orientalism was an image of Japan and the Japanese that diverged sharply from the Near East’s association with sexual license.⁷ In this version of East versus West, the Japanese man is militant, honorable, rigid, and emotionally aloof when compared with the candid and open Westerner, while the Japanese woman is more virginal, demure, and compliant than the West’s New Woman. This alternate image

of the Japanese within the broader category of the Oriental provided flexibility to the personae of Hayakawa and Aoki. In Aoki's case, it also provided a basis for her positioning as a transitional figure between old and new modes of feminine behavior.

In Hayakawa's and Aoki's films, Japan is often associated with outdated values that are opposed to American modernity. While Oriental primitivism is one component of this opposition, in the modern context, the concept of the "traditional" also becomes a structuring difference. Japan is thus presented as a kind of hyper-Victorian society from which the Hayakawas emerge into modern American life. In Hayakawa's screen roles, the stereotype of the Japanese man as repressed and honorable added yet another register to those of sexual predator and tender lover that his characters could call on. As Donald Kiriwara notes, Hayakawa's early popularity was built on a contradictory quality in his screen image that tended to "problematize the prefabricated patterns that we associate with stereotypes."⁸ Much of this contradiction stems from the fact that very distinct and even contrasting versions of Orientalism were combined with qualities of the modern American male in Hayakawa's persona. Kiriwara further states that "the image of a thin veil of civility shrouding the menacing beast would remain a part of Hayakawa's star personality throughout his career," but civility, and beyond that chivalry, were more thoroughgoing components of Hayakawa's persona than this would perhaps suggest (93).

Aoki's screen image is still more markedly distanced from the aggressive sexuality of the pseudo-Oriental vamp. Any sexuality attributed to her characters tended to be the result of victimization or self-sacrifice. Alternatively, she was often a chaste object of the hero's affection, a girlish figure, and/or a loving daughter. Her screen persona thus had more in common with performers such as Lillian Gish and Mary Pickford than with exotic types like Theda Bara or Alla Nazimova. However, as with Gish and Pickford, it would be a mistake to regard her as a purely passive type.

The Wrath of the Gods provides a good example of how Aoki could function on-screen as a Japanese version of the updated Victorian melodramatic heroines played by a number of European-

American actresses in the films of D. W. Griffith and others. While *The Wrath of the Gods* does play on Aoki's racial identity, her character is also shaped by ongoing shifts in the deployment of melodrama and related questions of changing standards of feminine behavior. The association between Japanese culture and arbitrary and outdated restrictions on women allows the ideological conflict that underlies other melodramas of the period to rise to the surface of *The Wrath of the Gods*. Indeed, it makes Aoki's character's open rebellion against punitive patriarchal tradition sympathetic and plausible.

Capitalizing on the dramatic eruption of the volcano Sakura-jima in Kagoshima Bay on 12 January 1914, *The Wrath of the Gods* was presented as a retelling of a Japanese legend about a family cursed by Buddha, with some obvious assimilationist overtones. Hayakawa plays Baron Yamaki, the last male descendent of a family cursed for defiling a Buddhist temple. His daughter, Aoki's Toya-san, is forbidden to marry, at risk of triggering the wrath of the gods in the form of an eruption of Sakura-jima. The dictates of the curse are vengefully enforced by an eccentric prophet, who warns any young men that Toya-san encounters to resist her charms. Toya-san falls in love with Tom Wilson (Frank Borzage), a European-American sailor shipwrecked on the beach near their isolated shack. Wilson quickly converts father and daughter to Christianity, and Toya-san and Tom marry in a Christian church. Toya-san's defiance of the curse causes the volcano to erupt and inspires the prophet to lead an angry mob from the nearby town to club Yamaki to death. The newlyweds flee in a rowboat and escape together on a merchant ship as the villagers die in the spectacular eruption.⁹

Aoki's performance as Toya-san places her within an evolving tradition of melodramatic heroines of the sort played by Gish, Pickford, and others. Consistent with the performance style of the genre and period, she mixes a variety of old and new strategies, using brief emphatic gestures, bits of stage business, and the occasional grand pose.¹⁰ Her performance serves to confirm her innocence and sincerity, and she is associated with the natural elements and a childlike primitivism. She is first seen cavorting

on the beach, in an iconic scene of innocence “taking pleasure in itself.”¹¹ She clutches her hands to her chest in exhilaration as she dances near the waves, while the wind plays with her hair. When a fisherman suddenly appears, she draws back in fear and surprise, throwing her hands behind her onto a rock and slowly drawing herself behind it. However, when he calms her fears, she innocently accepts his flirtatious conversation. Facing the camera, she casts her eyes down and away from him, refusing to meet his gaze as he tugs on her kimono sleeves. She repeats the reticent, downward-looking gaze away from a male suitor and in the direction of the camera during several later scenes with Wilson, finally meeting his eyes and echoing his upward glance when she converts to Christianity.

Her character is not confined to such demure displays, however, as she demonstrates the spunk and animation of a modern melodramatic heroine. She repeatedly enacts stubbornness or righteous indignation, clenching her fists and jaw and, in a scene in which she rejects Buddhism, flaring her eyes and throwing her arms wide in a dramatic attitude. In addition to the childlike physical exuberance noted in the first scene as she dances on the beach, she displays similar animation when she runs to tell her father of her engagement to Wilson, throwing her arms around his neck before recoiling at his horrified reaction.

Though she appears in kimono throughout the film, Aoki’s performance does not display the kimono as an exotic garment, but instead uses it for the kind of nervous bits of emotional business common to contemporary heroines. For example, she repeatedly uses its long sleeves to hide her face or wipe her tears during moments of despair. Her hair, too, provides an index of her emotional state and the film’s dramatic progression. One such instance occurs during the climatic scene in which she and Wilson hide from the mob and race to escape the volcanic eruption, when her upswept hairdo tumbles in an evocative tangle around her shoulders, much like that of Lillian Gish’s Anna Moore at the end of *Way Down East* (dir. D. W. Griffith, US, 1920).

In her affinity for the natural world and her unself-conscious and naive emotional reactions, poses, and gestures,

Toya-san is thus very much like any number of European-American dramatic heroines. In the case of Toya-san, however, the heroine's natural or primitive attributes are linked to the Japanese color that is one of the film's major selling points. For example, in a scene inside Yamaki's shack, the camera dwells on details of costuming and props as Toya-san rises from her futon and later wraps her obi around her waist and squats down to cook, holding back the long sleeve of her kimono and using *hashi* (chopsticks) to add what appear to be gourd strips to a cast-iron pot on the floor. In general, Toya-san's status as a Japanese heroine calls more on this sort of ethnic color than any marked exoticism of character. While race is hardly effaced in the film, Aoki's performance style is more clearly aligned with that of contemporary European-American melodramatic heroines than with a specifically Orientalist or Japanese mode of performance.

In narrative structure as well as performance style, the film presents a number of similarities to other melodramas of the time. The film's love-in-a-primitive-setting plot bears some similarity to Edwin S. Porter's *Hearts Adrift* (dir. Harold Lockwood, US, 1914), in which Mary Pickford plays Nina, a shipwreck victim who finds love on a South Sea island with John Graham, another shipwreck victim, and ultimately bears his child. Unlike Toya-san's lover Wilson, however, Graham comes burdened with a previous marriage, and when his wife arrives with a search party, Nina leaps with her child into a volcano. Other films, such as *The Eagle's Mate* (dir. James Kirkwood, US, 1914), feature remote settings in a way that is parallel to the use of coastal Japan in *The Wrath of the Gods*, providing a separation from the modern world and a related time-less quality.¹² Both Toya-san and Japan itself thus hold structural positions that have parallels in melodramas that do not feature an Orientalist angle.

The most obvious point of comparison for *The Wrath of the Gods* is Pickford's screen version of *Madame Butterfly* (dir. Sydney Olcott, US, 1915), as both films center on the iconic story of a Japanese maiden who falls in love with a European-American man, and earlier incarnations of *Madame Butterfly* must have been a point of reference for *The Wrath of the Gods*.¹³ However, there

are several important distinctions in the source of conflict and in the narrative trajectories of these two films that lead them to mobilize racial concerns in very different ways. *Madame Butterfly* belongs to the melodramatic tradition centering on a powerless young woman who falls victim to a man, through no fault of her own. Lea Jacobs has described this scenario as one variation of the fallen woman story, typically involving the seduction of a lower-class young woman by an upper-class man, often resulting in an illegitimate child. “Class difference highlights the woman’s defenselessness,” Jacobs notes, “her status as victim in a system she does not control.”¹⁴ Anna Moore in *Way Down East*, an adaptation of the 1898 stage melodrama of the same name, provides a classic example. Mary Pickford’s Tess Skinner in *Tess of the Storm Country* (dir. Edwin Porter, US, 1914, remade in 1922 by John S. Robinson) presents a variation in that her character is mistakenly believed to be the mother of an illegitimate child when she chooses to shield the real mother, her rich neighbor, and her persecution is thus doubly unearned.

Thomas Elsaesser has suggested that this type of scenario personalizes ideological conflicts during periods of intense social and ideological crisis, creating a “metaphorical interpretation of class-conflict as sexual exploitation and rape.”¹⁵ Linda Williams has made a similar argument about the role of melodrama in addressing racial conflict, describing it as a primary way in which mainstream American culture has dealt with the moral dilemma of racial injustice toward African Americans. Melodrama, she argues, gives power and moral legitimacy to the victimized “through the public spectacle of their suffering.”¹⁶ *Madame Butterfly* presents a similar handling of racial conflict, in that Cho-Cho-San’s fall is directly linked to her victimization at the hands of her American lover.

Unlike Cho-Cho-San, however, Aoki’s Toya-san is not a victim of the gap in racial power or the sexual double standard, but rather of the ancient family curse identified as stemming from the rigidity and injustice of the Japanese gods, whose punishing agent is the volcano Sakura-jima.¹⁷ The curse puts her in the kind of no-good-man-can-marry-me conundrum faced by both Anna and

Tess, but like Tess she is, if possible, even more faultless than the fallen woman, as there is no sexual transgression involved, and her situation is therefore entirely arbitrary. Traditional Japanese culture is thus aligned with standards of behavior that are even more unreasonable than those that punish other melodramatic heroines. Baron Yamaki parallels such overly judgmental patriarchal figures as Squire Bartlett (Burr McIntosh) in *Way Down East*, though Yamaki is somewhat more reluctant in his enforcement of the harsh dictates of tradition. In both cases, the love of a younger man provides the more forgiving perspective required to redeem or rescue the heroine and soften the heart of the old patriarch.

Linda Williams further argues that Anna's trial on the icy river in *Way Down East* "affords a covert satisfaction of the punishing law that unjustly accuses Anna," without the necessity of pushing Squire Bartlett into the role of villain.¹⁸ *The Wrath of the Gods* is considerably less oblique. As the title suggests, the punishment meted out by the volcano is the direct result of Toya-san's decision to ignore the curse and renounce her old religion, and the prophet (priest) provides a human villain who clings maliciously to the letter of an unjust law. The shipwrecked sailor Tom Wilson's forgiving attitude is moreover explicitly linked to his espousal of a more powerful and forgiving god who is "all justice," and who seemingly protects the lovers and turns the volcano's flow against the prophet and the townspeople. The distancing effect of its particular deployment of Orientalism thus allows *The Wrath of the Gods* to dramatize the ideological conflict that simmers under the surface of other melodramas. By displacing unreasonable patriarchal rigidity onto another culture, the film can rather forcefully suggest the necessity of a departure from that outmoded cultural position, while at the same time positing that modern Western Christian patriarchy, embodied in the character of Wilson, is forgiving and just.

Perhaps most important, this strategy creates room for Toya-san's open rebellion against the unfairness of the social forces brought to bear on her through her rejection of the authority of her father and her religion and through her marriage to Wilson. As noted above, in one scene she stands before the family

shrine to Buddha, throws her arms out, and cries, in words that are easy to lip-read, "I renounce my faith!" While Anna Moore is finally able to confront her seducer near the end of *Way Down East*, she is afforded no such explicit criticism of the society or the religious heritage that created the power differential and the double standard that is the true source of her suffering. Yamaki, too, not only relents, as does Squire Bartlett, but ultimately rejects his role as enforcer of the law that punishes his daughter. He dramatically casts the statue of Buddha from the family shrine, replacing it with a makeshift cross, and later exclaims to the mob, "I have deserted my Gods as they have deserted me. No God of mine shall destroy my daughter's happiness!" Toya-san thus embodies a fantasy of open rejection of restrictive norms of behavior that is in many ways beyond the reach of her European-American counterparts.

Japan as cultural Other thus seems to be mobilized in the context of *The Wrath of the Gods'* melodramatic scenario primarily for the purpose of exploring not racial but generational conflict, a matter of great cultural tension in the teens. Interestingly, and perhaps as a consequence of this, the question of miscegenation is not foregrounded in the film. The curse is presented as the only explicit obstacle to the marriage of Toya-san and Wilson. Though one might assert that the curse functions as a metaphor for the injunction against racial intermarriage, the fact that Toya-san has earlier been forbidden to have anything to do with Japanese men as well as Westerners presents something of an obstacle to this interpretation. Indeed, Wilson tells his bride in the film's final minutes that "you have survived to perpetuate your race." Toya-san is furthermore notably spared the self-sacrificing fate of both Cho-Cho-San in *Madame Butterfly* and Nina in *Hearts Adrift*, characters who are linked not by race but by the narrative obstacles of bigamy, illegitimate motherhood, and, above all, female powerlessness. Against the background of this melodramatic formula, Toya-san emerges as an unusually self-possessed and modern heroine.

Publicity and the Passage to America

Aoki's star persona in publicity was carefully designed to offset her exoticism with an array of reassuring qualities. However, here again, her placement within the context of shifting expectations of the New Woman was aligned with Aoki's representation as Oriental Other in ways that allowed startling glimpses of feminine power and difference. Aoki's marriage to Hayakawa was a defining feature of her public persona. While their film roles often placed both Aoki and Hayakawa in traditional Japanese settings, publicity regarding the two placed a marked emphasis on their transformation and assimilation as a modern American couple. The stars' biographical passage from Japan to America, which for Aoki began at age six and for Hayakawa at nineteen, is also written as a passage from traditional into modern gender roles and standards of marital behavior. Their star personae affirm emerging models of American masculinity and femininity at the same time that they invest them with ethnic novelty and charm.

The image of the Hayakawas as a model of the modern companionate marriage that circulated in publicity about the couple rested on a specifically Japanese version of Oriental otherness. Japanese culture was once again mobilized as a hyper-Victorian Other to modern American society, here in the context of newspaper publicity and fan magazines' focus on questions of domesticity, marital relations, and fashion. Such materials were ideally positioned to participate in gendered discourses, offering lessons in modern marriage drawn from celebrity couples—happy and otherwise—to their primarily female readers. The lesson presented by the Hayakawas, it would seem, was that the model couple found marital bliss in the perfect blend of old and new. Depictions of the couple's married life are marked by the pairing of tradition with the East and modernity with the West, suggesting that they had achieved a harmonious balance of the two and were thereby beating the growing menace of divorce.¹⁹

The success of the Hayakawas' marriage is furthermore attributed to their ability to compromise and adapt, and to their self-realization through a consumer lifestyle. The stereotype that adaptability was a Japanese characteristic, widely circulated in

publicity, undergirds this construction of the couple. In a sense, the Hayakawas invert the dynamic of the reunited couples in DeMille's comedies of remarriage, as discussed by Charles Musser, who adopt sensuous Oriental consumer accessories to revitalize their humdrum home life.²⁰ In depictions of the Hayakawas' home life, it is the Oriental touches that suggest a retreat to old-fashioned marital values, while markedly American consumer goods introduce the element of fun and playfulness necessary to the companionate marriage.

Though their assimilation to the modern Western consumer lifestyle is key to the couple's image, exoticism is retained in the form of their quaint and picturesque customs. Aoki's carefully tended Japanese garden, for example, represents a refuge from the bustle of the modern world of work, as in a *Picture Play* article titled "How to Hold a Husband: Mr. and Mrs. Hayakawa, in an Oriental Lesson in Four Chapters." A picture of the couple strolling in the garden has the caption, "few men would chase a roof garden if they had a garden like this in the back yard."²¹ Aoki's ability to "hold onto" Hayakawa is similarly linked to her ability to provide domestic comforts coded as Oriental in the article "A Romance of Nippon Land." "Mrs. Hayakawa, the dainty, humming-bird like person who so adores her 'Ses-shoe' will help him," it states. "In her old age she will . . . make him the chop suey that he likes with his dinner. And when he is tired after his day's work, she will do as she does now—she will sing a little lilting song to him about plum trees in bloom and birds in the trees, and in the dim future Sessue expects to go back to Japan on the stage. But," the article tellingly shifts registers, "it will only be a passing visit. He loves America. Everything about him is American, particularly his wife."²²

The contrast of East and West embodied by the couple provided the angle for numerous feature articles on the pair, whose titles suggest the devices that they employ. For example, the articles "One More Illusion Smashed" and "The Tradition Wreckers" explore the Hayakawas' "surprising" preference for such things as the latest Western dances and home design. "The Orient on the Subway," "From Out the Flowery Kingdom," and "That Splash of

Saffron” also played on the blend of Eastern custom and modern Western technology and decor in the Hayakawas’ lifestyle, and “Was Kipling Right?” and “Kipling Was Wrong!” set out to prove that the Hayakawas had refuted the famous quote, “East is east and west is west and never the twain shall meet.”²³

The American side of the Hayakawas is expressed primarily through the deployment of modern consumer goods. For example, a *Photoplay* article says that the Hayakawas have “never been known to appear in the streets of Hollywood in kimonos nor sandals. They wear American tailor-made clothes, and they’ve never traveled in the ‘rickshaw,’ because their garage houses three things: a perfectly good American chauffeur and two town cars—one a little roadster.” Furthermore, their drawing room, library, and dining room are described as “modernistic” in design, “just exactly the same as ten million other . . . rooms in homes of luxury.”²⁴ The Hayakawas even sport the latest fashion in dogs, being frequently pictured with a bulldog alternately described as an American bulldog and a French bulldog.

If the Hayakawas’ possessions provide evidence of their assimilation, Aoki’s qualification for the status of modern American woman is furthermore demonstrated time and again by her position within the couple as the locus of consumer savvy. For example, the “Oriental lesson in four chapters” on how to hold a husband indicates that she has learned when it is possible to take shortcuts on the domestic front through the use of ready-made foods. “For dessert,” it suggests, “buy the very finest pastry your city affords—and assure him you made it yourself.”²⁵

Through their shared interests in work and play, the couple is also portrayed as fulfilling for one another the most important role in the modern American companionate marriage—they are, as the article “A Romance of Nippon Land” professes, “perfect pals.” A *Picture Show* photo of the couple dancing cheek to cheek describes it as “Mr. and Mrs. Sessue Hayakawa (practicing) the one-step between scenes at the studio.” “Both Sessue and Tsuru love the Western dances,” it states, “and are always anxious to learn new steps.” “How to Hold a Husband” concludes, “the divorce courts will now be watched for dwindling business.”²⁶

Individually, each star also had a dual persona that played on a similar juxtaposition of traditional/Japanese and modern/American. Creating a multidimensional star persona was a useful tactic in general for keeping stars fresh, appealing to a variety of audience demographics and motivating offcasting, but in Aoki and Hayakawa's case it also provided opportunities to exploit both exotic and Americanized dimensions of their image. Thus the flip side to Hayakawa's emotionally impassive and somewhat menacing image as a dark male Other is his representation as an energetic, witty, and athletic new American man—well-rounded intellectually and physically, and a consummate professional—on the model of Douglas Fairbanks. Hayakawa's mobile and expressive features are often described as setting him apart from the "typical Japanese." For example, a *Moving Picture Stories* biography of Hayakawa describes him as "one of the handsomest men of his race . . . five feet seven inches tall and weighs 157 pounds. Unlike many Orientals he always has a cheerful smile. He is very athletic, being an expert swimmer, wrestler and boxer. He can ride, fence, paint and is a clever writer."²⁷

In roles such as the wild man Tatsu in *The Dragon Painter* (dir. William Worthington, US, 1919) and in a 1921 Screen Snapshots comedy short with Charles Murray and Fatty Arbuckle, Hayakawa displays an exuberant and nimble style of movement reminiscent of Fairbanks's zany and boyish physicality in films such as *Wild and Woolly* (dir. Philip Leacock, US, 1917). The dichotomy of East and West in his lifestyle is mobilized as a clash of primitive versus civilized, but it is also presented as the gap between traditional and modern. A story entitled "Sessue of the Samurai" states, "He is American to the finger-tips, but one always feels that in Hayakawa there is the soul of some stern old Samurai, who has returned to earth and got into the body of a very up-to-date young man of fashion by mistake . . . the spirit of old Japan . . . but the manners and thoughts of modern America."²⁸ Hayakawa thus personified modern masculinity while retaining an aura of exotic allure.

Physical descriptions of Aoki suggest a reversal of this soul-body dichotomy, as she seems to embody a small and submissive

Oriental feminine type, but with the spirit and outward trappings of the modern woman.²⁹ One article describes her as a “rare old Japanese print framed in American flapper clothes,” and a fan magazine poem calls her “an exquisite Japanese doll dressed up in French clothes.”³⁰ Many stories and photos highlight a perceived clash between Aoki’s “quaint” Eastern appearance and her Western ways. For example, one photo plays on the contrast within an image of Aoki in a kimono using the “latest in phone technology.” The poem mentioned above describes her as excusing herself from a conversation, whispering, in “her quaint little voice” that she has an important appointment at Coney Island.³¹

A similar juxtaposition occurs in an Emma-Lindsay Squier story about the lavishness of Aoki’s collection of kimonos and obis, which emphasizes both their exoticism and their similarities to a Western-style wardrobe. Squier professes surprise that Japanese women of fashion are concerned about keeping up with trends in kimono design, and compares Japanese men to the American husbands of “social butterflies,” forced to supply their wives with the latest styles at great expense.³² At the end of a rather melodramatic story about a letter that Aoki received from “the flowery kingdom” from a man claiming to be her long-lost father, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote, “She is so entirely American in her manner of speech and in voicing her viewpoints that it is a bit difficult and somewhat incongruous to connect her with anything so bizarre and unconventional.”³³ Aoki is also often presented as a contrast to Hayakawa in his stern or fatalistic incarnation. “His wife is exuberant [*sic*] most of the time,” “A Romance of Nippon Land” states, “generally smiling, and not particularly the serious type that her husband is.”³⁴

The dichotomy in Aoki’s persona is on occasion pushed to the edge of plausibility by the contrast between how she is represented visually and how she is described in print. Though she is most often pictured in kimono, numerous articles insist that for everyday wear she typically dresses in the latest French or American fashions. Aoki is also described as behaving as a modern woman, engaging in sports, card games, dancing, a love of fast cars, and, of course, a career. One *Picture Play* photo feature, on

the occasion of her new contract with Universal in 1920, shows her once again in a kimono, but states, “When in Rome . . . Tsuru Aoki isn’t in Rome, of course, she’s in Los Angeles, so she’s doing as the Angelesians do—withdrawing from her place as leading lady for her husband . . . and becoming a star in her own right.”³⁵

Furthermore, while Aoki’s Japanese characteristics were typically used to balance the modern facets of her persona, in certain configurations they had the potential to amplify rather than diminish a sense of her departure from safely contained feminine behavior. In a publicity stunt arranged with the Los Angeles police department, reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, Hayakawa and Aoki gave a demonstration of jujitsu to members of the force. After Hayakawa demonstrates his skill, he turns the officers over to Aoki:

The lean brown arm of the woman struck. It caught the burly policeman in a trick hold and the club flew from his grasp. A jerk of her No. 2 shoe, and a twist of her back and Sergt. O’Brien spilled over her, alighting on his back. Then she stood the squad of eight men in line, told them to prepare themselves against an attack, and then apparently, she fluttered past them. Sixteen heels left the floor in startling succession, sixteen hands that have held many violent persons and performed many feats of strength, hung limp. The eight were in a pile and Mrs. Hayakawa was at the other end of the room.³⁶

In this example, Aoki’s otherness enabled a rather startling image of modern feminine power. The reference to Aoki’s “brown arm,” her “fluttering” movement, and the mysterious power of the martial arts are all clearly based in Oriental stereotypes. In fact, the image of the delicate-but-lethal Asian woman persists in such figures as Lucy Liu’s O-Ren Ishii in *Kill Bill Volume 1* (dir. Quentin Tarantino, US, 2003), which in turn draws on various earlier *manga* and martial arts films. However, the combination of bold physicality and unruffled stylishness—even, perhaps, the description of her arm as lean and brown, suggestive of a tennis player’s tan, rather than olive or yellow—also align Aoki with the athlete chic of the modern woman.

As though the highly charged combination of Japanese maiden and modern woman was more than enough for any one star to support in this period, the overdetermined sensuality of the female exotic is as notably absent from Aoki's publicity as it is from her films. Instead, publicity about the star is insistent in its comparison of her to a doll or a child. Harry Carr called her a "tiny doll" with "the simple directness of a child," and the fan magazine poem mentioned above joked, "Sometime somebody is going to pick her up and take her home to his little girl."³⁷

While an association with doll-like or childlike qualities was a common feature of the persona of stars such as Mary Pickford, it had, additionally, a particular implication for the figure of the immigrant. Diane Negra has pointed out that Colleen Moore's colleen persona was also linked to emphasis on her small stature, "as if to insist upon her inability to present a threat."³⁸ Negra further argues that Moore's Irishness "established a connection to purified, virginal sexuality at a historical moment when American female sexuality was suddenly (and to some Americans, shockingly), unbounded" (31–32). The pervasiveness of images of Aoki in a kimono among the plum blossoms, in spite of the modern elements in her star persona, can be seen to serve a similar function of cementing an association between the star and the figure of the pure Asian maiden. However, there are also important distinctions to be made between Moore's "guileless" and comical colleen and the image of Oriental polish cultivated for Aoki.

Aoki's association with French fashion and culture is a key third term that complicates the cultural flux that made up her star persona. Her collective biography makes frequent mention of the French tutor that her adoptive father secured for her on her arrival in the United States, and also of a "French chaperone." French cars and clothes and the "French bulldog" mentioned above are also said to be among her possessions. French fashion here represents a kind of cultural higher court, signifying Aoki's undeniable mastery of Western fashion and serving as a mediator between the exotic and ancient East and modern America.³⁹

Aoki's connection to French culture brought with it an aura of continental sophistication that might have had the poten-

tial to push her persona in the direction of the sexualized exotic.⁴⁰ However, Aoki's connections to France seem to have played out primarily at the level of smart consumer choices, bringing with them none of the connotations of intransigent foreignness that marked the persona of stars such as Pola Negri.⁴¹ Just as Beth Gordon in *Why Change Your Wife* (dir. Cecil B. DeMille, US, 1920) learns to indulge in the Hindustan Foxtrot without succumbing to Oriental depravity, so, too, in the context of modern American consumer culture, Aoki can indulge in French fashion without aligning herself with the vamp or the coquette. Once again, the constant comparisons of Aoki to a doll seem fundamental to retaining this distance. Entirely unlike the physically substantial vamp, and more passive than the comical madcap or the vivacious flappers to come, Aoki danced delicately on the precipice between the traditional and the modern, the exotic and the familiar. Her diminutive stature and interchangeable international costumes evoked fantasies of dressing her up, while suggesting that negotiating a fundamental change in gender roles can be as easy as a shift in outfits.⁴²

Masquerading as a Full-Fledged American Girl

As the teens drew to a close, female screen types began shifting ever more rapidly as a faddish succession of sensational new character types appeared. The limits to Aoki's ability to shift the balance from Japanese flower toward modern American woman are demonstrated by a film role in which she temporarily left the kimono behind for more flapperish attire. In the comedy *The Courageous Coward*, the image of Aoki as a dress-up doll allowed her to temporarily step into the shoes of the modern woman. The film was produced by Haworth Pictures, which under Hayakawa's leadership sought to provide its Asian performers with less stereotyped roles.

Aoki's association with shifting costumes dovetailed in the film with a pattern of narrativizing the unconventional behavior of the modern woman as a masquerade, which I have discussed elsewhere in relation to comic feminist and madcap characters of the

teens and flapper characters of the twenties.⁴³ In films like *Indiscrete Corinne* (dir. John Francis Dillon, US, 1917), *Madcap Madge* (dir. Raymond West, US, 1917), *Miss Hobbs* (dir. Donald Crisp, US, 1920), *The Flapper* (dir. Alan Crosland, US, 1920), and *Bobbed Hair* (dir. Thomas N. Heffron, US, 1922), to name just a few, the narrative device of the masquerade provided a way for good girls to play with a modern or transgressive identity while retaining their fundamental innocence. For example, in *The Flapper*, the heroine dresses up in a stereotypical and oversized vamp costume in an attempt to persuade an older man that she is mature enough for him. In each of these films, the pretense is easily dropped when the young women discover that their young men do not care for the new identity. Similarly, in *The Courageous Coward*, Aoki's character Rei, mistakenly believing that Hayakawa's character Suki prefers American girls, rejects her traditional Japanese upbringing to adopt Western manners and dress.

Although *The Courageous Coward* did provide Aoki with a chance to set aside her kimono and play comedy on screen, publicity for the film suggests that the racial identity of her star persona did not undergo much of a shift. A *Moving Picture World* feature on *The Courageous Coward* comments that Aoki "blossoms out into a full fledged American girl" and "adopts the Occidental clothing and incidentally the niceties which every American woman wants." The *Moving Picture World* review of the film similarly asserts that "what will appeal mostly to women followers of the movies is the Americanization of Tsuru Aoki, which takes place in this play. Tsuru adopts the powder puff, the tight skirt and the Occidental shoes in this picture, which all goes to make it highly entertaining from the woman's view."⁴⁴

It is notable that the accessories highlighted here, particularly the powder puff, are those closely associated with the modern girl's use of consumer goods to define her rebellion against traditional standards of appearance and behavior. However, publicity for the film does its best to consign the changes in Aoki's character to the realm of masquerade. Her established and essentialized racial identity undergirds the assurance that she will not really stray far from her kimono. The text for the film's advertising

campaign states, “Tsuru Aoki as the Japanese maiden is delightful in her efforts to imitate her western sisters in everything from high heels to powder puffs.”⁴⁵ Unlike a European-American actress who can, over the course of a single makeup session, become indistinguishable from a “real Madame Butterfly,” Aoki’s race is presented as a visual constant that makes her modern costume inherently contradictory, and her apparent transgression unthreatening.

As Said has said, “No matter how deep the specific exception, no matter how much a single Oriental can escape the fences placed around him, he is *first* an Oriental, *second* a human being, and *last* again an Oriental.”⁴⁶ In spite of years of publicity that suggested that Aoki had in fact successfully bridged the gaps of culture and race, and a film role that offered a brief look at Aoki as a modern woman, publicity for the film conflates Aoki herself with a character who only imitates her “western sisters.” In fact, Aoki’s performance requires a double masquerade: she is an American masquerading as a Japanese woman masquerading as an American.

It is doubtful that Tsuru Aoki could have been successfully put over as the sympathetic figure that she was in the teens and early twenties if her racial identity had been united with the more sensual version of Orientalism.⁴⁷ It would seem that the unquestionable gap of race was a necessary component of European-American female stars’ forays into a sexualized Oriental identity in this period. For Aoki’s persona, *Oriental* therefore took on a nearly opposite association with domesticity and submissiveness. However, Aoki’s star narrative is one of movement away from this restrictive past into the more benevolent, egalitarian consumerist patriarchy of the modern West. If this was a journey that could not then be completed, it nevertheless on occasion opened up an unusual space, through its construction of Japanese gender relations as hyper-Victorian, for outright rejection of an outmoded and intractable patriarchy. Aoki’s ability to be all things—demure heroine and spunky rebel, traditional and modern, a homemaker and a pal, a flower of the East and an American in chic costumes—offered a model of cultural adaptability at a time when changing and multiple expectations of feminine identity seemed

difficult to manage. Her star persona certainly offered the reassuring fallback position that she was an unthreatening little Oriental doll, but it also made room for a very different image: of Aoki standing in quiet triumph over the bodies of eight burly and deeply chagrined Los Angeles cops.

Notes

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1. In connection with the release of the film *The Courageous Coward* (dir. William Worthington, US, 1919), *Moving Picture World* said of Hayakawa, “Beyond question, he is one of the most popular players on the screen today and a glance at the Exhibitors Mutual booking records is sufficient to prove this assertion.” “‘The Courageous Coward’ Goes Big in Washington,” *Moving Picture World*, 26 April 1919, 559. Furthermore, Hayakawa was widely acknowledged as a figure of romance and as having a special appeal to women and girls. For example, in the *Wid’s Daily* review of *The Man Beneath* (dir. William Worthington, US, 1919), Wid Gunning states, “Hayakawa, who has a particularly large following among women, has a role that they should like quite well in his latest. In this one he has more chance to get response through sympathy than he had in several of his recent releases, and that’s the sort of stuff the women like to see the Japanese star do. So it’s up to you to go after the fair sex most strongly if you play this one.” Wid Gunning, review of *The Man Beneath*, *Wid’s Daily*, 13 July 1919, 111.
2. “Jiu-Jitsu for Police Force,” *Los Angeles Times*, 27 December 1914.
3. Charles Musser, “Divorce, DeMille, and the Comedy of Remarriage,” in *Classical Hollywood Comedy*, ed. Kristine Brunovska Karnick and Henry Jenkins (New York: Routledge, 1995), 282–313.

4. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 187–88, 287. The most famous Hollywood examples are Theda Bara's pseudo-Arab vamps in films like *A Fool There Was* (dir. Frank Powell, US, 1915) and *Cleopatra* (dir. J. Gordon Edwards, US, 1917), and Rudolph Valentino's sexually avid sheiks in *The Sheik* (dir. George Melford, US, 1921) and *The Son of the Sheik* (dir. George Fitzmaurice, US, 1926). The Oriental male predator also made his appearance in films such as *Brewster's Millions* (dir. Oscar Apfel, US, 1914), *The Arab* (dir. Cecil B. DeMille, US, 1915), *The Lad and the Lion* (dir. Alfred E. Green, US, 1917), *The Man Who Turned White* (dir. Park Frame, US, 1919), and *Flame of the Desert* (dir. Reginald Barker, US, 1919), assaulting and/or abducting women and taking them to assorted lairs and harems.
5. Said speaks of intra-Orient spheres within Orientalist discourse. However, he states, "neither of these Orients was purely one thing or the other: it is their vacillations, their tempting suggestiveness, their capacity for entertaining and confusing the mind, that are interesting" (Said, *Orientalism*, 41, 58). The sensuality most associated with the Near East could thus be extended to the Far East and to Japanese and Chinese characters. Anna May Wong's role in *Picadilly* (dir. E. A. Dupont, US, 1929)—discussed further in this volume by Yiman Wang in "The Art of Screen Passing: Anna May Wong's Yellow Yellowface Performance in the Art Deco Era"—provides an example of the persistence of this connection. Wong's Sho-sho possesses a vamplike power to gain control over men that is linked to her exotic appearance and style of dancing, particularly when she dons a skimpy Chinese costume for her number at the Picadilly nightclub.
6. See, for example, Gaylyn Studlar's discussion of the use of a standard romantic scenario in Valentino's films in which an initially frightening male is "revealed to be other than he originally seems" when a woman brings forth his tender side. Gaylyn Studlar, *This Mad Masquerade: Stardom and Masculinity in the Jazz Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 172. This narrative device is also evident in earlier films that center on Arab characters, such as DeMille's *The Arab*, and it is similarly employed in a number of Hayakawa's Japanese roles, including *The Soul of Kura San* (dir. Edward LeSaint, US, 1916).

7. Donald Kiriwara has noted that American perceptions of Japan in this period were shaped by everything from nonfiction scenics of the “land of pagodas” and fictional narratives such as *Madame Butterfly* to political events such as Japanese aggression in the Pacific and the limitations placed on East Asian immigration to the US. Donald Kiriwara, “The Accepted Idea Displaced: Stereotype and Sessue Hayakawa,” in *The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of US Cinema*, ed. Daniel Bernardi (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 83–84. Daisuke Miyao has further pointed out that “the success of the English light opera, *The Mikado* (1885) by Gilbert and Sullivan and the popularity of *Madame Butterfly* (1898)—novel, play and especially the opera version—had a strong influence on forming popular imagination on Japan as a land of refined culture.” Daisuke Miyao, “Madame Butterfly to Ideal Wife: Exoticism, Americanization, Nationalism, and Tsuru Aoki’s Silent Stardom” (paper presented at the annual conference of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, Atlanta, 6 March 2004).
8. Kiriwara, “The Accepted Idea Displaced,” 83.
9. The fictional eruption of Sakura-jima was apparently much bloodier than the historical eruption, as most of the villagers were forewarned by earthquakes and escaped with their livestock several days before the actual eruption.
10. For a thorough discussion of the development of staging and acting styles in this period, see Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, *Theater to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). See also Roberta Pearson, *Eloquent Gestures: The Transformation of Performance Style in the Griffith Biograph Films* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).
11. Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976), 69.
12. The seascapes for *The Wrath of the Gods* were actually shot in Santa Monica.
13. Both films include the figure that Nick Browne has described as a “cross-cultural heroine,” “a woman between two cultures who both rejects and is rejected by one in moving toward the other.” Nick Browne, “The Undoing of the Other Woman: Madame

- Butterfly in the Discourse of American Orientalism,” in *The Birth of Whiteness*, 227, 235.
14. Lea Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin: Censorship and the Fallen Woman Film, 1928–1942* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 7.
 15. Thomas Elsaesser, “Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama,” in *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman’s Film*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1987), 45–46.
 16. Linda Williams, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O. J. Simpson* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 43–44.
 17. As Lea Jacobs notes, the scenario in which the heroine is cast out into the snow is a classic icon of the fallen woman’s ejection from her domestic haven, and the volcano provides an effective parallel. Jacobs, *Wages of Sin*, 11.
 18. Williams, *Playing the Race Card*, 37.
 19. For a discussion of concerns over rising divorce rates and the participation of film in the discourse around divorce, see Musser, “Divorce, DeMille, and the Comedy of Remarriage,” 287–90.
 20. Musser has pointed out that in films like *Why Change Your Wife?* (dir. Cecil B. DeMille, US, 1920), consumer goods with an Oriental association, including Turkish cigarettes and a veil-like negligee, hold the potential to add spice to the characters’ repressed home life. “DeMille’s orientalism allows for an escape from Victorian moralism,” Musser argues, “allowing spectators to participate vicariously in the loosening of sexual bonds” before returning to the “normal constraints of everyday life.” Musser, “Divorce, DeMille, and the Comedy of Remarriage,” 301–3.
 21. “How to Hold a Husband: Mr. and Mrs Hayakawa, in an Oriental Lesson in Four Chapters,” in Sessue Hayakawa Clipping File, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research (hereafter WCFTR). “Chasing a roof garden” suggests indulging in the nightlife in clubs with lavish roof gardens and hence neglecting one’s wife and family in favor of the companionship that this implies.
 22. Pearl Gaddis, “A Romance of Nippon Land,” *Motion Picture Classic*, in Sessue Hayakawa Clipping File, WCFTR.

23. Edna Foley, "One More Illusion Smashed"; Warren Reed, "The Tradition Wreckers"; Grace Kingsley, "That Splash of Saffron"; "From Out the Flowery Kingdom," *Photoplay*; Emma-Lindsay Squier, "Was Kipling Right?"; "Kipling Was Wrong!" *Photoplay*, December 1919, 51, 124, all in Sessue Hayakawa Clipping File, WCFTR. See also "'Picture Show' Photographs of Prominent Picture Players," *Picture Show*, 22 May 1920, 5.
24. Unidentified *Photoplay* article, in Sessue Hayakawa Clipping File, WCFTR.
25. "How to Hold a Husband."
26. Gaddis, "A Romance of Nippon Land"; "'Picture Show' Photographs of Prominent Picture Players," 5; and "How to Hold a Husband."
27. H. C. Witwer, "Making Hay-akawa while the Sun Shines," in Sessue Hayakawa Clipping File, WCFTR; "The Actor on the Cover," *Moving Picture Stories*, 12 September 1919, 2.
28. Photo caption, *Photoplay*, "Sessue of the Samurai," source unknown, in Sessue Hayakawa Clipping File, WCFTR.
29. Yiman Wang details strikingly similar descriptions of Anna May Wong as outwardly chic and American, and inwardly quaint and Chinese, in her essay in this volume titled "The Art of Screen Passing."
30. Harry Carr, "Son of the Samurai," *Motion Picture Classic*, and unattributed poem dated 1921, both in Sessue Hayakawa Clipping File, WCFTR.
31. Unidentified photo and unattributed poem dated 1921, both in Sessue Hayakawa Clipping File, WCFTR.
32. Emma-Lindsay Squier, "To One Lot of Kimonos—\$25,000," in Sessue Hayakawa Clipping File, WCFTR.
33. "High Rank or Fisher Maid?" *Los Angeles Times*, 20 December 1914, 117.
34. Gaddis, "A Romance of Nippon Land." It is interesting to note the extreme flexibility of the representation of the two here. Hayakawa's cheerfulness can be contrasted with that of the "typical Japanese" in one article, while another will draw a contrast between his Japanese inscrutability and Aoki's upbeat American charm.

35. *Picture Play* article in Sessue Hayakawa Clipping File, WCFTR. See also “Tsuru Aoki,” *Picture Show Art Supplement*, June 26, 1920, 11.
36. “Jiu-Jitsu for Police Force.” The passage draws humor from the juxtaposition of the diminutive Asian woman and the stereotypical burly Irish cop, economically called to mind here by the name “Sergt. O’Brien.”
37. Carr, “Son of the Samurai”; and unattributed poem dated 1921, in Sessue Hayakawa Clipping File, WCFTR. This doll-like quality is also present on screen. Compositions in films such as *The Wrath of the Gods* and *The Dragon Painter* frequently emphasize Aoki’s diminutive stature, placing her at the feet of her male costars, dwarfing her within natural landscapes, or setting her off from the surroundings with framing shoji or iris shots. In *The Dragon Painter*, when Hayakawa’s mountain man Tatsu encounters Aoki’s Ume-ko, he races forward and effortlessly swings her high over his head as though she were weightless. The gesture is once again reminiscent of Douglas Fairbanks, who was often photographed lifting Mary Pickford, also famous for being petite, in a similar way.
38. Diane Negra, *Off-White Hollywood: American Culture and Ethnic Female Stardom* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 33.
39. See, for example, Louise Scher, “A Flower of Japan,” *Photoplay Magazine*, in Sessue Hayakawa Clipping File, WCFTR.
40. As Said has noted, from a Victorian English perspective, fashionable, cosmopolitan French culture was a seductive lure for colonized Orientals, which drew them away from English-style reserve and solidity (*Orientalism*, 213).
41. Negra argues that Pola Negri’s persona was characterized by resistant female ethnicity that was “unassimilatable in terms of both her sexuality and her ethnicity” (*Off-White Hollywood*, 56–57).
42. The dress-up fantasy evoked by Aoki’s doll-like image has a corollary in publicity regarding the yellowface roles of European-American actresses. The temporary transformations of actresses including Helen Jerome Eddy, Mary Pickford, Shirley Mason, Viola Dana, Norma Talmadge, and Alla Nazimova into Asian characters are detailed in fan magazines as exciting opportunities to explore what it would be like to be an exotic

type, made possible through costume and modern makeup. For example, a *Photoplay* feature on Viola Dana's makeup for *The Willow Tree* (dir. Henry Otto, US, 1920) asks, "How long does it take to become a [*sic*] Japanese? If you contemplate trying to be a real Oriental you might refer to Viola Dana who, after experimenting two weeks with make-up assisted by two Japanese maids, knows that it takes just two hours to transform herself into a real Mme. Butterfly." Dana is said to be easier to transform than some others. "There is a certain strange foreign look about her eyes and face," the magazine explains, "doubtless due to strong [*sic*] French strain." "Slant Eyes and Bumps!" *Photoplay*, in Viola Dana clipping file, WCFTR. See also "Clever Japanese Make-Up," *Picture Show*, 23 April 1921, 10–11, in Hayakawa clipping file, WCFTR; and "'The Red Lantern' Stars Nazimova," *Moving Picture World*, 10 May 1919, 920–22. For discussions of the continued use of yellowface to play out exotic fantasies, see also Studlar, *This Mad Masquerade*, 83–85; and Mark Winokur, *American Laughter: Immigrants, Ethnicity, and the 1930s Hollywood Film Comedy* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996).

43. Sara Ross, "Early Experiments with the Cinematic Flapper," *Aura Film Studies Journal* 6 (2000): 20–44; Sara Ross, "'Good Little Bad Girls': Controversy and the Flapper Comedienne," *Film History* 13 (2001): 409–23.
44. "Tsuru Aoki Is Starred in 'The Courageous Coward,'" *Moving Picture World*, 26 April 1919, 567; "Next Hayakawa Film Shows Him in Play of Moods," *Moving Picture World*, 19 April 1919, 417.
45. Advertisement for *The Courageous Coward*, *Wid's Weekly*, 6 April 1919, 6.
46. Said, *Orientalism*, 102.
47. Once again, an interesting parallel can be made with Anna May Wong, whose foray into sexualized roles beginning later in the 1920s rendered her star persona deeply problematic within the Hollywood mainstream.

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Having married in defiance of a family curse, Toya-san and Tom hear the vengeful mob approaching. Courtesy Margaret Herrick Library



THE gorgeous and daring dancing costume which so strikingly set off the Oriental beauty of Anna May Wong in "Daughters of the Dragon."

Wong's dragon lady costume was condemned by Chinese nationalists and raved about in American publicity writings.