She bleeds under your white male gaze:

The dialectics of sex and race in *Madame Butterfly*.

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Introduction

For centuries, women in Asia have been conceptualized in Western texts as objects of sexual fascination. The origins can be traced back to the thirteenth century when explorers and traders would venture off to the Silk Route before returning and documenting their stories of the sensual pleasure offered by the women in the East. As European colonial involvement in Asia progressed, these published testimonials transitioned into literary fiction. The short story M*adame Butterfly* (1891) by American writer John Luther Long (1861-1927) was one of the earliest pieces of Western literature that depicted an Asian female protagonist, through the character Cho-Cho San, and offered a representation of interracial marriage.

In my thesis, I attempt to articulate how Cho-Cho San's body and sexuality is used against her in the text and is instead used to uplift certain Western ideologies of the East. Throughout my analysis, I investigate the representation of Cho-Cho San by reviewing the distorted ways in which Cho-Cho San is portrayed as a woman and how this portrayal depicts her as inferior to her husband Pinkerton. This study uses the feminist theories the male gaze and "Madonna/whore" dichotomy because both explore the representation of women's bodies and sexuality in the media and literature. These two models are befitting in pinpointing the multiple ways in which Cho-Cho San is objectified and degraded in a sexual manner.

The male gaze was first coined by Mulvey in her essay "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema" where she examines how the pleasure of looking in cinema is radically used to dehumanize women. She cites Freud's concept of scopophilia which is the pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation by looking at them through a controlling and curious gaze (qtd. in Mulvey 8). Freud theorized scopophilia as one of the main components of sexuality for men and women, stemming from their childhood curiosity of seeing the private bodily and genital functions (8). While Freud states that both men and women subconsciously objectify the person they desire in a scopophilic way, Mulvey argues

that due to the power imbalance in the film industry that is dominated by men, the camera is always focused through the perspective of a man (11). This forms a binary in the pleasure of looking where the man is the active viewer, while the woman is the passive object on display and her appearance is coded solely for the man to erotically look at (12). The storyline consists of her being sexualized, ornately dressed, and dolled up for the camera and characters to see (12). She soon becomes the love interest of the male protagonist and thus his property, causing her to lose her external glamorous "show-girl persona" as her sexuality belongs to the male character only (13). While the male gaze is usually applied to films, it is also useful in examining literature. The concept behind the male gaze assists in analysing how Cho-Cho San is constantly objectified throughout the storyline and how her beauty is used to define her self-worth. It also facilitates in determining how Cho-Cho San's interracial relationship with Pinkerton consists of her being his property instead of an equal partner.

The "Madonna/whore" dichotomy, too, is useful in analysing Cho-Cho San's portrayal. The dichotomy was first officially theorized by Freud as a psychological complex developed in heterosexual men where they "can become aroused only when they degrade a partner, reducing her to a sex object, because a respected partner cannot be fully desired" (qtd. in Bareket et al. 502). In this concept, a man is supposed to be in a respected relationship with the "Madonna" in the form of his wife while only being aroused in the presence of the "whore" who is usually in the form of a mistress or prostitute.

The "Madonna/whore" complex is related to De Beauvoir's theory of how this binary attitude towards women is institutionalized in society to reinforce a patriarchal society. In her book *The Second Sex*, De Beauvoir delves into how society has a caste system of lost women and virtuous women which is in the form of the prostitute and the wife (680). In this system, a man destines his wife to be chaste but because he is unable to derive sexual pleasure from that, he uses the prostitute as a scapegoat to vent his sexual frustration onto her before

discarding her (680). The prostitute is the scapegoat because she is treated as a pariah by society as a result of selling her body while the man is omitted from this debasement despite his part in this carnal liaison. De Beauvoir contemplates the similarities between the prostitute and the wife where both sell their bodies to the man, only the wife is considered the legitimate woman and is respected as a human being (681). This is because her occupation with the man is considered a lifelong contract where he is her provider while the prostitute relies on the money of multiple clients. Since the prostitute is not considered a human being with human rights, she is considered the epitome of feminine slavery where she is a commodity to please any men in society but not herself (681). And yet, neither the wife nor prostitute has the power to exploit the man in the same manner (681). This is because there is not a category of lost men or virtuous men. The man is still respected as a human being and can maintain his role as a husband regardless.

The connection between this double standard and the esteemed position of the wife lies in the concept of "virginity" and "purity". Blank examines this in her book *The Taboo of Virginity*, where she highlights how "virginity" is a social construct invented by humans (1). The concept of virginity is exclusively female since the male body has never been commonly labelled as being "virginal" (10). The very word *virgin* originated from the Latin word *virgo* which means a girl or a never-married woman (10). Hence, women have historically been expected to be "virgins" before the wedding night or else be rendered undesirable as a wife and worthless on the marriage market (28). This is because women were traditionally considered the property of their father. The wedding would simply be a transaction from a father's household to a husband's with monetary gains through the form of a dowry (28). Thus, the role of the wife is a respected position only because she succeeded in being the property of one man. Her virginity provides her and the men in her life with status, so her self-worth is based on her refusal to be sexual. However, she is deprived of the role of being

sexually desirable. That role belongs to the prostitute and it is what defines her self-worth since her survival is dependent on if and how many men desire her enough to be her client. De Beauvoir and Blank's binary of the wife and prostitute is undoubtedly a synonym of the "Madonna/whore" dichotomy. Furthermore, De Beauvoir and Blank's analyses highlight how this dichotomy is a rigged system that works against women by using their sexuality to reduce them as possessions. The dichotomy sets women against each other and ultimately seeks to uphold men into power since they are the ones who get to decide the women's value by choosing who is a "Madonna" and who is a "whore". This study applies this doctrine of power to brandish the numerous ways in which Cho-Cho San attempts to embody the role of the "Madonna wife" throughout the storyline but is inevitably destined to have the role of the "whore" through the way she is treated and described by Pinkerton and the other male characters in the novel.

However, this study does not merely investigate the novel *Madame Butterfly* through a feminist lens, but instead applies a postcolonial feminist theory, which is an intersection between feminist theory and postcolonial theory. This is critical because this study aims to emphasize how Cho-Cho San's race affects the way she is portrayed, along with her gender. Indeed, this thesis ultimately seeks to demonstrate that *Madame Butterfly* uses Cho-Cho San's body and sexuality in the storyline to reinforce an interwoven form of racialized misogyny and Western imperialism.

The importance of using an intersectional lens lies in the criticism of how early feminism centred on Western feminists who "assumed that their political project was universal, and that women globally faced the same universal forms of oppression" (McEwan 96). They only defined the struggle of women through their gender but not their race, class, religion, language, and sexual orientation (96). It was during the 1980s that non-white

feminists, such as hooks, began to confront how Eurocentric the heart of (white) Western feminism was, in her book *Aint I a woman*:

> All too frequently in the women's movement, it was assumed one could be free of sexist thinking by simply adopting the appropriate feminist rhetoric; it was further assumed that identifying oneself as oppressed freed one from being an oppressor. To a grave extent, such thinking prevented white feminists from understanding and overcoming their own sexist racist attitudes toward black women. They could pay lip service to the idea of sisterhood and solidarity between women but at the same time dismiss black women. (8-9)

hooks makes an example of how this single-axe framework affects the way feminist theory is written and applied in her other book *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984). She begins by critiquing *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), a book written by Friedman, a white woman. *The Feminine Mystique* was credited for having sparked the beginning of second-wave feminism in the US due to opening up the discussion of how women wanted more than the domestic role of the suburban housewife and mother (qtd. in hooks 1). hooks highlights Friedman's classist and racist overtones where she assumed *all* women shared this experience or had the luxury of being a bored housewife (1). Friedman ignored "the existence of all non-white women and poor white women. She did not tell readers whether it was more fulfilling to be a maid, a babysitter, a factory worker, a clerk, or a prostitute" (1-2).

It was partly as a response to such criticisms like hooks' that the branch of "global feminism" emerged. It had the intent to recognize diversity in women's oppression across the globe. An example of a global feminist text is Morgan's *Sisterhood is Global* (1984) which consists of feminist essays written by women in eighty different countries. However, Mohanty argues how this universal sisterhood, projected from texts like Morgan's, is predicated "on the erasure of the history and effects of contemporary imperialism" (*Feminism*

Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity 110-111). This is because it still assumed that women everywhere had the same perspectives and experiences. This universalist assumption allowed the Western white women to ignore an imperialist history and system that they benefitted from but directly affects the experiences that non-white, non-Western women faced. This resonates with hooks' examination of how white women were able to use the concept of gender-based sisterhood to avoid confronting their privilege and role as the oppressor in a racist hierarchy. Mohanty further elaborates that this type of erasure allows Western feminists to write about the "oppressed third world women" in an ethnocentric way by judging the "underdeveloped" culture they live in by Western standards ("Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" 80). As demonstrated, this linear, gender-based lens distorts and sanitizes the complex experiences a woman can face that other women do not, with one of them being the way they are misrepresented in literature. It is thus necessary to analyse the representation of Cho-Cho San through an intersectional framework.

Through this intersectional framework, I introduce the concept the "White Madonna/Oriental whore" dichotomy. I coined this term because it addresses how non-white women from the East are inherently depicted and perceived as different to white women from the West in terms of their body and sexuality. In this dichotomy, Asian women fill the role of the "Oriental whore" as she is deemed worthy to sexually gratify the white man and be their temporary pleasure but not worthy enough to be their wife as that role belongs to a white woman. This analysis also relates to the white male gaze, a term first coined by writer Garcia in her article "3 Disturbing Ways the Media's White Male Gaze Hurts Women of Color". While Mulvey's theory sees all women's bodies as indispensable elements of spectacle, the white male gaze further makes a spectacle of the bodies of women of colour where they are objectified, exotified, and hypersexualized (Garcia). Thus, the thesis attempts to critique how

Cho-Cho San is fetishized, exoticized, and objectified as this exotic commodity for Pinkerton to take as his possession. Garcia further articulates how the white male gaze goes "a step further and complicates this theory [Mulvey's male gaze] by acknowledging that race makes the experience of objectification different for WoC [Women of Color]. This is because although all women are objectified in media, whiteness is idealized in a way that celebrates the beauty of white women in a way WoC are not" (Garcia). This race disparity resonates with hooks' exploration of how black women have their womanhood erased in films in order to validate white women's existence, as shown in her essay "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators" (1992). While Mulvey reduces the concept of a "pleasure in looking" into a simple binary of an active male and passive female, hooks elaborates that black women cannot identify with either role because when it came to black women being represented in films, their "bodies and being were there to serve—to enhance and maintain white womanhood as [the] object of the phallocentric gaze" (119). Thus, this study references the perspectives of Garcia and hooks, two women of colour, to highlight how through the white male gaze, Cho-Cho San's value is based on whether she resembles the Eurocentric standards of beauty in order to reinforce the notion that white women are the true object of feminine beauty and male desire.

Subsequently, this study cites Kaplan's doctrine of the "imperial gaze" in order to apply the white male gaze with a postcolonial lens. In her book *Looking for the Other* (1997), Kaplan investigates the imperial gaze found in Hollywood films that include non-white characters and are situated outside the Western world. Kaplan highlights how the imperial gaze "reflects the assumption that the white western subject is central much as the male gaze assumes the centrality of the male subject" (78). The gaze comprises a colonial binary between a White Westerner, who is the subject and observer, and an ethnic "Other" who is the non-white object to be gazed at. This gaze validates the white western subject as the

superior conqueror and allows them to assert command. Kaplan stipulates that there are three common images of the "Other" found in Hollywood:

> 1) infantilizing minorities-imagining them as helpless and childlike within adult bodies, fixed at the "primitive" stage of development.
>
> 2) animalizing minorities-showing their similarities to animals and associating them with nature.
>
> 3) sexualizing minorities as lusty, libidinous, debasing minorities as immoral, not knowing right from wrong, if not quite simply evil. (80)

This study attempts to identify the moments that Cho-Cho San embodies any of these three tropes under the white male gaze. Moreover, Kaplan also examines the contradictory position that white women occupy, where they can be objectified by the male gaze but also participate in the imperial gaze through their role as a colonial white traveller (15). This study explores this diametrical rank of power in the analysis of the character Adelaide, a white woman who ends up being Pinkerton's new wife, and her interaction with Cho-Cho San.

Although all of these texts have focused their respective analysis of the "gaze" exclusively on cinematic films, it can be argued that their "gaze" can be applied to literature as well. After all, in literature, a female character can be objectified through her lack of agency in the storyline, the way the story is narrated through the scopophilic perspective of a white man, and the ways in which her self-worth is based on how the male characters find her sexually desirable. Furthermore, this study analyses the ways in which the white male gaze can be found in the film, opera, and theatre adaptations of *Madame Butterfly*.

The "White Madonna/Oriental whore" dichotomy, too, is built on a diverse set of texts that cover the sexual politics in gender, race, and colonialism. Blank specifies how

virginity is not only defined by gender but also colour (11). Traditionally, Christianity symbolically equates light and light colours to purity and holiness, while darkness and darker colours are allegories of sin and corruption (11). Thus, when white Christians from Europe began to colonize parts of the world where people had a darker skin tone, they assumed they were inherently immoral (11). This is accompanied by the fact that the European settlers found the Natives' culture and attitudes towards sex as insubordinate and "primitive" as they differed from the Christian standards of morality (11). As a result, there was this preconceived idea that indigenous, non-white people were inherently sexually deviant. This is significant in examining how Cho-Cho San's race and culture implements her to be innately classified with the role of the "Oriental whore". Even though as a Japanese woman, Cho-Cho San may not possess a dark complexion, this research argues that her ethnicity and culture still alienate her from her white characters and deems her too "exotic" to be the "White Madonna" wife.

In order to delve deeper into the racial construct behind the "Oriental whore" archetype, this study has integrated Said's critique of "Orientalism" into the discussion. In his book, *Orientalism* (1978), Said chronicles the term as the West's patronizing and imitation of the East in order to dominate it. When it came to portraying the women in the East, Said cites the written account of French novelist Flaubert (1821-1880), who describes a sexual liaison with a courtesan dancer during his trip to Egypt. Said comments on how "The Oriental woman is an occasion and an opportunity for Flaubert's musings...Less a woman than a display of impressive but verbally inexpressive femininity" (187-188). Said's dialectic of the Oriental woman being a feminine imitation of a woman and a white man's "occasion" resonates with De Beauvoir's concept of the prostitute's role as the dehumanized, feminine pariah to mankind but with added racial undertones. Additionally, Said reflects on how the Oriental women are "are usually the creatures of a male-power-fantasy" (207). This concept

helps to highlight the way Cho-Cho San's demeanour and relationship with a white man is used as a metaphor of Western masculine power.

While there are numerous books and journal articles that have examined *Madame Butterfly*, it is usually through a post-colonial lens that focuses more on the themes of nationalism, orientalism, and cultural diaspora found in the text. A prime example is the anthology *A Vision of the Orient: Texts, Intertexts, and Contexts of Madame Butterfly* edited by Wisenthal and the article "Literature Examined under the Diasporic Lens: Emotional Diaspora Present in Madame Butterfly" by Kwak and Song. Wisenthal's anthology in particular includes multiple essays, written by him and other authors, which mostly focus on the adaptations of *Madame Butterfly* instead of the original short story. Indeed, there is little research on the short story itself that includes an in-depth analysis of Cho-Cho San's body and sexuality and how these two factors represent her as a woman. This thesis attempts to achieve this analysis, while also citing the works of Wisenthal, and Kwak and Song, to prove how gender and sexuality can be intrinsically linked with racism, cultural diaspora, and nationalism. As such, it is the first study to offer an extensive analysis of Madame Butterfly, both the short story and its adaptations, through an intersectional lens.

The first chapter explores the early Western and Eastern interactions, the initial sexual relations between Western men and Asian women, and the attitudes surrounding these relationships by both the Western and Eastern society, and the political, sexual violence inflicted on Asian women through Western Imperialism. This is done to determine how the "White Madonna/Oriental whore" dichotomy and white male gaze objectification were formed in the Western attitudes before it began to appear in Western texts. The chapter shows that the trope of the "Oriental whore" with the White explorer is a combinative product of the West's exotic fantasy of the East, the East's nationalist fear of Western domination, and the institutionalized misogyny on both sides.

The second chapter conducts a textual analysis of Long's *Madame Butterfly*, identifying where the white male gaze and the "White Madonna/Oriental whore" dichotomy are found. The chapter shows how Cho-Cho San's overall role in the storyline is to reinforce Western hegemonic ideas through the way she is abused by Pinkerton into playing the role of the "White Madonna" wife before being discarded as the "Oriental whore".

The third chapter reviews the later film, theatre, and opera adaptations of *Madame Butterfly* and contrasts the different artistic and literary changes. The chapter overall discovers that the white male gaze and the "White Madonna/Oriental whore dichotomy" have evolved in order to strengthen the image of Cho-Cho San as the "Oriental whore" and exotic object.

Together, these chapters ultimately demonstrate that the white male gaze and "White Madonna/Oriental whore" dichotomy reinforce racialized misogyny and Western imperialism by acting as Eurocentric standards of womanhood which Cho-Cho San consistently tries, and fails, to match up to.

1. “Oriental whore” culture.

The representation of Cho-Cho San and her relationship with Pinkerton is a reflection of the West’s fetishization of Asian femininity. A broader analysis is that this fetishization is interwoven with the East’s nationalism and universal misogyny of women's bodies and sexuality. All these factors work together to reduce and utilize women of the East as possessions, either as an imperial prize or a patriotic coat of arms. These conflicting attitudes emerged in society before being propagated in literature.

While the earliest interaction between Europe and Asia can be traced back to Antiquity, it was not until the thirteenth century that the literary narrative of European explorers engaging in sexual liaisons with the women abroad began to form. In 1295, Venetian traveller Marco Polo details in his book *The Travels of Marco Polo* of how the courtesans in the Silk Road are “accomplished and are perfect in the arts of caressing and fondling...Strangers who have once tasted of their charms remain in a state of fascination and become so enchanted by their wanton arts” (235). This shows Polo is fetishizing Asian women because he is fixated on the way they openly practice sexual acts that might be unknown or forbidden in European society. He also claimed to have witnessed Kublai Khan instructing his officers to “collect for him 100 or more of the handsomest of the young women, according to the estimation of beauty...they are divided into groups of five, each taking a turn for three days and three nights, in his majesty’s interior apartment” (188). This passage has the effect of justifying the objectification of Asian women because it conveys the sense that if it is acceptable for the Oriental men to objectify their women and use them for sexual gratification, then it must be acceptable for the Western explorers as well. Thus, we can see the fantasy of the “Oriental whore” being a disposable plaything slowly forming.

As European colonial involvement and trading ties began to emerge, the more interracial liaisons became mainstream. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive in Japan, the country that Madame Butterfly is set in, in 1543, followed by the Spanish in 1592 (Leupp 3). The Dutch and British would follow in the 1600s with their respective trading companies settling in separate island territories of Japan (Kawaguchi 16). The merchants and sailors on these Western ships remained in the country for many years, living with Japanese women, particularly the courtesans who lived in government-sanctioned pleasure quarters (Leupp 3). William Adams, an Englishman who piloted the first Dutch ship to reach Japan in 1600, became the first westerner to take a Japanese wife (Prasso 38). However, this welcoming atmosphere was not to last. The Japanese authorities began to fear the growing influence of Christianity which caused them to expel the Spanish in 1624 and the Portuguese in 1639 (Kawaguchi 16). The British left on their own accord in 1623, finding trade unprofitable (16).

The Dutch were thus the only Europeans who were permitted to continue to trade with Japan albeit with more restrictions. In 1641, the Dutch trading post was moved to Dejima, a fan-shaped island off Nagasaki that was originally built in 1634 to confine the Portuguese (17). The Dutch employees were forbidden from wandering off the island and the few locals who were allowed to enter the island were prostitutes (17). It should be noted that the prostitutes who entertained the European clients were registered in a different class than those who catered to non-European clients, and it was initially the lowest-ranking women in the brothels who fraternised with these foreigners and them only (17).

This type of confinement was not exclusive to Japan. For example, in 1604, China restricted prostitutes to only servicing Western men in Canton (now called Guangzhou), which was the port city that served as the entryway to South China, due to an outbreak of syphilis (Prasso 38). We can detect a nationalist mindset of maintaining monoculturalism

through the Asian government allocating foreigners to an isolated area and only allowing a certain type of woman to form sexual and romantic relationships with them. Furthermore, a standard "Madonna/whore" dichotomy can be shown within the two societies. This is because the government considered women who profited from using their bodies sexually, i.e. the "whores", as inferior enough to be discarded and given to the outsiders, to the extent that the women who were given to the white foreigners were considered an even lower value than those who serviced local men. At the same, the women who are not "whores" are the "virgins" who belong to the local men and must be protected from the dangerous outsiders. The "whores" of the East were thus used as barriers to protect the nation's female purity.

Subsequently, there was also a practice in Japan where girls from poor families were hired or sold to traders as temporary wives (Prasso 84). The foreigners were able to look at these girls, select the one they desired, and negotiate a price. It was a mere transaction where the wife was more or less a long-term prostitute with housekeeping duties for as long as the trader was in the port (84). This is the profession that Cho-Cho San is written to be, and it is how she ended up meeting Pinkerton. It should be noted that the storyline of *Madame Butterfly* was supposedly based on a story that Long's sister Jennie Correll had personally disclosed to him (84). It was believed that during a missionary trip in Japan, she had encountered a Eurasian man, whose mother had unsuccessfully attempted suicide after his Western father's departure. Thus, to an extent, *Madame Butterfly's* storyline was an authentic reflection of the grim history between Western foreigners and the "fallen women" of the East.

Furthermore, interracial relationships were also frowned upon by the West just like in the East. In her book *Shanghai: The Rise and Fall of a Decadent City,* Dong highlights how taboo interracial marriages were between Westerners and local Chinese women. When they did take place, the unions were "regarded with horror by both whites and Chinese. To ensure that such marriages occurred as seldom as possible, nearly all British assistants had contracts

that did not permit them until they had served five years in China. It became customary for these bachelors to find brides in England during a home leave and bring them over after the end of the five year[s]" (28). And yet, despite the West's attempts to annihilate interracial marriages, the practice of having a Chinese mistress was common and even considered inevitable since Shanghai at this time had so few European women living in the enclosed colony that the ratio of men to women was around ten to one (28). Polo and Dong's contrasting statements demonstrate that interracial relationships were seen as both a fetish and taboo. They were considered valid enough as a temporary pleasure but not worthy enough to be in the form of a marriage. This attitude only strengthens the "White Madonna/Oriental whore" complex.

And while women in Asia have been fetishized by European society, they have also been penalized for it. In the pre-colonial Philippines, the local women had the right to own property, could trade with their own money, divorce, and remarry (Antons 405). There were even women healers and priestesses called *Babaylans*, sometimes referred to as *Catalonas*, who were held in highest rank of Filipino priestly caste (Halili 59). These women were deemed most powerful when they were more sexually experienced and beautiful (Prasso 37). When the Spanish colonized the islands in 1565, they outlawed the women's right to divorce and property inheritance (Antons 405). The *Babaylan* women were denounced as "witches who kept the other people deceived" and whom "the devil influenced" (qtd. in Morga 306). Many of them were forced into nunneries where they had to sleep on their sides, covered, and faced the wall so that the devil "could not rape them" as means to convert them (Prasso 37-38). Additionally, the Spanish and other European settlers were shocked to see a practice of Indigenous men piercing their private parts with a metal pin, called a *tugbuk*, that was supposedly meant to enhance the sexual pleasure for women during vaginal intercourse (Scott 24). This indicates that the Spanish did not tolerate the idea of women openly expressing their

sexuality in such a manner or having their sexual pleasure prioritized over men's. Instead, they viewed these dark-skinned natives with their ethnic religion as demonic and embodied the role of the "Whore". This aligns with Blank's doctrine of how Christianity traditionally viewed the concept of virginity with lightness and how this concept was the universal standard of morality. Thus, the Spanish used their religion of Christianity to shackle these women into the "Madonna" trope as an act of patriarchal rule but also as an act of Western dominion because they wanted to control Asian women's sexuality like they controlled white women's sexuality.

Asian women have not only had their bodies violated and their sexuality constrained as an act of conversion but also as an act of conquest. A prime example is the United States colonial rule in the Philippines. The United States had previously assisted the Philippines in revolting against the Spanish in the 1800s with the promise of having no intentions to colonize them (Woan 283). However, after the Spanish-American War ended in December 1898, under the Treaty of Paris, the United States demanded Spain to surrender the entire Philippine archipelago in exchange for 20 million in gold (Nadeau 296-297). While occupying the islands, the American soldiers would refer to the Filipinas as "little brown fucking machines powered by rice"(Woan 283). This dehumanizing, hypersexualized comment highlights how the local women were seen as conquered possessions and entertainment. And yet Westerners like English writer Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) supported this imperialism. In his poem, titled "White Man's burden" (1899), he frames colonial imperialism as the white race's moral obligation in civilizing the brutish, non-white Other (Woan 282). Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) wrote in one of his speeches "National Duties" about how it would be unmanly for the American race to not take up imperialist duties outside its borders (Bederman 188). He deemed it as unmanly as an individual man who spends all of his time at home with his wife (188). An Orientalist

mindset can be detected in these two men's justification. Since the colonization occurred the same year that Long's *Madame Butterfly* was published, it can be argued that this mindset of Oriental women being seized as Western possession to validate a masculine and civilized image of imperialism has been slowly forming in Westerner's minds throughout the years and can be detected in *Madame Butterfly*'s texts, which we will touch upon in the following chapters.

Overall, it is clear that the image of the "Oriental whore" provides multiple conflicting connotations: a fetish, occasion, taboo, threat, and a prize. This is especially the case when this "Oriental whore" is viewed through the white male gaze. These connotations stemmed from the West's sexual fixation of the East and the East's misogynistic nationalism. It was these two extreme ideologies that solidified the notion that the only valid relationship between a Westerner and an "Oriental" was if the former fetishized and dominated the latter.

2. Cho-Cho San: A Moon Goddess, Butterfly, Mother, or Plaything?

It is clear in Long's short story *Madame Butterfly* that the role of the "White Madonna" wife is seen as the respected standard of womanhood. This is shown in the way Cho-Cho San is initially forced into that role and how she spends the rest of the story desperately trying to keep it. Unbeknownst to her, she was merely performing the "White Madonna" role for Pinkerton's amusement. She is innately trapped with the "Oriental whore" role through the ways she is still being fetishized and praised for her sexual allure, despite being married and becoming a mother to a child, which goes against the philosophy of how the "White Madonna" should be treated. It is only at the end when Cho-Cho San meets Adelaide, a white woman who indirectly reveals herself to be Pinkerton's new wife, that the former realizes that she never was, nor could be, Pinkerton's true American wife. This revelation devastates Cho-Cho San to the extent that she attempts suicide.

The Clipping of the Butterfly's wings

The white male gaze can be detected early in the story through the way Cho-Cho San is first referred to as "Madame Butterfly" by the narrator instead of her birth name (Long 4). And while her birth name is later revealed, she is also called other nicknames like "moon-maid" and "moon goddess" by Pinkerton (10-11). These exotic nicknames align with Kaplan's analysis of how one of the common images of the "Other" in Hollywood is when they are animalized and associated with nature. The animalistic pet name "Madame Butterfly", which the title of the short story is derived from, provides connotations of Cho-Cho San being pretty, frail, and tiny. It also foreshadows Cho-Cho San's fate of only being a temporary presence in Pinkerton's world since a butterfly normally has a short lifespan.

A similar connotation is found in the nature-centred pet names "moon-goddess" and "moon-maid" that Cho-Cho San is called by Pinkerton as a term of affection. This is because

the moon can only appear at night and it is only fully present once a month before slowly disappearing. This metaphorically depicts Cho-Cho San as the “lady of the night” in Pinkerton’s world which is a euphemism for a mistress of prostitute. In addition, the word “moon” illustrates the connotations of exotic Eastern beauty. This is because the moon appears at night, which is associated with mystery, and always rises from the East. Moreover, the moon is also white which is a Eurocentric standard of beauty and virginity. Pinkerton thus praises Cho-Cho San for adhering to his standard of beauty and purity and his Oriental fetish at the same time.

Subsequently, Cho-Cho San is domesticated into imitating the role of the “White Madonna” through Pinkerton’s controlling and abusive behaviour. She first finds herself living in a house that Pinkerton renovated by hiring Japanese artisans who painted the “paper walls of the pretty house eye-proof, and, with their own adaptations of American hardware, the openings are cunningly lockable. The rest was Japanese” (4). When Cho-Cho San asks why Pinkerton chose to make these changes, he responds "To keep out those who are out, and in those who are in" with an “amorous threat in her direction” (4). The way Pinkerton talks to Cho-Cho San with “amorous threat” suggests he has an abusive, controlling side which he masks as love. The way the house is designed to be lockable subtly forebodes that Cho-Cho San is destined to be trapped inside as a literal housewife. Cho-Cho San soon finds herself isolated from her family who had attended the wedding with “lanterns and banners and disturbing evidence of goodwill” and whom Pinkerton views as “an appalling horde” (5). When Cho-Cho San questions his ban on seeing her family, he proceeds to manipulate her by questioning whether she would find them as a “trifle wearisome” and that she will have to “get along without ancestors. Think of the many people who would like to do that and be comforted” (5-6). The way Cho-Cho San’s family is deemed “appalling” and their cultural gestures of goodwill go underappreciated reveals Pinkerton finds them inferior and does not

intend to be associated with them or learn their culture. This further fetishizes Cho-Cho San because she is considered worthy enough to be an exotic marital possession but not worthy enough for Pinkerton to get to know her or her family or her cultural background.

This isolation and house purchase align with Kwak and Song's analysis of the cultural diaspora found in *Madame Butterfly*. The concept of diaspora centres on the movement of people from their original homeland and focuses on the individual's feelings in the "nation land" (Kwak and Song 19). These feelings can include a sense of displacement, yearning for the homeland, and a desire to assimilate into the host land (20). Ironically, it is Cho-Cho San who experiences these feelings instead of Pinkerton despite the latter being away from his homeland (20). Cho-Cho San is emotionally displaced through being confined to an unfamiliar looking house and being separated from her local community. It is through this paradox that *Madame Butterfly* "captures an essence of modern diaspora" where one does not have to leave the literal homeland to feel misplaced in a foreign space (20). It instead centres on power imbalance which in this case Pinkerton exceeds due to his age, wealth, race, and gender (21). Thus, Pinkerton is able to impose the "White Madonna" role onto Cho-Cho San by severing her from her culture and making her displaced and dependent on his Western ways to survive.

Pinkerton's overall entitlement in purchasing foreign property and westernizing it and enforcing his Western culture onto Cho-Cho San aligns with Porter's analysis of how *Madame Butterfly* is "a tale romanticizing power and the 'right' to possess and colonize women and countries" (209). Porter aligns this sentiment with critical Whiteness theory which explores "Whiteness" as a form of power and privilege that originated in Western countries and has been dispersed globally (207). One of the ways "Whiteness" operates is by "making white patriarchal norms the universal signifiers even as they apply to other racial/ethnic groups, such as non-White women like Butterfly. These universal norms

propagate the dominance of maleness and heterosexuality, as well as of white supremacy" (209). Through this context of "Whiteness", Pinkerton's action of possessing Cho-Cho San is justified because he is correcting her with the white patriarchal norms of being a proper white woman. This can be connected to Blank's examination of how Europeans traditionally equated whiteness with virginal purity while darkness was linked with sin and corruption. It further connotes the idea of Pinkerton civilizing Cho-Cho San, a non-white "Oriental whore" with the essence of "White" purity.

The loss of Cho-Cho San's agency can be seen through her change of demeanour. She is first portrayed to have a rebellious nature as she cries and attempts to run away from Pinkerton after he bans her from seeing her family before changing her mind due to her attraction for him (Long 6). She instead attempts to seduce Pinkerton to negotiate an occasional allowance for her family to visit her, as shown in the passage:

> "Mr. B.F. Pikkerton,"-it was this, among other things, he had taught her to call him, -"I lig if you permit my august ancestors visit me. I lig ver' moach if you please permit that unto me." Her hair had been newly dressed for the occasion and she had stuck a poppy in it. Besides, she put her hand on his arm (a brave thing for her to do), and smiled wistfully up at him.
>
> And when you know what Cho-Cho-San's smile was like, -and her hand-and its touch, —you will wonder how Pinkerton resisted her. (7)

The way Cho-Cho San enhances her beauty by adorning her hair and physically caresses Pinkerton indicates she is knowingly using her body and sexual allure to her advantage. Thus, for a brief moment, Cho-Cho San dangerously embodies the role of the hypersexual, deviant minority who is in control of her body. And even though Pinkerton manages to resist her charms and refuses to grant her request, she expresses one final act of defiance by crying and walking away from him after he kisses her (7).

However, Cho-Cho San finally submits to Pinkerton after her family officially disowns her, even though it was Pinkerton who manipulated them to do so. At the end of chapter three, during their final appearance together in the text, Cho-Cho San "throws herself onto him like a child" and exclaims "I'm mos' bes' happy female woman in Japan mebby in that whole worl" (11). The image of Cho-Cho San latching onto Pinkerton like a child infantilizes her to be hopeless and child-like in an adult body which matches with one of Kaplan's three main imperial tropes that the "Other" are traditionally portrayed as. This interracial "infant-and-parent" juxtaposition fully gives Pinkerton colonial power over Cho-Cho San and her body since she is now dependent on him. Thus, it is through the white male gaze by both Pinkerton and the narrator, along with the colonial confinement that Cho-Cho San is finally broken into performing the "White Madonna" wife role.

The Dutiful Wife and Mother

The fourth chapter begins three years after the events of the third chapter. Cho-Cho San has immersed herself deeper into the "White Madonna" role because she has borne Pinkerton a son whom she has named Trouble. However, she has been raising Trouble on her own since it is revealed that Pinkerton had left for America before he could know of Trouble's conception. Despite all of this, Cho-Cho San is convinced that Pinkerton will return and take her and Trouble to America, so she loyally waits for him (12). She is so certain that this will happen that when she is visited by Goro, a marriage broker, and Yamadori, a Japanese aristocrat, she rejects the marriage proposal by insisting "At America one is married foraever—aexcep' the other die. Aha! What you thing? Your marriages are not so" (31). Her statement not only shows she is convinced she is Pinkerton's true wife but that she harbours internalized, Orientalist beliefs through the way she states Japanese marriages are not as long-lasting as Western marriages. This image of a Japanese woman openly

expressing her preference to be with a white man, has the effect of emasculating non-white men and uplifts white men's virility.

During her long wait, Cho-Cho San is shown to be fully westernized through the way she only speaks English and forbids any language besides English to be spoken in the house, as shown in the line, "Listen! *No* one shall speak anything but United States' languages in these house!" (15). She is also shown to have internalized, Eurocentric beauty standards through the way she boasts to Suzuki (her maid) of how her biracial son has purple eyes which is a conventional Eurocentric feature, as shown in the line, "Now did any one ever hear of a Japanese baby with purple eyes?" (14). Her demeanour illustrates her attempts to resemble the "White Madonna" by speaking like one and bearing a Caucasian-looking child. However, the contrast of her broken English grammar when she expresses this desire acts to mock her delusion and hints that she will never be a true "White Madonna".

As it happens, Cho-Cho San's true role as the "Oriental whore" is established by the narrator at the beginning of Chapter four because it opens with the line, "And after his going, in the whimsical delight they had practised together, she named the baby, when it came, Trouble" (12). The way Cho-Cho San's brief time with Pinkerton is phrased as a "whimsical delight" being "practiced" invalidates their marriage and Cho-Cho San as a wife. It reduces Cho-Cho San to a fetish and experiment for Pinkerton to delightfully practice on for his real marriage with a white woman.

Subsequently, it is revealed that Cho-Cho San was continuously subjected to the white male gaze by Pinkerton even after she submitted to be his wife. The narrator reveals that before Pinkerton's departure, he praised Cho-Cho San as an "American refinement of a Japanese product, an American improvement in a Japanese invention" (13). This passage affirms that Cho-Cho San was viewed by Pinkerton as an ethnic commodity whom he has done the favour of improving by isolating her from her inferior culture and enforcing his

western views onto her. It justifies his abuse through dehumanizing her and acting like he is her saviour.

Another change in Cho-Cho San's demeanour is how she now bases her self-worth on how Pinkerton evaluates her beauty and body. A prime example is how she recites to Suzuki a love poem that Pinkerton composed of her when he was still around:

I call her the belle of Japan -- of Japan;
Her name it is O Cho-Cho-San -- Cho-Cho-San;
Such tenderness lies in her soft almond eyes,
I tell you she 's just ichi ban. (27)

The poem is embedded with fetishism, sexualizing Cho-Cho San's slanted eyes which is a stereotypical feature of an East Asian, but it is clear Cho-Cho San enjoys it. That is because she mistakes his temporary fetish for her as romantic love. By the same token, when Cho-Cho San believes that Pinkerton has returned, she frantically instructs Suzuki to fetch her pink kimono to wear, kanzashi and poppies to decorate her hair, and chrysanthemum to be decorated around the house (69). She goes as far as asking Suzuki, "Ah, Suzuki! I am beautiful—as beautiful as when he went away?" and when Suzuki does not answer, she frantically grabs a mirror (69). Cho-Cho San's plan to beautify herself for Pinkerton ironically mirrors the scene where she attempted to seduce Pinkerton. The difference is that the first time, she was attempting to be free from Pinkerton's control but this time it is an attempt to recapture his affection for her. Cho-Cho San's mindset resonates with De Beauvoir's doctrine of how a woman's intrinsic value is connected to how she dresses and adorns herself (655). Through this, a woman dresses herself to display herself and seek affirmation of her beauty, her elegance, and her taste (659). However, dressing is also a way to indicate a woman's social status, particularly in the case of a prostitute, whose function is to exclusively be displayed as a sex object to men (652). As it happens, while a husband can

take pride in his wife's presentability in public since she represents him as his object, it would be considered vulgar if he found her too attractive (658). This is because the main rule of the standard "Madonna/whore" dichotomy is that the husband is not supposed to be sexually attracted to his wife. In Cho-Cho San's case, she does not realize that when she wears her kimono and flowers in her hair, she is not representing the role of Pinkerton's presentable, "White Madonna" wife but the exotic "Oriental whore". After all, a kimono and kanzashi are traditional Japanese attire so they brand Cho-Cho San as an "Other". And when Cho-Cho San is planning to look beautiful, she is unknowingly decorating herself to cater to Pinkerton's oriental fetish, especially with the flowers that further assimilate her to nature.

The double-standard of Cho-Cho San spending years devoted to Pinkerton while he nonchalantly remarried another, can be further explored in De Beauvoir's analysis of how the concept of love has been constructed to be different for both sexes. Women are traditionally expected to be monogamous, better at loving, possessive, and more emotionally invested in relationships to the extent that they confuse sexual desire with affection (135). She cites Sauvage's theory that "When the woman loves, she must forget her own personality. This is a law of nature. A woman does not exist without a master. Without a master, she is a scattered bouquet" (773). Men, meanwhile, are their own masters who, while they might find themselves to be passionate lovers, they never lose their identity completely (773). Indeed, even if the men "fall on their knees before their mistresses, they still wish to possess them, annex them; at the heart of their lives, they remain sovereign subjects" (773). Thus, the concept of love is used to control women by portraying them as emotionally inferior. Reading the short story through a post-colonial lens, then, reveals that the way Cho-Cho San loses her cultural identity by loving Pinkerton and shaping her life to exist for him, further grants him the role as her colonial master. Pinkerton's mistreatment of Cho-Cho San is justified because it is considered the law of nature for him to not love Cho-Cho San in the same monogamous

way that she is bound to love him. He is only capable of desiring her as a fetish to possess and mould into his exotic prize.

This colonial love dynamic resonates with Micznik's critique of how Cho-Cho San is misrepresented in terms of her psychological behaviour and profession. She states that Cho-Cho San's "incomprehensible blindness to the reality of her situation, her self-deception to a point of ridicule – do not correspond to the expectations one would have from geisha or hired wives" (36). Thus, a geisha and temporary wife would have been aware that their relationship with the clients was a monetary transaction so they would not have been so emotionally attached like Cho-Cho San. Furthermore, Micznik highlights how Long mistakenly grouped the role of a geisha and temporary wife as one (37). Cho-Cho San's past as a geisha is hinted when she tells the American consul that after her father had died, she "go an' dance liddle, so we [her family] don' starve" until she was sold off as a temporary wife (Long 55). In reality, a geisha was considered a different profession than a prostitute and hired wife. Geishas were trained as professional dancers and singers, specializing in tea-ceremonies, and flower and table arrangements (Micznik 39). They were expected to entertain guests at dinners, or parties, or in public teahouses, by acting as hosts (39). Moreover, sexual intercourse with the guests was strictly prohibited and most geishas did not enter the profession with the idea of finding a husband (39-40). At best, geishas expected to find a rich guest to be a regular patron (40). Micznik also points out the vagueness of the alleged authentic tale that inspired *Madame Butterfly* since "the model for Madame Butterfly was a tea-house girl who lived with a lover who deserted her and their child (there is no mention of a temporary marriage)" (38). The term "tea-house girl" seems too generic as it could mean a geisha or prostitute or a hired wife or just a local girl who worked at a teahouse. As demonstrated, Cho-Cho San's devotion is a figment of a Westerner's ignorance of Japanese culture and an Orientalist

fantasy. This fantasy consists of merging different types of "Oriental" female entertainers into a hypersexualized monolith who blindly worships her colonial master.

The Butterfly, the Wife...and Husband

Cho-Cho San's fantasy of being the "White Madonna" wife is shattered when she encounters Adelaide, a Caucasian woman that Pinkerton has re-married, at the American consulate. In their brief scene together, Adelaide is shown to fetishize Cho-Cho San because the moment she lays eyes on her, she exclaims "How very charming—how lovely—you are, dear! Will you kiss me, you pretty—plaything!" (Long 80). Cho-Cho-San reacts by staring "at her with round eyes—as children do when afraid. Then her nostrils quivered, and her lids slowly closed" (80). The way Adelaide is capable of infantilizing Cho-Cho San, by making her look away "as children do when they afraid", as well as objectifying her sexually, aligns with the notion that white women, as colonial travellers, are able to imperially gaze at the "Others" (Kaplan 82).

This resonates with Yoshihara's analysis of how Cho-Cho-San and Adelaide view each other in sexualized terms and how this eroticism is grounded in racialized power dynamics (3). As demonstrated, Adelaide is able to fetishize and infantilize Cho-Cho San through her white gaze. Yoshihara additionally points out how Adelaide "infantilizes Cho-Cho-San while insinuating that Japanese women seduce American men with their innocent sexuality" (3). This is shown in her line, after Cho-Cho San refuses to kiss her, "Ah, well. I don't blame you. They say you don't do that sort of thing—to women, at any rate. I quite forgive our men for falling in love with you...!" (Long 80). The clause "our men for falling in love with you" indicates that she speaks on behalf of all white American women at home and objectifies Cho-Cho San to represent the collective body of Japanese women (Yoshihara 3).

Furthermore, Adelaide's forgiveness indicates she does not feel jealousy towards Cho-Cho San, which according to Yoshihara suggests how "White women don't take Asian

woman seriously, that they are in alliance with American men rather than with Asian women, and that they are more concerned with their own womanhood at home than with the lot of women across the Pacific"(4). This statement connects with my thesis's analysis of how white women in fiction are placed in a higher colonial position than non-white women and can yield certain amounts of power that white men can. Through this, they will defend their white husbands' actions and position to maintain their imperialist role as the "White Madonna" wife at home which Adelaide does by informing Cho-Cho San of her role as a "pretty plaything". Adelaide thus acts as a gatekeeper of white womanhood and a white patriarchal household.

Through sexualized terms, Cho-Cho San comments on Adelaide's beauty, just like the latter did with her, only it is out of jealousy (3). This is shown in the line where she cries to Suzuki of how Adelaide is "more beautiful than the Sun-Goddess" (Long 82). Her jealousy reveals that she continues to base her self-worth on Eurocentric beauty standards since she is devastated that Pinkerton has left her for a white, more beautiful woman. The way Adelaide is compared to the "Sun-Goddess" subtly connotes the "White Madonna/Oriental whore" dichotomy because Cho-Cho San was previously referred by Pinkerton as a "moon-goddess". Through this perspective, Cho-Cho San represents the moon while Adelaide represents the sun with her blonde hair. Adelaide is meant to be Pinkerton's true wife because she represents daytime while Cho-Cho San was only meant to be Pinkerton's mistress since she represents nightfall which will always be over shadowed by the rising Sun.

Adelaide's further acts as a gatekeeper through her claim on Trouble. Prior to meeting Cho-Cho San, her purpose of being in the American consulate was to send Pinkerton, who was called to China, a telegram with the writings:

> Just saw the baby and his nurse. Can't we have him at once? He is lovely. Shall see the mother about it tomorrow. Was not at home when I was there to -- day. Expect to join you Wednesday week per *Kioto Maru.* May I bring him along? ADELAIDE. (80)

The text indicates Adelaide feels a colonial entitlement to take a biracial child away from his non-white mother. A deeper examination behind this can be found in Kaplan's inquiry of how films like *Black Narcissus* contain the trope of white nuns bearing the colonial gaze when interacting with Indigenous inhabitants. In *Black Narcissus*, the character Sister Blanche is seen giving medicine to the Natives (whom in a voiceover are referred to as "noble savages") (82). In the shot, she stands on a chair high above the people, who are crowded around her and gazing up at her. The female natives are infantilized and look up to the white woman, especially mothers with sick children (82). This gazing imagery offers an imperialist structure where the literal white Madonna is seen as the white saviour to the lost, lustful non-white inhabitants. A similar juxtaposition can be found through Adelaide being the "White Madonna" who saves Trouble from his child-like, unfitted "savage" mother by taking him to live in the more civilized West. Adelaide thus feels entitled to have Trouble because she assumes that she will be a worthier mother.

In conclusion, Cho-Cho San was first pushed into performing the "White Madonna" role because it provided Pinkerton, and the readers, with imperial pride in seeing how far he could "civilize" Cho-Cho San and break apart her cultural identity. The way Cho-Cho San spends years latching onto the idea of being Pinkerton's wife reinforces the ethnocentric idea that being a white, virginal wife of a white man is the universal standard to aspire to. However, Cho-Cho San is discarded because it is considered colonial law of nature for a white man like Pinkerton to move on and possess another object but one with a more equal colonial power which is in the form of Adelaide.

3. The Transformation of the "Oriental Whore".

The short story *Madame Butterfly* spawned several film and theatre adaptations. All these adaptations were developed within the span of the twentieth century and are still performed to this day. In each of these versions, the "White Madonna/Oriental whore" dichotomy and white male gaze were further magnified through changes in the storyline, extended dialogue, and Cho-Cho San's demeanour.

The first known adaptation of *Madame Butterfly* was in the form of a one-act play titled *Madame Butterfly: A Tragedy of Japan* (March 5th, 1900). It was written by American playwright and director David Belasco (July 25,1853–May 14,1931) who had read the original short story when it was first published in *Century Illustrated Magazine*. The project took approximately two years to complete before premiering at the Herald Square Theatre in New York City (Kerr 120). The timing could not have been more advantageous as the allure of Japonalia was at its height. Ever since Japan's victory against China, Japan became an amusement to the Americans, as the "little David that had defeated its neighbour" (Downer 41). Female socialites would invite Japanese business magnates to lavish dinner parties. During these parties, women would don kimonos. A Japanese newspaper once reported in amusement how "Many American women wear them (kimonos) to parties though they are most unbecoming" (qtd. in 41). Japanese culture was thus considered fashionable in the West, and *Madame Butterfly* itself was seen as a "collection or thesaurus of japonaiserie" (Kerr 121). On Broadway, there were already Japanese-themed plays being performed such as *Mikado* and *Broadway to Tokio* prior to *Madame Butterfly: A Tragedy of Japan* (Downer 41). Hence, Belasco's latest project sought to take monetary advantage of patrons who were eager to see more of the mystical beauty of Japan. The play would then travel to London and made its first European debut during the summer of 1900. It was one of those performing nights

that Italian opera composer Giacomo Puccini attended. Puccini was allegedly "profoundly moved by the play" despite not being fluent in English and unable to fully follow the dialogue (Kerr 199). Puccini transformed the play *Madame Butterfly* into *Madame Butterfly* the opera. His adaptation made its debut on 17th February 1904 in Milan's theatre *La Scala.* It should be noted that the first premiere was met with negative reviews which caused Puccini to rewrite the script multiple times with the fifth and final version debuting in 1907 (Schwarm and Cantoni). This chapter will be citing the English translation of the 1907 edition, translated by former opera conductor and author Burton D. Fisher.

It would be another decade before *Madame Butterfly* would be translated into a series of films from 1915 until 1995. I selected the 1915 and 1932 film versions for this analysis because both of them were produced by Paramount Pictures, a prominent film studio in the United States (Epstein 4-6). Thus, these two films arguably had the largest platform and influence. This is important to consider when examining how the storyline and Cho-Cho San's demeanour is altered in order to cater to the West's growing fantasy of the Orient.

Instead of reviewing each adaptation in chronological order, this chapter is divided into categories of themes, when compared to the original short story, that all the adaptations have used in order to contrast how these themes are elevated and used differently throughout the 1900s.

White Male Gaze

In his stage adaptation, Belasco chooses to have an *in medias res* opening which sets the play three years after Pinkerton has left. The events that occurred in the novel prior to Pinkerton's departure are told through the dialogue between Cho-Cho San and the other characters. Thus, Cho-Cho San is given a more central role since the play mainly focuses on her and her maid. However, her agency is still deprived through the way she is further racially objectified. For example, the play begins with stage directions that describe Cho-Cho

San “spraying the growing flowers with a small watering pot. She snips off two little bunches, lays them on a plate of rice which she sets reverently on the shrine, then kneels, putting her hands on the floor, her forehead on them” (Belasco 13). While in this position, she mutters her first line, “Oh, Shaka! Hail! Hail! Also perceive! Look down! I have brought a sacrifice of flowers and new rice. Also, I am quite clean. I am shivering with cleanliness. Therefore grant that Left-ten-ant B.F. Pik-ker-ton may come back soon” which indicates she is praying for Pinkerton’s return (13). The way she is “shivering with cleanliness” offers sexual connotations of her desire for Pinkerton’s touch after being virginally “clean” (i.e. celibate) for so long. This sexualizes her as lusty which aligns with one of the imperial tropes under the white male gaze. Furthermore, the image of her tending to flowers before plucking two of them to be set with a plate of rice (a seed of grass) associates her with nature which is another imperial trope of the white male gaze. It further animalizes her to resemble a dainty butterfly in the garden.

The 1915 film adaptation of *Madame Butterfly* acts as the first time the white male gaze is executed on camera. Since it is a black-and-white silent film, there is no dialogue, so the movie relies on slides with text that convey the characters’ lines and narrative plot, along with the characters' amplified facial expressions and actions. The film begins with an introduction slide, one of them writes “Cho-Cho San, a pretty girl in Japan” (00:00:36-00:00:40). The screen then shifts to display the actress playing Cho-Cho San, played Mary Pickford, dressed in a kimono and donning a traditional Geisha hairstyle, kneeling on the floor (00:00:41). She breaks the fourth wall by looking directly at the camera, thus she is addressing the audience, before proceeding to bow so that her forehead is touching the floor. She then returns to her original position and gives a dramatic giggle with her eyes downcast and her hand covering her mouth (00:00:41-00:00:55). The juxtaposition of Cho-Cho San on her knees before the white audience conveys the sense that she is subservient to them. This

heightens when her forehead is touching the floor because she is performing a *dogeza* which is a traditional Japanese etiquette of bowing that is usually meant to show submission to a person of higher status or to beg for forgiveness or favours (Leaman 74-75). And the way she giggles with her eyes downcast portrays her as being demure. This combination has the effect of dehumanizing her into a lower status to white men as if she is more of an Oriental object.

The audience can also see how the white male gaze acts in enhancing Adelaide's colonial power on camera for the first time in the 1915 silent version. This is shown in Adelaide's first appearance when she arrives at the Consulate's front entrance. She is first shown getting off a carriage that was pulled by a Japanese man, and silently asking a local Japanese woman if the building in front of her was the American consulate (00:54:03-00:54:07).The Japanese man and woman, who are noticeably shorter than her, bow as she enters the building (00:54:07-00:54:09). The image of petite natives serving and bowing to a tall white woman dressed in white conveys the "White Madonna" saviour image.

In the opera version, the white male gaze is shown in a new original dialogue of Pinkerton where he openly describes his fetish for Cho-Cho San's body, as shown in the passage:

> Sharpless
>
> What folly has seized you! Are you intoxicated?
>
> Pinkerton
>
> I don't know! I don't know! It depends what you call intoxication! I cannot tell you if it is love or fancy. All I know is that her innocent charm has entranced me. She delights me. She's fragile and slender, dainty in stature, and a quaint little figure. She seems like a figure from a painted screen or from a work of lacquer. She's light as a feather and flutters like a butterfly, hovering and settling with gracious silence. I want to run after her furiously and break her fragile wings. (Puccini 9-10)

The passage displays Pinkerton objectifying Cho-Cho San through the way he compares her to a painted artwork. The way he delights in her dainty frame indicates he is aroused by the notion that her body is physically inferior. Pinkerton is shown to fetishize Cho-Cho San's movements by comparing it to fluttering like a butterfly as a way to cope with her autonomous movement. The way he wants to "break her fragile wings" reveals his desire to break her spirit until she is nothing but his possession. This is also the first time Pinkerton is seen to directly animalize Cho-Cho San, unlike the original where it was only the narrator who referred to her as a butterfly. Thus, the white male gaze has been expanded.

The theatre, opera, and 1915 film version overall amplify the white male gaze by fleshing out Pinkerton's racial fetish for Cho-Cho San and making it more direct in his lines, along with adding new original dialogue and scenes where is Cho-Cho San is further associated with nature and animals.

The "White Madonna/ Oriental Whore" dichotomy

The stage version of *Madame Butterfly* enhances the "White Madonna/Oriental Whore" dichotomy, especially in the scene where Cho-Cho San and Pinkerton's wife, now renamed Kate, first meet. In this scene, as their eyes meet, Cho-Cho San begins by slowly bowing her head. Kate begins the conversation by saying "Why you poor little thing...who in the world could blame you or...call you responsible...you pretty little plaything" before taking Cho-Cho San in her arms (Belasco 30). The way Pinkerton's wife directly refers to Cho-Cho San as a "pretty little plaything" also occurs in the original short story. However, in Long's version, she expresses sexual attraction for Cho-Cho San by asking for a kiss. This does not occur in the play's script. Instead, Kate embraces Cho-Cho San to comfort her like a motherly figure. This has the effect of embodying Kate further into the role of the "White Madonna" because she is shown to be inherently nurturing and have no sexual desire. At the same time, Kate still maintains her colonial position because she still objectified Cho-Cho

San as a “plaything”. And the way she infantilizes Cho-Cho San by embracing her only emboldens the imperial image of the “White Madonna” travelling to third world countries to mother the lost “Others”.

In the same scene, Cho-Cho San at first tries to resist her role as the “Oriental Whore” but promptly resigns her fate, as shown in the passage:

> Madame Butterfly: No- plaything’...I am Mrs. Left-ten-nt B.F-No-no-now I am, only-Cho-Cho-San, but no playthin’... (She rises, then impassively.) How long have you been marry?
>
> Kate: Four months…
>
> Madame Butterfly: (Counting on her fingers) Oh...four.
>
> Kate: Won't you let me do something for the child? Where is he? (Madame Butterfly gestures toward the next room. Kate, seeing the child.) Ah! The dear little thing! May I-
>
> Madame Butterfly: No! Can look...no can touch…
>
> Kate: Let us think first of the child. For his own good..let me take him home to my country...I will do all I would do for my own.
>
> Madame Butterfly: (Showing no emotion). He not know then-me-his mother?
>
> Kate: It’s hard, very hard, I know: but would it not be better?
>
> Madame Butterfly: (Taking the money-box from her sleeve, and giving the coins to Kate.) Tha’s his...two dollar. All tha’s lef’ of his moaneys...I shall need nore more… (30-31)

In this passage, Cho-Cho San attempts to insist she is Pinkerton’s wife instead of the “pretty little plaything” that he had temporarily used to amuse himself while he was stationed in the exotic East. And when Kate asks to see her son Trouble, Cho-Cho San demands that she does not touch him as if she is attempting to solidify her maternal claim to Trouble, who is the

only link between her and Pinkerton, but also to declare that her child is not an exotic plaything for Kate to enjoy. However, the way Kate insists that it is in Trouble's best interest to be raised by her instead, in America, administers the idea that she, a white woman and a newly picked bride of Pinkerton, is more suited for the role of mother. It also extends the imperial image of the "White Madonna" saving an ethnic child from their uncivilized mother and country. This was only subtly hinted at in the original short story. The way Cho-Cho San easily submits by giving the remaining money Pinkerton has given her further supports this notion. Therefore, the roles of Cho-Cho San and Kate are confirmed where Kate is the "White Madonna", who is the true mother and wife, while Cho-Cho San is the "Oriental whore" whose purpose of enticing Pinkerton has ended. The adaptation overall develops the "White Madonna" archetype by extending its ties with the "white saviour" and "white colonial traveller" roles.

The opera version of *Madame Butterfly* further places Kate in the "White Madonna" role. Kate first appears on stage with Suzuki, continuing a conversation they have had off stage. Kate's first lines comprise of asking Suzuki if she will tell Cho-Cho San about her and convince her to trust her (Kate), which Suzuki readily promises. Kate also states that she would care for Trouble like he was her own, a claim to which Suzuki expresses her support (Puccini 56). This conveys a sense that Kate's ambience is basked in the essence of maternity, for she can sway Suzuki, Cho-Cho San's only friend, to side with her on the matter of taking full custody of Trouble.

During Kate and Cho-Cho San's first meeting, Cho-Cho San is the first to begin the conversation by demanding to know who she is but Kate does not answer (56). When Cho-Cho San begins to eerily suspect who Kate is, she exclaims how "That lady that terrifies me! She terrifies me!" (57). Sharpless is quick to defend Kate by claiming "She [Kate] is the innocent cause of your trouble. Forgive her" (57). When Cho-Cho San flares at Kate that she

will steal everything from her including her child, Sharpless insists that "They [Pinkerton and Kate] will give him the most loving care" (57). This is enough for Cho-Cho San to submit and cry "Ah! Sad mother! Sad mother! To abandon my son! So be it! For him I must obey" (57). It is only then that Kate speaks to Cho-Cho San, merely to ask her "Are you able to forgive me, Butterfly?" which indicates she feels sympathy for Cho-Cho San and can see why she is emotionally distressed (57). Kate's empathy further portrays her as a maternal figure because she is seen to have more compassion.

This reshaped confrontation scene between Cho-Cho San and Kate bestows the latter with more essence of purity through the way she neither fetishizes Cho-Cho San by calling her a "plaything" or asking for a kiss. The way she speaks less than the previous adaptations renders her as a more docile character compared to Cho-Cho San who is shown to be in a passionate frenzy. Furthermore, Wisenthal highlights how this adapted scene humanizes Kate and makes her a more sympathetic character but it prevents her from being developed as a character in the way she is in Long's story (12). The way Kate does not refer to Cho-Cho San as a "plaything" indicates her colonial power has been depleted.

The 1915 silent film is able to apply the white male gaze on camera to visually enhance and highlight the "White Madonna/Oriental whore" dichotomy. Following the scene where Adelaide greets the Japanese locals outside the American consul, she enters the office just as Cho-Cho San and Sharpless, the consul, are having a conversation (00:54:25). Adelaide gets in between them to speak to Sharpless, not even realizing or acknowledging Cho-Cho San's presence as if she were invisible or a forgotten prop (00:54:25-00:54:30). The audience gets to see a physical contrast of Cho-Cho San and Adelaide where their clothes give away their social position. Cho-Cho San is the vulgar "Oriental whore" and plaything with her exotic kimono and headwear. Meanwhile, Adelaide is the civilized "White Madonna" with her white, modest, Western-style ensemble. Adelaide is also taller than Cho-

Cho San so that when she goes to embrace her, after realizing who she is, it connotes the image of the "White Madonna" nurturing the infant-like minority (00:55:00-00:55:04). Moreover, the film chooses to have Cho-Cho San personally hand Trouble over to Adelaide. This was done by having Suzuki walk in the office with Trouble just moments after Cho-Cho San discovers who Adelaide is (00:55:22). This catches the attention of Adelaide who, through written slides, insists "If you give me your baby, I will take good care of him" (00:55:34-00:55:36). Cho-Cho San is shown to passionately protest by putting herself closer to Adelaide so that she can (silently) shout in her face to which Adelaide calmly responds by urging her to "Think of your baby's future. His father can do better by him" (00:55:43-00:56:04). This causes Cho-Cho San to take Trouble from Suzuki and tearfully hold him for a final time before handing him to Adelaide (00:56:09-00:56:30). The contrast of Cho-Cho San's aggressive demeanour to Adelaide's gentle manner portrays the former as "uncivilised" and "brutish". Furthermore, the image of the brutish "Oriental whore" lifting up her hands to pass her son to the tall, civilised "White Madonna" not only enhances the "White saviour" trope but affirms the idea that Cho-Cho San can never be the "White Madonna" because she is unable to "do better" by Trouble as a mother compared to Adelaide.

In Long's version, the "White Madonna/Oriental whore" dichotomy was not just displayed in the comparison between Cho-Cho San and Adelaide but also through the way Pinkerton views his relationship with Cho-Cho San. This is extended in the opera version as shown in the scene between him and Sharpless, where the latter makes a toast, "I drink to your family far away" and Pinkerton replies "And to the day of my real marriage to a real American wife" (Puccini 10). The contrast between the way Pinkerton previously expressed his ardent desire for Cho-Cho San and is now toasting to the prospect of his future "real marriage" to a "real American wife" emphasizes how he had no intention of engaging in a "real marriage" with Cho-Cho San, as that role is reserved for a "real American woman". He

has thus placed women like Cho-Cho San in a separate category from a “real American wife”.

The 1932 film uses a similar approach by altering the Cho-Cho San and Adelaide’s confrontation scene. While the latter does appear in the movie and agrees to accompany Pinkerton to Cho-Cho San’s house, Pinkerton chooses to have her wait outside (01:09:58). At the entrance of the house, Pinkerton is greeted by Cho-Cho San who throws herself into his arms and kisses him enthusiastically (01:10:49). This mirrors the way she used to greet him when he would come home from work when she was “his wife” (00:34:05-00:34:10). The difference is Pinkerton does not eagerly respond to her affection like before. It is through Pinkerton that Cho-Cho San discovers his marriage to Adelaide. This change of storyline adds emphasis on the “White Madonna/Oriental whore” dichotomy because Pinkerton gets to establish the roles himself in front of Cho-Cho San. Additionally, Adelaide is this time guiltless of both sexualizing Cho-Cho San and coercing her to believe she would be a worthier mother. Instead, her role is to support Pinkerton and love him regardless of his past. As a result, she further embodies the “White Madonna” traits of obedience, loyal, and chaste.

Additionally, the 1932 version chooses to alter the storyline of Trouble where he is not taken away to be raised by the Pinkertons. Instead, Cho-Cho San chooses not to inform Pinkerton of Trouble’s existence after learning about Adelaide. After Pinkerton departs, she instructs Suzuki to take Trouble to his grandfather who will raise Trouble “in the ways of his ancestors” (01:17:59-01:18:06). This revised storyline was a result of the racial tensions surrounding miscegenation at the time of film production. Schulberg, the film’s producer, expressed his beliefs on how racism towards Japanese people was supposedly not as strong during the play and opera’s first premiere which meant interracial marriages between Japanese and white people seemingly did not have “consequences” and that “the tragedy of

the half-blood Japanese-Caucasian was not discernible or thought of" (qtd. in Sheppard 79). However, since it was 1932, Schulberg remarked that:

> It seems to us to be an unpleasant hangover on the picture after its completion to feel that the half Japanese half American child of Butterfly's and Pinkerton's will have to go through a miserable life in America as a social misfit. (79)

Schulberg's mindset indicates that the taboo of interracial relationships and race-mixing have worsened over the years that biracial children like Trouble, who is even written to be conventionally white-passing in the original story, were now considered too ethnic to be raised by white parents. This further strengthens the "White Madonna/Oriental whore" dichotomy because it implies that any child born from the "Oriental whore" does not belong in the white household even if it will fuel the "White Madonna saviour" complex. Thus, biracial children like Trouble must be raised by the relatives whose race he is closer to which is his non-white mother. This supports the notion that the "Oriental whore" can never be a "real" white wife and mother because she is unable to sire "real" white children.

The "White Madonna" trope in Adelaide/Kate has overall evolved throughout the adaptations used in this chapter. The trope started with her slowly gaining some maternal and colonial power over non-whites, only to have it stripped from her as well to make her more docile. Thus, the "White Madonna" trope ends up just being the pure, obedient, marital possession of Pinkerton. Her only value over Cho-Cho San is her skin tone and American nationality. Additionally, the adaptations overall offer a stronger distinction of who is the "White Madonna" and who is the "Oriental whore".

The Ending

The main storyline change in all of the adaptations of *Madame Butterfly* is that Cho-Cho San commits suicide in the end. In Long's novel, Cho-Cho San almost commits the deed out of despair, but she hesitates and stops when Suzuki places her son Trouble into the room

(Long 85). His cries cause Cho-Cho San to realize a new purpose in life which is being a devoted mother to her son (86). The novel ends with the ambiguous line "When Mrs. Pinkerton called the next day at the little house on Higashi Hill, it was quite empty" (86). Cho-Cho San, Trouble, and Suzuki's fates are left unknown, but it is implied that Cho-Cho San ran away to raise her son as a single mum. She is thus given back some of her agency and independence after spending three years devoting her time and self-worth on a man's false love for her and depending on him to provide for her. Her exit also operates as a method of defiance against Mrs. Pinkerton who had expressed a desire to have Trouble (80). Cho-Cho San taking her son with her and leaving Mrs Pinkerton to aimlessly contact the house thus establishes a shift of power.

However, in the play, the last scene starts similar to the novel where Cho-Cho San demands to be left alone. In the stage directions, she takes her father's sword and reads the inscription "To die with honor...When no one can live with honor" (Belasco 32). Suzuki then pushes Trouble into the room. Cho-Cho San puts the knife down and takes her son in her arms (32). At first, it would seem that she would have a change of heart like in the novel, but she then sets the child on the mat and puts a miniature American flag in his hand. She then takes the knife and disappears behind the screen. She reappears with a scarf around her neck, as if to conceal a wound, to indicate she has just wounded herself. As she collapses and takes Trouble back into her arms, Suzuki, Pinkerton, and Kate barge into the scene. Pinkerton displays remorse and a renewed affection for Cho-Cho San through the way he gathers her and their son into his arms (32). Cho-Cho San then mutters her last lines of "Too bad those robins didn' nes again" which mirrors the promise Pinkerton made to Cho-Cho San of when he will return to her (32). The opera's version follows this ending in a similar manner. The main difference is Cho-Cho San sings her final opera solo, bidding farewell to Trouble, as her

last words. This adds a more dramatic effect of Cho-Cho San's suicide compared to Belasco's version.

This dramatic climax in both the play and opera version offers multiple allegories of Orientalism and Western imperialism through the way Cho-Cho San represents Japan and Pinkerton represents the West. The way Cho-Cho San is unable to go on living without being the property of a Western man connotes Japan as a fragile, powerless woman and a colonial conquest of the West. Marchetti examines the motive behind this depiction which lies behind the history of Japan being able to defy Western military and colonial domination despite being forcefully opened by the United States to trade in 1853 (80). This meant the United States had been unable to conquer Japan and its women in the same manner as the Philippines as an example. Thus, in order to maintain the West's image of being dominant and masculine, Japan needed to be emasculated, feminized, and mocked (80). And since there was already a popularity of interracial affairs between the West and East, the use of fiction with an interracial couple was a suitable outlet to project this Orientalist depiction (80).

Secondly, the death scene acts as Cho-Cho San's redemption of being the "Oriental Whore", shown through the way Cho-Cho San uses the sword that belonged to her father, who was a Samurai, to commit suicide. The sword's inscription and her offscreen death by stabbing herself resembles the traditional Japanese ritual suicide *sepukku*. This act was originally developed as a means for samurai to achieve an honourable death but was later practiced by other Japanese people (Andrews). It conveys the sense that Cho-Cho San has realized her role of being no more than Pinkerton's temporary "Oriental whore" instead of his wife and cannot bear to live with that dishonour. It also suggests that her suicide and allowing her son to be raised by the "White Madonna" was the only way to redeem her honour. The play and opera version of *Madame Butterfly* thus begin by building and sexualizing Cho-Cho San up as the "Oriental whore" before shaming her for it in the end. This aligns with

Marchetti's analysis of how Cho-Cho San acts as a "scapegoat for the excesses of men and for the abuses of the West" (80). And while her fate might arouse sympathy from the audience and portray the West as insensitive and unfair, her suicide still "legitimizes its authority [the West] by allowing the heroine to martyr herself for its continuing domination" (79). As a result, Cho-Cho San's suicide overall allows the West to establish their cruel dominance without being held accountable for the consequences.

The trope of Cho-Cho San redeeming her honour through her death is continued in the films. The 1915 version alters Cho-Cho San's method of suicide where instead of stabbing herself, she walks into a river and drowns (00:59:21-00:59:35). This provides connotations of Cho-Cho San cleansing herself from Pinkerton's life and her "sinful state". The way she is dressed in all white further provides undertones of purity.

The 1932 film version alters the ending to portray Cho-Cho San's redemption in a distinctive light. She promises to follow them as soon as she prays to "cleanse her heart" which infers her renouncing her romantic feelings for Pinkerton (01:18:16-01:18:26). However, as she prays, she recalls the American marriage vow "till death do us part" (01:20:06-01:20:10). This is followed by her reading the knife's inscription and her suicide. Her dying words are "I love you for always" (01:20:25-01:21:37). Seeing as Cho-Cho San's uncle had previously disowned her for "forsaking her country", Cho-Cho San's choice of letting her son be brought up by her grandfather acts as her redemption for renouncing her culture and believing she could be a "real American woman" (00:55:40-00:55:58). The way she attempts to "cleanse her heart" through praying but ultimately chooses suicide, conveys the sense that there was no chance she could return to being a pure "Japanese woman" because she would forever be in love with a white man. Furthermore, she could not be forgiven for being Pinkerton's "Oriental whore" and renouncing her native culture. She is thus shunned from both the West and East, and the only escape is through suicide.

Cho-Cho San's suicide overall acts as a ploy to provide the audience with heightened emotions through the dramatic ending but to also act as a cautionary tale. It carries the message that interracial relations are fatal and are not meant to last forever, especially when it is with a powerful Western man. This is seen through Cho-Cho San whose sin was believing her relationship with Pinkerton was permanent and she paid for it with her life.

The voice of the "Oriental Whore"

Cho-Cho San's broken English dialect was briefly touched upon in the second chapter because it was partnered with her expressed conversion to Western culture. The juxtaposition had the effect of mocking Cho-Cho San as inferior and isolating her from Western culture. This is again shown in Belasco's play where the grammar and spelling in Cho-Cho San's lines are butchered and embedded with Eurocentric ideologies, as shown in the line "Suzuki, how many time I tellin' you- no one shall speak anythin' but those Unite' State' languages in these Lef-ten-ant Pik-ker-ton's house? (She pronounces her name with such difficulty)" (13). The way Belasco leaves the stage direction of Cho-Cho San pronouncing the line with difficulty indicates it was intentional for Cho-Cho San to be seen as incompetent.

Cho-Cho San's fractured dialect is shown again in both the 1915 and 1932 film adaptations. While the 1915 version does not contain audible dialogue, title cards are used to indicate Cho-Cho San lines. They are shown to have punctured grammar and spelling. The film even adds an original scene where Cho-Cho San is in the house, attempting to write English calligraphy on paper with an ink wash painting brush (a traditional Japanese brush) (00:26:14-00:26:29). Pinkerton is then shown outside, secretly reading a letter. The camera reveals the letter's handwritten text: "I never realized how much I loved you until you left. So, don't let any of those Japanese dolls run away with your heart. Lovingly yours, Adelaide" (00:26:30-00:26:46). The letter not only reveals Pinkerton's philandering nature but highlights the West's racialized misogyny, shown in the way Adelaide objectifies Japanese

women by calling them “Japanese dolls”. The scene then shifts back to Cho-Cho San admiring her attempt to write “I love you” on paper (00:26:53). Her handwriting is shown to be messy and thick due to using a paintbrush. She then runs outside to show Pinkerton her writing, who is left unimpressed (00:27:00-00:27:29). This scene overall offers an allegorical comparison between Cho-Cho San and Adelaide where Adelaide is seen as the more superior and “civilized” woman due to being able to write a more sophisticated letter, declaring her love for Pinkerton. While Cho-Cho San, despite her best efforts, is seen as the “Japanese doll” who is intellectually inferior. The way she writes with a paintbrush, her cultural writing tool, symbolizes that she is not a “real Western woman” and will always belong to the East. This complex effect of objectifying Cho-Cho San on camera while mocking her dialect and illiteracy conveys the sense that under the white male gaze, Cho-Cho San is seen as an exotic doll who can please visually but not intellectually. It can also be confirmed that under the white male gaze, white women like Adelaide are seen as “subjects” who can possess intellect compared to non-white women like Cho-Cho San.

The choice of portraying Cho-Cho San with a broken English dialect was no coincidence but a common representation of Asian people in Western media in the nineteenth century (Chambers-Letsons 41). This representation was inherently tied to the narrative that Asian Americans were different and should be excluded from the national Western politics (1). Indeed, Chambers-Letsons explains that “It is little coincidence that the publication and dissemination of the various versions of Madame Butterfly occurred during a period of increased anxiety about the threats posed to national and racial borders by Asian bodies flowing in and out of the sphere of the U.S empire” (32). After all, Long’s novella was published in 1898, sixteen years after the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed (32). This act prevented Chinese laborers from immigrating to the United States and excluded Chinese nationals from eligibility for United States citizenship (32). Hence, Cho-Cho San’s voice with

her exotic beauty reflects the Western's fascination yet xenophobia for East Asians. They viewed East Asians as inferior where they were worthy to be conquered and owned but not worthy enough to be included in Western society as an equal.

The only adaptation of *Madame Butterfly* that is excluded from this "broken dialect" trope is Puccini's opera. Since it is an Italian libretto, all the lines and songs are sung and spoken in Italian, including Cho-Cho San's. As a result, she is spared from being at a linguistic disadvantage and being the object of mockery. Nevertheless, her lines and lyrics still work against her through the way she renounces her culture and worships the notion of being the wife of a Westerner, as shown in her line "The gods of Japan are fat and lazy. The American God is more persuasive and responds immediately to prayers" (Puccini 30). The sight of Cho-Cho San fluently speaking and singing in a European language while maintaining her exotic exterior only further portrays her as this Western refinement of the East.

The white-washing of Cho-Cho San

As previously mentioned, the portrayal of Asian people with a broken English dialect was a common tactic in Western media. Another recurring practice in Western media was the use of Yellowface which consisted of casting white actors to play Asian characters. The adaptations of *Madame Butterfly* were no exception. In the early stage performances and film versions of *Madame Butterfly*, only Caucasian actresses were cast to play Cho-Cho San. The actresses would don wigs and garments that were considered symbolic regalia of East Asian identity which in this case was a kimono and obi belt (See fig.1).

Fig.1 Valerie Bergere, who played Cho-Cho San in the 1902 onstage.
Strang, Lewis C. *Famous Actresses Of The Day In America*. Boston Page, 1899, pp.178, https://archive.org/stream/famousactresseso00stra#page/n208/mode/1up.

In some extreme cases, like in the 1932 film version, Caucasian actresses would use adhesive tape, makeup, and greasepaint to make their eyes look slanted and eyebrows higher which were stereotypical racial features of East Asians (Schmidt 41). The actress Silvia Sidney's eyes are noticeably more slanted in the movie compared to her acting headshots (See fig.2 and fig.3). Schmidt goes into detail of how the performance of Yellowface "followed their own filmic and theatrical conventions, informed by contemporary racial conceptions. This way, motion pictures created and disseminated a visual knowledge about Orientals for mainstream audiences, a knowledge based on racialized body concepts of the Orient" (41). Thus, *Madame Butterfly* can be classified as Orientalist art.

Fig.2
Sylvia Sidney as Cho-Cho San in *Madame Butterfly*. 1932. Digital Image. Pre-Code.Com. Web. http://pre-code.com/madame-butterfly-1932-review-with-sylvia-sidney-and-cary-grant/. Accessed 13 June 2020.

Fig.3
Dyar, Otto. Sylvia Sidney. 1978. Digital Image. *Bizarre Los Angeles*. Published. Web. https://bizarrela.com/2017/06/sylvia-sidney-photos-quotes/. Accessed 19 May 2020.

Additionally, Schmidt points out the paradoxical position of Yellowface where there was an appeal in Oriental films, but it rarely provided Asian Americans with career opportunities to play the "Oriental" lead. He cites the case in 1932, where production company Metro-Goldwyn turned down Chinese American actress Anna May Wong for the leading role in *The Son-Daughter* because representatives reportedly considered her "too Chinese to play a Chinese" (41). The role was instead given to a Caucasian actress Helen Hayes. This indicates that the purpose of Yellowface was to portray the West's idea of what East Asians were like and fuel their racist propaganda. There was little interest in providing inclusive, diverse representation in the media and performance arts. Thus, the portrayal of Cho-Cho San is the West's accepted idea of what an Oriental look, speaks, and acts like.

Subsequently, another reason Anna May Wong was turned down was due to the fact that Ramon Novarro, a Latino white-passing actor, was chosen to play the male Asian lead. The anti-miscegenation laws at that time would have prevented Wong from sharing an on-screen kiss with any person of another race, even if the latter were impersonating the same race as her (41). A racist hypocrisy can be detected in how the West fetishized the interracial motif of a white man in bed with an Asian woman abroad, as captured in *Madame Butterfly,* but they were also repulsed by the idea of mix-racing that they legislated laws to suppress this from happening in the United States.

A distinct case that resonates with this sentiment of only portraying the West's idea of East Asians is the story of Blanche Bates, who was the first actress to play Cho-Cho San on stage. To prepare for her role, she approached Japanese geisha and actress Sada Yacco to coach her how to walk and talk like a Japanese woman. Yacco was in New York at that time as part of a ten-month tour around the United States with her husband and their performance troupe. Her husband Otojiro was quoted to recall "We were too busy working all the

time...So the actress [Bates] came every day for a week to the performance and studied and I believe she was good" (Downer 142).

Bates gave a humorous interview about the difficulty she had "trying on the funny little Japanese clothes" and sitting on her knees Japanese-style (142). Regardless of her intentions, the way Bates analysed Yacco as part of her method of acting objectifies the latter like she and her culture were an exotic exhibit to be studied. We can thus detect a white male gaze being exhibited from Bates onto Yacco which highlights how tropes in literary texts can end up culminating into society's perception and attitudes.

Simultaneously, Yacco, an authentic geisha from the East that Cho-Cho San would have been based on, was performing her own role as "the Geisha" in her husband's original play *The Geisha and the Knight*. She shocked the Western audience by depicting Japanese women to be as complex as women in the West. A reviewer in the New York Times wrote:

> It is difficult to think of the Japanese woman of any age, rank, or character as anything but a pretty, dainty little creature, sitting in her toy house, arranging her single branch of cherry blossoms, or amusing herself in her miniature garden...Sada Yacco does not understand the methods of English-speaking melodramatic actresses, but she shows plainly that Japanese women can love deeply, hate savagely, and then die quietly. (qtd. in 142)

The reviewer's astonishment at watching an authentic Japanese play, performed by an authentic Japanese actress, highlights how inaccurate the West's perception of East Asian countries like Japan were. This indicates how the perceptions of geishas like Cho-Cho San were based on stereotypes and Orientalist ideas. To a greater extent, it confirms that the "Oriental whore" archetype, which Cho-Cho San is shunned for being, is a mere Orientalist fantasy that was meant to be written, produced, and acted by white people. This is a form of

racialized misogyny because it involves misrepresenting Asian femininity just to entertain the West's preconceived idea of the East.

Conclusion: Fly Away

In the preceding pages, I have made the case that Cho-Cho San is objectified, fetishized, and debased by Pinkerton and other white characters. It is apparent that Cho-Cho San, an East Asian female character, is represented differently than a white woman, like Adelaide, would be represented in a literary narrative that is built on white imperialism and white patriarchy. In this narrative, she is considered to fall under the category of "Other" rather than "Woman" due to her race. This is a form of racialized misogyny because it dehumanizes her and invalidates her womanhood as a consequence for not befitting into a socially constructed, Eurocentric criteria of womanhood that is in the form of the "White Madonna/Oriental whore" dichotomy and the white male gaze. This narrative highlights the predicament that while white women, like Adelaide, can also be objectified and debased, they will always be given a higher position of status and never have their femininity questioned when pitted against a non-white woman.

Throughout the short story and the adaptations of *Madame Butterfly*, it is clear that the "White Madonna" is the ideal archetype that both Cho-Cho San and Adelaide strive to qualify for by altering different aspects of their personality and suppressing their agency. Adelaide embodies the "White Madonna" trait of being a dutiful wife by "forgiving" Pinkerton for falling in love with a non-white woman and agreeing to raise Trouble as her own. Her plan to adopt and legitimize Trouble acts as a pawn to diffuse Pinkerton's past with the "Oriental whore" and act as a "white saviour".

Cho-Cho San tries to embody the "White Madonna"' role by being a dutiful wife through giving into his emotional abuse and embracing his (White) American culture and language while renouncing her own. She also sacrifices three years of her life to dutifully wait for Pinkerton's return instead of freely living the life she desires. Her three years of

celibacy and trying to speak and pray like a Caucasian conveys the sense of her almost resembling a literal “White Madonna”. However, she will never wholly succeed because the role innately belongs to Adelaide due to her race. The character Pinkerton ultimately acts as the judge of womanhood through choosing Adelaide as his wife which grants him male authoritative power over these two women. He is the source of their pain yet gets to decide which of them is worthy enough to love and respect.

The white male gaze acts as a standard of womanhood by deciding who is an exotic object that resembles a woman and who is a subject that is a “valid” woman. From the novel to the adaptations, Cho-Cho San is constantly referred to as a “pretty plaything”. Adelaide does not face this treatment, if anything in some versions of the text she takes part in objectifying and fetishizing Cho-Cho San. This not only makes it apparent that Cho-Cho San is considered the exotic object in the story but that white women, like Adelaide, have the colonial power to oppress Oriental women, like Cho-Cho San, since the former is considered to be more superior. The “White Madonna/Oriental whore” dichotomy and white male gaze ultimately serve to establish white male patriarchy. And while white women in this framework are placed in a higher position of power, they are ultimately used as pawns to reinforce this hegemonic design and uplift white men like Pinkerton in power.

Drawing from the complex history of East-West interactions, as discussed in the first chapter, the “White Madonna/Oriental whore” dichotomy and white male gaze are no doubt products of Western imperialism and the history of Asian women being assaulted or sexually bought by Western men. It is no surprise that interracial relationships between white men and Asian women, i.e. the Occident and “Oriental whore”, like Pinkerton and Cho-Cho San are ridden with colonial connotations. These connotations include Asian women being the pretty “playthings” who can easily be possessed. The image of the white man getting his hands on an Asian woman symbolizes the white men getting their hands on Asian countries.

Through imperialism being framed and masculinized as a “White man’s burden” by Westerners like Kipling and Roosevelt, Pinkerton is saved from being held accountable for psychologically abusing Cho-Cho San until she was an “American refinement”. After all, he did her a favour by “civilizing” her into performing the customs of a domesticated, proper Western woman. And he merely took what was entitled to him as virile Western man. We can conclude that the “White Madonna/Oriental whore” dichotomy and white male gaze are agents of Orientalism.

Another observation unearthed in this study is how the East’s fear of Western dominance ironically assisted in moulding the trope of the “Oriental whore” and plaything that Cho-Cho San embodies. This first chapter covered the government policies in China and Japan where only prostitutes and women purchased as “temporary wives” could interact with the Western foreigners in their enclosed area. This was to keep the Western men satiated enough so they would not attack or infect the general population, including the women who were not sex workers. The way the sex workers were used as live bait to protect the “Madonnas” enforces the idea that “Oriental whores” are disposable and actual “playthings” which encourages the Westerners to treat them like that. It also helped shape this trope where the only valid interracial relationship that could exist if it were between an Occident explorer and “Oriental whore”, based on monetary transaction and immoral lust. After all, that was the only legal form of relationship that both the East and West tolerated. This mutual perception translated into literary texts, hence it is no surprise that Cho-Cho San’s relationship with Pinkerton was represented as fleeting and unfounded.

Furthermore, the trope of the “Oriental whore” is a Western fantasy based on Orientalist ideas on what women in the East were like. This hypersexualized fantasy, that Cho-Cho San is constructed from, was purely meant to be performed by Westerners for a Western audience. Hence, it is only through accurate casting and representation of women

under the “Orient” umbrella being multi-faceted, in charge of their sexuality, and positioning their bodies to their own self-image that this Orientalist hegemony can be decolonized. A perfect example of that is Madame Yacco’s authentic performance in *The Geisha and the Knight* which left the American audience shocked. The “White Madonna/Oriental whore” dichotomy and white male gaze only limit the representation of what “Orient” women can or cannot be.

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