The Evolution of Far Orientalism on American Screens: A Cultural History of Representational Shifts Toward Occidentalism

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Contents

1) Introduction:
Mapping American Far Orientalism

In front of shoji panels, US air force major Lloyd Gruver drinks sake and flirts with the reserved and *kimono*-clad Hana-ogi. Chinese prostitute Suzie Wong asks would-be artist Robert Lomax, who appears to be mesmerized by her body-hugging and glaringly red *qipao*, if he wants her to be his girlfriend. Noir hero Porter makes the half-naked Asian dominatrix Pearl beat up a gangster with outward joy. In the midst of the Vietnamese anti-colonial struggle, the seemingly naive CIA operative Alden Pyle dances clumsily with Phuong, who gracefully wears a white *ao dai*. These are just a few memorable sample scenes. Surely, there is no shortage of exoticized Asian (American) female love interests for (European) American male suitors in Hollywood films.

Since the wars in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, Asian (American) women have been fetishized in American popular visual culture. Asian (American) men, on the other hand, have been consistently represented as either villainous or emasculated since the nineteenth century. It may not just be a coincidence that, according to the 2010 marriage statistics of the US Census Bureau, European (American)-Asian (American) marriages by far outnumber any other interracial marriages. Moreover, three-quarters of them involve a European (American) husband and an Asian (American) wife. In the light of this, popular audiovisual texts depicting this type of interracial relationship seem charged with particular significance.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Susan Koshy (2004) observes, "narratives of white-Asian miscegenation have received little scholarly scrutiny because of their axiomatic status as productions of white fantasy" (19). I am interested in these narratives exactly because they should be considered products of European American imagination and I would like to help filling this research gap. Much of the previous work on this topic is the result of character- or stereotype-centered approaches to visual culture. However, I am neither particularly interested in judging a text's representational accuracy via comparison to a pre-existing reality nor in determining its various effects on different audiences and the larger social world via empirical reception research. Like Gina Marchetti (1993), Laura Hyun Yi Kang (2002), and Celine Parreñas Shimizu (2007), I am most interested in the cultural work contemporary texts are doing; like for Elaine H. Kim (2011), my guiding question is "What's new and what has been recycled?"

I assume that changes in the representation of interracial relationships between Asian (American) and European (American) women and men signify developments in the way (North) America relates to (East) Asia. Orientalism, as conceived of by Edward Said (1978), is a eurocentric ideology which divides the world into two essentialized and contrastive cultural realms: Occident and Orient, the West and the East. It is a system of ideas "governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments and projections" (8) and, therefore, reveals much more about the West than the East.

During Christendom's encounter with Islam in the Middle East, Arabia came to be seen as the dark opposite of Europe: unfathomable, exotic, erotic, cruel, and barbaric. In medieval times, writes Gina Marchetti (1993), these sentiments became enriched by the idea of the "Yellow Peril" through "fears of Genghis Khan and Mongolian invasions of Europe" that combine "racist terror of alien cultures, sexual anxieties, and the belief that the West will be overpowered and enveloped by the irresistible, dark, occult forces of the East" (2).

According to Said, Orientalism is characterized by an inherent "cultural hostility" (290). It is a "way of thought", a "historical phenomenon", and a "contemporary problem" (44). Said maintained that Orientalism's main goal was and is to justify the subjugation of the Orient and that it should be conceived of as "racist", "imperialist", and "ethnocentric" (204). It is unattached to how the East understands itself, since it is a set of "narcissistic Western ideas" (62) that are not based on accuracy but constructed in a way that enhances Western self-esteem. Furthermore, Orientalism is, fundamentally, a "male conception of the world" (207). Said, thus, conceptualizes this ideology as fed by two intertwined desires: a collective one to control and form the Orient and a personal one of European men for exotic sexuality. Finally and most importantly, "the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority" (42).

Recently, scholars of intellectual thought like John J. Clarke (1997) have recovered a "richer and often more affirmative" Orientalism that "cannot be fully understood in terms of 'power' and 'domination'" (8). Besides the imperial role, Clarke claims, Orientalism also assumed "a counter-cultural, counter-hegemonic role" (27) and served as a corrective mirror for three centuries. In contrast to the earliest form of Orientalism, this more affirmative form was usually concerned with the Far East rather than the Middle East. Especially German Orientalism, less concerned with the practicalities of empire maintenance than with the great Eastern spiritual traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism, often served the Romantic movement, according to Clarke, "against what is perceived as the strong and central bias

within modern Western culture towards what may loosely be described as 'reason', 'logic', 'the rational', indeed towards the whole ethos of science and technology, against what is often summed up as 'the Enlightenment project'" (20).

In *American Orient* (2011), David Weir sheds light on America's long fascination with the Far East and demonstrates that it has been markedly ambiguous from the outset. He analyzes the writings of American thinkers – William Jones, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, John La Farge, Lafcadio Hearn, and T. S. Eliot among others – and comes to the conclusion that "antagonism toward Asian people" was paralleled by "admiration of Asian culture" (6). Overall, Weir identifies a "long-standing tendency in the United States to find Oriental remedies for American ills" (8). This pertains to the Far East only, however, as "the American notion of the Near East does not differ appreciably from the British and French conceptions" (4). Moreover, "it is possible to trace the genealogy of certain ideas and attitudes", Weir asserts, "in the realm of popular culture" (234).

Interestingly, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, some film researchers have suggested the existence of a new form of Orientalism and demanded refocusing on previously undertheorized elements such as projection and fascination. Juliana Hu Pegues (2008), for instance, suggests to call it "neo-Orientalism" (197). This form may be inherently ambiguous but seems to evolve toward increasingly positive evaluation of Asian culture and people. Darrell Y. Hamamoto (2000) finds instances of what he calls "Yellowphilia" and "Asiaphilia": "the fetishization of all things Asian in popular culture" (11). In *Yellow Future* (2010), Jane Chi Hyun Park even documents signs indicating that "East Asia, once abject and rejected, has become, or is very much in the process of becoming, attractive and even celebrated in U.S. popular media" (x).

Moreover, some researchers have called attention to the way American racialization of Asians intersects with the history of capitalism. In *Alien Capital* (2016), Iyko Day demonstrates how Asian immigrants came to represent the abstraction of capital, money, and machines. Colleen Lye (2004) argues that "the most salient feature" of American fantasies about Asians is the "trope of economic efficiency" which "has been made the basis for exclusion or assimilation" (5). Similarly, Park (2010) asserts that American Orientalism seems to be rooted in both "desire and fascination" as well as "fear and disgust" at the same time (65), because it conflates "Asiatic difference with the liberating *and* dehumanizing mechanisms of capitalism" (42, italics in original).

Just as in the case of Richard Slotkin's study *Gunfighter Nation* (1992), the main subject of my research is an "ideological struggle on the grounds of mass culture" (24). I try to accomplish two conjoined objectives by analyzing audiovisual texts featuring representations of interracial relationships between Asian (American) and European (American) women and men: (1) Mapping developments in American Orientalism since the 1980s with an emphasis on the twenty-first century (2) necessitates an expansion of the conceptual toolbox.

I opt for distinguishing European Near Orientalism from American Far Orientalism in order to denote clearly that the ideological formation I am interested in here is a specifically American form of Orientalism concerned exclusively with East and Southeast Asia. This study aims to provide insights into sequences of representational shifts from Asiaphobia to Asiaphilia. I begin this cultural history in the 1980s, because from this decade onward my readings of films and television series differ significantly from those of some researchers whose shoulders I stand on.

Building on the works of David Morley and Kevin Robins (1995), John J. Clarke (1997), Vijay Prashad (2000), Darrell Y. Hamamoto (2000), Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit (2004), Alastair Bonnett (2004), Jane Chi Hyun Park (2010), David Weir (2011), Richard V. Francaviglia (2011) and Jane Naomi Iwamura (2011), I distinguish Techno-Orientalism, Spirito-Occidentalism, and Anti-Colonial Occidentalism from Colonial Orientalism. In the course of unfolding these concepts in the following three core chapters, I track the evolution of salvation, redemption, and assimilation narratives as well as additions to the catalog of stock characters. Whereas fragile Lotus Blossoms transform into powerful Asian Fairies, for instance, proud White Knights deteriorate into desperate Broken Knights.

In the following two sections of this introductory chapter, I survey previous research for key insights and methodological shortcomings. To better account for the ambiguity which seems to be integral to texts featuring representations of interracial relationships between Asian (American) and European (American) women and men, I propose a methodological framework based on ideas borrowed from evolutionary and ecological theory. From this perspective, narrative change comes about in slow and partial adaptive shifts in reaction to both the historical context and the representational ecology. Documenting this cultural work, the cinematic struggle against previous portrayals, amounts to writing cultural history.

Previous Research

Previous research can be allotted to three categories depending on research objective and methodology:

a) Stereotype Criticism
b) Contextual and Structural Analysis
c) Interventionist Reading

A) Stereotype Criticism

Most research preceding the present study is concerned with "stereotype criticism". In his groundbreaking study *On Visual Media Racism* (1978), Eugene Franklin Wong analyzes Hollywood films released from 1930 to 1975 with the aim of "noting shifts and changes as well as persistency in racism against Asians" (2). His conviction is that "the persistence and durability of stereotypes over time … will determine to what degree there has been progress" (20). In this equation "progress" means less racism against Asians and "racism" means negative stereotyping; therefore, "change" is good whereas "persistency" is bad. This outlook had to be complicated by subsequent research.

Wong understands "Asians" as defined by the American film industry itself and what he calls "imaginal conditioning". Historical contact and conflict with Asians in and outside the United States served as inspiration and led to films predominantly featuring "epicanthic Asians", if any: Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese (50). This observation reveals a very specific racial imagination at work in Hollywood. The United States arguably had intense historical contact and conflict with Filipinos after the imperialist takeover of the Philippines from Spain in 1889. Nevertheless, Filipinos do not loom large on American screens. This may be because they are imagined to neither have epicanthic folds nor belong to the same cultural hemisphere as the aforementioned ethnic groups.

Most importantly, although it was not the focus of Wong's work, he notes that interracial romantic/sexual relationships are a central theme in Hollywood's portrayal of Asia and reveals a tradition of "double standardized miscegenation" (21). Whereas European American male characters "are generally provided the necessary romantic conditions and

masculine attributes with which to attract the Asian females' passion", Asian (American) men are usually represented as would-be rapists lusting for European American women or as asexual wimps (27). Moreover, in almost every film featuring a character of mixed European and Asian descent, Hollywood went so far as to clarify by spoken lines that the father was European American and the mother Asian (230). Asian (American) female characters, on the other hand, appear to be characterized primarily by their sexual availability to a European American male hero. Aged beyond "ingénue status", therefore, Asian (American) actresses would only find very few roles. Wong concludes that "both sexism and racism have been blended together to produce the sexualization of white racism – with its emphasis upon the negativity of Asian males and positivity of Asian females" (260).

Deborah Gee's *Slaying the Dragon* (1988) is an often cited educational documentary film that explores Hollywood stereotypes of Asian (American) women. The "dragon" that ought to be slain is the image of submissiveness and hypersexuality, but that remains "tough", narrator Herb Wong tells the viewer, "when screen images continue to feed it". It must be slain, nonetheless, because "many Asian American women today find themselves living in the shadow of silver screen stereotypes". To illustrate this focal point of the film, two female Asian American students get interviewed conveying stories of how they were harassed by European American men: "They came right up to me and said, 'We like Orientals'. And they said it very suggestively which, you know, shows that they are expecting me to be sexually knowledgeable or some sort of passionate person." The flipside is an interview with European American filmmaker Jamie Kibben who reveals that, when he first saw Miyoshi Umeki playing Katsumi in *Sayonara* as a young boy, he thought, "When I grow up and get married, I want to get married to a woman like that".

Sayonara, Wong relays, "explored the sensitive issues of interracial relationships which had been forbidden on screen until 1954" by the Motion Picture Production Code (MPPC) that "prohibited any scenes suggesting miscegenation as desirable". The 1950s, therefore, "marked the birth of a new Hollywood theme: the interracial love affair between an Asian women and a white male lead". This is another strong hint at the importance of the historical context. It is not simply the concurrent relationships of the United States with Asian countries and other sociopolitical factors that have a strong influence on what is shown on screens, but also the way the media industry itself is organized and regulated. The interracial love affair, for instance, emerged as a new Hollywood theme because the MPPC's strict head enforcer Joseph Breen retired in 1954. Since events within the industry as well as in the larger social

context can entail drastic changes in media portrayals of Asian (American)s, it is reasonable to assume that it is feasible to distinguish more or less discrete phases in the history of their representation.

For her documentary, Gee consults psychologist and media critic Ben Tong to assess the impact of Hollywood's images on Asian American women (from the perspective of an Asian American man). *Flower Drum Song* (1961), he believes, constructs two "mutually exclusive types" with the characters Mei Li and Linda Low: the first "has integrity" and is "very domestic", the latter is "very whirly", "sociable, sensuous, very confident", but also "unethical" and "manipulative" – she "knows her way around men" and, thus, is neither "terribly wholesome" nor "someone you can trust". The result, Tong opines, is that "Asian American women really cannot be taken seriously, because they come in these one-dimensional types".

About movies like *Sayonara*, *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing* (1955), *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960), and *A Girl Named Tamiko* (1962) he says that they were "*white* liberal film[s]", because, "if you pay attention to the movie[s], it was a certain form of miscegenation that was endorsed: white man-Asian woman – not the reverse". Though Tong believes the psychological imprint on Asian American women to be difficult to measure, he suggests marriage statistics as a possible indicator. He reasons that in the 1970s and 1980s about 70 to 80 percent of Japanese American women married out of their race and usually European American men, because American media portray Asian and Asian American men as either malevolent or undesirable and idealize European American men. Marriage statistics, however, impressive as they are, can only serve as indication rather than as foundation for robust claims. The best available method to assess the impact of films is empirical audience reception research. More relevant for the study at hand is Tong's assertion that the mentioned films are "white" and "liberal". Asian (American) women are not white, though, and these films are not exactly liberal from the perspective of European American women either. What these films do cannot be fully understood from the perspective of race and racism alone. In 1989, African American feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw would call this a "single-axis approach" as opposed to an "intersectional" one (139). When it comes to portrayals of interracial heterosexual love on screens, though, race is gendered and gender is raced.

At the end, Gee promulgates through Wong's mouth that, "though Hollywood studios are beginning to replace glitter with substance in a few portrayals of Asian American women" (e.g., Kim Miyori's roles in the television series *St. Elsewhere* (1982-84) and *Hard Copy*

(1987)), "the art form is being revitalized by a new wave of Asian American filmmakers who are dismantling the stereotypes". What "the art form" refers to is never clearly stated, but since Wayne Wang's experimental short film *Dim Sum Take-out* (1988) and Peter Wang's feature film *A Great Wall* (1986) are presented as examples, it is reasonable to assume that it is "non-serial audiovisual narrative texts". Gee's observation suggests that the medium of non-serial film may (initially) be in need of input from artists who are acutely aware of racism and sexism in order to convey alternatives to stereotypes. Television series, on the other hand, may facilitate the development of more complex (main) characters because of the much longer screen time and its serial nature that allows for audience feedback. Consideration of textual form, therefore, should be part of character- and stereotype-centered analyses.

In the last interview we see Wayne Wang explaining the problem he is trying to solve with his films: "We're so conscious of actually kind of reversing our stereotypes or trying to portray positive … characters for Asians that … tend to … become cardboards in another way". Wang's words point to a shortcoming of Eugene Franklin Wong's approach to determine "progress": "Positive stereotypes" do not compute in his equation as they hardly can be made sense of without an intersectional framework and broader definitions of racism as well as sexism.

Renee E. Tajima's short essay "Lotus Blossoms Don't Bleed" (1989) was another groundbreaking text for the study of popcultural images of Asian (American) women. At the end of the 1980s, she claimed that "whereas form has leaped toward the year 2000" in Hollywood, "content still straddles the turn of the last century" (308). Especially images of Asian (American) women, is Tajima's conviction, "have remained consistently simplistic and inaccurate during the sixty years of largely forgettable screen appearances" and often are "interchangeable in appearance and name, and are joined together by the common language of non-language – that is, uninterpretable chattering, pidgin English, giggling, or silence" (309). The portrayal of Asian (American) men, on the other hand, generally reflects "the state of U.S.-Asia relations at the time a movie is made", but most often they are "cast as rapists or love-struck losers" who, in competition for Asian (American) women, usually run "a distant second to the tall, handsome American" (312). The fact that it is only the portrayal of Asian (American) men that reflects US-Asia relations calls attention to the possibility that these have a different social function than stereotypes of Asian (American) women.

Tajima came up with the influential idea that most portrayals of Asian (American) women can be allotted to two categories: "the Lotus Blossom Baby (a.k.a. China Doll, Geisha

Girl, shy Polynesian beauty), and the Dragon Lady (Fu Manchu's various female relations, prostitutes, devious madames)". Whereas Dragon Ladies are "partners in crime with men of their own kind", Lotus Blossoms, the predominant type, are "sexual-romantic objects": "utterly feminine, delicate" and "passive figures who exist to serve men, especially as love interests for white men" (309). The label Tajima uses for another problem is "invisibility": When Asian (American) women don't appear in "roles in the Oriental flower and Dragon Lady categories", they only populate "hordes or have groupings of their own, usually in some type of harem situation" or they are entirely absent. Her biggest complaint, however, is that Asian (American) women "are not portrayed as ordinary people". What she can be read as calling for, thus, is normalization. Tajima also mentions that early Hollywood's practice to use European American actresses – Louise Rainer, Katherine Hepburn, Jennifer Jones, Ona Munson, and Angie Dickinson – for Asian roles contributed "to a case of aesthetic imperialism for Asian women" (314). Since "there have been few signs of progress" in European American-operated film studios, she, too, puts her hope in Asian American filmmakers who "may soon constitute a critical mass out of which we will see a body of work that gives us a new image" (317).

Darrell Y. Hamamoto provides the first book-length and often a little sarcastic study of Asian Americans on television with *Monitored Peril* (1994). Although he does not focus on them, he discusses several television texts featuring European American male-Asian (American) female relationships. In the final season of *M*A*S*H* (1972-83), for instance, the character Soon-Lee was written into the show as spoil of the Korean War and "love object" (24) for Corporal Klinger and their relationship was spun-off into the sitcom *AfterMash* (1983-85). Hamamoto finds the latter "pathetic" (24) and "mercifully short-lived" (25) for three reasons: (1) It "disparage[s] Asian Americans even as it conveys seemingly generous liberal pieties", for instance, when Soon-Lee remembers that in Korea they were "lucky to have a little dog with [their] rice" in the episode "Thanksgiving of '58" (S01E03), (2) Soon-Lee conforms to the stereotype "Asian War Bride" ("the ideal companion or wife to white American males who prefer 'traditional' women untainted by such quaint notions as gender equality"), and (3) Klinger is a "loser to any potential spouse but an impoverished Korean immigrant woman" (25-26). The observation that "liberal" and "racist" topoi can both be present in the same narrative is of central importance here: This ambiguity may be an integral feature of stories built around interracial relationships between Asian (American) and European (American) women and men.

According to Hamamoto, the episode "Gunfighter, R.I.P." (S12E06) of the Western drama series *Gunsmoke* (1955-75) "provides an excellent example of how the deep-running theme of miscegenation or interracial marriage is typically treated in television drama" (39). As an instance of the "dominant white male displacing the weak yellow male" (41) scenario, "tough guy" Joe Bascome is nursed back to health by Ching Lee, a Chinese American daughter of a laundryman, after being injured in the course of shooting three European American "ruffians" who fatally beat up her father. Sometime after "in stock melodramatic gesture, Bascome lightly lifts Ching Lee's chin with a single forefinger and draws her face to his for a passionate kiss" (40), she "sacrifices herself by diving out of a second-story hotel window to distract" (41) two hostile gun men. The episode "China Girl" (S03E10) of another Western series, *How the West Was Won* (1976-77), "is devoted to resolving the dilemma of the pregnancy" resulting from the rape of "young and beautiful" Li Sin by the European American captain of the ship that brought her and her family to the United States (44). Both episodes clearly articulate a "motif in American popular culture", Hamamoto claims, which "has it that white males maintain the prerogative to cross racial boundaries when it is in their interest to do so" (46).

Hamamoto's readings of the more contemporary television film *Shooter* (1988) and the episode "All or Nothing" (S02E07) of the crime drama series *Wiseguy* (1987-90) are also worth noting. In *Shooter*, US military photographer Matt Thompson meets the "somewhat independent and aloof" (145) Lan, a Vietnamese woman exotified by her traditional attire despite having studied political science in Berkeley before she came back to Saigon. After they have sex, he "pays Lan a whore's compliment when he tells her, 'I love Vietnamese women. You really know how to make a guy feel special'" (146). In "All or Nothing", Chinese American union organizer Maxine Tzu transforms into a "kinky Asian female sex pot" when she suddenly "mounts" FBI agent Vinnie Terranova and rides him "straight into the collective sexual fantasies of the white male producers of *Wiseguy*". Hamamoto interprets both scenarios as implying that "deep down, all Yellow Woman truly desires is to have sexual relations with White Man": "beyond ideology, she desires only orgasmic – not social – equality" (193).

Finally, Hamamoto calls attention to the importance of considering media specificity and genre for character- and stereotype-centered analyses, for instance, when he incidentally remarks that "television genres that are only thirty minutes in duration, such as the situation comedy, must rely heavily upon stereotypes, stylized acting, punched-up writing, and

contemporary settings to telegraph the minimum information required to elicit calculated responses over a short span of time" (42). Such limitations do not necessitate reiteration of (racial) stereotypes, it seems to me, as especially the episode "Indians on TV" (S01E04) of the Netflix comedy-drama series *Master of None* (2015-21) proves conclusively about 20 years later. Crucially, the show is written by two Asian American men: Aziz Ansari and Paul Yang. This particular episode, however, does not only fulfill the hopes of Gee and Tajima for more rounded characters but goes much beyond that since Ansari plays an actor looking and fighting for roles that are not demeaning. Ultimately, the episode is about how content is negotiated in an industry that all too often uses stereotypes as supposed safeguard against economic failure and may, therefore, constitute the pinnacle of reflexivity on American screens.

In "From Yellow Peril to Yellow Fever" (2007), Krystle Doromal compares and judges the oeuvres of Anna May Wong and Lucy Liu. She notices a general passage from "yellow peril (Asiaphobia) to yellow fever (Asiaphilia)" due to "the increased permeation of Asians and Asian culture into Western culture". "Coming from fear and going towards desire", Doromal reasons, "does not spell progress", but "just a different basis for the Othering" of Asian (American) characters in film. After all, playing Alex Munday in *Charlie's Angels* (2000), Liu appears "in a very short red qipao, wearing red blush make-up and lilies in her hair, in yellow face and in a black wig with classic Anna May Wong bangs". Doromal, therefore, reasons that "Hollywood is still Orientalizing its Asian actors as much today as in the 1920s". Her gloomy conclusion notwithstanding, Doromal makes two interesting observations: The passage from Asiaphobia to Asiaphilia was a slow adaptive shift rather than an abrupt and radical succession and one of the reasons for this shift may be that the number of Asian Americans has exceeded a threshold in the eyes of business executives in the media industry.

Slaying the Dragon Reloaded (2011) is Elaine H. Kim's sequel to Gee's documentary film in which the focus has shifted slightly to the media's imprint on European American men. In 2010, it is shown, the term "Asian Women" was used 17.9 million times with Google's image search, while the term "Blonde Women" was used a mere 3.5 million times. Of course, it is not possible to know who used these search terms and for which reasons. Also, it seems that this comparison is based on a category mistake, since "Asian" refers to race and "blonde" to hair color. It implies, however, a changed cultural fetish along the lines of "Asian is the new blonde".

Though Kim's explicitly stated guiding question is "What's new and what has been recycled?", the first in a row of experts interviewed, college professor Christine Chai, states, "The representation of Asian women, I feel, are still the same from what they were ten, twenty years ago. They're still represented as oversexualized, exoticized, submissive, pleasure-giving, wilting flower". Soon thereafter, however, USC professor Robin Kelley asserts that, "if anything", one sees "a browning of faces" but "a continuing whitening of character". Unfortunately, Kim does not comment on these contradicting politics of representation. Whereas Chai's remark implies that there has been no substantial change and unabashed essentialism is still the rule, Kelley observes a steady rise of "colorblindness": The belief that race does not matter and that complete assimilation is possible as well as desirable.

Toward the end of her film, Kim declares that the imagined gendered sexual polarity of Asian Americans is more pronounced than ever on screen: "The flipside of hypersexualized Asian women is desexed Asian men". Her definite verdict, therefore, is as gloomy as Doromal's: "Hollywood's attempts to grapple with a changing world have failed because its vision of the world has not changed". The rise of New Media, however, inspires Kim's hope, because "the opening of innovative spaces for expression and critique" provides room in which "Asian American producers, artists, viewers, and critics are challenging the status quo". Allowing for extensive feedback, the Web 2.0 has brought viewers and critics opportunities to be much more active participants in the production of media content than ever before.

To sum up, cultural critique in the vein of Wong, Gee, Tajima, Hamamoto, Doromal, and Kim is twofold: Most representations of Asian (American) women and men in American visual culture are (1) *inaccurate*. Most Asian (American) women are not, for instance, hypersexual, submissive, and interested in European American men; most Asian (American) men are neither rapists or gangsters nor wimps or geeks. These inaccurate representations are also (2) *repeated* too often and therefore *harmful* to the extent that these representations encourage prejudice, facilitate the disintegration of the Asian American community, and hamper the emancipation of women. The first half of this critical desire implies that accurate or at least more varied representations are possible and that they are what filmmakers should provide audiences with. The second half demands audience reception research to empirically determine the effects on various audiences. This research agenda serves important political causes: (1) It can help change the practices of the media industry or motivate independent artists to contribute to the representational ecology in innovative ways, and (2) it can help

raise the level of media literacy and cross-cultural understanding in the general public. Its success might be contained, however, by some limitations of its research design.

There are a number of takeaway insights for the purposes of this study. In the American racial imaginary a special place seems to be reserved for those ethnic groups commonly associated with epicanthic eye folds: Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese. Moreover, the Asia-related racism evident in American media is decidedly gendered: Whereas Asian (American) women are usually portrayed as subservient and sexually available to European American men, Asian (American) male characters are either sexually threatening enemies or impotent sidekicks depending on the concurrent US-Asia relations.

In general, for a thorough analysis of audiovisual texts the historical context of their production must be taken into consideration in at least two respects: Social circumstances like state relations or domestic race and gender relations shape storyworlds as much as the way the media industry itself is institutionalized and regulated. Textual form must not be neglected either. Compared to films, for instance, the long story arcs of television shows provide producers with much more opportunity to create complex characters and relationships. Moreover, the serial nature of long-running television shows allows for potentially infinite feedback cycles that not even series of franchise films can match. Similarly, genres come with sets of possibilities and limitations that evolve over time. Although comedy may have been an especially superficial genre living off stereotypes in the 1990s, it is buzzing with more reflexive forms of humor in the twenty-first century.

When it comes to romantic/sexual relationships between European American men and Asian (American) women presented on American screens, single-axis frameworks severely limits understanding them. This is because race and gender intersect and thereby give rise to more specific meanings and functions. A strict focus on race, for instance, would universalize what it means to be "Asian (American)" in a text's imaginary, but cannot but oversee gender differences. Other dimensions may also play significant roles. "Nationality" comes to mind when one considers the importance of the relations the United States has with Asian states. On a similar note, narrow definitions of both racism and sexism exclusively considering derogatory stereotypes hinder the analysis. Broad definitions enable refocusing from (negative) value judgments to essentialist beliefs fixing specific sets of attributes to race and sex and their functions. Many critics put their hopes in Asian (American) artists to fight the racial stereotypes they themselves are most painfully aware of. Especially in the age of participatory media, however, developments in the composition of the potential audience may

also render change possible. From the perspective of media executives, larger numbers of solvent Asian Americans surely raise the incentives for *discoursive sensitivity* – at least once the threshold to a critical mass is passed. Incidentally, this highlights the role of another social dimension: "class".

Another important insight is that portrayals do not exist in a vacuum but are embedded in a *representational ecology*. In this context, *cultural work* is struggle against earlier portrayals. In contrast to the indirect approach of film critics, the strategy of artists like Wayne Wang and Aziz Ansari is direct representational interventionism. So far, six distinguishable patterns of representation have been noted: (1) *Conservation* repeats established essentialist attributions with slight variations; (2) *reversing* turns negative stereotypes upside down; (3) *liberalization* makes way for deeper explorations of previously tabooed topics like interracial romance; (4) *normalization* renders both essential racial differences as well as racism non-existent; (5) *enriching* creates varied individual and complex characters with more psychological depth; and (6) *self-reflexivity* moves the focus to the process of character creation itself. However, sudden and radical changes are rare in the history of representation. Usually, transitions come in the form of slow shifts that may be adaptations to changed circumstances. This could be one of the reasons for an *ambiguity* pronounced beyond mere polysemy in narratives featuring romantic/sexual relationships between European American men and Asian (American) women.

B) Contextual and Structural Analysis

Franklin Eugene Wong's observations already suggested that contextual analysis would be fruitful since both shifts and persistence in portrayed stereotypes may be tied more or less directly to shifts and persistence in US-Asia relations and what is considered to be the national interest. In his work, knowledge about the social world outside the investigated texts serves to make sense of changes in character portrayals over time. In the studies discussed in this section, however, the structural analysis of audiovisual texts is utilized to gain insights into larger cultural developments. Thereby the ambiguity of what Ben Tong called "white liberal films" moves into focus and can be explained.

Laura Hyun Yi Kang's essay "The Desiring of Asian Female Bodies" (1993) provides a critique of liberal multiculturalism with her readings of the films *Year of the Dragon* (1985),

Come See the Paradise (1990), and *Thousand Pieces of Gold* (1991), all of which focus on relationships between European American male and Asian (American) female characters. These films, she maintains, are set apart from earlier ones for two reasons: (1) Their narratives take place "within the nation-state borders of the United States" rather than in Asia and (2) their female protagonists are "spirited, proud, resourceful" and therefore "depart from the old stereotype of Asian women as passive and silent or evil and scheming" (77-78). Her "admittedly situated and selective viewing" (74) enables her, however, to understand the films to be not about the Asian American women after all, but about an anxiety around European American masculinity in the 1980s and 1990s. All three Asian American female characters have to be "rescued from the perpetual facelessness and otherness that mark the other Asian bodies in the film" and come "into comprehensibility precisely through her romantic/sexual liaison" (78) with a European American male protagonist who is "redeemed of a racist past through the romantic embrace he grants" (94). The liberal assimilationist endings of all three films, Kang concludes, construct a "familiar and reassuring version of national and masculine identity in an increasingly fluid and heterogeneous era of (1) growing racial diversity through continuing immigration from Asia and Latin America, of (2) the threats to masculinity posed by the demands of feminism within the United States, and of (3) the declining status of U.S. hegemony" (74).

In 2002, however, Kang revised her earlier overall-reading of the three films in chapter two of her book *Compositional Subjects*. Due to her "own critical desire to disavow these films as in any way representative of real Asian/American women", as she puts it, in 1993 Kang did not realize that, "rather than attempting some mimetic correspondence to actual living, desiring Asian/American women", they "must struggle against previous cinematic markings of their racial and sexual alterity" (93). In this light she refers to Werner Sollors' (1986) insight that "American allegiance", like love, "is based on consent, not descent" (112). Consequently, Kang reads the three films as ultimately about the struggle to become truly "American". Not only the main Asian American female characters – Tracy (*Year of the Dragon*), Lily (*Come See the Paradise*), and Polly (*Thousand Pieces of Gold*) – start out being "marginal to a Protestant, Anglo-American, middle-class norm": At the beginning, Stanley is a "crude, resentful, and possibly impotent Polish-American", Jack is a "'hot-blooded Irish-American' and labor-agitator-on-the-run", and Charlie is "an amoral, unkempt, and aimless gambler and drunk" (95). All six characters, therefore, can be seen as realizing their Americanness through their interracial, heterosexual relationships and their genuine

melting-pot love (94). The "personal growth" of all six characters, however, takes place "against the backdrop of the disintegration" of Asian American communities (95).

Strikingly, Kang's revision is sparked by a succession of frameworks rather than by the discovery of previously overlooked film details. The earlier analysis is a decidedly feminist one in which gender is stressed more than race and the criticism is intransigent. Asian (American) femininity may be represented positively, the argument goes, but only strategically as part of a defense of traditional European American masculinity. Ultimately, all three films, therefore, should be seen as part of a larger backlash against European American feminism in the 1980s. The later analysis, on the other hand, marks the films as reactions to cinematic history. This time, Kang sees them as tributes to the liberal sentiment that Americanness is a matter of consent rather than descent. Asian American female characters are a good fit for this purpose, since earlier portrayals embodied the racist concept of unassimilability. At the price of relegating their distinct ethnic communities to the past, Asians can be integrated into the American people, the new overall message seems to be, just as Catholics from the South and the East of Europe before them.

The second study in the category of contextual and structural analysis and the only one with book-length about representations of romantic/sexual relationships between European American and Asian (American) characters in American visual culture to date, *Romance and the Yellow Peril* (1993) by Gina Marchetti, focuses on Hollywood films released between 1915 and 1985. Rather than intending to judge the accuracy of representations, Marchetti's interest lies in "the way in which narratives featuring Asian-Caucasian sexual liaisons work ideologically to uphold and sometimes subvert culturally accepted notions of nation, class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation" (1). In the light of (1) "the prevalence of yellow peril images springing from the press", (2) "the American government's imperialistic foreign policy and exclusionary immigration laws", (3) "organized religion's tendency to treat race allegorically", (4) "labor's fear of cheap labor", and (5) "reformers' horrific association of Asians with dirt, disease, opium, and prostitution", she finds it "amazing that any remotely sympathetic treatment of interracial love affairs could exist at all in Hollywood" (4). But it does and it seems a fruitful endeavor to investigate what sort of cultural work it performs.

In contrast to stereotype criticism, the focus is not on the portrayal of individual characters, but on what function these particular narratives might have in the larger discourse about race and sex. Marchetti comes to the conclusion that they tend to deal with the same "fundamental crisis of Anglo-American culture desperately trying to reconcile its credo of

'liberty and justice for all' with its insistence on white, male, bourgeois domination of the public sphere" and can be regarded as attempting "to 'save' the Anglo-American, bourgeois, male establishment from any threats to its hegemony" by (1) "saving the white woman from sexual contact with the racial other", (2) "rescuing the nonwhite woman from the excesses of her own culture", or (3) "saving the couple from a living death by allowing them to be symbolically assimilated into the American mainstream through their romance" (218).

The main chapters of *Romance and the Yellow Peril* can be read as setting up a matrix according to which films about romantic/sexual relationships between European American men and Asian (American) women can be categorized by plot type. There are narratives defined predominantly by (1) *sacrifice*, (3) *salvation*, (4) *tragedy and transcendence*, (5) *assimilation*, and (6) *postmodern spectacle*.

Sacrifice narratives like *Madame Butterfly* (1915/1932), *China Gate* (1957) and *The Lady from Yesterday* (1985) are about Madame Butterfly figures that can be traced back to nineteenth century writings of French naval officer Julien Viaud and are manifestations of "Pocahontas tales, which call for the sacrifice of the woman of color for the sake of white men" (79). Abandoned by their European (American) lovers, Butterflies sacrifice their "own happiness for the 'good' of [their] child and kill themselves – their "martyrdom is the focus of the narrative" (78). Through their sacrifice they proof that Asian (American) women are morally superior to the "insensitive beasts" the European (American) men are portrayed as when they express their "'genuine' (i.e., masochistic) femininity" (79). The emotionality of the Butterfly is also contrasted with the "civilized" rationality of a female European (American) character that will take care of the mixed-race child after the man-beast marries her. Some versions "legitimize Anglo-American rule over a submissive, feminized Asia" (91), whereas others remain ambiguous failing "to provide the reader or viewer with a clear moral focus since they depict the heroine as a fool and the hero as a cad" (81).

Salvation narratives like *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing* (1955) and *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960) are based on "medieval romantic quest tales" in which a "heroic knight promises salvation from any number of woes ranging from simple lack of self-esteem, boredom, and sexual frustration to poverty, oppression, or the stifling confines of the family" for the passive heroine (114). The modernized and Americanized version set in Asia features a White Knight figure "who rescues the nonwhite heroine from the excesses of her own culture while 'finding' himself through this exotic sexual liaison" (109). In both, *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing* and *The World of Suzie Wong*, the male protagonists get out of their

identity crises through their interracial love for Asian women which Americanizes them by moral elevation above the openly racist British colonialists in Hong Kong. At the same time, by preferring an Asian woman to a European American one, the knights "affirm male identity against the threat of the Western 'new' woman" (115). Overall, in Marchetti's reading, both films make a European American man "the vehicle of his lover's salvation and the institution of heterosexual marriage the ultimate hope for womankind" and, therefore, do not question "gender inequality or the right of their heroes to tear the heroines away from their own cultures and independent life-styles" (111).

Tragic and transcendent narratives like *Sayonara* (1957) and *The Crimson Kimono* (1959) are entries in a "long Hollywood tradition of social problem films that use melodrama and romance to make concrete (but also personalize, individualize, and often trivialize) broader social or political concerns" (126). Typically, they make use of "the device of parallel love stories" (125). One interracial couple is tragically "punished" for crossing racial barriers and the other one is successfully assimilated into the American mainstream and thereby functions as confirmation of the myth "that American society is the tolerant melting pot it claims to be" (126). However, Marchetti points out, in *Sayonara*, for instance, "the conservative treatment of gender stands as a corrective to the film's more liberal treatment of race", because it is as much about "keeping women in their 'place' as wives and mothers" as it is about "racial tolerance and understanding" (131).

Assimilation narratives like *Japanese War Bride* (1952) and *Bridge to the Sun* (1961) stand out from other wartime romances that are based in Asia and thereby avoid any discussion of more challenging topics like "miscegenation laws, prejudice against Amerasian children, racism within the family, and spouse abuse" at home (158). To the usual tension between "the bourgeois myth of the patriarchal family as a stable, unchanging haven" and "forces of social change" in Hollywood "melodramas that focus on topical issues or historical themes" (160), *Japanese War Bride* adds problems caused by "racial differences, national animosities, and intercultural misunderstandings" (159). After the newlyweds arrive at the male protagonist's family farm in Salinas, California, they have to deal with rejection in a hostile environment. The film offers "a nostalgic view of the American, rural, patriarchal household" (170) – "free from all the economic and psychic stresses of advanced capitalism" (168) – "as both a social norm and an impossible ideal for its interracial couple" (170). Nevertheless, as the couple embraces "at the end of the film against the natural backdrop of the Pacific Ocean", "legality and morality of the internment of Japanese Americans during the

war, miscegenation laws, and the economic basis for racial tensions in California agriculture fall by the wayside" since it stands "alone from society and, as a consequence, from any moral imperative to help change it" (162).

Finally, postmodern spectacles like *Year of the Dragon* (1985) go beyond "the realist notion that film can accurately depict the material world as well as the modernist conception of art as intervention" and accept "the image as a fabrication, as part of a commodity culture where no depth exists beyond the surface of the marketplace" (202). Interracial sexuality is neither "a liberal call for reform" nor a "conservative demand for exclusionism" but only one of many elements of a "stylistic mélange" (203). Like Kang, I would not necessarily go along with Marchetti's decision to categorize this film as postmodern spectacle. The action comedy film *Volunteers*, likewise released in 1985 and visually cited in Gee's documentary, seems to be a better fit. Consciously but unapologetically, it deals freely with stereotypes of all facets to a degree that justifies claiming that its humor is entirely based on them.

Some additional important takeaway insights can be derived from these studies. Isolating single characters and judging the accuracy of portrayals should be given up in favor of utilizing knowledge about the context to interpret the text and simultaneously gaining insights into the context via textual interpretation. Reciprocal (con)textual analysis enables a better understanding of genealogy, structure, and function of the characteristic ambiguity many texts share that this study focuses on. Besides, this type of analysis has two major aspects to it: Whereas *discourse ecological* arguments focus on what role a text might play in the larger circulations of knowledge and power of the social world, *media ecological* ones zoom in on what role a text might play in representational history and the media economy. Structural analysis is another way to go beyond stereotype criticism. In conjunction with contextual analysis, this approach enables understanding the life cycles of certain plot types and arrangements of stylistic techniques. Marchetti was able to distinguish five plot types in films of the twentieth century up until the eighties. It is interesting to ascertain whether they were adaptable enough to persist into the twenty-first century.

C) Interventionist Reading

Finally, "interventionist reading" is a variant of stereotype criticism interesting enough to justify a separate category. Granted, in her short essay, Jessica Hagedorn (1994) does not add much to earlier research results. To emphasize what exactly she disapproves of, she used the word "whore" no less than twenty-two times in the satiric abstract of her article titled "Asian Women in Film" (74). Hagedorn does, however, advocate creative viewing practices in the face of distorted Hollywood imagery. Concretely, she advises Asian American women to align themselves with "bad" female Asian characters like the violent Jade Cobra girls in *Year of the Dragon* (1985) rather than with "good" ones that are "childlike, submissive, silent, and eager for sex" (74-75).

Similarly, Lynn Lu (1997) is certain that a "parade of familiar stereotypes populates our cultural landscape: concubine, geisha girl, mail-order bride; dragon lady, lotus blossom, precious pearl" (17) – a parade that would make you believe that (non-dragon-lady-like) Asian (American) women must naturally be "serene and sensual (read: compliant and servile)" (19) – which is why the objective must be to "explode expectations of docile Asian women" (26). She also decries "attempts to show that we can be 'All-American Girls', as in the TV show starring Korean American comedian Margaret Cho" as superfluous since they "gets [sic] us nowhere" (20). Lu is in complete agreement with Hagedorn: To the hopes for "critical representations" she adds a call for "critical readings". She seems convinced that whereas "what looks like a positive role could limit us even further", "what looks like blatant discrimination could present new, radical ways of thinking" (25). Viewers, therefore, should be able "to recreate, refigure, and reinterpret" slightly uncomfortable and "even the most egregious of racist images" since these "can simultaneously offer radical alternative readings and possibilities" (23).

Hagedorn and Lu's urges for interventionist readings point once more to the inherent ambiguity of the texts this study is focusing on. "Liberal" and "progressive" topoi may coexist with "conservative" and "reactionary" ones in the same narrative or set of images. Lu, for one, imagines this ambiguity in terms of a geological metaphor: Texts are layered objects and the exposed top stratum represents obvious or conventional meaning. If you happen to be a "critical spectator" equipped with the necessary tools to dig deeper, however, you will be able to discover "an openly oppositional subtext" hidden "beneath the surface" (24). Now, Lu may be sure that the surface consists merely of dirt and gravel, whereas only the lower strata

contain precious metals and gemstones. This assumption is ridden with prerequisites, however. Even from Lu's perspective, many texts may feature the reverse or no such structure. As insight-producing as metaphors can be, they are also capable of trapping thought. Audiovisual texts, after all, are no products of undesigned natural processes. A question that will be of central importance in this study, therefore, will be: Why is pronounced ambiguity a common feature of most if not every narrative built around romantic/sexual relationships between European American Men and Asian (American) women in the first place?

With her book-length study *The Hypersexuality of Race* (2007), Celine Parreñas Shimizu launches an attack on much of the earlier research by urging to "go beyond stereotype analyses and the ease of political and moral judgements" (23). She claims that her project "ultimately queers heterosexual frameworks of race" which is important because "expanding the normal to include the perverse makes the unknown not only acceptable but human" (13), whereas by privileging "ordinary normalcy, we lose the opportunity to reimagine what is missing, unaccounted for, and excluded in the normal – such as perverse practices that criticize the disciplining of women by sexuality" (19).

Shimizu makes clear that, for now, there is no way around accepting the fact that "hypersexuality is the primary legibility of Asian/American women in Hollywood". This is evident at two levels: (1) Their "sexual subjection in film involves an inherently different sexuality essentialized to race and culture" and (2) their "sexuality is framed in a rivalry with a white woman, in terms of competing for idealized heterosexual femininity" (65). Simply "rejecting hypersexuality as external to Asian/American women, something imposed entirely by others", she argues, "seems as equally insufficient as accepting it as entirely essential and internal" (22). Instead, it is preferable to keep in mind that, "because the Asian woman cannot be imagined outside of sex, her resistance is also found in sex" (97). Refining Hagedorn and Lu's thoughts, Shimizu points out, "progressive politics" can be excavated by analyzing sexual representations of Asian (American) women "outside of a moralistic framework" (77) but "within the narrative context" (66) of a film. In other words, instead of focusing on a single character in isolation, considering the story it is part of as well as the relationships between characters will enable a critique of normativity via the identification of inspiring alternatives to dominant norms.

In chapter three of Shimizu's book, she captures the cultural work the "Asian American femme fatale" (61) figure is doing with the representation of femininity by analyzing roles

played by Anna May Wong, Nancy Kwan, and Lucy Liu. In contrast to the role of Lotus Flower in *Toll of the Sea* (1922), the "pathologically devoted Chinese 'wife' of an American husband who disavows her love", Wong's later roles conjured up the image of the Dragon Lady, a "sublime object of beauty hiding a grotesque interior" associated with "seduction and danger" (59). Though the slave girl Wong plays in *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924), like all other Mongols in the film, is "hopelessly immoral" (66), she "occupies a substantial position within the film's narrative economy" and "offers an alternative" to the "static white femininity" (69) of the princess when one sides with her in the "political practice of misidentification" (68). Considering that the slave girl drugs the princess and disappears after saving the Mongol prince, thereby ensuring herself "a more viable future", Shimizu opines, "the stereotype diagnosis that calls the character a dragon lady does not appreciate her as a subject who devises her own transformation, under sever constraints, from docile servant to daring vixen" (71).

Similarly, the character Hui Fei in *Shanghai Express* (1932) "carves a new heroism" (75). On one level of the film, the danger looms that Shanghai Lily, Marlene Dietrich's character, falls "from grace and civilization" and becomes "entirely part of China as indicated by Hui Fei, an entirely fallen woman in a savage and primitive place"; "the Asian woman represents the terrible future of the white woman if the latter is not diverted from the path of sex – in a film where sexuality is the measure of a woman's worth" (73). On another level, whereas "the white woman gives her body to service male pleasure and male survival", Hui Fei "refuses both in an alternative form of gender and sexuality"; the Asian woman "kills a man and saves the woman in a more liberatory and woman-centered equation" (75). Read this way as characterized by unrepressed sexuality, self-reliance and confident assertiveness, Asian femininity seems to be an ideal one could aspire to.

Nancy Kwan plays "a prostitute 'with a heart of gold'", "essentially the 'good' woman caught in a 'bad role'", in *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960), often considered to be a "classic racist and sexist text" (78). Though it is an "anti-modern" femininity that is embodied by Suzie Wong "in an era when the civil rights movement involved women's rights activism", nonetheless, "political critique occurs at the site of her resistance to racialization and racial critique": "in a reversal of the butterfly trope, the Asian woman partners up with the white man who chooses her over the white woman" (80). The character Linda Low in *Flower Drum Song* (1961), in contrast, calls "for a new envisioning of gender roles within the Asian American community in the film" (82). Low's beauty "represents a sexually liberated

American woman against the Asian Mei Li and the Asian American Helen" and "shows the Asian/American woman's achievement of normative standards of beauty for women" while her "seductive role" "offers a racial occupation of traditional white femininity" (81). "Ultimately", Shimizu asserts, "there is a political critique in aspiring to normalcy if such an aspiration provides a critique of exclusion for minoritized raced and gendered subjects" (84). Like Kang and Marchetti, then, she exposes these texts' ambiguity by embedding them in a history of representational shifts. Shimizu proceeds, however, to emphasize those aspects she deems progressive as part of her interventionist discoursive strategy.

Finally, though Lucy Liu's role as the dominatrix Pearl in the neo-noir crime film *Payback* (1999) renders an Asian American female character an "inhuman sex machine" (88), it absolutely crushes the image of the docile and submissive China Doll that so many flesh-and-blood Asian American women suffer from. In one scene, when the European American male villain opens a door, Pearl "immediately smacks him in the face while commanding, 'On your knees, bitch, I want satisfaction'", after which she "punches him in the stomach as she tilts her head back with pleasure" (86). Sometime later, she "narrates the kicking and beating" of her lover's "limp body with the lines, 'Me love you baby … me love you long time'" (87). *Charlie's Angels* (2000), too, can be "read as postmodern play" offering "a form of political critique" (85-86). The private investigation agent Alex Munday is a "dynamic playful figure, donning various costumes and characters" and, like her female European American colleagues, masquerades "in various racial and gendered forms" (84). Especially "Alex's eye-rolling derision and knowing smile as the masseuse character" that knocks a European American businessman unconscious at an Oriental establishment "enable resistant readings" (85). In contrast to Marchetti, thus, Shimizu finds political value in the reflexive play with stereotypes that characterizes postmodern films.

Representational shifts necessarily entail textual ambiguity. This is because adaptation to new circumstances is slow and always partial. *Interventionist reading* is a research agenda entirely built upon this textual ambiguity. First, it is exposed by embedding the text in representational history. Then, the progressive aspects are emphasized in order to empower minority viewers. In contrast, I am interested in bringing the ambiguity to the fore in order to situate the text in the evolution of American Far Orientalism.

To conclude this section about previous research, I briefly discuss merits and shortcomings of character- or stereotype-centered approaches. In *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (1994), Ella Shohat and Robert Stam list the following three "indispensable contributions": (1

– *pattern recognition*): They reveal "oppressive patterns of prejudice in what might at first glance have seemed random" phenomena; (2 – *effects*): they highlight "the psychic devastation inflicted by systematically negative portrayals on those groups assaulted by them, whether through internalization of the stereotypes themselves or through the negative effects of their dissemination"; and (3 – *function*): they signal "the social functionality of stereotypes, demonstrating that they are not an error of perception but rather a form of social control" (198). This is what previous research excels at.

Shohat and Stam go on, however, to list the following four "theoretical-political pitfalls" of character- or stereotype-centered approaches: (1 – *essentialism*) They might "reduce a complex variety of portrayals to a limited set of reified formulae" and thereby force "diverse fictive characters into preestablished categories"; (2 – *ahistoricism*) they "tend to be static, not allowing for mutations, metamorphoses, changes of valence, altered function", (3 – *moralism*) they "easily slide into … fruitless debates about the relative virtues of fictive characters" and thereby remain "rooted in Manichean schemas of good and evil"; and (4 – *individualism*) the "focus on individual character also misses the ways in which social institutions and cultural practices … can be misrepresented without a single character being stereotyped" (199-201). It is these pitfalls, it seems to me, Wong, Gee, Tajima, Hamamoto, Doromal, and Kim as well as Hagedorn, Lu, and Shimizu do not always avoid.

Valuing negative assessments more than positive ones (or vice versa) or making categories elastic (Lotus Blossom/Dragon Lady dichotomy) and analogies loose results in missing any progress or even just change. In *Slaying the Dragon Reloaded*, Kim, through her experts Chai and Kelley, laments both exotification and whitewashing of Asian (American) women. Both representational strategies are certainly problematic, but it is impossible to challenge both at the same time. Awareness of the representational ecology at least allows for recognizing normalization as a strategy to hard-counter the Lotus Blossom/Dragon Lady dichotomy. Similarly, Doromal cites the Oriental massage scene in *Charlie's Angels* as evidence for Hollywood "still Orientalizing its Asian actors as much today as in the 1920s". This scene is a parody, however, made obvious not only by the "eye-rolling derision and knowing smile" of Lucy Liu's character, as Shimizu put it (85). This can be recognized as a new development, though audience reception research would have to assess whether the reflexive and transgressive humor gets lost on less media literate viewers. Likewise, Doromal does not make much out of the fact that, in both *Charlie's Angels* and the sequel *Full Throttle* (2003), Alex Munday "crudely shrugs off (Caucasian) men who try to flirt with her, simply

saying ‘no’ or ‘uh-uh’ repeatedly, without budging or looking them in the eye”, despite her writing about “yellow fever”. This can be appreciated as welcome cultural work countering the imagined sexual availability of Asian (American) women instead of disposing it as simply another reiteration of the Dragon Lady stereotype. In contrast, Marchetti, Kang, and Shimizu embedded the texts they were analyzing in a history of representational shifts and thereby were able to recognize the resulting ambiguity and stress the cultural work these texts were doing at the time.

Shohat and Stam also caution against a “privileging of social portrayal, plot and character” as this “often leads to a slighting of the specifically cinematic dimensions of the film”: “narrative structure, genre conventions, cinematic style … lighting, framing, *mise-en-scène*, music” (208). Unfortunately, not adequately honoring the media specificity of audiovisual texts is a weakness that unites all previous research.

Research Method

Previous word choices like “adaptation” and “emergence” have not been coincidental. Inspired by the ideas German philosopher of science Peter Finke presents in *Die Ökologie des Wissens* (2005), I have come to understand the screen media system in terms of evolutionary and ecological theory. Though, as a concept, “evolution” has been developed in the field of biology, it is not restricted to it. It designates a model of development in contrast to others (97): *Creation* models a system brought into existence via a conscious act (by gods or human beings), whereas *revolution* requires an already existing system which then can be altered via sudden and massive changes to its basic principles. *Evolution*, on the other hand, models a system that comes into existence and develops via a multitude of accumulating minor changes that can result into the emergence of a new state. While the creation and revolution models can be thought together, the evolution model is radically different: Non-evolutionary systems are static because they are characterized by rigid laws; evolutionary systems are dynamic because they are characterized by rules that allow for a high degree of freedom (108).

The American *screen media system* can be seen as tripartite: The *political* dimension comprises institutions that regulate both production and distribution of consumable audiovisual texts. For the most part, content-producing media institutions are stock companies that cannot afford too much idealism and need to be oriented toward making a profit to justify and ensure their existence within a capitalist economy. This is the *economic* dimension, whereas the c*ultural* equivalent comprises representational ecologies. Newer audiovisual texts have their roots in the plethora of predecessors that have been produced before but usually feature some innovative elements. Besides, of course, the screen media system does not exist in isolation but within a *social environment*. For this study, its most relevant aspects are US-Asia relations as well as domestic race, gender and class relations.

In her recent study *Cable Guys* (2014), Amanda D. Lotz expresses a similar view. Beginning with the airing of *The Sopranos* (1999-2007), she observes, cable’s male-centered serials tend to offer much more original stories than before, exploring “uncertainty about contemporary manhood in a manner that does not presume that reinstating women’s subordination is the solution”. In order to do so, they usually feature flawed rather than good protagonists “upon which the difficult process of negotiating contrary gender norms is mapped” (57-58). There was “no catalytic moment or event” to trigger this phenomenon,

though, but many "gradual adjustments … over the preceding decades" (21). Thus, the alternatives to patriarchal masculinities that emerged in cable television dramas at the beginning of the twenty-first century, she asserts, "cannot be clearly traced to a single cause but can be linked to a confluence of industrial, sociocultural, and textual forces" (21). Similarly, I explore a number of causes while putting the emphasis on mapping the resulting changes in screened Asian (American) femininity and American Far Orientalism.

One of the merits of the evolutionary perspective is that it sheds some light on the origin of the political ambiguity that is characteristic for texts this study focuses on. Three arguments can be made here: (1) Within a *media ecological* perspective, more recent texts have their roots in preceding ones and must distinguish themselves from their direct competition. In *Television and American Culture* (2010), Jason Mittell explicates what he calls the "'similar but different' logic of television creativity" (46-48): Since the screen media industry struggles with accurately predicting hits and flops, it usually relies on "formulas". Whatever has been successful in the past is studied and repeated in variations. Strategies include producing "spin-offs" by relocating familiar characters in new situations, developing "branded franchises" that utilize new characters but familiar sensibilities, and creating "recombinants" by mixing elements of several other texts. Outright "clones", however, are almost always failures. Therefore, relying on tradition is crossed with compulsive innovation. There must be creativity, in other words, albeit one contained by cautiousness. Elements of older texts, of course, often clash on some level with other (innovative) elements they are (re)combined with.

Ambiguity also may be a common feature of Manichaean ideologies once there has been enough time for differentiation. (2) From a *discourse ecological* standpoint, ideologies evolve when confronted with a world perceived to have changed to a degree that does not sit well with their basic premises. Orientalism should not be understood as an ideology set in stone that can only be reproduced unvaried. In fact, since its inception, Colonial Orientalism has transformed in significant ways without shedding the geographical dualism at its core. Its mirror image, Anti-Colonial Occidentalism, probably arose first as a consequence of an anti-imperial but nationalist fever many colonial subjects got afflicted with. Then, Spirito-Occidentalism evolved in Europe when rapid industrialization wreaked havoc. Finally, the emergence of Techno-Orientalism is closely linked with economic and technological advances made in East Asia toward the end of the twentieth century. Today, narratives can recombine any elements of these variants, but not without frictions.

Applicable to representation in general, one more argument can be made: (3) Ambiguity is a result of social dimensions like sex, race, and class intersecting with each other. Visualizing the "triad of prejudice" (18-24) that Edward Schiappa writes about in *Beyond Representational Correctness* (2008) can help illuminating intersectionality:

Type of Prejudice	*Identity Beliefs*	*Normative Beliefs*	*Difference Beliefs*
Sexism	Biological essentialism	Androcentrism	Gender polarization
Racism	Biological essentialism	Whiteness	Racial polarization
Heterosexism	Behavioral essentialism	Heteronormativity	Sexual polarization

The insurmountable problem that this triad poses is that it is impossible to fight all three *types of prejudice* in a single representation. For instance, portraying Asian (American) women consistently with dominant stereotypes risks reinforcing *identity and difference beliefs* (essentialism and polarization), whereas portraying them inconsistently with stereotypical expectations risks reinforcing *normative beliefs*. This is what Shimizu is grappling with, fighting moralism in *The Hypersexuality of Race* (2007). Desexualizing Asian (American) women on screen to "acceptable" levels will "normalize" their portrayals but also reduce their potential to upset normativity. The flipside is that essentialism and polarization can be cut simultaneously when normativity is reinforced. Thus, even the best representation can never be pure in its political progressivism but must remain ambiguous.

Two more concepts have to be clarified. (1) *Discoursive sensitivity*: Since the gradual establishment of Ethnic Studies programs at American universities and the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, audiovisual texts are increasingly sensitized to potential accusations of racism and sexism. It is not the ideal of an American cultural democracy, however, that drives the screen media system. Rather, from the 1960s onwards, prolonged academic, artistic, and legal efforts of the feminist, LGBT, and ethnic consciousness movements as well as continuous immigration have led to the realization that strategies not including sensitivity risk financial losses and a damaged public image.

Moreover, I assume ever increasing levels of (2) *reflexivity* in American visual culture as a result of the evolutionary process. There are two relevant forms: *Feedback reflexivity* occurs when a theory affects the system that it is meant to be modeling. Like every evolutionary system, the screen media system, too, allows for creative feedback processes. Once the media industry becomes aware of such academic notions as social constructionism

and Orientalism, for instance, it can utilize them to create new forms of narratives. *Industrial reflexivity*, on the other hand, is what John Thornton Caldwell calls on-screen self-analysis and self-representation in his book *Production Culture* (2008) which explores the cultural practices of film and television production workers. Although both forms of reflexivity certainly can be utilized for progressive political agendas, often they are "merely sound corporate promotional and marketing strategies" (2). Caldwell is sure, however, that "corporations now make film knowledge, general aesthetic speculation, and critical analysis parts of their consumer media products" (25).

Finally, I need to elaborate on how the complexity of audiovisual texts can be honored. First of all, *media specificity* has to be taken into account. The common narratological distinction between "plot" and "story" can be mirrored for audiovisual texts: "Film" is what the viewer can see and hear, whereas the "diegesis" is the storyworld that the viewer can only infer. Alternatively, "film" can be described as "plot" plus stylistic techniques. Jason Mittell (2010) considers five of them (176-212): "Staging" is what can be shot with a camera, i.e. set, props, lighting, costume, makeup, and actor performance, whereas "camerawork" refers to the way everything staged can be shot. Distance, angle, and movement of the camera profoundly influence how the viewer experiences the stage. Moreover, "editing" makes the viewing a very unnatural experience as it literally cuts into the diegesis and allows for omissions and non-chronological storytelling. Adding to this unnaturalness are "graphics" like title sequences, captions, or credits that can be superimposed. Lastly, of course, there is "sound" in the form of voice, music, and environment. All of these media specific stylistic techniques substantially add meaning to the plot and essentially constitute a "film".

Not any less important is to embed the text into its *historical context*. Insofar as I try to map developments in American Orientalism, I situate this study within the field of cultural history. In the words of Richard Slotkin (1992), the task of cultural historians is "to show how the activities of symbol-making, interpretation, and imaginative projection continuously interlock with the political and material processes of social existence" (5). Essentially, what is necessary is an analysis of the text within the political, economic, and cultural dimensions of the screen media system and its environment.

Constructions of causal relationships between audiovisual texts and the social environment of the screen media system are *discourse ecological arguments*. They focus on external references. *Media ecological arguments*, on the other hand, zoom in on causal relationships between audiovisual texts and the political, economic, and cultural dimensions

of the screen media system itself. To a fairly substantial degree, especially on the level of culture, this system appears to be self-referential. Therefore, it is advisable to pay close attention to the specific *representational ecology* that a text is contributing to. Within their respective historical contexts, characters are doing *cultural work* insofar as they are reactions to preceding portrayals and contributions to their respective ecologies. Since my approach differs significantly from previous research, rereadings are in order.

To be able to map the evolution of American Far Orientalism, I selected three audiovisual texts featuring romantic relationships between Asian (American) female and European (American) male characters for case studies: Michael Cimino's neo-noir film *Year of the Dragon* (1985), Edward Zwick's epic war film *The Last Samurai* (2003), and Ronald D. Moore's science fiction television series *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-09). These texts either garnered a cult following or achieved commercial success and earned critical acclaim or both. Initial readings serve as starting points for investigations of their historical contexts, genre histories, and representational ecologies. The results lead to enriched readings which allow me to refine concepts and chronicle developments around the turn of the century.

The following chapter deals with *Year of the Dragon*. This thriller about a police captain fighting crime in New York's Chinatown, I argue, is a rich source of hints pointing to changing valuations of both European American masculinity and Asian (American) femininity during the 1980s. The first two sections are concerned with the aftermath of the Vietnam War, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, and the rapid economic rise of Japan. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the salvation narrative of the 1950s adapts to new circumstances at the end of the twentieth century.

2) Broken Knights and Asian Fairies: *Year of the Dragon* (1985)

Manhattan's Chinatown is thrown into chaos by Hong Kong triad offshoots: A war of succession and inter-gang rivalry between the Hun San and the Nam Soong leaves a trail of blood. Most of the tongs' money is made by extortion, gambling, importing heroin, and slaving in sweat shops. Among Chinatown's citizens, of course, there is no doubt that police informers will be brutally murdered. In Michael Cimino's neo-noir film *Year of the Dragon* (*YTD*), this is the challenge constructed for protagonist Stanley White (Mickey Rourke), a driven New York Police Department captain taking over the precinct.

The plot unfolds via tripartite narrative focus: (1) Repeating the Horatio Alger myth with a dark twist, cunning and ruthless antagonist Joey Tai (John Lone) makes it from waiter to head of a powerful internationally operating crime syndicate. After displacing his predecessor Harry Yung (Victor Wong), he secures an enormous influx of heroin from Southeast Asia's Golden Triangle. (2) Stanley's relentless efforts to stop Joey in his track cause much suffering for whoever is close to him. Frequent complaints by several characters do not weaken his obsession and he remains unable to take off the blinkers. As a result, he alienates his only friend Louis Bukowski (Raymond J. Barry) while both his wife Connie (Caroline Kava) and his subordinate officer Herbert Kwong (Dennis Dun) lose their lives. (3) Facing corruption in the city's leadership, Stanley attempts to partner up with up-and-coming television news reporter Tracy Tzu (Ariane Koizumi). The resulting love-hate relationship serves to shed some light on his mindset and offers some form of redemption.

Gina Marchetti (1993) categorized *YTD* as postmodern spectacle that breaks with "the modernist conception of art as intervention" and presents us with an image that has "no depth … beyond the surface of the marketplace" (202). In contrast to preceding films, she claims, its interracial sexuality is nothing but another meaningless element of a typical "stylistic mélange" (203). This assessment does not fully do justice to Cimino's work. The film may not be a straightforward intervention, but it is not a meaningless spectacle either. In this chapter, I offer an alternative reading of *YTD*. Cimino managed, I argue, to map an entire decade's discourse onto one compact narrative.

An insightful way to begin is a short comparison with Robert Daley's novel of the same title (1981) that the film is based on. Although the plot is much the same overall, there

are some striking differences. Besides the characters having different names in Daley's novel, for instance, it goes into much more detail about how the Hong Kong triads, enabled by British imperialism, build globalized networks of operation. The antagonist Jimmy Koy and his Hakka partners, the reader learns, joined both the triad Hung Pang as well as the Royal Hong Kong Police Force and worked their way up in both organizations. Once they made enough money with extortion and the like, they spread out to New York, San Francisco, Vancouver, Boston, and Amsterdam, taking over existing groups and building a heroin shipping empire. Local bosses act as benevolent community leaders, but youth gangs like Nikki Han's Flying Dragons enforce their will. Now, if police and news media worked as intended, even well organized crime syndicates would be worn down and destroyed by some heroes the story could focus on. Instead, in the novel, top level police officers care more about advancing their careers than fighting crime while television news executives prefer raising viewing figures with good looks and sensationalism rather than supporting police investigations.

All in all, Daley's version is somewhat more noir than the film it inspired: The lines between good and bad are thoroughly blurred in the novel. Crime is essentially unbeatable and therefore the principal police emotions are cynicism, defeatism, and hatred. Truth does not matter except for the kind that can stand up in court. In this nihilistic storyworld, the protagonist's name – Arthur Powers – is the name of the game: Almost every character is on an egotistical quest for power and ruthlessly utilizes all means at hand. Arthur, however, deals with some guilt and remorse about his affair with the television news reporter Carol Cone when he realizes that his faithful wife Eleanor is his sole support. In the end, he finally quits the affair and blackmails Jimmy with a bigamy charge. The aspiring triad boss left his first wife Orchid in Hong Kong and obtained US citizenship by marrying his Chinese American lover Betty. Facing prison time, deportation, and a complete loss of face, Jimmy opts for suicide. Nevertheless, he is replaced in no time and business continues as usual.

Cimino constructs a world, by contrast, in which crime seems beatable at first. Stanley arrives at the scene, rides roughshod over people close to him, and bulldozes through every obstacle. The troubled hero appears to be self-forgetting and only interested in an all-out rebellion against whoever is in power. Like Arthur, Stanley cheats on his wife, albeit for different reasons. He does not correct his course of action on time, however, and loses her as a result. At the end, Stanley emerges victoriously from an action-packed showdown with Joey. The final scene, however, suggests that this was merely a temporary triumph, too. In

repetition of the film's first scene, a traditional Chinese funeral procession marks the death of one leader and the accession of another.

Both the novel and the film conjure up an image of the Hong Kong triads as a new mysterious menace from the East. With regards to the importation of heroin, this might not have been far off social reality. According to criminologist Ko Lin Chu (1990), by 1987, about 70 per cent of New York City's supply of the drug came from Southeast Asia via the hands of Chinese traffickers based in Hong Kong (147). A few years before, the business was firmly in the hands of Frenchmen and Italians (148). In this sense, *YTD* can be seen as an updated version of William Friedkin's film *The French Connection* (1971). Criminologist Yiu Kong Chu (2001) argues, however, that ordinary triad members are neither wealthy nor sophisticated enough to manage such complex international projects (110). Most major Chinese traffickers are international business entrepreneurs who have the necessary cash, contacts, and managerial skills (114). These entrepreneurs may or may not hire triads, asserts Chu, for the strong-arm services they provide to businesses in risky environments (8).

In any case, the Hong Kong triads are not in the focus of Cimino's film. Daley's story has been reworked, I argue, in order to speak about recent American history as well as gender, race, and class. This is achieved mainly via two major changes: 1) The law-degree-possessing nonspecific-European American Arthur Powers is replaced with the working class Polish American try-hard Stanley White who wants nothing more than being accepted as the quintessential American poster boy. Most significantly, he served in the United States Marine Corps and is a Vietnam War veteran. 2) In a similar fashion, the All-American blue-eyed and blond-streaked news reporter Carol Cone, fighting for women's rights only when it affects her personally, is exchanged for Chinese American Tracy Tzu. She appears to be a materialist career woman, too, but saves the deeply flawed Stanley with what may seem to be unconditional love.

Vietnam War Wounds

In *YTD*, film scholar Susan White (1991) asserts, “the detective’s mission includes saving a woman from the evil influence of the Chinese, of Chinatown” (221). Stanley, after all, heroically throws himself on top of Tracy to protect her from incoming bullets during the shootout in the restaurant. Nobody is trying to hurt the news reporter at this point, though. The assault is part of Joey’s plan to discredit and replace Harry Yung as head of Chinatown. In fact, any danger to Tracy is the result of Stanley pulling her into his personal vendetta without regard for her safety. Eventually, Joey perceives her to be a threat because she attacks him in her reports and spreads rumors about a supposed Chinese Mafia. Stanley cannot even protect Tracy from getting raped by thugs. All he achieves is an empty revenge.

Despite his last name: Stanley is no “White Knight”. Marchetti found that this type of character promises the racial and gendered Other “salvation from any number of woes ranging from simple lack of self-esteem, boredom and sexual frustration to poverty, oppression, or the stifling confines of the family” (114). There is nothing Tracy needs to be saved from, however, whereas Stanley is in dire need of salvation. He is a Broken Knight with worn down armor, if he is a knight at all. He suffers himself and has nothing to offer but pain and death. This is readily discernable from the most significant scenes of the film. All of them are accompanied by non-diegetic music to intensify the emotional impact.

A tragic tune is audible for the first time when Conny gives vent to her feelings in the bedroom. Apparently, Stanley does not sleep or eat regularly, neglects his wife, and ignores her wish to have a baby. Since Conny’s efforts to relieve his obsession with work seem futile and his promises have proven empty, she is on the verge of giving up on their marriage. Nevertheless, in Joey’s office, Stanley decides to take the hard way. The businessman offers him collaboration for fighting petty crime in Chinatown and an annual pension of 100.000 dollars. Right at the moment Stanley refuses, menacing music sets in. Keenly intent on suggesting himself as nemesis to a very powerful man, he follows up with a barrage of accusations and threats.

Now firmly on the path of destruction, Stanley invites himself to Tracy’s apartment. When their love-hate relationship is brought up to the next level, the conversation is accompanied with a tune brimming with expectation. Tracy seems to be determined to brush Stanley off and play with his insecurities. Surprisingly, after some banter, she gives in to his

rather charmless advances. Off-screen, after having failed in the earlier restaurant scene, Stanley somehow convinces Tracy to be the civilian arm of his operation to bring down Joey. Menacing sounds are audible as soon as she begins to interview the young leader of Chinatown with a criminative line of questioning. It is obvious that there will be consequences.

When Stanley arrives at Tracy's apartment for the second time, he already did some damage. After missing a dinner date with Conny, she threw his belongings out the window and exiled him. This and Stanley's escalating insubordination, in turn, motivated his superior officer and long-term friend Louis to intervene, albeit in a most questionable way. Stanley, however, repaid him with a punch in his face. Now completely isolated, the hothead bangs on Tracy's door and begs to let him in. He keeps the façade going for a little while but eventually breaks down. Precisely when Stanley finally cracks and begins to show vulnerability, the tragic melody begins to play again. He admits to feeling tired, confused, and lonely. The camera zooms in for a close-up of his face while Stanley confesses that he feels "like such an asshole". He cries.

Whatever Stanley may have realized, turning back is no option anymore. In fact, it is time for consequences. Conny is desperately disappointed and ends the marriage. During the break-up scene, the by now familiar tragic tune can be heard. Suddenly, two hitmen attack and kill Conny. During the funeral ceremony, for the second time, Stanley is shown crying. His suffering is underscored by a Christian dirge on the soundtrack.

With even stronger resolve than before, Stanley taps wires illegally and sends the inexperienced Herbert to go undercover in the lions' den. It does not take Joey long to single him out and order him killed. When Herbert gets shot in broad daylight, a gloomy melody is played. Out for retaliation, Stanley somehow gets ahold of Joey in a nightclub and starts punching him in the face. Another colleague gets shot. Soon afterwards, Tracy is attacked by three switchblade-wielding thugs. This scene is accompanied, again, by menacing sounds. Later, she reveals to Stanley that she was raped and almost killed. He does not get the message although Tracy asks him, how many more people he is going to kill until he does.

As a result of his lawbreaking conduct, Stanley is removed as captain in charge of Chinatown. He remains unperturbed, however, and decides to kill Joey in a showdown at the docks. The rogue cop manages to isolate and defeat the triad leader, yet this improbable feat is still not enough to soothe him. Deliriously, Stanley attempts to arrest some prominent participants of the funeral procession and gets trampled down in the ensuing turmoil. Not until

Tracy pulls him up from the street and embraces him is he free of his obsession to right all wrongs. The final shot, showing the happy couple kissing in slow motion, fades out while a hopeful tune is playing.

In general, *YTD* corresponds remarkably well to Yvonne Tasker's (1997) characterization of American action and martial arts films. The typical protagonist, she claims, is "defined in part by his suffering, which both lends him a certain tragic status, and demonstrates his remarkable ability to endure" (315-16). Action films "tend toward the articulation of narratives centered on class conflict" (316) and often constitute "fantasies of physical empowerment" (317). Besides, in many martial arts films "Vietnam functions as the space/time when the hero acquired his fighting skills" (326). Moreover, Tasker identifies three recurring themes "that have a clear resonance for the discussion of the construction of masculine identities in the cinema": "revenge", "physical limitations and their transgression", as well as an "axis of power and powerlessness, which is complexly articulated through the discourses of race, class, and sexuality" (315, 334). There is, however, a crucial distinction between the protagonist of *YTD* and the typical hero of action films. Although, at least after the fact, Stanley is not oblivious to the havoc he is causing, he does not seem to be entirely aware of what is propelling him forward despite his proclaimed guilt. In Daley's novel, the thirst for power corrupts everyone, whereas in Cimino's film, Stanley's motives are somewhat obscure. Solving this mystery is one of the keys for opening up the complexity of *YTD*. Cimino refuses to provide clear-cut answers but offers some hints.

Most strikingly, the viewer is repeatedly reminded of the fact that Stanley is a veteran of the Vietnam War via character dialogue and visual cues. Tracy, for instance, tells him that she knew he was "cracked and a racist" the first time she saw him and guesses that this is a result of him serving in Vietnam. Louis, too, ridicules him on several occasions for not being able to leave Vietnam behind. Moreover, Stanley wears a golden lapel pin on his tie: The Eagle, Globe, and Anchor in gold clearly identifies him as a veteran who served with an enlisted rank in the United States Marine Corps. Significantly, the official motto of the Marines is "Semper Fidelis", literally "Always Loyal". Precisely when the viewer is presented with a close-up shot of the pin, Louis taunts: "You wanna attack Chinatown with the 82nd Airborne? You're not in Vietnam here, Stanley." This specific infantry division is not mentioned by chance but for its reputation to not take any prisoners. Stanley, sure enough, can only see one distinction between fighting soldiers in Vietnam and gangsters in New York's Chinatown: "There, the difference was, I never saw the goddamn enemy. Here, they are right in front of

my eyes. They got no place to hide, no jungle." White, thus, certainly is not wrong when she states that *YTD* is a film about "a cop's extended flashback of Chinatown-as-Vietnam, as a place that can only be purged of its corruption by all-out warfare" (221).

In *The Remasculinization of America* (1989), Susan Jeffords puts forward a compelling thesis about Hollywood's response to the war. Many films, she claims, are primarily concerned with "the regeneration of masculinity, not, as would seem to be the case, a militaristic or patriotic fanfare" (135). Jeffords distinguishes three phases in the process of remasculinization: First, veterans were portrayed as "weakened, confused, and marginalized" losers responsible for the American nation's first defeat in history. In the next phase, they were presented as "reborn and purified" super soldiers capable of devastating large groups of enemies singlehandedly. Finally, films began suggesting Vietnam veterans as "superior leaders for society as a whole". Empowered by their acquired wisdom, they can "heal wounds, provide direction, offer commitments, and fulfill promises" (142-43).

The cluster of films that fits Jeffords' thesis best revolves around the return of American prisoners of war (POW) or servicemen reported as missing in action (MIA). The topic was broached by Ted Post with his action film *Good Guys Wear Black* (1978). During the eighties, the issue was then exploited by a number of productions in quick succession: *Uncommon Valor* (1983), *Missing in Action* (1984), the infamous *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985), and *Behind Enemy Lines* (1986). The general premise of these films is that the US Government is to blame for the defeat in Vietnam rather than the soldiers in the field. To add insult to injury, it is not willing to bring the POWs home. In fact, the American and the Vietnamese governments conspire, the premise goes on, to deceive the American public and deny the very existence of prisoners. Outraged, super heroic veterans find and free the POWs on their own against impossible odds. All in all, these films do not only demonstrate the impressive amount of oversimplifications necessary to restore a masculinity that glorifies violence but are testimony to the birth of a reactionary paranoia that wreaks more havoc today than any time before.

In *YTD*, Cimino alludes to the POW/MIA issue visually, lets Stanley represent the associated rightwing sentiments, and mirrors the just mentioned films structurally. During one of his temper tantrums, the troublemaker spouts: "This is a fucking war and I'm not gonna lose it. Not this one. Not over politics. This is Vietnam all over again. Nobody wants to win this thing, do you?" In another scene, Stanley and Louis have a talk in a pub. The large banner on the wall in the background clearly identifies the location as a hangout for POW/MIA

activists. Louis argues that the police department has an arrangement with the leadership of Chinatown and that this cannot simply be defied. Sure enough, Stanley insists that it was this arrangement that killed Conny. Just like John Rambo (Sylvester Stallone) or James Braddock (Chuck Norris), the rogue cop has no respect for negotiations or compromises, takes no orders, and solves problems with brute force.

There can be no doubt that Mickey Rourke plays a sexist and racist killing machine in *YTD*. When asked how he will deal with female colleagues who give in to the allure of corruption, Stanley responds: "She better bend over." Moreover, he has the audacity to mansplain racial discrimination to Tracy. Not only does Stanley make ignorant statements like "There is no Chinese word for love", he also thinks that violence is the only language that "these people" understand. Fittingly, when he meets Conny for the last time, he wears a combat jacket. In an earlier scene, Tracy lets her audience know that "Captain Stanley White … has declared war on Chinatown". Of course, he has no problem whatsoever with killing numerous Chinese.

Racism and sexism, however, are not exclusive to Stanley in *YTD*. After finding out about the relationship with Tracy, his buddy Louis spouts: "You going chink on us? She doing it sideways or something?" This is significant for the fact that he is a veteran, too – not of the Vietnam War but of the Korean War. Cimino uses Louis, I argue, to make a point that Stanley Kubrick repeats more forcefully in *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). The storyline of this infamous film follows James T. "Joker" Davis (Matthew Modine) from when he begins basic training in South Carolina to his first combat experiences in Vietnam. Utilizing a bipartite structure to great effect, Kubrick presents the viewer with insights into the worldview of the Marine Corps.

During the first half of the film, Joker's platoon suffers at the hands of Gunnery Sergeant Hartman (R. Lee Ermey). On the one hand, the drill instructor builds up rage in his recruits by constantly humiliating them. His favorite method is feminization: "Sound off like you got a pair!" This works because he clearly associates femininity with weakness. On the other hand, Hartman makes them able to endure hardship, teaches them how to use a rifle, and gives them new names. By virtue of this training, the drill instructor is sure, his once soft recruits are "born hard again". They are transformed from civilians to soldiers or, symbolically, from women to men. In fact, just like the bullets Marines use to "kill everything [they] see", they are now encased in "full metal jackets".

Leonard “Pyle” Lawrence is victimized most consistently and without mercy. Interestingly, the moment he appears to be deranged, Pyle starts to do much better as a soldier. In conclusion of the film’s first half, he kills Hartman and himself. What follows firmly suggests, however, that this is not a complete aberration. In Vietnam, Joker serves as a military newspaper correspondent and realizes that no meaningful operations are taking place. All officers and soldiers care about is the body count. An unnamed helicopter door gunner best incorporates the official policy of attrition. While mowing down Vietnamese civilians in the rice fields below them, he brags: “I done got me 157 dead gooks killed. And 50 water buffaloes, too! Them’re all certified!” Joker is taken aback and asks him how he can kill women and children. “Easy”, replies the gunner, “you just don’t lead’em so much!” Ruthless killing machines, Kubrick seems to imply, are the supposed outcome of military training. Hartman simply failed to direct Pyle’s rage at the enemy: the Vietnamese, civilians, and women.

It is well worth to take a look at the three scenes featuring representations of Vietnamese women. In the first two of them, Joker and other members of the “Lusthog Squad” meet prostitutes in the company of their South Vietnamese pimps and bond over questions of price as well as the order of precedence when it comes to the prescribed short-term whoring. The third one is about a female Vietcong sniper that shoots and kills three of Joker’s companions before she can be overwhelmed. These scenes are significant for several reasons: By contrasting the prostitutes and the sniper, White asserts, Kubrick ensures that the viewer makes “no mistake about the conditions of women under the two social systems in operation in Vietnam” (214). At the same time, I argue, these encounters demonstrate impressively that the teachings of Hartmann and other drill instructors have been internalized successfully by their recruits. These soldiers clearly have no respect for women, especially Vietnamese women. All the more they are dumbfounded when they find out that the capable sniper is not a man. John Newsinger (1993) even believes this to be “the most radical statement of any of the Vietnam War films”: The fact that “these products of the American war machine have been put through the grinder by a young woman” calls into question “the whole ethos of the masculine warrior” (133). The moment when Joker is forced to kill the fatally wounded woman by the newly appointed squad leader also marks the completion of his decent into madness. Although he occasionally expressed moral doubts before, Joker exhibits the famous “thousand-yard stare” afterwards. Ultimately, as White puts it, the film is

about “the construction of … racist woman-haters” (213). Kubrick’s *Full Metal Jacket*, therefore, can almost be regarded as a prequel for *YTD*.

Cimino also uses Louis to raise another interesting question: “We came back and nobody gave a shit either. But we fitted in. Why can’t you fit in? What is it that’s so different?” Historian Christian G. Appy provides some answers in his book-length account *Working-Class War* (1993): In sharp contrast to earlier wars, “roughly 80 percent [of the men that served in Vietnam] came from working-class and poor backgrounds” (6) and their “average age was nineteen” (27). This undeclared war, it is fair to say, was fought on the back of powerless teenagers who US presidents were willing to send into battle despite them not being eligible to vote yet. Vietnam can be seen as symbolizing an American all-out betrayal of the working class at home and abroad. While the much needed war on poverty was being supplanted by massive military spending in the United States, Vietnamese hopes for support against imperialism were shattered. Reneging on the promise to bring independence and democracy to other places of the world, America intervened in Vietnam’s long-lasting anti-colonial struggle. In fact, “had nationwide elections [for Vietnamese unification under Ho Chi Minh] been held in 1956”, he would likely have won with “80 percent of the vote” (149). Defying the Geneva Accords of 1954, the United States built up and supported the despotic regime of Ngo Dinh Diem in the South. This accounts for “the widespread hostility of Vietnamese civilians toward American soldiers” who believed they would comply with a request to defend the free South against communist aggression (213). The “major policymakers and military commanders”, however, “have never owned up to the deceptions” (8).

Then “newly ascendant far right of the early 1980s had long sought to portray Vietnam as a just war”, Appy states, that could have been won “had it not been sabotaged by irresolute liberal politicians, the antiwar movement, and a near-treasonous media” (4). In *YTD*, Cimino puts the paranoia bred this way in veterans into Stanley’s mouth: “You wanna know what’s destroying this country? It’s not booze, it’s not drugs. It’s TV, it’s the media.” According to Appy, the average veteran came to believe that antiwar demonstrators “were attacking his morality without sharing his sacrifices or understanding his experience” (299). In fact, “college students stirred in many a deep set of class-related emotions: resentment, anger, self-doubt, envy, and ambition” (220). Quite a few working-class soldiers felt compelled, therefore, to defend a war that they did not believe in themselves. Ironically, Appy suggests,

this led to the "construction of an image of workers as the war's strongest supporters, as superpatriotic hawks" (38).

Not least because of the American military's imperative to "maximize the enemy body count" and the resulting "deaths of at least a half-million civilians", "most soldiers came to perceive the war as meaningless" (8). Many helmets were embellished with "UUUU": "the unwilling, led by the unqualified, doing the unnecessary for the ungrateful" (43). Understandably, however, "only a minority have decisively concluded that the war in Vietnam was unjust and illegitimate", because "no one wants to believe they have risked their lives and lost friends in the service of a baseless cause" (248). Badly disillusioned survivors, Appy laments, returned home "in virtual isolation, received no national homecoming ceremonies, and lacked adequate medical and psychological care, educational benefits, and job training" (3). All in all, the experience was "so meaningless, so frustrating and confusing, and so morally wrenching" that many of these young working-class soldiers were incapable of dealing with it adequately, especially without professional support (308). As a result, the "number of suicides far exceeds the number of men who died in the war itself" (9).

In *YTD*, when Stanley argues with three superior officers about whether or not politicians stab soldiers and policemen in the back, he tries to blackmail the commissioner and says: "That's what we are: Four guys in a room with guns to our heads." This reference to the famous Russian roulette scene in Cimino's earlier Vietnam War film is another indication of class being an important factor in understanding Stanley's condition. In contrast to the middle-class heroes in Oliver Stone's trilogy – *Platoon* (1986), *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), and *Heaven & Earth* (1993) – as well as in other contemporary anti-war films like *Coming Home* (1978), *Gardens of Stone* (1987), and *Casualties of War* (1989), the protagonists of *The Deer Hunter* (1978) thoroughly belong to the working class. The storyline follows Michael "Mike" Vronsky (Robert De Niro), Nikanor "Nick" Chevotarevich (Christopher Walken), and Steven Puskov (John Savage) through two rites of passage, a wedding and military service, and gives an impression of how these events affect their lives in the Russian American ghetto of the small town Clairton, Pennsylvania.

The Deer Hunter has rightfully been accused of racism and misogyny by, among others, Marsha Kinder (1979), Susan Jeffords (1989), and Michael Klein (1990), whereas John Hellmann (1982), for instance, has defended it as an inversion of American mythology. Leslie A. Fiedler (1990), however, identifies the film's political ambiguity as its most defining feature: He believes it to be "sufficiently ambiguous to reflect the doubts which these days

undercut the one-time certainties of the most hawkish and dovish" (393). For the task at hand, I find both the readings of Richard Kamber (1980) and Sarah Hagelin (2013) the most helpful, one of the earliest and one of the latest attempts to make sense of the film.

Cimino's use of a smash cut to transition from scenes depicting a solemn ceremony in the Russian Orthodox cathedral, a merry celebration in the local veteran's hall, and a drinking bout in a bar to the grotesque Vietnam sequences suggests the set-up of a contrast between the idyllic life in Clairton and the hell on earth of war. In fact, the pre-war life of the protagonists is replete with problems. They have to endure the hard labor in the steel mill, Steven's bride Angela (Rutanya Alda) is probably pregnant by Nick, Mike cannot quite allow himself to live out his homosexual tendencies, and Linda (Meryl Streep) gets brutalized by her drunk father who does not seem to recognize her. Hagelin finds that the latter matters because it "shows that violence belongs to the domestic space as well as the Vietnam landscape" and it foreshadows "Nick's fatal misrecognition of Michael in the final act" (53). Besides, she notes, this scene also features a violation of the 180-degree rule and, thus, shows the disorientation to begin in Clairton already (52).

Despite De Niro's fame and its title, the film "lurches dramatically between different cinematic points of view, denying the viewer a stable source of identification with Michael", and "insists on viewing the male characters as a group, not as individuals" (51). The most defining attribute that this trio of working-class men has in common is their utter inability to verbalize their emotional responses to drastic life events. In fact, throughout the film, not a single meaningful conversation takes place. The entire cast of characters, Kamber observes, seem to have "enormous difficulty getting beyond an exchange of banalities" (29). This may be best symbolized by the Special Forces soldier who describes his experiences in Vietnam to Mike with no more than two words: "Fuck it." Kamber, therefore, reads the film as a "study of the lower limits of verbal communication" (27) and applauds Cimino for setting out to convey the protagonists' "unenlightened agony" (28). Metaphorically speaking, oblivious to the forces at play, Mike, Nick, Steven, Angela, and Linda get pulled back and forth like tiny pieces of metal in the magnetic field of the social world and they cannot even help each other with the limited amount of solace that words can provide. These characters are not meant to represent American heroes and I agree with Kamber rejecting the interpretation of the final scene as an "expression of recalcitrant jingoism" in favor of reading it as a "gently ironic depiction of baffled mourners reaching out for words that they themselves cannot command" (30).

The cast of characters in *YTD* may be slightly more articulate, but there are no heroes among them just the same. I regard Stanley as a very ambiguous protagonist. He may fight crime, but there is no kindness or compassion in him. Instead, self-righteous indignation seems to be his primary emotion. In fact, he is acknowledged as rather obnoxious, foremost by female characters. His wife, for instance, drags him over the coals with the following words: "You have become an arrogant, self-centered, condescending son of a bitch." And at one point, Tracy's view does not differ much from Conny's: "You should take a look at yourself, Stanley. You're selfish, you're callous, you're indifferent to suffering." Furthermore, he is not always portrayed as a self-assured and confident man. Stanley may usually be capable and courageous, but he is also confused and plagued by self-doubt at times. During his breakdown, for example, he confesses to Tracy: "Maybe everybody is right. I'm chasing something that doesn't exist."

In a similar vein as Jeffords, Laura Kang (1993) comes to the conclusion that *YTD* is about a contemporary anxiety around European American masculinity. The liberal assimilationist ending, she argues, constructs a "familiar and reassuring version of national and masculine identity" (74). In her view, the film's interracial sexuality is essential to this end since Stanley is "redeemed of a racist past through the romantic embrace he grants" (94). It seems to me, however, that *YTD* is not invested in the project of remasculinization wholeheartedly. Since, in the film, the air is heavy with anxiety about masculinity, I see it as a reflection of a cultural moment rather than a reaction to it. Most importantly, it is not Stanley who grants an embrace but Tracy. In this moment of definitive failure, he is not really in a position to redeem himself. Perhaps, however, it is Tracy's compassion that clears up the fog of Vietnam. In any case, Stanley shows remorse and appears to be ready to become a different kind of man: "You know, you were right, I was wrong. Sorry. I'd like to be a nice guy. I would. I just don't know how."

Success is Asian

Cimino may refuse to give unambiguous answers, but he does not make it too hard to read the final scene of *YTD* as Stanley asking Tracy to teach him how to be a better man or, rather, a better *American* man. In her revised assessment, Kang (2002) worries that her earlier feminist approach cedes "too much to the security and stability of the white masculine subject": Stanley starts out, she claims now, as a "crude, resentful, and possibly impotent Polish-American" and only achieves his "'American' manhood" through interracial romance (95). Race, ethnicity, and assimilation certainly do play a major role in *YTD*'s economy of meaning. It seems to me, however, that Stanley has not quite achieved "proper" American manhood at the end of the film yet.

Cimino makes sure to call viewer attention to his protagonist's uneasy sense of identity. On the one hand, Stanley is a member of New York's Polish American community. This is made most obvious through the Polish-speaking Catholic priest hosting the funeral ceremony for Conny. On the other hand, Stanley uses the disparaging slur "Polack" to refer to himself from time to time. Most importantly, at some point in the past, he changed his Polish last name to the all-Americanized "White". When Louis mocks his friend about dropping the original "Wizynski", a point of view shot is established: Stanley longingly gazes at a Star-Spangled Banner blowing in the wind just outside the office. Moreover, he genuinely cares about the history of immigration and hurdles to assimilation. When Tracy tells him that he does not need to lecture her about past exclusionary practices against Chinese railroad workers, because she knows the story, he replies: "Yeah, well, most people don't, because no one remembers in this country." Stanley is not the most action decorated cop in New York City for no reason. His obsession with work, however, does not seem to do him much good. The first time Stanley sets foot in Tracy's edgy penthouse apartment, he is impressed or, rather, intimidated: The experience prompts him to exclaim that he hates "rich kids". This scene does not only reveal that Stanley is anxious about upward social mobility, but also marks the Chinese American news reporter as exceptionally successful.

At this point, it is well worth to ponder the significance of Tracy as a novel character. With this representation, Kang (1993) acknowledges, Cimino departs from "the old stereotype of Asian women as passive and silent or evil and scheming" and creates "a new prototype of the Asian female – spirited, proud, resourceful" (78). From the end of the eighties onwards,

this new prototype proliferates in the representational ecology. Examples immediately following the release of *YTD* are Alan Parker's drama *Come See the Paradise* (1990), Nancy Kelly's western *Thousand Pieces of Gold* (1991), Oliver Stone's Vietnam War drama *Heaven & Earth* (1993), and John Madden's drama *Golden Gate* (1994). Two more films are worth mentioning for their innovative portrayal of Asian women: In Barry Levinson's comedy-drama *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987), Trinh (Chintara Sukapatana), the sister of a Viet Cong operative, refuses to be "saved" by White Knight Adrian Cronauer (Robin Williams). Another female Vietnamese character demonstrates wit, confidence, and independence in a scene of Gary Nelson's television film *Shooter* (1988). When protagonist Matt Thompson (Jeffrey Nordling) asks her why she has spent the night with him although she refuses so many other men, Lan (Rosalind Chao) simply replies that she wanted a man and he was available. Matt follows this up with an ironic remark: "I love Vietnamese women. You know how to make a guy feel special." Darrell Y. Hamamoto (1994) has this line backwards: Matt does not "pay Lan a whore's compliment" (146); he is baffled by this Berkeley-educated woman defying a major stereotype.

Nevertheless, at the time, Tracy was a unique character because she is Chinese-*American*. She was neither born somewhere in Asia, nor does she speak pidgin. She does not wear long silky hear or traditional dresses either. In fact, Tracy is not exoticized at all. As a native of the San Francisco Bay Area, she speaks perfect American English. Her hair is short and her clothes Western. Indeed, Tracy is thoroughly Americanized. When Stanley starts debating the specialties of the Chinese restaurant they met in, she is not interested: "I like Italian food better, anyway." Most importantly, as mentioned above, Tracy is an independent career woman. She is modeled, most likely, after real life news anchor Connie Chung who worked for CBS, NBC, ABC, CNN, and MSNBC since the late seventies. Her breakthrough success paved the way for Christine Chen and many more female Asian American news reporters. They were the highly visible faces of what came to be known as the Model Minority.

In her book-length study *The Color of Success* (2014), historian Ellen D. Wu tells the story about how Asian Americans, "once despised by American society", became "its most exceptional and beloved people of color" (1-2). Between the 1940s and the 1960s, the Model Minority myth was invented by a number of stakeholders in response to substantial intra- and extra-societal developments. World War II marks the beginning of this change. To distinguish their American society positively from those of the fascist enemies, politicians, scientists, and

social critics worked together to end official exclusionary practices and facilitate the assimilation of racial minorities. This was meant to bolster "the framing of US hegemony abroad as benevolent" and proved indispensable for "narrating American exceptionalism to the nations of the world" (5, 9). For about twenty years, "the conflation of separate ethnic groups as Orientals lost its political purchase" (11). Chinese and Japanese Americans found themselves in starkly different situations during this period. Whether they were treated as allied or hostile groups was now entirely dependent on events such as the surrender of Imperial Japan in 1945 or the Communist Revolution in China in 1949. Despite these differences as well as "internal divisions, rival agendas, and disagreements about their collective futures", however, ingenious community leaders were able to craft representations of Asian American masculinity, femininity, and sexuality which purposefully conformed to "the norms of the white middle class" (5). Although this certainly helped raising the tolerance level among European Americans significantly, "whiteness was not an option for assimilating Japanese and Chinese" (149).

When participants in the African American freedom movement began pressing urgently "for lasting changes to … existing structures of capitalist democracy", both conservatives and liberals abused the newly created image of Asian Americans to defend the status quo (6). The Model Minority was held up as undemanding and capable of moving ahead only with their own effort. During the 1960s, therefore, "not-blackness eclipsed not-whiteness as a signal characteristic of Asian American racialization" (149). Political scientist Claire Jean Kim (1999) argues that the Model Minority myth subsequently has become a serviceable tool to support the ideology of colorblindness which undercuts affirmative action by foregrounding supposed cultural differences and ignoring historically grown socioeconomic inequalities. Since the sixties, she finds, Asian Americans are "racially triangulated" as inferior to European Americans but superior to African Americans (106). It did not take long for this already ambiguous stereotype, however, to acquire another layer of complexity.

During the Cold War, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan developed their economies almost miraculously fast. Soon companies from these East Asian countries were able to challenge and beat American competitors on the world market for automotive and microelectronics industries. At the same time, Asian Americans became increasingly affluent and achieved educational attainments at an astonishing rate. For instance, in 2012, the Pew Research Center found that only 13 percent of Latin Americans, 18 percent of African Americans, and 31 percent of European Americans age 25 and older hold

at least a bachelor's degree, whereas no less than half of the Asian Americans in the same age bracket do so as well. Unsurprisingly, Asian Americans came to be known as studious and academically capable. Today, the avid watcher of television series is quite familiar with Asian female characters, for instance, that are exceptionally intelligent. Among the most prominent are the lawyer Ling Woo (Lucy Liu) in the legal comedy-drama *Ally McBeal* (1997-2002), the surgeon Cristina Yang (Sandra Oh) in the medical drama *Grey's Anatomy* (2005-present), and Joan Watson (Lucy Liu) in the procedural drama *Elementary* (2012-19). This renewed consolidation of all Asians "into a single cluster of consummate colored citizens", Wu asserts, was an "update of an ingrained American Orientalism that held all Asians really did look – and act – alike" (243).

Like many liberal and conservative pundits, the Pew researchers believe Confucianist values about hard work to be responsible for Asian success at home and abroad. Economist Ezra E. Vogel (1991) remains skeptical and recalls arguments from the 1940s and 1950s about how the "the Confucian heritage retarded modernization and left East Asian nations far behind the West" (84). Although he takes care not to entirely discredit culturalist theses, Vogel presents a number of situational factors that facilitated rapid industrialization in Japan and the "Four Little Dragons" (85-90): In order to contain communism in Asia Pacific, the United States provided "massive aid" (85) in finances and know-how to East Asian nations. Besides, the conservative political order in the region was destroyed by the successive wars of the twentieth century. In the face of continuing military threat, the new political elite resolved internal differences and prioritized the economic base in preparation for possible future conflict. Equally important as US aid, capitalists in all five societies had "large dislocated populations" (88) at their disposal. Since there were "far more workers than jobs" (90), opportunities to exploit people "anxious to find a new basis of economic livelihood" (88) and reap extraordinary profits that could be reinvested were plentiful for the new economic elite.

In a similar vein, sociologists Jennifer Lee and Min Zhou (2015) make a case for the centrality of political and socioeconomic factors for an explanation of Asian success in the US. After the Immigration and Nationality Act was passed in 1965, America's borders were open for highly educated and skilled applicants from Asia. The average contemporary immigrant from East Asia, therefore, is much better educated than the average American. Lee and Zhou refer to this phenomenon as "hyper-selectivity": Whereas 50 percent of Chinese immigrants to the United States graduated from college, for instance, only 4 percent of Chinese in China do so (29). Culture only plays a role insofar as "Asian immigrants

selectively import *class-specific* cultural institutions, frames, and mindsets from their countries of origin" (6, italics in original). In the light of these findings, Lee and Zhou criticize "the tendency of Americans to make assumptions about all Asians based on a select group of contemporary Asian immigrants in the United States" (66).

In *YTD*, Cimino plays with emerging fears among European Americans in response to Asian success. With respect to the defeat in Vietnam, for example, Stanley tells Tracy that "we lost because you were smarter than us". This line alludes to the idea that the Model Minority myth, pushed too far, becomes the danger of the Yellow Peril again. Historian Gary Y. Okihiro (1994) argues that these representations do not denote beginning and end of a straight line, but "form a circular relationship that moves in either direction": Whereas the Model Minority marks a "feminized position of passivity and malleability", the Yellow Peril symbolizes a "masculine threat of military and sexual conquest" (143). When Japanese companies began acquiring American competitors and stateside factories had to be closed down, old fearful fantasies were revived and adapted to the new situation. David Morley and Kevin Robins (1995) call this development "Japan Panic" and see it culminating in "Techno-Orientalism": "The barbarians have now become robots" (172). The fanatical soldier capable of kamikaze attacks has morphed into an incessantly working business man; the conquest is now of economic rather than military nature.

In Ron Howard's comedy drama *Gung Ho* (1986), the American auto plant workers realize that they are not disciplined enough to meet the car production quota of their Japanese colleagues. In Ridley Scott's action thriller *Black Rain* (1989), Osaka is presented as much more modern than New York City. And in Philip Kaufman's crime drama *Rising Sun* (1993), American men come up with metaphors like "business is war" and Japanese men in relationships with American women are "plundering our resources".

Yuko Kawai (2005) finds the latter film especially telling about the way the Model Minority becomes the Yellow Peril. The very suggestive opening scene sets the theme: A karaoke videotape shows an Asian American cowboy saving (or stealing) a tied-up European American damsel in distress from her European American captors. When the camera zooms out from the TV screen, Eddie Sakamura (Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa) jumps into the frame and continues singing the popular American song "Don't Fence Me In". The Japanese big business owner's son and yakuza seems to have an abusive relationship with Cheryl (Tatjana Patitz), a blond all-American call girl. Kaufman proceeds to lead the viewer to believe that Eddie kills her during a performance of erotic asphyxiation on a conference table in the Los

Angeles headquarters of the Japanese conglomerate Nakamoto. Afterwards, the storyline follows the quest of police detectives John Connor (Sean Connery) and Web Smith (Wesley Snipes) to find out what this murder has to do with Nakamoto's planned acquisition of the American software company Microcon. Throughout the film, Japan is compared favorably to America visually and verbally. A duo of scenes, for example, juxtaposes the gigantic and ultra-modern Nakamoto building with a poor suburb populated by Latin and African American gang members.

Ultimately, Kawai believes, *Rising Sun* presents the Japanese as "not simply the model minority or the yellow peril but both": Japanese men are morally questionable imitators that pose a menace to European American women, Japan is technologically superior to America, and America's problems are caused by Japan (120-21). In my reading, however, Kaufman does not maintain this image until the very end of his film. Instead, he builds up this multipronged threat to expose it gradually as a chimera later on. As it turns out, the Japanese have nothing to do with the murder of Cheryl. The only two known characters involved are European American men: The racist senator John Morton (Ray Wise) and Nakamoto's ruthless lawyer Bob Richmond (Kevin Anderson). Unsurprisingly, Sean Connery got the most significant line of the film: "They think we're stupid, they think we're corrupted. And they are not often wrong." But then again, Kaufman does not want the Japanese to be entirely above suspicion: In the final scene, Jingo Asakuma (Tia Carrere) suggests that someone higher up the command chain of Nakamoto may have pulled the strings all along.

Similarly, in *Black Rain*, Scott builds up the menace of Japan as an ultra-modern country harboring internationally operating criminals like Sato (Yusaku Matsuda). The yakuza boss is depicted as an erratic and unnecessarily brutal psychopath who is willing to do just about anything to get rich. Police detectives Nick Conklin (Michael Douglas) and Charlie Vincent (Andy Garcia) arrest Sato in New York but get tricked into letting him go in Osaka during their mission to extradite him. Embarrassed and without being asked, they try to make up for their failure and help the local police to get a hold of him. Their contemptuousness toward the Japanese, however, quickly leads to Charlie's death. Nick then lusts for revenge and tries to form an alliance with yakuza boss Sugai (Tomisaburo Wakayama), a rival of Sato. The ensuing conversation between them is one of the most significant of the film: Sugai explains that the Japanese were bound by duty and honor once and blames Americans for replacing these values with greed. His way of phrasing likens this corruption to the nuclear fallout following the explosions of Little Boy and Fat Man: "You made the rain black, and

shoved your values down our throats. We forgot who we were. You created Sato and thousands like him." Sato is not a product of Japan, then, but of America.

Nick very much represents Sugai's vision of America: Internal Affairs is investigating his role in a corruption scandal. Besides, Nick embodies an even more toxic masculinity than his alter ego in *YTD*. He is arrogant, selfish, condescending, and constantly heeds his own advice: "Sometimes you have to forget your head and grab your balls." Of course, he blames the theft of criminal money on his ex-wife and his obligation to pay alimony for their children. Scott grants his protagonist some much needed redemption, though. The final scene suggests that Masahiro Matsumoto (Ken Takakura), the embodiment of honorable Japan, was able to teach Nick: Instead of taking the dollar counterfeit printing plates of the yakuza with him, the NYPD officer gives them to his Okinawan colleague as a farewell gift. Both films, *Black Rain* and *Raising Sun*, thus, remain ambiguous while they contest American superiority on the levels of technology and morality. In Morley and Robins' words, these Hollywood productions are as much concerned with a "disturbing sense of insecurity around Western modernity" (173) as they are with fantasies about Japan.

Even in her revised analysis of *YTD*, Kang (2002) criticizes Cimino for displaying "irrational acts of violence and destruction perpetrated by a literally faceless gang of young Chinese men" (88). The film certainly lacks representations of Chinese men that are both strong and kindhearted, but I do not entirely agree with her assessment. Granted, Kang specifically refers to the restaurant scene in which two young men wearing black ski masks shoot everything to pieces with submachine guns. The viewer gets to see the faces of the Pei Brothers (Sammy Lee and Keenan Leung), however, when Joey pays them a visit to check on their health conditions later on. The violence is not actually irrational either, but an essential part of their leader's well-thought-out plan to usurp power in Chinatown. In fact, the Chinese in the world of *YTD* consistently act considerably more rational than Stanley. Joey, in particular, appears to be educated, smart, and levelheaded. In any case, this character should not be regarded as a clear-cut villain. Joey immigrated only recently but is an extraordinarily successful businessman already. He also helps community members in need like Tina (Janice Wong) whose widowed mother is not able to pay her college tuition. Moreover, a somewhat imposing non-diegetic tune accompanies a scene in which Joey rides into General Ban Sung's (Yukio Yamamoto) jungle hideout on horseback wearing a bright suit. Neither the protagonist nor the antagonist has qualms about breaking laws, however; having them would be nothing but a hindrance for aspiring American heroes, the film seems to suggest. Stanley even calls

Joey the personification of the "American Dream", albeit sarcastically. Certainly, the Chinese crime boss embodies both the Model Minority and the Yellow Peril.

By no means does Stanley disagree with Joey's actions fundamentally. Instead, envy and resentment seem to fuel his obsession, very much akin to the resolve to beat a tough competitor. He may not be entirely sincere when he calls himself a "stupid Polack" and a "peasant" in a conversation with Joey, but he reveals an uneasy sense of self-worth nonetheless. In the name of the freighter which is to deliver the heroin to New York City, Cimino offers a final hint at Stanley's motivation: "Kazimierz Pulaski" was a Polish US Colonial Army officer who became a hero of the American Revolution. Soldiering has been the favored vehicle for acquiring American masculinity since the beginning of the nation's history. World War II proved to be an opportunity even for supposed "unassimilable aliens": The all-Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Team, Wu points out, "accumulated seven Presidential Unit Citations and earned 18,143 individual citations" and, thus, was able to "rebut deep-rooted popular beliefs that the gender identities of 'Oriental' men were feminized, ambiguous, or deviant" (74). The more recent wars in Korea and Vietnam, however, gave much less reasons to celebrate superior American masculinity than previous ones. Today, business seems to be the primary proving ground. Stanley, however, has much trouble adapting to this new reality.

In assimilationist films, Kang asserts, racial violence is staged only to be transcended by interracial romance which "takes place crucially against the backdrop of the disintegration of the respective ethnic locales" (95). *YTD* cannot serve as a straightforward example then, I argue, since the film is thematically too convoluted. In Cimino's storyworld, neither does Chinatown actually disintegrate nor would this be necessary for the lovers to achieve Americanness. Times have changed and this film is not purely derivative but features a topical variation of earlier narratives. It is, after all, the "Year of the Dragon": In all countries that use the Chinese zodiac, this time is associated with good fortune. More generally, in Sinicized cultures, the dragon symbolizes power. The title indicates that Cimino uses this film to explore American anxieties pertaining to the end of the American century, the rise of Asia, and the belief that Asians may be the better Americans.

Imagined Erotic Salvation

Certainly, taken as a group, American films about the Vietnam War cannot easily be judged politically, since they are riddled with ambiguity and contradictions. David Esser (1991), however, manages to find one "overriding commonality: a vision of the war as a problem within American culture" (82). Except as targets and victims, the Vietnamese practically do not exist in these films and their history and culture is left unexplored. The country's long anti-colonial struggle simply does not matter to contemporary policy and film makers. And neither do the hopes and wishes as well as the grievances and fears of the Vietnamese. Thus, "an essential cultural myopia got America into the war in the first place", Esser believes, "and clouds Americans' vision still" (97). More than anything, the final shot of *YTD* confirms this fault to be an essential part of it, too. It ends in a still frame of a close-up and Stanley's face is right in its center. Tracy's face can also be seen, however, albeit cut off partially on the right side by the frame. Cimino does not neglect her entirely but clearly prioritizes the exploration of Stanley's economy of emotions.

Both characters seem to struggle with understanding the attraction to each other. The question that Stanley raises at one point lingers for the rest of the film: "Why do I want to fuck you so bad?" Since not much is revealed about her history, the only hint the viewer is given with regard to Tracy's desire is her apparent wish to be seen as thoroughly assimilated. She might not be comfortable with the Chinese part of her identity. Stanley is even less at peace with the image he has of himself and Kang (2002) observes that "Tracy provokes multiply exacerbated anxieties" in him (89). Considering his inability to meet the demands of his wife, the viewer might suspect him to aspire toward replacing her with an Asian woman he deems easier to dominate. Tracy, however, echoes Conny almost word for word and calls Stanley an "ungrateful, overbearing, self-centered son of a bitch". To explore the issue of racialized desire further, I examine both the social and media histories of European American male desire for Asian (American) women.

In 1998, Aki Uchida published a comprehensive but concise article about the "Orientalization of Asian women" in America. She argues that Asian and Asian American women are being objectified as "Oriental Women" through images and stereotypes. In America, Uchida demonstrates, this process of "Orientalization" is no longer based on the European colonialist experience in the Middle East, as Edward Said described it in 1978, but

feeds from the European American experience of the Far East in terms of immigration and wartime involvement from the end of the nineteenth century onwards (161-63).

The image of the Oriental Woman emerged during the anti-Chinese period between 1870 and the early 1900s. After the abolishment of slavery, corporations tasked with building the Transcontinental Railroad were looking for new sources of cheap labor and found it in Chinese coolies. In order to avoid an increase in labor cost and in coalition with racists who wanted the United States to stay "white", they tried to prevent immigration of their worker's wives and children. As a result, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 made it almost impossible for Chinese women to immigrate legally. The few who were brought to America were forced into prostitution and had to live under horrendous sanitary conditions. This was the context in which the stereotype of the seductive, sinister, corrupting, and disease-ridden Oriental Woman arose (163-64). With *Contagious Divides* (2001), Nayan Shah has provided a detailed study about metaphorical mappings from epidemic plagues to Chinese immigration common in fin de siècle San Francisco. In the context of "escalating class confrontations" and at a time when "'health' and 'cleanliness' were embraced as integral aspects of American identity", not least the medical authorities, including the San Francisco Board of Health, began portraying Chinatown as "a nexus of infection, domestic chaos, and moral danger" (12). Three main "figures of Chinese immorality and infection" entered the popular imagination: The "depraved 'Chinaman'" who lured Americans into opium dens, the "abject leper" who had come to symbolize "the fate of American society after years of intimate contact and miscegenation with the Chinese", and the "mercenary prostitute" (79). In a reversal of the actual power dynamic, European American men were framed as "the passive victims of the Chinese women's sexual lure", whereas Chinese prostitutes were characterized as powerful and manipulative agents in a racial war, spreading syphilis deliberately (87).

In 1945, with the occupation of Japan by US military forces, a second source for linking the Oriental Woman with prostitution emerged. In *Japan's Comfort Women* (2002), Toshiyuki Tanaka sheds light on the origins of the "comfort women system" inherited by America. Since between 1918 and 1922, during the "Siberian Expedition" of the Japanese Imperial forces, rape of Russian women was widespread, Japanese military leaders considered establishing brothels to protect their soldiers from venereal disease and to maintain the morale of young men fighting far from home (10-11). Consequently, the Japanese Navy opened their first "brothels for the exclusive use of troops and officers" during the "Shanghai Incident" in 1932 (8). Though this strategy failed to prevent rape (and many more atrocities) committed by

Japanese troops during the "Second Shanghai Incident" in 1937 (a.k.a. the "Rape of Nanjing"), the comfort women system was adopted "as a general policy" (12-13) – and "quickly expanded to almost every corner of the Asia-Pacific region" (167). Moreover, once allied occupation became inevitable, Japanese authorities were quick to found the so-called "Recreation and Amusement Association" charged with applying this system to the homeland to protect Japanese women and girls (142). According to Tanaka, this system "became the largest and most elaborate system of trafficking in women in the history of mankind" (167). Now, if US military efforts to stop prostitution around its bases in Europe were an indication, on would expect it to abolish the Japanese comfort women system immediately after takeover. In Asia, however, it was wholeheartedly accepted. Tanaka attributes US military conduct to a "perfect prototypical mixture of Orientalism and male chauvinism" as American men were generally believed to be "morally sound, healthy, and physically pure" until they are "exposed to seductively exotic women inhabiting a morally corrupt society" – "naive victims" rather than "harsh exploiters" (98).

Korean women suffered the most and the longest. The realization of the comfort women system on a large scale was easiest in Korea, colonized by Japan after its victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. There, a substantial agrarian reform had turned landholding famers into poor peasants and forced "many young Korean women [into] prostitution to provide the essential income for their poverty-stricken families to survive" (33-35). Unfortunately, their situation did not change dramatically for the better after the American takeover as Ji-Yeon Yuh makes clear in *Beyond the Shadow of Camptown* (2002). The context in which Korean women would meet American servicemen was South Korea "politically, militarily, and economically subordinated to the United States" – essentially a "neoimperialist relationship" from the level of national states all the way down to individuals (3). Commanding officers relied on the help of Korean madams and pimps to lure impoverished and credulous countryside women into the brothels close to military bases and suggested to their soldiers that they were not forced but "innately sexual, even depraved, and doing what they do for fun and money" (14). Entering the system was a point of no return for these women, since the "respectable" part of Korean society deemed them as voluntary "Yankee whores" – the only "escape" was marrying a soldier and moving to the United States where, of course, they were not exactly welcomed with open arms either. Yuh argues that "the logic of national pride requires" America to be seen "as a liberator, not a colonizer" and prostitutes as cases of "individual depravity" rather than as "victims of U.S.-sponsored militarized prostitution",

because not doing so would "shatter a self-conception of Korea as a sovereign nation" (35-38). The sad pinnacle of American exploitation in Korea was the 1960s, a time in which "more than thirty thousand women earned their living entertaining some sixty-two thousand U.S. soldiers" (21).

In 2014, finally, the US military illegalized patronizing prostitutes for its servicemen in Korea. Since World War II, especially during the wars in Korea and Vietnam, then, many young and impressionable European American men encountered Asian women as geishas, bar-girls, and prostitutes made available to them by the US military and local authorities. Therefore, the oversexualization of Asian women in American culture can be seen as a direct legacy of US wars in Asia. The image of the Oriental Women formed during the wars, Uchida asserts, was "then transferred to represent Asian American women as well" (166).

After the US Congress passed the War Brides Act in 1945, however, another side of the Oriental Woman was increasingly diffused. US servicemen were now allowed to bring their Asian brides to America. According to Yuh, between 1950 and 1989, "nearly a hundred thousand Korean war brides immigrated to the United States" (2). In turn, Asian women came to be seen as "perfect wives": loyal, subservient, and excellent homemakers. Therefore, in *Sexual Naturalization* (2004), Susan Koshy rightfully laments the usual treatment of the War Brides Act as "a footnote in the history of Asian immigration to the United States" although it "played a significant role in reconstructing images of Asian femininity from sexually licentious to domesticatedly feminine" (12). While feminist challenges to family-centered femininity had created an opening for conservative men imagining European (American) women as selfish, disloyal, and promiscuous rather than the symbol of passionless domesticity, Asian (American) women came to be seen as hypersexual *and* family-oriented. Instead of embodying dangerous "sexual freedom outside marriage", they became "emblematic of the perfect match between family-centrism and sex appeal" when "ideals of companionate marriage celebrate sexual vitality and eroticism within marriage" (16-17). These observations can be visualized, albeit very crudely, in a table:

	19th century	20th century
European (American) femininity	+ Family – Sexuality	– Family + Sexuality
Asian (American) femininity	– Family + Sexuality	+ Family + Sexuality

Hollywood films of the 1950s and 1960s reflected this new sociocultural situation and mark a first major evolutionary development of American Far Orientalism since the 1920s and 1930s. Produced following the passing of the Asiatic Barred Zone Act (1917), films such as *Toll of the Sea* (1922), *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924), and *Shanghai Express* (1932) are seething with anti-Asian sentiment and routinely feature female characters which are either Lotus Flowers or Dragon Ladies. As mentioned above, however, the passing of another piece of immigration legislation – the War Brides Act (1945) – paved the way for significant representational shifts.

The practice of yellowface is largely abandoned. Overt racism is problematized, mostly in the form of miscegenation laws and crude prejudices, in King Vidor's drama film *Japanese War Bride* (1952), for instance. Moreover, the value of Asian femininity has changed drastically. This is most obvious when Marion Gering's version of *Madame Butterfly* (1932) is compared to Joshua Logan's film adaptation *Sayonara* (1957): Whereas Lieutenant Pinkerton (Cary Grant) discards Cho-Cho San (Sylvia Sidney) like a plaything in order to marry Adelaide (Sheila Terry), Major Gruver (Marlon Brando) chooses to marry Hana-ogi (Miiko Taka) rather than his fiancée Eileen for fear of her becoming as overbearing as her mother. In John Sturges' drama film *A Girl Named Tamiko* (1962), Ivan Balin (Laurence Harvey) does not only reject the advances of a beautiful blonde, Fay Wilson (Martha Hyer), but also passes up the long awaited chance to achieve American citizenship in order to start a committed relationship with Tamiko (France Nuyen). Thus, Asian female characters, in reversal of earlier cinematic portrayals, are often shown to be more desirable and more marriageable than the competition they displace in relationships with European American male characters.

As argued by Gina Marchetti (1993) and Laura Kang (1993), though, it is important to see this development within the context of the advent of second-wave feminism: Racism is challenged, albeit rudimentary, only insofar as it is conducive to mounting a defense for patriarchal gender roles. Another pivotal contextual aspect to consider, of course, is America's part in the global conflict between fascism, liberalism, and communism. Taken as a group, these films serve to create an image of American culture as considerable less racist and sexist than Japanese culture and thereby justifying US imperialism. Furthermore, films set in Hong Kong, such as *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing* (1955) and *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960), do not only add traditional Chinese culture to the contrastive foil but also British imperialism. The protagonists Mark Elliot and Robert Lomax, both portrayed by

William Holden, are favorably compared to European colonialists: rather than opportunist exploiters, they are White Knights offering salvation to Asian damsels in distress. Despite the significance of the representational shifts discussed above, therefore, this cluster of films remains firmly rooted in classic American Far Orientalism: America is superior, East Asia is inferior. I am most interested, however, in developments that succeeded these first major adaptive changes.

In the 1980s and 1990s, ambiguities within single texts and the entire representational ecology become increasingly pronounced, revealing American national identity in crisis. As suggested in the previous section of this chapter, the next period was ushered in by yet another piece of immigration legislation: the Immigration and Nationality Act (1965). This federal law substantially reformed previous policy and thereby opened America's gates for East Asian immigration. As a result, Asian American population increased tenfold from about one million to roughly ten million between the beginning of the 1960s and the end of the 1990s. Since applicants for citizenship were screened hyper-selectively, on average, Asian Americans have become drastically better educated than any other racial group and only slightly less well off than European Americans. By creating the Model Minority myth, conservative pundits then abused this fact in their efforts to discredit African American demands for social justice. Coincidentally, American imperial policies facilitated rapid economic growth in Japan and later also in South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, which in turn put some American industries under severe competitive pressure on a globalized market. In conjunction, these developments elicited an uneasy blend of admiration and fear in the American imaginary of the period with regards to East Asia. Confucian values suddenly seemed to have an edge over those cherished by WASPs.

Several other factors have put evolutionary pressure on the representational ecology, too. The traumatic military and ideological defeats in Vietnam, domestic economic recession, and continued efforts by feminist researchers and activists have destabilized European American masculinity. Moreover, the African American Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War inspired the formation of the Asian American Movement whose history William Wei (1993) has chronicled. The movement's activists promoted universal solidarity and decried numerous injustices brought about by US institutions and thereby challenged American nationalism, especially beliefs pertaining to the Manifest Destiny. In addition, Ethnic Studies programs were established at universities in order to raise critical awareness. In the wake of student protests in 1968 and 1969, for instance, a new field of academic

inquiry was defined: Asian American Studies. This was followed up with the creation of the Amerasia Journal in 1971 and the foundation of the Association for Asian American Studies eight years later. Currently, consciousness raising courses in Asian American Studies are offered at about 70 academic institutions across the country.

In the remainder of this chapter I explore the ensued representational shifts evident in a number of films published in the 1990s, particularly the changed dynamics between the European American male protagonist and his Asian love interest. *Come See the Paradise* (1990), *Heaven & Earth* (1993), *Golden Gate* (1994), *Red Corner* (1997), and *Snow Falling on Cedars* (1999) continue what Marchetti (1993) identified as salvation and assimilation plot type traditions with some significant variations. These films may be "white liberal films", but they can also be read as far from uncritical celebrations of European American culture and traditional masculinity: White Knights do not rescue Asian princesses from their home countries and cultures anymore, but from domestic materialism and racism shown to be pervasive both in European Americans as well as the Asian immigrant community. Moreover, the knights themselves, equipped not with shiny but worn-down armor, are at least as much in need of rescue as their ladies. Arguably, the tide has turned and it is now the European American male characters that are saved from their own culture by brave Asian (American) heroines. Compared to both sacrifice as well as tragic and transcendence narratives which are largely relics of a more overtly racist past, therefore, the long-term success of salvation and assimilation plots suggests a higher degree of adaptability to evolving circumstances.

With regard to television texts, Amanda Lotz (2014) finds that "male protagonists consistently have been infallible and well intentioned and their authority rarely questioned" (35). A new type of character, however, became "hegemonic throughout US dramas in the 1990s" (48). Essentially, male protagonists are now humanized rather than deified and substantial parts of drama narratives are reserved for the "exploration of their motivations, dilemmas, and underlying neuroses" (55). The results of a similar development are evident in the cluster of films I discuss here. Instead of embodying invulnerable and self-assured beacons of rationality, the male lead characters are overwhelmed by emotions, plagued by insecurities, and suffer indignities. Interestingly, these ailments seem to be directly related to atrocities committed against Asian (Americans) by European Americans and their institutions. Most protagonists are driven by either rage or guilt as a consequence of having had to witness the shattering of Manifest Destiny.

Oliver Stone's biographical war drama *Heaven & Earth* starts out as standard salvation narrative fare. The viewer witnesses the horrors of the Vietnam War from the perspective of a young Vietnamese woman who is severely mistreated by all parties. In Da Nang, Le Ly (Hiep Thi Le) meets the surprisingly kind Gunnery Sergeant Steve Butler (Tommy Lee Jones). Steve tells her that he has had enough, that he will go home to San Diego, and that he wants her to come with him. During the Vietnam War, it was not unusual for American enlisted men "to fall in love and even to propose marriage" to prostitutes or chance acquaintances, Christian Appy (1993) finds, since they were "deeply in need of affection and healing" (238).

In *YTD*, Stanley is aware of the fact that the war has not left him unscathed: "I've got scar tissue on my soul." He has been faithful to America to the utmost degree and only served "her" the way he was taught. Stanley does not get much in return, however, besides misunderstanding and rejection. In *Heaven & Earth*, Steve fares even worse. Once the film morphs into an interesting variation of the assimilation narrative, the full extent of damage done to him is revealed. Initially, the couple's life together in the United States seems to go well. But Steve suffers from PTSD and becomes increasingly and uncontrollably violent. He confides in Le Ly what he has gone through in the war: "It was a complete mindfuck. PSYOPs, baby. Knives, rip a man's guts out, take a bite out of his liver, drop him on his chest so he doesn't get into Buddha heaven, leave him lying in the road, cut his nuts off, stuff them in his mouth." Eventually, Steve shoots himself in the head with a shotgun.

John Madden's drama *Golden Gate*, based on a screenplay by David Henry Hwang, ends with the suicide of the male protagonist, too. In the 1950s, the young and ambitious FBI agent Kevin David Walker (Matt Dillon) lets law prevail over justice during the frantic prosecutions of communists by seeing to the arrest of the innocent Chinese union organizer Chen Jung Song (Tzi Ma). Ever since he is plagued by guilt, especially after his disgraced and shunned victim jumps off the Golden Gate Bridge. Increasingly estranged from the FBI, Kevin begins to obsess over Chen. Ultimately, he idealizes his former enemy to the degree that he tries to emulate him. Andrew Shin (2002) asserts, therefore, that Madden "dramatizes McCarthyism in terms of Asian American masculinity": Chen "upholds the democratic values which are traduced by America's indigenous citizens" (180) and even "comes to embody the best of Western manhood: agency committed to justice" (191). To atone for his sins, Kevin "martyrs himself to Berkeley's Asian American rights movement" (192).

Another film concerned with anti-Chinese as well as anti-communist sentiment is Jon Avnet's mystery thriller *Red Corner*. The plot concerns protagonist Jack Moore's (Richard Gere) fate after being subjected to the Chinese judiciary. Before the American businessman can broker a satellite communications deal, he is framed for murder of General Hong's (Chi Yu Li) daughter Ling (Jesse Meng). Jack's only hope is his court-appointed lawyer Yuelin Shen (Ling Bai). Although he manages to elicit some sympathy from her, his chances for survival seem slim. To make matters worse, Jack implicitly accuses Yuelin to be a naive dupe when he reveals the conspiracy theory he indulges in: Hong supposedly sacrificed his daughter in order to prevent the opening of a totally closed and corrupt system. Yuelin proceeds with great care to push Jack off his high horse by contrasting America as a racist country with much higher rates of infant mortality and murder only to finally expose him as the true dupe himself for taking Orientalist fantasy at face value.

Besides the defeat in the Vietnam War and the demonization of Chinese communism, the third topic this cluster of films revolves around is the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. Scott Hicks mystery drama *Snow Falling on Cedars* is interspersed with original footage of the Manzanar concentration camps and portray American leadership and society as drenched in anti-Japanese racism: Roosevelt issues the infamous Executive Order 9066, FBI agents cruelly raid the homes of Japanese American families, and an anonymous caller warns newspaper editor Arthur Chambers (Sam Shepard) that "Jap lovers get their balls cut off and shoved down their throats". In the wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor, decorated US Army war hero Kazuo Miyamoto (Rick Yune) is wrongly accused of murdering a childhood friend. If it was not for attorney Nels Gudmundsson's (Max von Sydow) passionate speech contrasting prejudice with the country's foundational values, prosecutor Alvin Hooks' (James Rebhorn) would likely have achieved a condemnatory sentence for Kazuo simply by urging the jury to "look at his face".

During this time, protagonist Ishmael Chamber's (Ethan Hawke) relationship with Hatsue Miyamoto (Youki Kudoh) takes a tragic turn. Though they have fallen in love with each other at a very young age, they could never act out their feelings openly. Eventually, Hatsue feels forced to send a goodbye letter which Ishmael receives while stationed in the Pacific Theater. She succeeds in concealing her immense pain and creates the illusion that she has fallen out of love. Under the stresses of war, Ishmael is unable to empathize with Hatsue and suffers devastation. Still in shock he is unable to focus in the following battle and gets gravely wounded. Finally, with his emotional defenses worn down, Ishmael succumbs to

racial hatred, too. After having lost his left arm on the operating table, he exclaims coldly: "Fucking Jap bitch".

Although Alan Parker's drama *Come See the Paradise* is also concerned with the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II, it foregrounds a critical perspective on capitalism largely remaining latent in the other films of the cluster. Protagonist Jack McGurn (Dennis Quaid), a recent immigrant from Ireland, has a strong sense of justice and tries to right some wrongs as a union activist during the Great Depression. This does not only get him into trouble with the law but also shunned by his browbeaten brother Gerry (Colm Meany). Jack cares little for his well-being, however, since he is full of rage. He is certainly upset by the hardship honest and hardworking people have to suffer under capitalist exploitation, but he is entirely unhinged by tragic personal losses resulting from horrendous working conditions. His pregnant wife's hair got caught in a machine of a shoe factory and this shocking experience made her lose the baby. In agony and disillusioned, she left Jack and America to return to Ireland.

None of these principal male characters are mistaken to be "romantic liberators" by their Asian (American) love interests. They have next to nothing to offer. In fact, these characters are crippled, embittered, and exhausted. Therefore, in reference to its evolutionary source, the White Knight, I call this type the Broken Knight. Besides the wretched state this new stock character is usually found in, its second distinguishing feature is the quest to find direly needed healing in the loving embrace granted by an Asian heroine. The cluster of films I discuss here is entirely devoid of Dragon Ladies, Butterflies, Lotus Flowers, and even Hookers with Hearts of Gold. Instead, Asian (American) women are portrayed as spirited, resourceful, and, above all, compassionate. They inspire the highest hopes in Broken Knights, who, in their desperation, tend to idolize them. At times, these female companions are almost literally elevated to otherworldly beings. In *Come See the Paradise*, for instance, Jack is impressed with Lily's incessant and infectious happiness to such an extent that he muses aloud: "It's as if someone gave you a little bag of magic that only you can dip into." Thus, I suggest calling this newly evolved type the Asian Fairy.

In *YTD*, Tracy might mock Stanley's racist views, but recognizes them as collateral damage of a war machine Stanley is not responsible for. She is the only character that seems to give him solace. Eventually, Tracy is even able to open his eyes and cure his ideological ailment. In *Heaven & Earth*, Steve is not that lucky. Though he expects salvation from being with a "good Oriental woman", Le Ly's healing powers ultimately prove insufficient. Perhaps

this can be attributed to the film being an adaptation of autobiographical reports and thus based more faithfully on reality than others. In contrast, *Come See the Paradise* concludes with the happiest of Hollywood endings. Desolate as Jack may be, Lily Kawamura (Tamlyn Tomita) manages to turn him into a peaceful and content family man. Ishmael, however, needs to come to grips with this exact same dream going up in smoke. *Snow Falling on Cedars* certainly is the most melancholic film of the cluster. Contributing selflessly to the court case, Ishmael plays a vital role in the acquittal of Kazuo and thereby manages to make amends for his earlier racist outbursts. Hatsue cannot offer more, though, than allowing him to hug her one last time.

Interestingly, the Broken Knights in *Red Corner* and *Golden Gate* also get rejected. After achieving Jack's release, Yuelin refuses to accompany him to America. Instead, she prefers to continue standing up for justice in China. Kevin is even less fortunate. He becomes obsessed with Chen's daughter Marilyn (Joan Chen) and desires to love and protect her as her guardian angel. Eventually, however, she finds out about the role he played in her father's imprisonment, cuts off all ties, and swears to ruin his life. Kevin still does everything in his power to help her from the background when the FBI begins to crack down on the Student Movement she gets involved with. He even goes as far as leaking the secret Song case file to Marilyn and thereby cleans her father's name and exposes his own misdeeds to the public. She is visibly moved by Kevin's self-sacrifice and expresses her gratitude by kissing him one last time. Shortly thereafter, he decides to kill himself the same way Chen did. In the moment Kevin jumps off the bridge, however, he is shown evaporating into thin air. Narrating the whole story, Marilyn comments that it was Guanyin, the goddess of mercy and compassion, who took pity on Kevin and elevated him to heaven. Asian Fairies possess the magical power to soothe emotional pain, it seems, and specialize in alleviating guilt.

To sum up, I would like to broaden the perspective once more and draw attention to three stages I have identified on the evolutionary path American Far Orientalism has taken during the twentieth century. In about seventy years, the relationship between East and West has changed drastically. Whereas both the romantic dyad as well as its constellation in terms of race and gender have remained staples throughout the decades, the power dynamic has virtually reversed. This is most obvious in the adaptive transformations of stock characters. On the one hand, European American male protagonists were opportunist exploiters in the 1920s and 1930s, morphed into benevolent liberators during the 1950s and 1960s, and ended up as overstrained roamers in the course of the 1980s and 1990s. On the other hand, their

Asian (American) love interests had to accept rejection at the beginning of the twentieth century, became deserving of salvation about thirty years later, and acquired the power to bring redemption toward the turn of the millennium. Moreover, the Asian Fairy's love has become progressively elusive. In the majority of films published in the 1990s, happy endings are denied. Two Broken Knights even need to die by their own hands for their sins. At last, Madame Butterfly gets her belated revenge.

In conclusion, I would like to return to the opening question of this section concerning Stanley's racialized desire in *YTD*. There seems to be a connection between poor self-esteem and love-hate relationships. In a set of seven studies, psychologists Steven M. Graham and Margaret S. Clark (2006) find that individuals "high in self-esteem store positive and negative partner information in a functionally integrated fashion", whereas people "low in self-esteem store partner information in memory in functionally distinct positive and negative categories" (652). Since Stanley is unsure about his self-worth, especially with regard to Asians, he cannot integrate all he knows about Tracy: Depending on his mood, he can only either demonize or idolize her. Transferred to the United States' relationship with East Asia, this insight is revealing: The fact that both Orientalist and Occidentalist elements occur within one and the same narratives or across a number of contemporaneous narratives can be seen as indicating a deep cultural insecurity about American modernity. In the remaining two case studies, I explore these ambiguities further. Specifically, the following chapter focuses on the simultaneous emergence of Occidentalist ideas and redemption narratives.

3) Saviors and Lost Causes:
The Last Samurai (2003)

Edward Zwick's epic war film *The Last Samurai* (*TLS*) was inspired by the 1877 Satsuma Rebellion against the Westernization advanced by Japan's imperial government and stars Tom Cruise as US Army captain Nathan Algren as well as Ken Watanabe as the samurai rebellion leader Lord Katsumoto Moritsugu. Nathan's love interest, Katsumoto's sister Taka (Koyuki Kato), only plays a comparably small role in the film's narrative economy.

The plot begins in 1876 with the cynical and alcoholic Nathan in San Francisco, traumatized by his participation in the Indian Wars. Soon he is hired as part of a group of distinguished US Army officers to train the newly formed Imperial Japanese Army. While on board a ship on its way to Yokohama Harbor, Nathan comments this turn of events with the following words: "I have been hired to help suppress the rebellion of yet another tribal leader. Apparently, this is the only job for which I am suited. I am beset by the ironies of my life". Since the Imperial Army consists mostly of inexperienced farmers, the first battle with Katsumoto's samurai is lost catastrophically. Most soldiers get slaughtered, the commanding Imperial general commits *seppuku*, and Nathan is taken prisoner.

Katsumoto decides to keep him alive due to a recurring dream about a white tiger and his hope for information about his new enemy. Nathan is deemed so important by the rebel leader that he leaves him in the care of his son Nobutada (Shin Koyamada) and his sister Taka, whose husband Hirotaro found, in Katsumoto's words, "a good death" in combat with Nathan earlier. Through forced cold turkey, he overcomes his alcoholism and begins observing life in the rebel's village. Though an excellent gun and sword fighter himself, Nathan gets beaten up badly repeatedly by Ujio (Hiroyuki Sanada). Gradually, though, he learns to be mindful and improves his *kenjutsu* to the degree that he can make himself useful during an assassins' attempt on Katsumoto's life, after which the samurai begin to accept him. At the same time, Nathan grows increasingly fond of the samurai's way of life and their values, because they are so radically different from what he experienced in the Far West – so much so that he becomes willing to die for them.

After Katsumoto fails to convince the young manipulated and intimidated Emperor (Shichinosuke Nakamura) of his belief that opposing Westernization is in Japan's best interest, the final battle approaches. Though Taka deeply despises Nathan at the beginning,

who was struck by her beauty and grace upon first sight, her feelings change after seeing him playing with her two little sons and learning enough Japanese to apologize to her. Before what basically is a surefire suicide mission, she helps Nathan put on her husband's armor and a diffident kiss comes about. Inevitably, the terribly outnumbered samurai get killed by the superior firepower of the Imperial Army and Katsumoto gets the kind of death he wished for. Moved to tears by this atrocious massacre of honorable and brave men, the Imperial soldiers stop firing only in time to save Nathan's life – ironically, once more, the only one who actually wanted to die. He believes it his duty to hand over Katsumoto's *katana* to the Emperor, which finally makes the former student of the samurai leader reject the American treaty with the words, "I have dreamed of a unified Japan, of a country strong and independent and modern. And now we have railroads and cannon [sic], Western clothing. But we cannot forget who we are or where we come from. Ambassador Swanbeck, I have concluded that your treaty is not in the best interest of my people". What happened to the badly wounded Nathan after these events is not revealed.

I am not primarily concerned with determining the degree to which *TLS* is historically accurate, promotes cultural appropriation, or evidences social progress. Rather, my main interest is in exploring the ambiguities of *TLS* as results of adaptive shifts in the evolution of American Far Orientalism at the beginning of the twenty-first century. That is to say, I examine the film from an ecological perspective in order to write cultural history and refine conceptual tools.

In large part, therefore, this chapter complements Mina Shin's essay "Making a Samurai Western" (2010), the most comprehensive analysis of *TLS* to date. According to her, the film presents a classic Orientalist tale in which the inferior East learns from the superior West. The depicted defeat of sword-fighting samurai by gun-wielding soldiers does not only affirm historical progress from feudalism to nationalism and capitalism, Shin claims, but celebrates modernization as necessary and honorable. Moreover, since the Imperial Japanese Army is equipped and trained by European American veterans of the Indian Wars, she understands the films as justifying the Indian genocide and American imperialism. Although Shin identifies several aspects of *TLS* as jarring with her overall interpretation, she dismisses them as ironic. This is where I pick up the thread.

The film can just as well be read, I argue, as idealizing feudal Japan and Eastern spirituality while equating Western materialism and modern capitalism with moral decay and, consequently, condemning American imperialism. In this alternative perspective on *TLS*,

modernization is characterized as inevitable but also as deplorable. Facilitating historical progress means reducing the possibility of human dignity. Rather than the Imperial soldiers and their American instructors, it is the samurai (and, by extension, Native Americans) who are celebrated as honorable for resisting Western modernity and all it stands for.

I begin my investigation form a media ecological perspective. The fact that *TLS* is a hybrid of the most national genres of the United States and Japan – the Western and the Samurai Film (or Eastern) – makes it unique and promises a fruitful analysis. Positioning the film in both genre histories is the basis for my interpretation and enables me to illustrate the cultural work done within the representational ecology. The Western and the Eastern are concerned with evaluating the historical period in which the respective country transitioned to modernity and both genres have mutually influenced each other to such an extent that they developed in parallel thematically and structurally. Greatly simplified, this co-evolution could be summarized as such: Whereas the classics idealized gun- and swordfighters and their codes of honor, revisionist works demonized them after a transition period in which they were seen as traversing a moral twilight zone. Both genres developed almost diametrically opposed to each other, however, with regard to the evaluation of historical progress: Whereas classic Westerns and revisionist Easterns celebrate modernization, revisionist Westerns criticize it harshly and classic Easterns dismiss it by idealizing feudalism.

Across the first two sections of this chapter, I demonstrate that *TLS* combines conventions of both the revisionist Western and the classic Eastern. Integrating the findings enables me to discuss Matthew W. Hughey's (2014) conceptualization of the "White Savior narrative" in the final section. Finally, I define "Spirito-Occidentalism", the most recent result of adaptation in the evolution of Far Orientalism on screens.

Straightjackets and Redemption

In *Gunfighter Nation* (1992), Richard Slotkin observes that part of the Frontier myth in the Western is the presentation of violence as "an essential and necessary part of the process through which American society was established and through which its democratic values are defended and enforced" (352). Based on Slotkin's insight, Shin argues that *TLS* is essentially "a nostalgic saga for the Wild West" since it "rehabilitates the American past of the Indian genocide as an inevitable and honorable historical progress for the modern nation" by "identifying with Japan's history of loss and recovery" (1067).

Classic Western films rarely ever personified or humanized Native Americans but put them in opposition to virtuous European American settlers and their Manifest Destiny. They were fed and have fed, in S. Elizabeth Bird's (1999) words, "a popular culture that mythologized the massacre of Whites by savage, uncontrollable American Indians" (62). In blockbusters like James Cruze's silent film *The Covered Wagon* (1923) or John Ford's first major successes, *The Iron Horse* (1924) and *Stagecoach* (1939), Native Americans are little more than a force of nature that has to be dealt with, not unlike storms or droughts. When they were not portrayed as savages quite literally in the way of European westward migration, they were stereotyped as alcoholics and lowlifes, for instance, in film adaptations of the Wyatt Earp legend: *Frontier Marshal* (1939), *Tombstone, the Town Too Tough to Die* (1942), and *My Darling Clementine* (1946). In each of these films, Charles Stevens portrays drunken "Indian Charlie" who is to be apprehended by Wyatt.

Since World War II, however, the mythological West has been challenged more frequently and forcefully than ever before on the silver screen. The first aspect contested was what Robert Baird (1998) calls the dichotomy of "evil aggressors and innocent victims" (159). John Ford dignified some Native American characters by not only giving them recognizable faces and names but also a just cause for their rebellion against European America in his Cavalry Trilogy: *Fort Apache* (1948), *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949), and *Rio Grande* (1950). The earliest entry, a reimagining of Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer's "last stand" in the Battle of the Little Bighorn, features an institution of European American civilization as prime villain rather than a Native American tribe.

US Cavalry captain Kirby York (John Wayne) discovers that Silas Meacham (Grant Withers) is responsible for the discontent and unrest of the Apache bands in the reservation,

since he supplied them with “whiskey but no beef” and “trinkets instead of blankets”. As a result, “the women [are] degraded, the children sickly, and the men [are] turning into drunken animals”. Interestingly, Silas works for the “Indian Ring”, the designation being a thinly veiled disguise for the Bureau of Indian Affairs founded in 1825. Therefore, Kirby calls an agency of the US Federal Government “the dirtiest, most corrupt political group in our history”.

Kirby convinces the escaped Cochise (Miguel Inclan) to return to the reservation but is betrayed by his thoroughly bigoted superior officer, Lt. Col. Owen Thursday (Henry Fonda), who calls the Native American chief a “breech-clouted savage” and an “illiterate, uncivilized murderer and treaty-breaker”. In his arrogance, Owen underestimates his enemy, leads his men into an ambush, and pays with his life. Curiously, his willingness to die for his convictions makes a strong impression on Kirby. This is evidenced visually by him emulating Owen’s style: Instead of the more practical cavalry stetson, he starts wearing a kepi and a scarf. Kirby even eulogizes him in an interview with a journalist: “No man died more gallantly or won more honor for his regiment.” Overall, thus, Ford’s trilogy can be seen as a glorification of the US Cavalry despite the innovative portrayal of American Indians.

The last two major Classic Western films, both released in 1953, contrast each other in their racial sympathies but not their angle on historical progress. In Charles Marquis Warren’s *Arrowhead*, most European Americans respect the Apache, even the commanding officers of the cavalry. It turns out, however, that trust in Native Americans is misplaced: The tribe’s returned de facto leader Toriano (Jack Palance) kills his European blood brother John Gunter (John Pickard) and agitates his followers by presenting himself as a mythological figure chosen to “rid the earth of [the] second-comers”. Moreover, all Natives working with the US Army or the settlers are eventually revealed to be double agents. Only maverick scout Ed Bannon (Charlton Heston), having grown up with the Apache, is able to understand their treacherous nature and dispels the naiveté of his fellow European Americans before it is too late.

In John Farrow’s *Hondo*, on the other hand, US Army scout Hondo Lane (John Wayne) is the only one siding with the Apache exactly because of his intimate knowledge of them. He is part Native American, had an Apache wife once, and thus he can empathize with the frustrated and angry Chief Vittorio (Michael Pate). In a futile attempt to avoid bloodshed, Hondo goes to great lengths to convince settlers and army representatives that it is them who violate treaties, not the Natives. In fact, he claims that the Apache are all but incapable of

treachery since “there’s no word in the Apache language for lie”. After Vittorio and his followers are defeated, Hondo remarks: “Yeah. End of a way of life. Too bad, it’s a good way.” And yet, ultimately, he has sided with the settlers and the army. By fighting the Apache in the final battle Hondo has helped ending the way of life he is so fond of. Both films, therefore, remain expressions of the belief that America had to outgrow its natives.

Three years later, John Ford founded a tradition of Revisionist Westerns with his seminal film *The Searchers* (1956), which is not centered on adventures of the US Cavalry but built upon centuries-old Indian Captivity Narratives instead. Interestingly, Ford did away with the dichotomy of evil aggressors and innocent victims: In *Searchers*, Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) may be on a heroic quest to rescue his niece Debbie (Lana/Natalie Wood) from a group of Comanche, but his views and actions are appalling: He is disgusted by Martin Pawley (Jeffrey Hunter) because he is one-eight Cherokee, wants to kill Debbie after he found out that she has become a “squaw”, and shoots the eyes out of an Indian warrior to prevent him from finding the happy hunting ground. Both he and Comanche chief Cicatriz/Scar (Henry Brandon) are driven by passionate hatred ever since they lost loved ones in the American Indian Wars.

Ford’s follow-up film *Two Rode Together* (1961), too, is concerned with Comanche brutality as well as the cruelty of the European American frontier society. In two emotionally charged monologues, the protagonist Guthrie McCabe (James Stewart) shatters the settlers’ naive hope that children would not change in Indian captivity and denounces their hostility toward the returned captives. Robert Aldrich’s *Ulzana’s Raid* (1972) and Ron Howard’s *The Missing* (2003) repeat elements of *Fort Apache* and *The Searchers*. Both films feature Native American aggression caused by the US Army and neither innocents nor heroes. In *Raid*, army scout McIntosh (Burt Lancaster) shakes up the inexperienced Lt. Garnett DeBuin (Bruce Davison): “What bothers you, Lieutenant, is you don’t like to think of white men behaving like Indians. Kind of confuses the issue, don’t it?” In *Missing*, Lt. Jim Ducharme (Val Kilmer) confesses his bewilderment: “This whole territory has gone topsy-turvy. You got Indians running with whites, whites running with Indians.” The storyworld in *Searchers* and the films inspired by it is characterized by a grim outlook on human affairs, gritty realism, and grey morality. Whereas Classic Westerns allowed for pleasant and reassuring escapism, this cluster of films’ goal is to irritate audiences into reflexivity. In the words of *Raid*’s McIntosh, moviegoers are advised to “to stop hating and start thinking”.

Ford's particular tradition of Revisionist Westerns lives on in films like Steven Craig Zahler's *Bone Tomahawk* (2015), Alejandro González Iñárritu's *The Revenant* (2015), and Scott Cooper's *Hostiles* (2017). This cycle takes the aforementioned characteristics of the tradition to the extremes. Most characters are racist, vicious, and brutal because the storyworlds are chock-full of suffering and vice versa. In *Tomahawk*, the European American settlers cannot distinguish between the cannibalistic cave dwellers they are dealing with and Native American tribes. John Brooder (Matthew Fox) joins the rescue party to avenge his mother and sisters who were killed by Indians when he was ten years old. In *Revenant*, Arikara chief Elk Dog (Duane Howard) does not distinguish between Europeans either. He and his warriors massacre British trappers after his daughter got abducted by French marauders. Moreover, John Fitzgerald (Tom Hardy) despises the Arikara ever since they partially scalped him. Since he believes that "a savage is a savage", it does not trouble him to stab half-Pawnee boy Hawk (Forrest Goodluck). In turn, the boy's father, Hugh Glass (Leonardo DiCaprio), hunts down Fitzgerald with superhuman endurance only to kill him in a gruesome fight.

The central theme of this cycle is made most apparent in *Hostiles*. The film was promoted with a poster saying "we are all hostiles" and begins with a superimposed quote from D. H. Lawrence: "The essential American soul is hard, isolate, stoic, and a killer." A similar sentiment is evident in a poignant scene of *Revenant*. On a wooden sign around the neck of dead Pawnee warrior Hikuc (Arthur Redcloud) the French marauders wrote what translates to "we are all savages". In *Tomahawk*, too, even the most elegant and eloquent character is revealed to be a ruthless killer who murdered 116 Indians by his own estimation. The notion that the conquest of America is an enactment of God's will is also called into question in these films. In *Hostiles*, for instance, Cpt. Joseph Blocker (Christian Bale) expresses his belief that "[the Lord]'s been blind to what's going on out here for a long time" and Master Sgt. Thomas Metz (Rory Cochrane) says "our treatment of the Natives cannot be forgiven" before he commits suicide. This cycle, therefore, presents the most recent and thorough attack on the mythological West: "from white America's exceptionalist notion of Manifest Destiny", in the words of George W. Hopkins (1998), "to the simple dualistic struggle (or binary opposition) of good white civilization against Indian savagery and inevitable white progress against noble but anachronistic primitive peoples obstructing progress" (72).

In parallel to the Classic and Revisionist traditions, the Counterculture Western evolved from the 1920s onwards. After every major conflict the United States was involved in during the twentieth century – World War I, World War II, the Vietnam War, and the Cold War – a new cycle appeared. It began modestly by simply allowing for positive portrayals of Native Americans paired with negative portrayals of European Americans but became increasingly radical with successive iterations. Just as in the Revisionist tradition, the perspective on the conquest of the West is highly critical. The Counterculture Western is rarely cynical, however, but remains idealist and romantic. In fact, by the 1970s it had evolved into a negative image of the Classic Western. The binary opposition of European civilization and Indian savagery is retained but reversed. Native Americans are portrayed as innocent victims attacked by European settlers and soldiers. Another classic element preserved is the promise of "regeneration through violence" which Richard Slotkin (1973) dedicated a book-length study to. Violence appears to be a tool to right the world rather than the primary source of suffering. In the Counterculture subgenre, Native American civilization must be defended against European savagery.

George B. Seitz's *The Vanishing American* (1925) first featured the depiction of a bigoted and greedy Indian agent (Noah Beery) who mistreats the Navajo living on the reservation he oversees. Chief Nophaie (Richard Dix) and his followers join the US Army during World War I in hopes of earning better treatment. When they return distinguished, however, they find that the situation has worsened. Nophaie decides to fight this injustice and dies in the arms of Marion (Lois Wilson), his European love interest. *Vanishing*'s success with audiences and critics allowed Richard Dix to star in another film sympathetic to Native Americans, Victor Schertzinger's *Redskin* (1929), and resulted in two quasi-remakes produced after World War II: Anthony Mann's *Devil's Doorway* (1950) and Joseph Kane's *The Vanishing American* (1955).

The next phase in the evolution of the Counterculture Western is marked by Delmer Daves' *Broken Arrow* (1950). With the exception of scout Tom Jeffords (James Stewart) and Gen. Oliver Otis Howard (Basil Ruysdael) all European American characters are bigoted, hateful, and aggressive, especially the patrons of the tellingly named saloon "Scatfly". At one point, Tom almost gets lynched by a mob calling him renegade and Indian lover. Yet, he prevails and secures a peace treaty with the wise Apache leader Cochise (Jeff Chandler). The film won a Golden Globe award, allowed Jeff Chandler to reprise his role as Cochise twice in George Sherman's *The Battle at Apache Pass* (1952) and Douglas Sirk's *Taza, Son of*

Cochise (1954), and inspired George Sherman's *Comanche* (1956). In contrast, John Ford's *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964), his attempt to correct his earlier representations of Native Americans with a sympathetic perspective on the Northern Cheyenne Exodus, flopped at the box office. Walter Hill's *Geronimo: An American Legend* (1993) and Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man* (1995) were equally countercultural and ineffectual, too.

Broken Arrow, however, was influential much beyond the 1950s. It introduced Going Native, a trope which became a staple of successful Counterculture Westerns. Repelled by the bigotry of his own people, Tom turns his back on them and chooses the wise Apache chief Cochise as his mentor. He learns the language of the tribe, gets deeply immersed in its culture, marries into it, and fights for its interests. This narrative sequence is repeated with Confederate veteran O'Meara (Rod Steiger) in Samuel Fuller's *Run of the Arrow* (1957), legendary Jack Crabb (Dustin Hoffman) in *Little Big Man* (1970), and English aristocrat John Morgan (Richard Harris) in Elliot Silverstein's *A Man Called Horse* (1970). The latter even spawned two sequels: Irvin Kershner's *The Return of a Man Called Horse* (1976) and John Hough's *Triumphs of a Man Called Horse* (1983).

By far the most successful inheritor of the Going Native trope is Kevin Costner's *Dances with Wolves* (1990). Disillusioned by the horrors of the Civil War, Lt. John J. Dunbar (Kevin Costner) encounters the Sioux while stationed at a remote army outpost. Gradually, mutual trust is established between him and several members of the tribe. John learns the Lakota language, immerses himself in a new worldview, receives a Sioux name, dons tribal wear, and, eventually, sheds his European American identity. When he is captured and treated with disdain by US Army soldiers, his loyalty changes completely. In Lakota, he exclaims: "I am Dances with Wolves. I have nothing to say to you. You are not worth talking to."

The process of John going native serves to make the countercultural reversal of the classic racial dichotomy explicit. One of the first observations he writes in his notebook is this: "Nothing I've been told about these people is correct. They are not beggars and thieves. They are not the bogeymen they've been made out to be. On the contrary …" John learns that the Sioux value family, nature, all living beings, the spiritual world as well as peace and harmony. European American settlers and soldiers, on the other hand, are materialists devoid of respect for life. The entirely unhinged Maj. Fambrough's (Maury Chaykin) suicide depicted early on even implies that they are on a path of madness and destruction. In perhaps the most poignant scene of the film, John witnesses the aftermath of mass buffalo slaughter

perpetrated by European American hunters. He notes in his journal: “The field was proof enough that it was a people without value and without soul.”

In the Countercultural Western, according to S. Elizabeth Bird (1999), the American Indian is idealized “as the wise, spiritual keeper of the land” (62). At the same time, in the United States, “the formerly common aversion to, even shame of, Indian roots has given way to an avid yearning for such genealogical connections”, Marianna Torgovnick (1997) observes (136). These films, therefore, ought to be seen as “important documents in relation to America’s changing image of Indians and the nation itself” (140). Especially New Agers regard “this idealized, lyrical view of Indian life” as “a cure for some of the ills of contemporary culture” (136-37). Going Native may have soared in popularity after the Vietnam War, but the practice’s roots reach back to the nation’s origin. Shari M. Huhndorf (2001) finds that it “attempts to resolve widespread ambivalence about modernity” (2) and “originates in the relations between two simultaneous late-nineteenth-century events: the rise of industrial capitalism, with its associated notions of linear historical progress, and the completion of the military conquest of Native America” (14).

Whereas most Countercultural Westerns are concerned with the “military conquest of Native America” and the racial dichotomy, a small subset of texts also reevaluates “the rise of industrial capitalism”. Classic Western films tend to celebrate, in Richard Slotkin’s (1992) words, “all persons, tendencies, and crises that yield higher rates of production, faster transportation, more advanced technology, and more civilized forms of society” (286). In Michael Curtiz’ *Dodge City* (1939), for instance, lone cowboy Wade Hatton (Errol Flynn) rids the frontier town Dodge City of a gang of outlaws only to move on and clean up Virginia City as well. Edward Creighton (Dean Jagger), the heroic engineer in Fritz Lang’s *Western Union* (1941), does not only have to deal with outlaws, but with Confederate soldiers and Native Americans, too. Eventually, however, he is able to realize his plans to construct a telegraph line from Omaha to Salt Lake City.

In contrast, David Milch’s television series *Deadwood* (2004-06) emphasizes selfishness and greed as the primary drivers of “progress”. There are neither good nor bad guys. Deadwood’ residents are remarkably single-minded. They are there to profit from the gold rush on the Black Hills in one way or another by all means necessary. “Naked capitalism rules the day”, Ina Rae Hark (2012) observes, and “the more altruistic or productive” motives are absent (3). Hark concludes that the series is “quintessentially (if unflatteringly) American in what it reveals about the dark underpinnings of national success rooted not in some

renewed Eden" (4). More than thirty years before the production of *Deadwood*, Robert Altman's film *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* (1971) offered similarly bleak commentary on the nation's origins. The gambler John McCabe (Warren Beatty) establishes a makeshift brothel in the small mining town of Presbyterian Church, gets into conflict with the Harrison Shaughnessy mining company, and, eventually, gets killed by a bounty hunter. His death is undignified and met with indifference by the townspeople. Joseph Maddrey (2016) finds that, in Altman's West, "the business of America is business: sex is business, religion is business, law and order is business" and "the value of human life is relatively low" (117).

In my reading, *TLS* neither demonizes Native Americans and celebrates progress to modernity like Classic Westerns, nor does it descend into cynicism and misanthropy like Revisionist Westerns. Edward Zwick's film builds on Counterculture Westerns, both the pro-Indian and anti-capitalist varieties. European America is not compared unfavorably to Native America, however, but to feudal Japan. All of this is impressed upon the viewer at the very beginning of the film: The story is narrated by British translator Simon Graham (Timothy Spall) who starts revealing what it will be all about off-camera and before the title screen. When the viewer witnesses Katsumoto meditating in the gorgeous Japanese countryside, Graham says: "Japan was made by a handful of brave men. Warriors willing to give their lives for what seems to have become a forgotten word: Honor". In stark contrast, the next scene shows drunken Nathan advertising Winchester's 1873 seven-shot capacity lever-action rifle "Trapper" to a sensationalist crowd hoping for some gruesome stories about the efficient butchering of Indian "savages". Most likely in reference to Altman's film, the last name of the accompanying Winchester representative is "McCabe". Nathan closes his shocking performance with a sarcastic remark: "My thanks on behalf of those who died in the name of better mechanical amusements and commercial opportunities".

In *TLS*, the "conquest of Native America" and the "rise of industrial capitalism" are presented as intertwined events. Recently, historians like Walter R. Borneman (2010) and H. W. Brands (2010) have taken up this position, too. Robert Redford's television documentary series *The American West* (2016) illustrates the link: When he completed the First Continental Railroad, Thomas C. Durant, the vice-president of Union Pacific, drastically overcharged the US Government for supplies and labor. Although he bribed congressmen with discounted rates on stocks, the scheme got exposed eventually. As a result, investors ran scared and the railroad stocks plummeted. This lead to the stock market crash known as the Panic of 1873. At the same time, rumors about gold in the Black Hills surfaced. In direct violation of the

Peace Treaty, thousands of miners flooded into sacred Native American land. The US Government under president Ulysses S. Grant felt forced to support the mining operation in hopes to pull the country out of economic depression. Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer was sent to lead about 1500 soldiers into Indian Territory. The aggression escalated further after the Corrupt Bargain of 1877. Under President Rutherford B. Hayes, Gen. William T. Sherman was allowed to conduct total war against Native Americans.

TLS is part of a national re-evaluation process that has gained momentum after the end of the Cold War. After the end of World War II, the experience with fascism led to increasingly critical perspectives on racism. Critical perspectives on capitalism began to proliferate after the threat of communism had been averted by the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. About a decade later, in 2003, it was possible to sell the idea that the country was built on genocide made possible by the rise of capitalism (and its endemic failure) to the movie-going public for a profit.

The opening of *TLS* contrasts national characteristics in foundational moments. Whereas European Americans are driven by greed and racial hatred, Japanese are brave and honorable. Interestingly, the diegetic narrator explicitly states that Japan was made by *men*. Congruously, in large parts, the film is concerned with the idealization of Japanese masculinity. Considering the representational ecology it evolved out of, this reversal of earlier portrayals constitutes a significant act of cultural work.

Asian (American) men have been under- and misrepresented quite consistently in about one hundred years of American film history. Most recently, David L. Eng (2001), Celine Shimizu (2012), and Hoang Tan Nguyen (2014) have devoted book-length studies to this topic, whereas Jeff Adachi contributed the documentary film *The Slanted Screen* (2006) to the discussion. The filmmaker and the scholars agree that, in the American imagination, Asian masculinity is either vilified or emasculated and lacks strength, prowess, and sexual desirability. Shimizu calls this assessment of lack "straitjacket sexuality" in order to "capture Asian American men's strange distance from acceptable and traditionally white masculinity" (15). A few years earlier, Gina Marchetti (1993) analyzed a number of films released in the first half of the 20th century and identified rape and captivity as the dominant themes. In all cases, the narratives feature "the rape or threat of rape of a Caucasian woman by a villainous Asian man" and "the white woman as the innocent object of lust and token of the fragility of the West's own sense of moral purity" (10).

The nationality of the Asian malefactors varies depending on the concurrent political circumstances. In Cecil B. DeMille's silent drama film *The Cheat* (1915), for instance, Sessue Hayakawa portrays Hishuri Tori at a time when European Americans felt threatened by the decisive Japanese victory over the Russian Empire in the Battle of Tsushima (1905) and, especially, the influx of Japanese laborers after the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. Since the Empire of Japan became an ally in World War I, however, the villain in D. W. Griffith's silent drama film *Broken Blossoms* (1919) had to be Chinese rather than Japanese. Consequently, the two pre-Code drama films of Josef von Sternberg and Frank Capra, *Shanghai Express* (1932) and *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (1933), also feature Chinese villains. A decade later, the American moviegoer was confronted with Japanese evildoers once gain in Mark Sandrich's war film *So Proudly We Hail* (1943) and Richard Thorpe's drama film *Cry Havoc* (1943) since the United States had to face the Empire of Japan in World War II. Finally, of course, the imperialist aggression against the people of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia had to be accompanied with the depiction of a vaguely Indochinese rapist, for instance, in James Clavell's adventure film *Five Gates to Hell* (1959).

Since World War II, the portrayal of Asian men as lecherous threats to innocent European American women has given way to depictions as fanatical and cold-hearted or even sadistic enemy soldiers and military officers. Among the early adopters were Lewis Milestone and Sam Newfield with the war film *The Purple Heart* (1944) and the noir film *State Department: File 649* (1949). This trend peaked out with a plethora of Vietnam War films, some of which I discuss in the previous chapter. At the same time, a new stereotype began to emerge: the desexualized nerd with big glasses usually employed for comic relief. An early but infamous example is the bucktoothed Mr. Yunioshi in Blake Edwards' romantic comedy film *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961). Mickey Rooney had to wear an extreme form of yellowface including a prosthetic mouthpiece to embody this obnoxious caricature of a Japanese man. A little more than twenty years later, John Hughes coming-of-age comedy film *Sixteen Candles* (1984) and Richard Donner's adventure comedy film *The Goonies* (1985) perfected the stereotype. Whereas Long Duk Dong (Gedde Watanabe) is a silly exchange student with an exaggerated accent and anything but desexualized, Richard "Data" Wang (Jonathan Ke Quan) is a school boy and an inventor of malfunctioning gadgets. In contrast to the earlier rapists and soldiers, these newer characters are thoroughly unthreatening. This development, too, is a reflection of the time period: Since the backing out of Vietnam in 1975, the United States had no major military conflict in (South) East Asia and the Immigration and

Nationality Act passed in 1965 had led to a new wave of Asian immigrants which were well educated, fairly wealthy, and eager to assimilate.

In the 1980s, however, it became apparent that Japanese companies had managed to evolve into formidable opponents in the competition for market shares. The American automotive industry was struggling and had to lay off large amounts of employees. Predictably, this led to a resurgence of anti-Asian sentiment primarily directed at men. As discussed in the previous chapter, in films like Ridley Scott's action thriller film *Black Rain* (1989) and Philip Kaufman's crime film *Rising Sun* (1993), Asian men are now portrayed as ruthless businessmen in service of either internationally operating corporations or crime syndicates. In Ron Howard's comedy film *Gung Ho* (1986), the blue-collar workers employed by the fictional Japanese automotive company Assan Motors assemble cars much faster than their American colleagues. This is not the result of their superior skill or work ethic, the film suggests, but of their inhumane treatment by the quasi-fascist bosses who force them to work like tireless robots. These two new stereotypes, the meek geek and the ruthless criminal/businessman, display both sides of the Model Minority.

Considering this brief sketch of the portrayal of Asian (American) men in American film history, *TLS* should be noted for the way it depicts Katsumoto and his samurai. Mina Shin (2010), too, observes that all samurai are represented as "disciplined and masculine" men who treasure "honor, duty, loyalty, and principles" (1072). Nathan is shown to be the only morally acceptable European American, albeit only after being healed by the "traditional Japanese society" that is portrayed as "noble, honorable, and more civilized than modern American society" (1062). According to Nathan's first diary entry, the samurai are not as shallow or hollow as his compatriots: "Everyone is polite. Everyone smiles and bows. But beneath their courtesy, I detect a deep reservoir of feeling." Besides, they also seem to be devoted family men. In short, Katsumoto and his followers have not been corrupted yet by the rise of industrial capitalism and the accompanying devaluation of life and dignity.

Indeed, in stark contrast to virtually every preceding American film, in *TLS*, Zwick elevates Japanese masculinity to the status of model masculinity by both contrasting it to its American counterpart and making Nathan convert to it. To my knowledge, the only previously screened narratives featuring a similar viewpoint are the Western drama television series *Kung Fu* (1972-75) and Rob Cohen's biographical drama film *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story* (1993), both of which spawned a cult following. In *TLS*, however, it is a very particular masculinity that is idealized: A masculinity on steroids based not only on honor and duty, but

on patriotism, the subjugation of women, and the mastery of martial arts as well as the willingness to kill.

Zwick, thus, certainly does not build on the Feminist Western best exemplified by Ralph Nelson's *Soldier Blue* (1970). Interestingly, although the film's title might suggest otherwise, the true hero of the story is Kathy Maribel "Cresta" Lee (Candice Bergen), a woman from New York. Whereas the cavalry man Honus Grant (Peter Strauss) is a pitiful soldier and wretchedly helpless in the wild, she is able to navigate the terrain, treat a bullet wound, and hunt for food after having spent two years with the Cheyenne.

Cresta's "greater depth of practical knowledge undermines", Emma Hamilton (2016) observes, "any claims to patriarchal dominance on the basis of women's lack of understanding of the realities of frontier life" (122). It is her as well that slowly cures Honus of his naive patriotism until he comes to share her understanding of "Indian acts of violence … as acts of self-defence [sic] in the face of an invading force" (123). Most importantly, the final speech of Colonel Iverson (John Anderson) "juxtaposes the images of brutality with the construction of masculinity and American identity" (121) when he declares that the soldiers should hold their heads high for "making another part of America a decent place to live" though all they actually did was raping, mutilating, and murdering Native American women and children. Hamilton, therefore, rightfully concludes that the film "argues that the ideals of American society regarding equality and justice can never and have never been implemented as they are fundamentally antithetical to the patriarchal institutions that American society is founded upon" (136).

As to the portrayal of Taka and the relationship with Nathan: Aki Uchida (1998), among others, defines "the Oriental Woman" as "less pure sexually, less moral", and "of a less civilized culture" than "the Western White Woman" (172) as well as in terms of "male possession and sexual availability" (171). Congruently, Mina Shin reads Nathan getting "the exotic Asian female and kids" (1072) as a hallmark of Orientalism. Taka, however, is pretty much the opposite of a "whore". She is never openly eroticized or portrayed as available for any man and is probably sexually and morally much purer and more civilized than any women Nathan has encountered in the saloons and brothels of the Far West. Most importantly, there is no sexual encounter between the two during their very limited screen time together and Graham ends his story by pointing out that "the American captain", in all likelihood, either died of his wounds or returned to "his country". In fact, one of the main

functions of Taka is to subdue and veil the homosexual tensions between Nathan and Katsumoto.

In *Unbinding Asian American Manhoods in the Movies* (2012), Celine Shimizu raises concerns over criticism of Asian (American) film characters being "straitjacketed into a narrowly circumscribed vision of masculinity, informed by a reactionary claim to male power and privilege" (2). A longing for heteronormativity, she cautions, and "the assessment of lack secures gayness, asexuality, or feminine masculinity as wrong and undesirable" (8). Instead, the aim should be to go "beyond just the correction of stereotypes or the attempt to gain equal access to patriarchy" (11) by exploring "new and better terms for organizing our definitions of manhood" (5).

Employing her typical style of interventionist reading, for instance, Shimizu comes to understand Clint Eastwood's drama film *Gran Torino* (2008) as containing "a critique of hypermasculinity" (233). Essentially, it tells the story of how Walt Kowalski (Clint Eastwood) evolves from a hateful man to one fueled by compassion. At the beginning, the veteran of the Korean War and former blue-collar worker in the automotive industry calls his new Hmong neighbors "swamp rats", but, eventually, he sacrifices his life in order to protect the lives of the shy teenage boy Thao Vang Lor (Bee Vang) and his sister Sue Lor (Ahney Her) from a murderously violent gang. It is Thao, Shimizu claims, that "compels the white man to transform" by asserting "lack as an alternative to macho" (235) and "embodying a dignified manhood" (236). Most importantly, the young man "expresses sympathy" for Walt when he shows signs of terminal illness (238). Since his own sons treat him like a nuisance, the veteran is moved by this concern and begins to change his ways.

In *TLS*, however, Shimizu would have a hard time to find anything of value for her project under the displays of militant masculinity. Even the samurai's willingness to sacrifice themselves has no redeeming quality. Shimizu may value "Asian American men in the movies risk themselves for the sake of others" (5), but Katsumoto and his followers are motivated by strict adherence to principles and a quest for an honorable death in combat rather than by compassion for other human beings.

The reversal of earlier portrayals, however, is not all-encompassing. Zwick replicates both sides of the Model Minority with two major Japanese characters opposed to the samurai: The meek Emperor Meiji (Shichinosuke Nakamura) and the ruthless businessman Omura (Masato Harada). Interestingly, though, Omura is not a threat to America, as Japanese businessmen are in *Gung Ho* and *Rising Sun*, but to Japan instead. He and his collaborators

have the young Emperor under control und represent American cultural forces that are about to corrupt Japan. In fact, Omura closely resembles Sato in *Black Rain*. As noted in the previous chapter, this film also features the idea that Japanese duty and honor are in danger of being replaced with American greed.

Katsumoto's samurai on the one hand and the Meiji/Omura duo on the other can also be seen as a reiteration of a dichotomy introduced by James Fenimore Cooper's writings: Whereas the Bad Indian is violently opposed to European (American) values and people, the Good Indian tends to be more peaceful and cooperative. Most recently, this trope has been replicated more or less verbatim in Michael Mann's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992), a film adaptation of Cooper's masterpiece. It also features prominently in *Broken Arrow* and, to a lesser extent, in *Dances with Wolves*. In *TLS*, however, the dichotomy is inverted: Whereas the Bad Japanese embraces and serves American imperialism, the Good Japanese fights it without compromise.

Besides building on the Counterculture Western, Zwick also follows the trend toward redemption narratives I described in the previous chapter. Just as in *Year of the Dragon* (1985), *Golden Gate* (1994), and *Snow Falling on Cedars* (1999), the male protagonist in *TLS* suffers from the effects of racism, capitalism, and imperialism. Clearly, Nathan is a Broken Knight: He is disillusioned, cynical, confused, depressed, drifting, and an alcoholic as a result of having taken part in the conquest of the West. All of this is established in the very first scene following the title screen, which I have discussed above. Nathan is in desperate need of healing and the narrative concerns his redemption.

Taka serves as the Asian Fairy: Selflessly, she treats Nathan's wounds, feeds him, and nurses him through his recovery from alcohol abuse. Taka's unconditional care and affection cures him of loneliness, bitterness, and addiction. Nathan also gets a glimpse of being a family man while he builds a relationship with her sons. When Higen (Sosuke Ikematsu) asks him why he would "fight the white men, too", he replies: "Because they come to destroy what I have come to love." Nathan learns enough Japanese to be able to apologize to Taka for killing her husband in battle and is forgiven. Before the final battle, she permits him to wear her husband's armor, kisses him, and rests her head on his shoulders. The final shots, depicting Graham's wishful thinking, show Nathan returning to the samurai village and Taka smiling at him.

His deeper guilt about participating in the American Indian genocide, however, is alleviated by Katsumoto's mentoring rather than Taka's love. The samurai leader quickly

realizes that Nathan "is ashamed of what he has done" and cures his self-hatred by conveying *bushido*, the way of the warrior. Gradually, his disciple learns to live "a life of service, discipline, [and] compassion" and restores his pride in being a warrior in the process. The scene in which Col. Bagley (Tony Goldwyn) spots the *kanji* character for "samurai" on a piece of paper in Nathan's room marks the completion of his transformation and foreshadows a showdown. During the climactic battle, the convert singles out his former commanding officer and kills him with a well-aimed throw of his *katana*. Katsumoto consummates Nathan's redemption right before committing seppuku by uttering: "You have your honor again."

Considering Zwick's track record, his reliance on redemption narrative structures is not surprising. *Glory* (1989) is a film about the endeavors of the African American 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment of the Union Army during the Civil War. It is Col. Robert Gould Shaw (Matthew Broderick), however, through whose voice-over the story is framed. Moreover, the film ends with the death of the regiment's commanding officer, although it continued operating afterwards. Occasionally, Zwick also emphasizes European American suffering for the sake of a more just society. In one scene, for instance, SGM John Rawlins (Morgan Freeman) reprimands Silas Trip (Denzel Washington) for the hatred he expressed toward European American Union soldiers: "Dyin' by the thousands. Dyin' for you, fool. I know, cause I dug their graves".

Mark Golub (1998) identified *Glory* as a prime example of Hollywood Redemption History. This emerging genre marks a "self-conscious departure from Eurocentrist narratives", he finds, yet "the central issue of the film turns out not to be the marginalized group's history, but the salvation of the lead character" (23). The central feature is the "charismatic white man" committed to fight social injustice; "the point of identification character, through whom the story unfolds, and with whom the audience is meant to strongly identify" (26). Golub criticizes redemption narratives for presenting "historical events as if they were resolved" or "irrelevant to the contemporary political situation" (30) and portraying "racism as a matter of the heart, to the exclusion of the institutional or structural mechanisms of racial oppression" (32).

In his epic historical drama film *Legends of the Fall* (1994), however, Zwick dispenses with the psychological detour via lead character and tells a story about a Cornish immigrant family, the Ludlows. The film opens with Col. William Ludlow (Anthony Hopkins) discarding his cavalry saber and leaving the army in protest over the constant betrayals of the

Native Americans by the US Government. This scene explains why the family lives reclusively in a remote part of Montana and is the prelude to repeated condemnations of the Indian Wars. Most importantly, World War I is used as a foil to help reevaluate the conquest of the West. When the colonel's sons argue with their father about whether or not they should join the war as volunteers for the Canadian Expeditionary Force, Samuel (Henry Thomas) claims that it would be nothing like the Indian Wars this time because they would be fighting "naked aggression".

Like his father, Tristan (Brad Pitt) does not share the patriotic sensibilities of his brothers. He was raised partly by William's Cree friend, One Stab (Gordon Tootoosis), who perfectly understands English but refuses to speak the language. Consequently, Tristan's sympathies firmly lie with Native Americans and he marries Isabel Decker (Karina Lombard), the daughter of a European American outlaw and his Cree wife. During World War I, he goes to Europe only to protect his brothers, but when Samuel gets killed the viewer witnesses him turning into a righteous avenger. His face painted with the blood of his brother and armed only with a knife, Tristan goes out in a cloak-and-dagger operation at night, kills unsuspecting soldiers, and returns with dozens of scalps dangling around his neck. Thus, Zwick presents the viewer with an image of a blond-haired and blue-eyed American Indian who proves to be a superior warrior by massacring evil Germans.

According to Marianna Torgovnick (1997), films like *Legends* want "to reimagine Indian history and to claim that whites are the true heirs to Indian culture, not just its destroyers" (144). This certainly holds true for *Dances with Wolves*, the primary inspiration for *TLS* in terms of narrative structure. It is quite obvious that this is not a film about the Sioux, Armando José Prats (1998) points out, since it "takes its title from the Lakota name for the white hero" (8). *Dances* does not only concern the redemption of a European American protagonist, however, but a reinterpretation of Native American history in the vein of the succeeding *Legends*. This becomes apparent in the closing scene which depicts Dances with Wolves riding off with Stands with a Fist (Mary McDonnell) before the final subjugation of the Sioux by the US military. Shari Huhndorf (2001) finds that "these two characters, cleansed of the corruption of European-American life by adopting Indian ways, hold the promise of a new and better white world" (4). The "primary cultural work" of *Dances*, thus, is "the regeneration of racial whiteness and European-American society" (3). Ultimately, Huhndorf concludes, the film expresses the obsession of European Americans with "retelling and refiguring their collective past in self-justifying ways" (11).

Dances has also been categorized as yet another "White Savior narrative", for instance, by Hernán Vera and Andrew M. Gordon in *Screen Saviors* (2003). These narratives usually involve a European American male character helping people of color with problems they could not have solved on their own. According to Vera and Gordon, they can be regarded as myths that "are essentially grandiose, exhibitionistic, and narcissistic" in that they present "whites with pleasing images of themselves as saviors rather than oppressors" of other races (34). Similarly, Shin understands the ending of *TLS* to be "another cliché of the West enlightening the East" and the film to be a "patronizing narrative" (1074).

In contrast, my reading results in the opposite conclusion. In the scene in which Katsumoto attempts to convince both the Emperor and the council of his cause, he announces his belief that, in the wake of the Americans arriving, they have become "a nation of whores, selling [them]selves". The Emperor's change of mind and the salvation from Japan's reckless Americanization is not brought about by Nathan (and "the West" least of all), but Katsumoto bravely leading the futile-seeming samurai rebellion to its bitter end. Nathan is merely the stumbling messenger and vehicle for the American viewer's psychological transformation. The film, thus, can be read as celebrating the last samurai (plural) rather than the heroism of a European American man who gets to be the last samurai (singular).

Unlike in *Glory*, racism and other social injustices are not presented as a matter of heart but as a matter of culture. Morally, feudal Japan is vastly superior to modern America but gets corrupted. Neither is the conflict portrayed as resolved and irrelevant to the contemporary political situation. The Emperor may deny the United States exclusive rights to supply arms, but American modernity has since spread globally. Katsumoto and his samurai fight what has become everyday reality of the film's audience. Moreover, America's past is not retold in self-justifying ways but in self-condemning ways instead. In contrast to *Dances* and *Legends*, *TLS* does not reimagine the relentless subjugation of American Indians as somehow improving the nation. It is marked as the beginning of US imperialism which since has affected East Asia, South America, and the Middle East. As a result, many more people "died in the name of better mechanical amusements and commercial opportunities".

Yet, *TLS* features many aspects of a White Savior narrative. I explore this ambiguity further in the final part of this chapter. In the following section, however, I situate *TLS* in the history of the Eastern, specifically the representational ecology of its Japanese subgenres.

A Western Eastern

The American Western and the Japanese Eastern do not have entirely separate genre histories. In the 1970s, Stuart Kaminsky (1972), Joseph Anderson (1973), and Kenneth Nolley (1976) have commented on the similarities between both genres and the mutual influence they have on each other. In his search for a "deeper parallel", Michitaro Tada (1986) even compares the samurai to the settlers of the American West. Since they "fought the Ainu and drove them off of the main island as far as Hokkaido" and spread the wet-rice agriculture "from the West to the East", he asserts, the samurai are the "conquerors of the Kanto Plain" (49) and the samurai films could be referred to as "easterns" [sic] (50). Despite this historical parallel, Easterns are not concerned with the conquest of the East in the way many Westerns are concerned with the conquest of the West. Instead of the Ainu, it is the samurai who are seen as an obstacle to modernity.

Most Easterns are set during the feudal Edo period which began with the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1603 and ended in premodernity with the restoration of power to Emperor Meiji in 1868. In comparison to the preceding ages of warfare, this was a rather peaceful time in Japanese history in which there was no need for a warrior class anymore. The samurai had to transform into bureaucrats and finally give up their status altogether when the nationalists abolished feudalism in order to transform Japan into a modern empire that could compete with Western powers. The subject of many films, therefore, is the struggles of the samurai caught in a double bind between strict adherence to ancient codes of honor (*bushido*) and pressure to adapt to the demands of changing times.

The original *The Last Samurai* (1974), directed by Kenji Misumi, is an epic film about the end of the Edo period. In short, the story follows Toranosuke Sugi (Hideki Takahashi) through the Bakumatsu, including the Boshin War, to characterize Tokugawa Japan as overwhelmingly violent. After the protagonist's love interest Reiko (Keiko Matsuzaka) falls victim to marauders, Misumi makes him mourn for her with much pathos. Toranosuke, then, renounces swords and samurai status to become a barber. In the films moral economy, this marks him as a good man who deserves to survive, whereas all characters who do not accept the end of "the age of the sword" must die. Certainly, thus, Misumi did not create this tale to elicit nostalgia from the viewer. Neither did Masanobu Deme, the director of *The Last Swordsman* (1974).

In contrast, Edward Zwick idealizes Japan's feudal past to a degree that was last common in Japanese filmmaking before World War II. According to David Desser (1992), the classic samurai film "never questions the moral right of the system" (149) and demands "the hero's continued fight even when the cause is clearly lost, or rather, especially when the cause is lost" (147). A particular postwar cycle of nostalgic films repeated these and other structural patterns with "a deemphasis [sic] on the moral rightness of the feudal system" (151). Hiroshi Inagaki's film *Chushingura* (1962), a masterful retelling of the legendary Ako vendetta, is both one of the best and latest examples. When their feudal lord Asano Naganori (Yuzo Kayama) is forced to commit ritual suicide by disembowelment (*seppuku*), his former retainers become masterless samurai (*ronin*) without pay. After their faultless fall from grace they do not denounce feudal protocol, however, but continue to adhere to it: Without any chance for survival, the eponymous forty-seven *ronin* avenge their master to demonstrate utmost loyalty and reclaim their honor.

With the exception of Inagaki, Kenji Mizoguchi can be seen as the last pro-feudal Japanese director. In his film *Ugetsu* (1953), for instance, he punishes the aspiring peasant protagonists for abandoning their wives during wartime and thereby affirms the feudal class system: On the one hand, Genjuro (Masayuki Mori) desperately wants to become rich and, consequently, gets seduced by the ghost of a deceased noblewoman, Lady Wakasa (Machiko Kyo). Tobei (Eitaro Oyawa), on the other hand, yearns to become a renowned samurai and succeeds by stealing the severed head of a famous general. In the meantime, their wives fall victim to marauding soldiers. Miyagi (Kinuyo Tanaka) is robbed and stabbed to death and Ohama (Mitsuko Mito) gets raped before she begins working as a prostitute to get by. In the end, both Genjuro and Tobei revert back to being peasants and regret their foolish ambitions.

Thomas Keirstead (2013) reads another work of Mizoguchi, *Tales of the Taira Clan* (1955), as an "anti-samurai film" which contests "a historiography linking national identity and agency with masculinity and militarism" (428). Kiyomori Taira (Ichikawa Raizo VIII) "represents the common man", he believes, "the forces of the marketplace, and an open, egalitarian society" (429). I side with Alain Silver (2004), however, when he observes that "Kiyomori is not alienated by the institutions of feudalism itself but by the monastic attempt to suborn those constructs to their own purposes" (67). The directors "working in the genre after Mizoguchi", however, "initiated a genuine exploration of the social aberrations of Japan's long feudal history" (46).

Like *Tales*, many Classic Easterns are concerned with the endeavors of high-born members of prominent clans. The samurai protagonists have inbred enemies they need to fight in order to support their clans in the endless struggle for regional dominance. In adherence to *bushido*, they are motivated by duty and willing to sacrifice themselves. These characters have no doubt about the moral right of the feudal system and they look the part, too: meticulously clean and beautifully ornamented kimonos or armor sets, clean-shaven faces and pates, long hair oiled and tied into a topknot. Besides the swordsmanship, these characters have little in common with the protagonist of Akira Kurosawa's famous duology: *Yojimbo* (1961) and *Sanjuro* (1962). In many ways, the *ronin* (Toshiro Mifune) is the opposite of Kiyomori Taira. He states his name as either Sanjuro Kuwabatake (thirty-years-old mulberry field) or Sanjuro Tsubaki (thirty-years-old camellia), has neither past nor allegiances, and does not abide by the samurai code. In fact, Sanjuro survives by his "fatalistic disregard for social mores" (72). Like the dogs that cross his path, he strays without purpose and looks the part, too: his kimono is soiled and dilapidated, his face unshaven, his hair unkempt. Essentially, Sanjuro is "acutely aware of his own alienation and likewise of his inability to resolve it" (70).

Inspired by Kurosawa's innovations, a new generation of directors firmly implemented this new tradition in the genre. In Masahiro Shinoda's *Assassination* (1964) and *Samurai Spy* (1965), Kihachi Okamoto's *Samurai Assassin* (1965) and *The Sword of Doom* (1966), as well as Hideo Gosha's *Goyokin* (1969) and *Hitokiri* (1969) a "new type of samurai is defined: pitiless, obsessive, perhaps more alienated than any other genre hero" (48). According to David Desser (1992), these works and most of the samurai films that followed them are ahistorical and drenched in nihilism: The society of the Tokugawa era "is often merely a backdrop against which spectacular duels take place" (156) and the rigid moral code of *bushido* is replaced "by a world of meaningless death and destruction" in which the hero, usually a sword-for-hire, "revels in the death and destruction he causes" (158). From the 1970's onwards, Desser observes, each film in this cycle "simply tried to outdo its predecessor in number of deaths and their spectacular delivery" and in order to achieve this these works "retreated from reality and entered the realm of fantasy" (162).

In contrast, *TLS* is neither ahistorical nor nihilist. The story is inspired by the Satsuma Rebellion against the Meiji Restoration and refers to the American Indian Wars. This scenario is not simply a backdrop for meaningless death and destruction. Katsumoto and his samurai engage in armed resistance to American imperialism and the corruption of Japanese

feudalism. Their mission is to convince Emperor Meiji to reject American influence. Nathan is traumatized by the Washita River massacre he had to take part in under Col. Bagley. He is on a quest to rid him of this past and does so most pointedly by killing his former commanding officer on the battlefield. Besides, the film features a defined moral economy, albeit an ambiguous one. In the context of her overall reading, Shin deems the "disdain for guns" that is so "easily detectable" in *TLS* "ironic" (1071-72). After all, she sees Japan characterized as "a 'masculine' modern nation that successfully attained modern militarization like the United States" (1074-75).

I argue that this disdain for guns can also be read as an expression of the film's moral economy rather than a contradiction to it, since it is a crucial element of the most prominent and poignant scene of the film. The slow motion shots depicting Katsumoto's heroic samurai (and all they stand for) being mown down one after another by Gatling guns are gut-wrenching in order to demonstrate the depravity of modern America and its ways. Swords symbolize honor whereas guns represent corruption. Like the forerunners of industrial capitalism in the Old West, Omura enriches himself through investments in the railroads and stops at nothing to clear any and all obstacles. Feudal Japan is masculine because its warriors are selfless protectors rather than greedy aggressors. In the world of *TLS*, modernization means feminization. Katsumoto is the epitome of masculinity because he sacrifices himself in order to prevent Japan turning into a "nation of whores". Emperor Meiji, on the other hand, is depicted as effeminate: shy and soft-spoken. Purified by the samurai leader's heroics, however, he musters up the courage to defy Omura and reject Swanbeck's treaty, thereby stopping the supply of guns. Therefore, the film's moral economy can be illustrated as follows:

Japan	swords	feudalism	honor	masculinity
America	guns	modernity	corruption	femininity

There is also a tradition of Eastern films that can be seen as a parallel to the American Counterculture Western. These works feature, in Silver's (2004) words, decidedly "anti-feudal themes" and often focus on "the oppressive concept of clan loyalty" (47). The protagonists openly question the moral righteousness of an utterly impersonal social order. Clearly, the directors working within this tradition compel the viewer "to regard institutions

as the villainous figures or even as major antagonists" rather than mean-spirited individuals (67). Moreover, they employ a number of cinematographic techniques to support this perspective: Rather than "horizontal pans and tracks", Desser (1992) notices, the "dolly shot" is used instead since it "actively explores the space within the frame" and "contextualizes the hero" (153). The beginning of this tradition can be seen in Buntaro Futagawa's silent film *Orochi* (1925) and Tomu Uchida's black-and-white film *Bloody Spear at Mount Fuji* (1955). Undoubtedly, however, Masaki Kobayashi's films *Harakiri* (1962) and *Samurai Rebellion* (1967) mark the iconic pinnacle of the anti-feudal tradition.

In *Harakiri*, Kobayashi tells a revenge story set in the 1630s. The former Fukushima retainer Hanshiro Tsugumo (Tatsuya Nakadai) has become a *ronin* through no fault of his own. To atone for some disgrace never revealed to the viewer, the protagonist's *daimyo* had to commit *seppuku* and the clan was disbanded. Hanshiro has to accept poverty since it is virtually impossible to become a retainer under another lord and members of the samurai class are forbidden to farm or labor. Nevertheless, he is content with raising his daughter Miho (Shima Iwashita) and his foster son Motome (Akira Ishihama). The two of them marry eventually and have a son, Kingo. When Miho and the baby fall ill, however, Hanshiro cannot pay a doctor. In an act of desperation, Motome attempts to elicit a small amount of money from retainers of the Iyi clan: He requests permission to commit *seppuku* in their courtyard in the hopes of them refusing and compensating him for said refusal. Unfortunately, the clan is aware of this *ronin* scam, determined to preserve a reputation for being honorable, and, consequently, forces Motome to kill himself. Needless to say, Miho and Kingo die soon thereafter. Tragically, too, the revenge Hanshiro exacts, ultimately, is without effect. Though he manages to kill four and seriously wound eight of the Iyi retainers, the clan's leaders do not change their ways, fabricate a version of the events that suits them, and get rewarded by the *shogun*.

In my view, Kobayashi is not primarily interested in depicting historical reality or countering earlier idealizations of Japanese feudalism. Rather, he uses the Edo period to launch an attack on modern authoritarianism by, for instance, raising skepticism toward historiography under the weight of unrestricted power. However, Kobayashi also creates a new type of samurai, I argue, via contrasting two seemingly diametrically opposed forms of *bushido*: Whereas one is characterized by vanity and cruelty, the other one emphasizes modesty and compassion.

The Iyi clan's obsession with martial discipline is revealed to be superficial when Hanshiro cuts off the topknots of several of is retainers, a feat more difficult than killing them. These samurai manage their reputation rather than actually honing their skills. Moreover, they view compassion as a weakness they have to shield themselves from. Dogmatically and selfishly, Iyi retainers do not even grant Motome a dignified death. Having sold his swords at a pawn shop earlier, he is forced to end his life using a dull bamboo *wakizashi*.

Hanshiro, on the other hand, is a master swordsman but disinterested in his reputation. Loyal to his family, he defies a lord who wishes to take his daughter as a concubine although this arrangement would have awarded him with a new position as a retainer. Essentially, Hanshiro is content with watching over Miho, Motome, and Kingo. Only after they are all dead he seeks revenge and an honorable death.

The Countercultural Eastern has been revived recently with a new cycle of films: Yojiro Takita's *When the Last Sword is Drawn* (2002) and Yoji Yamada's trilogy *The Twilight Samurai* (2002), *The Hidden Blade* (2004), and *Love and Honor* (2006). For the purpose of shedding a light on the way *TLS* evaluates feudalism and modernity, it is fruitful to juxtapose Zwick's work with the almost simultaneously released *Twilight*, a film that did well financially and received twelve Japanese Academy Awards.

Twilight is set in the same time period as *TLS*, albeit shortly before the Meiji Restoration. The film is about one of the last samurai, too: Seibei Iguchi (Hiroyuki Sanada) of the Unasaka clan. Since his wife died of tuberculosis, the low-ranking samurai has to take care of his young daughters Kayano (Miki Ito) and Ito (Erina Hashiguchi) as well as his demented mother Kinu (Reiko Kusamura). Seibei earns his keep as an accountant in the clan's grain warehouse. To make ends meet, however, he needs to borrow from relatives as well as build and sell insect cages. This leaves Seibei with too little time to groom himself: His kimono is ripped, his socks have holes, he looks grimy, and he gives off an unpleasant odor. Both his uncle Tozaemon (Tetsuro Tanba) and the senior retainer Gombei Terauchi (Baijaku Nakamura) reprove him harshly. Under the given circumstances, however, there is nothing he can do about it. Thus, he becomes the laughingstock of the clan and is called *tasogare* Seibei behind his back.

A war of succession breaks out when the young Lord Tadatomo dies of measles. Such conflicts usually do not involve petty samurai and Seibei is left alone until a retainer of the defeated faction refuses to commit *seppuku*. Zenemon Yogo (Min Tanaka) barricades himself into his house and kills the master swordsman Genba Hattori (Yuuki Natsuaka). Running out

of formidable samurai fighters, Lord Shogen Hori (Keishi Arashi) offers Seibei a rise in rank and income for forcing his will on Zenemon. He accepts the perilous mission reluctantly and sends for his childhood sweetheart, Tomoe (Rie Miyazawa), to help him prepare for combat. With both the imminent danger and the possible rise in status in mind, Seibei reveals his wholehearted regret about refusing her earlier and proposes marriage. Tomoe is happy but promised to another retainer from Aizu already. During the following duel, Seibei gets slashed several times. With his short *kodachi*, however, he has a decisive advantage in a close quarters skirmish. When Zenemon's long *katana* gets caught in the wooden rafters of his house, Seibei seizes the opportunity to kill the superior opponent. Unexpectedly, Tomoe awaits him for an emotional reunion. They get married and live together happily for three years. Then, the Twilight Samurai gets killed in the Boshin War.

Yamada lets Seibei's younger daughter Ito narrate the story when she is an elderly lady (Keiko Kishi). In the epilogue, she frames it as a tale about the merits of frugality. When she tends to Seibei's grave, Ito muses about her father's life. Many of his colleagues rose to positions of great authority, she relates, and deemed him an unlucky man. Ito does not agree. She considers his life a short but full one and is very proud to have had him as her father. Unlike many other men, Ito explains, he had no desire to rise in the world but loved his daughters. Indeed, Yamada seems to suggest that ambition and desire for a high social standing are corrupting forces. In his storyworld, rich and powerful characters lack kindness and compassion completely, especially when it comes to women. The income of Toyotaro Koda (Ren Osugi), for instance, is twenty-four times higher than Seibei's, but he is a mean drunk who hits and kicks his wife. Similarly, the Twilight Samurai's rich uncle Tozaemon (Tetsuro Tamba) is so offended by his demented sister's inability to recognize him that he demands her to be tied to a pole.

Overall, the film can be read as both a scathing critique of feudal social norms and an endorsement of modernization inspired by the West. In the world of the samurai, Yamada lets the viewer know, lords have no mercy with farmers and let them die of starvation, *ronin* terrorize the lands and kill at will, and girls are denied book learning. Whereas *TLS* associates modernity primarily with the degrading effects of commercialization and mechanization, *Twilight* focuses on the dignifying effects of democratization and individualization. Seibei and Tomoe are atypical characters for Japanese historical films as they repeatedly defy the values of the samurai class. This highlights their function for the narrative: They represent symptoms of the decaying feudal system in a rapidly modernizing Japan. In contrast to *TLS*,

samurai values are depicted as absurdly misanthropic and their dissolution as welcome progress. Katsumoto and Taka, on the other hand, have the opposite function: They serve as prime examples for the superiority of traditional Japan that should be protected from corruption by American modernity.

The usual relationship between societal duty (*giri*) and personal feeling (*ninjo*) is reversed in *Twilight*, Charles Chiro Inouye (2009) observes. Traditionally, "a respectable sense of duty [was] balanced against greed, selfishness, lust, and ambition" (160). This contrast can be readily observed in *TLS*, too. Yamada, however, presents *giri* as the "cause of the world's unhappiness" (164). Moreover, "bad, old-fashioned" *ninjo* is replaced with a "good, up-to-date" version: compassion and love (161). Tomoe is a brave woman who defies the classist and sexist norms of the time. She attends a peasant festival with Kayano and Ito, for instance, although members of the samurai class were strictly forbidden to do so. On another occasion, Tomoe stands up to her brother's wife who deems it unseemly for her to be seen talking to men on the street in broad daylight. Fortunately, Michinojo is kind enough to effectuate her divorce from the heartless Toyotaro. Otherwise, she would have been at this man's mercy and face a life full of misery. Seibei, too, resists feudal class expectations as much as possible without bringing harm to his family. Furthermore, he does not defend the old order when times are changing. On the contrary, he believes the age of the sword to be over and looks forward to give up samurai status to become a farmer.

In my view, Kobayashi, Takita, and Yamada attempted to wrench the concept of *bushido* out of the realm of fascism by contrasting the fixation on inducing death with the inclination to nurture life. Zwick, however, virtually promotes fascism. Three core elements of Roger Griffin's (2000) concept are readily identified in *TLS*: (1) "perceived national decline and decadence" (187), (2) radical opposition to "the individualist and materialist spirit or *ethos* of capitalism" (197, italics in original), and (3) pronounced sexism: "man the warrior, man the hero, man the creator" versus "woman the nurturer, woman the companion, woman the procreator" (191).

Moreover, Katsumoto's character seems to be inspired primarily by the work of fascist writer Yukio Mishima (1967/1977) who was fanatically obsessed with death and upheld a view of death as virtually orgasmic. One scene in which Nathan and the samurai leader discuss the merits of George Armstrong Custer is especially interesting. According to the American, the infamous Colonel Lieutenant led 211 cavalrymen against "2000 angry Indians" which he deems "arrogant and foolhardy". Nathan even calls him a "murderer who fell in love

with his own legend". The Japanese, however, proclaims to like Custer and believes him to have found a "very good death". This complicates the film's position toward the Indian Wars. By letting Katsumoto admire Custer, Zwick evokes Raoul Walsh's film *They Died with Their Boots On* (1941) in which the megalomaniac killer is portrayed as choosing honor over corruption.

As I have hinted at above, the work of Hiroshi Inagaki, the last great pro-feudal director, seems to have influenced Zwick as well. The legendary vendetta of the 47 *ronin*, retold in *Chushingura*, resonates with the final battle in *TLS*. Granted, Katsumoto could do what the Emperor's council demands, renounce samurai status, and come to terms with the reality of the Meiji period. This would entail, however, to give up his *katana*, "the soul of the samurai". Katsumoto, then, has no choice but to continue "the fight even when the cause is clearly lost". In the context of American history and viewership, Zwick's choice alludes to the reactionary ideology of the Lost Cause. According to Caroline E. Janney (2016), two tenets of this belief system are that Confederate soldiers were "heroic and saintly" and only lost the Civil War due to the Union's "overwhelming advantages in men and resources". In parallel, Katsumoto's samurai are depicted as faultless defenders who would never have been defeated in a fair fight. Again, the evocation of white supremacy is starkly at odds with the other major sources of inspiration for *TLS* discussed in the first section of this chapter: the Countercultural Western in general and *Dances with Wolves* in particular.

I see Zwick's nods toward right-wing political ideologies as an attempt to hop on the bandwagon of recent films like Paul Verhoeven's *Starship Troopers* (1997) and David Fincher's *Fight Club* (1999). Although they did not find commercial success initially, they quickly garnered the status of cult classics upon their DVD release. Both films toy with fascist imagery and ideology. *Troopers*, for instance, borrows heavily from the works of Leni Riefenstahl and Frank Capra, the Federation emblem resembles the *Reichsadler*, and the uniforms call to mind those of the *Wehrmacht*. Besides, the Federation fuels its war effort by urging its population to abandon logic and embrace hatred. In *Fight Club*, the answer to the assault on masculinity by the drudgery of consumer capitalism is Project Mayhem, which allows men to escape domesticity by indulging in aggression and violence. What made both films unique at the time was the presentation of fascist soldiers and cultists as the good guys. To a certain extent, this attempt to make the audience think and feel like fascists is emulated in *TLS* by inviting identification with Katsumoto's proto-fascist band of samurai.

Besides elements of both left- and right-wing political ideologies, Zwick also incorporated aspects of Eastern spirituality into his film. For instance, Nathan is enchanted by the religious philosophy of the samurai he encounters. The image of him passing by a Buddha statue in the spring of 1877 is superimposed with the following voiced diary entry: "I have never been a church-going man and what I've seen on the field of battle has led me to question God's purpose. But there is, indeed, something spiritual in this place." Soon he is cured of depression, nihilism and alcoholism: "I do know it is here that I have known my first untroubled sleep in many years."

Gradually, Nathan develops an appreciative understanding of what it means to be a samurai: "To devote yourself utterly to a set of moral principles, to seek a stillness of your mind, and to master the way of the sword." With these lines Zwick alludes to legendary warriors like Miyamoto Musashi and Tsunetomo Yamamoto who formulated forms of *bushido* inspired by Zen Buddhism. To the former, Inagaki dedicated his masterpiece, the so-called "Samurai Trilogy": *Musashi Miyamoto* (1954), *Duel at Ichijoji Temple* (1955), and *Duel at Ganryu Island* (1956). These three films depict, in Keiko McDonald's (2006) words, the "martial, spiritual, and aesthetic growth" of the heroic figure (68). In the third and last installment, Miyamoto (Toshiro Mifune) is repeatedly contrasted with Sasaki Kojiro (Koji Tsuruta): Whereas the latter is portrayed as arrogant and corrupted by ruthless ambition, the former is characterized as bound by piety and honor and motivated by benevolence. Thus, Miyamoto is idolized as "a fighter whose inner strength is humble and self-effacing, based on the austere self-discipline practiced by Zen priests" (84).

In *TLS*, the protagonist's quest for virtue clearly emulates the one staged by Inagaki. In parallel, for instance, Nathan is contrasted with Col. Bagley. Moreover, the scene in which he spars with Nakao (Shun Sugata) serves to illustrate his gradual familiarization with Zen Buddhism. Nobutada points out to Nathan that he is distracted by "too many mind" and that he needs to learn how to fight with "no mind". This lecture bears fruit: After many humbling attempts, he manages to achieve a draw against Ujio in a practice duel. Here, Zwick evokes *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind* (1949), the seminal work of D. T. Suzuki which sparked interest in Zen Buddhism in America.

As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, Katsumoto plays the most important role in Nathan's redemption. He quickly grasps that the American is deeply ashamed of participating in genocide at home and cures his self-hatred by conveying the way of the samurai. In turn, Nathan becomes a devoted disciple and realizes the significance of *bushido*

for the world he lives in. When his mentor reveals his believe that the way of the samurai is not necessary anymore, Nathan replies: "What could be more necessary?" Jane Iwamura (2011) calls characters like Katsumoto "Oriental Monk". Whether they are "gurus, bhikkhus, sages, swamis, sifus, healers, [or] masters", they feature "spiritual commitment", "calm demeanor", and an "Asian face" (6). The Monk transmits "Oriental wisdom and spiritual insight" to the viewer "through the *bridge figure*" and together they embody "a revitalized hope of saving the West from capitalist greed, brute force, totalitarian rule, and spiritless technology" (20, italics in original).

With regards to this incorporation of Buddhist spirituality, Zwick might have been inspired by recent films besides Westerns and Easterns, too. The year 1997, for instance, saw two releases featuring Buddhism and the 14th Dalai Lama: Jean-Jacques Annaud's *Seven Years in Tibet* and Martin Scorsese's *Kundun*. Whereas the latter is a biopic about Tenzin Gyatso, the former concerns the redemption of Austrian mountaineer Heinrich Harrer (Brad Pitt). In *Seven*, just as in *Dances* and *TLS*, the ideological transformation of the protagonist is made obvious by journal entries presented as voice-overs.

Initially, Heinrich is on a personal and national quest for glory. For him, being the first to conquer the Nanga Parbat is a "matter of German pride". To reach his goal, he goes so far as to abandon his pregnant wife in Austria and his expedition team on the mountain, revealing his selfish and arrogant nature. Heinrich is arrested by British troops, escapes the prison camp, and ends up in Lhasa. During the arduous journey he begins to realize the errors of his ways and senses a path to redemption: "In … Tibet, people believe, if they walk long distances to holy places, it purifies the bad deeds they've committed". Later on, Heinrich's transformation is facilitated by Pema Lhaki (Lhakpa Tsamchoe), a young woman he quickly falls in love with, and the 14th Dalai Lama (Jamyang Jamtsho Wangchuk) himself. Pema, on the one hand, opens his eyes to a core difference between their respective cultures: "You admire the man who pushes his way to the top in all walks of life, while we admire the man who abandons his ego." The Dalai Lama, on the other hand, teaches Heinrich respect, kindness, and pacifism: "Tibetans believe all living creatures were their mothers in a past life".

In *TLS*, Nathan's transformation comes about in the same vein. East Asian cultures, love interests, and wise leaders pave the way for the redemption of European or American protagonists. The overarching dichotomies in these films, however, differ substantially from each other. Whereas in *Seven* Tibetan Buddhism is juxtaposed with both European fascism and Chinese communism, that is religion with atheism, in *TLS* the way of the samurai and Zen

Buddhism are contrasted with frontier racism and imperialism, that is East Asian tradition and spirituality with American modernity.

In the last section of this chapter, I delve deeper into the ambiguities of *TLS*. Utilizing my findings so far, I discuss and differentiate the following conceptual tools: White Savior, imperialist nostalgia, and Orientalism.

Spiritual Occidentalism

In contrast to Kenji Misumi's film, the original *The Last Samurai* (1974), *TLS* lacks historical accuracy. At the time of the Satsuma Rebellion, the Imperial Japanese Army was neither equipped nor trained by the American military, for instance, but was developed during French and Prussian military missions to Japan instead. Moreover, a battle like the one staged in *TLS* – Katsumoto charging into Gatling fire with his *katana* held up high to retain his honor and all – has never taken place. The historical Satsuma rebels under the command of Takamori Saigo were sensible enough to use rifles, mortars, and field guns. Accordingly, Misumi staged the Battle of Toba-Fushimi: The shogunate loyalists do not fight Gatling guns with swords, but both sides use rifled muskets and field guns before engaging in close combat with *katanas*.

Zwick never intended to depict historical events faithfully. It is "the prerogative of filmmakers", in Alain Silver's (2015) words, "to distort the past or use it as a ground for a stylized dramatization of ideological conflicts it did not actually contain" (67). Historical accuracy simply would not have served Zwick's purpose to dualistically contrast Japan with the United States. In his structural analysis of romance narratives, literary theorist Northrop Frye (1976) gives descriptions that fit *TLS* stunningly well. Zwick clearly presents "a vision of reality in terms of human concerns and hopes and anxieties" rather than in terms of historical accuracy (14). The film conforms to the tendency of romances "to split into heroes and villains" and "avoids the ambiguities of ordinary life, where everything is a mixture of good and bad, and where it is difficult to take sides" (50). With the exception of Nathan, all Americans seem to be driven by greed and racial hatred, whereas all Japanese that have not been corrupted by American influence are portrayed as embodying such values as duty and honor.

Taka serves as a great example. Her name literally means "honored" in Japanese. She is the personification of "innocence and gentleness" (85) because "virginity is to a woman what honor is to a man, the symbol of the fact that she is not a slave" (73). It is precisely for her function to morally elevate traditional Japanese culture that this character gets little screen time. There is, after all, "a technical difficulty of what one does with a permanently virginal figure" (83). The "heroine of romance is supposed to carry out her tactics in low profile", Frye observes, and to "behave with due modesty" (79). Taka is the expression of Zwick's intention to deliberately construct "a goddess in a lower world" (86).

Analyzing the history of romance in literature, John McClure (1994) finds that "the traditional alliance between romance and empire broke down" at the end of the 19th century when an increasing number of writers began to construct narratives in which "Westerners go out into the non-Western world to confront the disfiguring effect of imperial projects" (177). These new stories can be thoroughly revisionist in their characterization of "the imperial civilization of the West as imprisoning and spiritually desiccating" (166) and represent a switch from "heroic political romances" to "heroic spiritual romances" (12). By simply turning the evaluation of East and West on its head, however, they "reinforce the Manichean mappings of imperial ideology" (29) and "perpetuate a Western tradition of 'othering'" (12).

Besides the (inverted) dichotomy of East and West, there are at least three features which firmly link *TLS* with colonial storytelling. (1) As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, the natives are split into two groups. In comparison to Cooper's writings, however, the moral evaluation is inverted: Whereas the Bad Japanese embraces and serves American imperialism, the Good Japanese fights it without compromise. (2) As Shari M. Huhndorf (2001) puts it with regard to *Dances with Wolves* (1990), *TLS* also "carefully skirts the threat of miscegenation" (3-4). This preserves the racial and moral dichotomy throughout the entire film. (3) Most importantly, *TLS* features a White Savior narrative, which "both Fanon and Said believe", Nathan Eckstrand (2014) remarks, "lurks at the heart of colonialism" (200).

With his book *The White Savior* (2014), sociologist Matthew W. Hughey provides the most comprehensive and conceptually rigorous treatment of this narrative pattern to date. He identifies fifty films produced between 1987 and 2011 as constituting a genre in which "a white messianic character saves a lower- or working-class, usually urban or isolated, nonwhite character from a sad fate" (1). The European American heroes and heroines of these stories do not detest, abuse, or exploit racial others but seek to befriend and support them in one way or another.

Superficially, the emergence of this genre expresses a call for racial reconciliation. Hughey, however, is interested in the subtle and covert forms of racism that are an integral part of the White Savior narrative. According to him, "narratives of triumphant white do-gooders should not surprise anyone" in a time in which "some perceive an assault on white racial superiority" (7). These films resonate in "a climate in which many whites believe they are victimized, feel fatigued by complaints of racial inequality, and hold a latent desire to see evidence of a postracial era of reconciliation" (8). Essentially, he maintains, the White Savior is simply a timely iteration of previous tropes like "great white hope", "white man's burden",

manifest destiny", and "noble savage" in "the age of Obama" (12). Hughey cautions, therefore, against trivializing it as either a bridge character (as Iwamura and I have done) or an overdrawn plot device. Ultimately, he deems the White Savior film as an insidious tool that "helps repair the myth of white supremacy and paternalism" (15).

Most importantly, Hughey examines seven "key dimensions" of both the character trope and the genre (24). *TLS* is part of the corpus of films he analyzes and serves the explication of two of these dimensions well. Two others, however, jar with it and the remaining three do not apply at all.

(1) Crossing the Color and Culture Line: A "white interloper" intrudes on "a nonwhite culture that is, or soon will be, under assault" but "slowly becomes uncomfortable with his or her role" and eventually turns "his or her back on the colonizing force" (28). Nathan arrives in Japan tasked with assisting the Imperial Japanese Army's efforts to suppress a samurai rebellion in order to secure exclusive rights to supply arms for the United States. Very uncomfortable with this role form the beginning, he soon switches sides during captivity.

(2) His Saving Grace: The White Savior's role is made explicit through "overt religious symbolism" and his "uncanny ability to transform nonwhite dysfunctions and cultural traditions into palatable patterns of Anglo assimilation" (41). The arrival of Nathan is foreshadowed in the opening scene: During meditation, Katsumoto sees him and his men encountering a white tiger. Yet this vision does not presage the coming of a messiah. Though Nathan supports the rebellion, participates in the rescue of its leader, and acts as its messenger, he neither saves nor transforms it. He never takes command like, for instance, Jake Sully (Sam Worthington) does in James Cameron's blockbuster *Avatar* (2009). In fact, it is him who is transformed and saved by both Taka and Katsumoto. It is Nathan who is assimilated.

(3) White Suffering: Many White Savior films "mimic the narrative of messianic torment" in parallel to the "tale of Jesus's painful travel from Gethsemane to the crucifixion on Calvary" (41). Often, the Savior sacrifices his or her life to take on "the sins of nonwhite people" (45). Nathan's suffering certainly is highlighted at the beginning of *TLS*, but he takes on the sins of European Americans and their racist, capitalist, and imperialist society. At the end of the film, he is redeemed because he has accepted Katsumoto as his savior.

(4) The Savior, the Bad White, and the Natives: The Savior is "juxtaposed with racist, domineering, completely uncaring, and extremely violent white characters" and surrounded by "a nonwhite community, suffering a social malaise or ailment" which "contextualizes his

character development" (47-48). Nathan is juxtaposed both with other European Americans – the audience of his Winchester performance and Col. Bagley – and some Bad Japanese like Omura who are already corrupted by American culture. However, the surrounding samurai community does not provide him with the opportunity to teach and save people in need, but with an alternative way of life he soon adopts.

The remaining three dimensions – (5) The Color of Meritocracy, (6) White Civility, Black Savagery, and (7) Racialized Historiography – are either concerned with comparing European American culture favorably with its African American counterpart or the claim that the film is based on a true story. Many White Savior films, for instance, feature "the patterned conflation of whiteness with an ethic of hard work, delay of gratification, and a mindset wholly focused on the individual triumph over obstacles" (52). Moreover, they "directly refer to historical events of a highly racialized nature" and thereby "subtly rewrite historical events so that white colonizers, paternalistic controllers, and meddling interlopers seem necessary, relevant, and moral" (65). These dimensions do not apply to *TLS*.

It seems to me Hughey modeled his White Savior concept on a particular subset of the films he analyzed: Michael Ritchie's *Wildcats* (1986), Christopher Cain's *The Principal* (1987), John N. Smith's *Dangerous Minds* (1995), Steve Gomer's *Sunset Park* (1996), Brian Robbins' *Hardball* (2001), Ryan Fleck's *Half Nelson* (2006), Richard LaGravenese's *Freedom Writers* (2007), and John Lee Hancock's *The Blind Side* (2009). These films feature a modern rather than a colonial setting, a European American teacher or coach, and African American students or sports teams.

Hughey may not explore the ambiguity of the White Savior concept, but he certainly is not oblivious to it: This narrative pattern "knows no political boundaries", he observes, "and is pliable to contradictory and seemingly antagonistic agendas" (2). The degree of inconsistency can be reduced considerably, however, by expanding the concept.

I begin with a discussion of "imperialist nostalgia", a term introduced by Renato Rosaldo (1989). He describes two forms of nostalgia without explicitly distinguishing them or exploring this ambiguity. At first, Rosaldo characterizes imperialist nostalgia as a portrayal of "white colonial societies" as "decorous and orderly" which "makes racial domination appear innocent and pure" (107). Subsequently, however, he relays that his concern resides with another kind of nostalgia "often found under imperialism, where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed" (108). Even "agents of colonialism", Rosaldo claims, sometimes displayed "nostalgia for the colonized culture as it was 'traditionally' (that

is, when they first encountered it)" (107). Anthropologists, in particular, have used "somewhat idealized versions of the 'primitive'" both "as foils against which to judge modern industrial society" and "to criticize the destructive intrusions of imperialism and its colonial regimes" (116).

The first form of nostalgia is the mourning for colonialism's relegation to history. Someone nostalgic in this way identifies with the colonizers and might dream about assuming the roles of Christian missionary or colonial administrator in order to fulfill their desire to embody a force that sweeps away the bad and brings about the good by dedicating their lives to spreading their glorified Western culture across the globe. The second form of nostalgia, however, is the mourning for the societies and cultures destroyed by colonialism. Someone nostalgic in this way identifies with the colonized and might dream about escaping to a non-Western society or distancing oneself from the colonizers by taking part in the resistance movement and thereby preserving alternatives to Western culture. The main difference between both forms of nostalgia, thus, is the underlying stance on colonialism: affirmation or rejection.

With this contrast in mind, I return to the discussion of the White Savior. Like Rosaldo's nostalgia, the Savior is inextricably bound up with colonialism but politically ambiguous. I suggest distinguishing two variations of the character trope: the philanthropic type and the romantic type. Both types have in common a propensity to condone hardship, the desire for redemption, and a dualistic worldview. They differ, however, in a few key aspects: On the one hand, the Philanthropic Savior is primarily motivated by pity for a person or a people. First and foremost, the Other is characterized by a glaring lack of competence, especially in comparison to the Savior. The philanthropic type wants to alleviate suffering and therefore takes on the role of a mentor delivering Western knowledge. In the end, whether the Savior chooses self-sacrifice or not, the Other is empowered and saved. The philanthropic type, therefore, is redeemed by successfully completing the mission.

The Romantic Savior, on the other hand, is primarily motivated by admiration. The Other is not lacking but offers a radically different way of life that promises happiness. In stark contrast to its philanthropic counterpart, this type seeks and finds knowledge, becomes hopelessly infatuated, and gets pulled into the role of a lover. The Romantic Savior tries to protect the Other from the onslaught of Western colonialism although the cause is lost from the beginning. Since this type's efforts are futile and its mission inevitably ends in failure, it is a savior only by intent. The Romantic Savior earns redemption by thoroughly rejecting

Western culture and embracing whatever way of life is embodied by the Other, the true savior.

Philanthropic Savior	Romantic Savior
pity	admiration
delivers	seeks
mentor	lover
succeeds	fails
superior	inferior

All in all, the most striking difference between these two types is the diametrically opposed hierarchical relationship between Savior and Other. Whereas the philanthropic type looks down on the Other, the romantic type looks up. Or, conversely, the Other looks up to the philanthropic type but looks down on the romantic type. In many films, this does not only hold true figuratively, but literally, too. Edward Zwick, certainly, conveys the character of the relationship between Savior and Other both via staging and camerawork. In *Glory* (1989), on the one hand, Colonel Shaw rides a horse next to the marching African American infantry soldiers under his command. Right before the final attack on Fort Wagner, he is shot from a low-angle. In *TLS*, on the other hand, Nathan kneels or lies flat in defeat before Ujio several times. In addition, he is shot from a high angle while shivering from cold turkey in Taka's house.

The Philanthropic Savior and the Romantic Savior are closely related to the White Knight and the Broken Knight I discussed in the previous chapter.

	superior	inferior
individualist	White Knight	Broken Knight
collectivist	Philanthropic Savior	Romantic Savior

Both the White Knight and the Philanthropic Savior are traditional heroes in shining armor. They venture out into the darkness (a foreign country, that is) and save either a single Butterfly or an entire community due to the cultural capital they embody. Stories featuring these character tropes serve to demonstrate the superiority of European American culture. In comparison, the worlds Broken Knights and Romantic Saviors live in are upside down:

European American culture is the source of darkness rather than a tool to disperse it. These characters languish as if poisoned; they are crippled, embittered, and exhausted. Whereas the Broken Knight longs for the compassion of an Asian Fairy, the Romantic Savior cannot be redeemed by love alone: He needs East Asian wisdom and spiritual insight imparted to him by an Oriental Monk.

In *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997), Heinrich's narcissism has cost him dearly. When he arrives in Tibet, he is divorced, estranged from his son, and separated from his mountaineering team. Pema acts as Asian Fairy by teaching Heinrich to abandon his ego, whereas the Dalai Lama acts as Oriental Monk by cultivating his compassion for all living beings. Besides some factual knowledge about the West, Heinrich has little to offer in return. He cannot save Tibet from Chinese occupation, of course, but he has learnt enough to become a father to his son. Similarly, in *TLS*, Nathan suffers from alcoholism, loneliness, cynicism, and depression. Taka affectionately nurses him through recovery from addiction and grants him a glimpse into family life. It is Katsumoto, however, who silences his shame about his participation in the American Indian genocide and makes him follow *bushido*. Nathan helps preventing the closure of the American arms deal, but cannot stop modernization and the abolition of the samurai. He might have found, however, "some small measure of peace".

Genealogically and structurally, the ideology of *TLS* is linked to classic Orientalism. It is not simply more of the same, though, but significantly more ambiguous than preceding films. The East-West-dichotomy is inverted, American imperialism is condemned, East Asian masculinity is elevated to model masculinity, and the White Savior is transformed. All in all, Zwick's film presents the opportunity to refine the conceptualization of Orientalism.

TLS is not adequately described by what Roland Robertson (1990), Alastair Bonnett (2004), Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit (2004) call "Occidentalism" either, since they are concerned with images of the West by the East. Robertson, for instance, provides insight into an ideology found in Japan that mirrors Western Orientalism. It revolves around "claims as to the selfish individualism, materialism, decadence and arrogance of westerners [sic] (particularly Americans)" and involves "the representation of Americans (and British) as devils and demons" (192). Japan's "original 'Occident'" was China, Robertson claims, which was generalized "so as to encompass the western [sic] world, particularly since the 1850s" (193). Furthermore, he sees the "deep-historical and cultural roots" of Japanese Occidentalism "in ideas about 'the middle kingdom' of Chinese origin" which "the Japanese came to attribute to themselves", since, in the aftermath of China's partial colonization by European

powers, they took responsibility “for the protection of Asian civilization” (192). Though these observations are very intriguing, here I am concerned specifically with the emergence of an American ideological formation.

I suggest following the proposals of Christopher L. GoGwilt (1995) and Couze Venn (2000) to understand “Occidentalism” as concerning images of the West by the West as well as a natural extension of Said’s studies of Orientalism. Echoing Said, thus, I define the essence of Occidentalism as the distinction between Eastern superiority and Occidental inferiority. The West is equated with all the negative consequences of capitalism, liberalism, and atheism; with arrogance, instrumental rationality, hyperindividualism, egoism, commerce, materialism, decadence, and an unreserved sexuality. Just as with Orientalism, hypersexualization of women is a central element of the projection, but within Occidentalism it is imagined as a result of the total commercialization of human relationships rather than as a natural female quality. And with East Asia taking the lead in technological innovation and adaptability to the future, the demonized West has little left to claim superiority.

What John J. Clarke (1997) understands as an affirmative Orientalism, Vijay Prashad (2000) calls “New Age Orientalism”, and Jane Iwamura (2011) subsumes in her concept “Oriental Monk”, I would like to call “Spirito-Occidentalism”. Whereas Clarke concerns himself with older European forms, Prashad and Iwamura analyze the ideology that crystallized in the American neo-Romantic movement of the 1960s. Prashad writes that the “hippie worldview saw the United States as the industrial-consumer society par excellence and thereby as the antithesis of spirituality” (51-52) which is why it turned to the gurus of the East as a “tonic against the disaffection produced first by abundance (during the boom cycle from 1945-67) and then by economic instability (after the start of stagflation from 1967 onward)” (50).

Moreover, the emergence of the 1960s counterculture signifies a reaction against the Vietnam War and the closely related rejection of the idea that technology is the solution to humanity’s fundamental problems. Darrell Y. Hamamoto (1994) calls the American intervention a “’technowar’ waged against a peasant society” (26) and a “race war” (149) best unmasked in the horrific “Mere Gook Rule” (156) the US military employed to make it easier for G.I. Joe to mistreat and kill civilians. Large-scale “strategic bombing” and the herbicidal warfare were used for what Hamamoto calls “U.S. genocidal activity throughout Southeast Asia” (150). In the light of this and the history of American Orientalization of Asian women, it seems hardly surprising that rape-murder of Vietnamese women was “common enough to

merit a perverse appellation for perpetrators: double veteran" (162). The Vietnam War added another atrocious chapter to US history and can be seen as one of the reasons why an increasing number of disaffected youths came to understand the relationship of America with East Asia as one characterized by technological superiority but moral inferiority. Spirito-Occidentalism, thus, is the mirror image of Techno-Orientalism, a recent variation on classic Orientalism I touched upon in the previous chapter.

An example for the popcultural expression of these sentiments is the popular television series *Kung Fu* (1972-75). Kwai Chang Caine, the protagonist of this "Eastern Western", is a Chinese-born mixed-race Taoist priest wandering through the American Wild West embodying both pacifist philosophy and martial arts prowess inspired by the East. This television series is significant not only because it suggests an Oriental Monk as the new American hero and portrays women and racial minorities in a humane and dignified way, but because it breaks with the long paternalist tradition of the television Western that Hamamoto dubs the "Great White Father syndrome". The principal feature of the syndrome is that European American male lawmen and authority figures are "made to serve as guardian and protector of the nonwhite subjects under his dominion" and that there never is a single instance "where discrimination or racism has been condoned by going unpunished by the authorities" (52). In *Kung Fu*, it is Caine who rights the wrongs of a profoundly hypocritical, materialist, racist, sexist, and social Darwinist society *against* its gun-wielding authority figures. He never attacks but only defends himself and others with bare hands and feet.

It is important to note, however, that while Spirito-Occidentalism allows for much more sympathetic presentations of Eastern characters through its inversion of the moral dichotomy, it is no less a fantasy than Orientalism. It remains, in Clarke's words, "inextricably bound up with Western concerns and problems" (22). Therefore many criticisms directed at films released during the twentieth century still hold up in the new millennium. Renee E. Tajima (1989), for instance, mentions that she understands "the rendering of Asia as only a big set for the white leading actors" as a "geographic parallel to the objectification of Asian women" (311). Without a doubt, Tom Cruise is an essential factor in the marketing of *TLS*. Not distinguishing between Orientalism and Occidentalism, however, risks overlooking evolutionary shifts in the development of American Far Orientalism in the twenty-first century.

Twenty years before the release of *TLS*, the very popular television miniseries *Shogun* (1980), written by Eric Bercovici and directed by Jerry London, featured substantially more

complex and nuanced representations of feudal Japan and its people. Following Armando José Prats' (1998) statement about "Costner's Indians" in *Dances with Wolves* (1990), however, it is fair to say that Zwick's samurai "were more fashionable than they were 'human'" (6).

On the one hand, Shin suggests reading *TLS* in the light of the "military politics under the Bush administration": "Hollywood's glorification of Japanese militarism" serves the United States in its appealing "Japan to rearm in order to checkmate North Korea and to balance China" as well as to help with the Iraq War (1075). On the other hand, I propose reading the film as concession to (1) a now global audience increasingly skeptical toward capitalism, (2) the Asian American population which has swollen from about 3.5 million in 1980 to 12 million in 2000, and (3) the mainstreaming of Buddhism in the United States.

As stated above, I do not wish to invalidate Shin's reading. In fact, I believe *TLS* to be the result of a deliberate attempt to maximize ambiguity in order to appeal to all audiences. This strategy has also been the basis of success of the franchise George Lucas started with *Star Wars* (1977). And as Robert Baird (1998) notes, by "addressing white historical fear and guilt within the same narrative", a film "can remain simultaneously true to contradictory emotional responses to history" (160).

Global skepticism toward capitalism is evidenced in the establishment of the World Social Forum in 2001, for instance, and has only grown more apparent in the years that followed the release of *TLS*, especially after the Financial Crisis of 2007 and 2008, culminating in the Occupy movement which emerged in 2011. Of course, the overall message in my reading of *TLS* can be considered ironic in the light of the fact that this film is an international mass commodity designed not only to maximize profits in the United States but also to penetrate the Japanese market.

During the same time, Buddhism has become part of American mainstream culture. Nathan's recovery from depression alludes to the increasingly prevalent belief that symptoms of mental ailments caused by Western modernity can be alleviated by Eastern spirituality. The last five decades has seen the medical implementation of Buddhist practices by American mental health professionals. Through a process of secularization and enrichment by cognitive science research, spiritual teachings associated with mindfulness, acceptance and compassion have been turned into several forms of psychotherapy.

During the 1970s, Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990) created MBSR (mindfulness-based stress reduction), a program to prevent stress, anxiety, and depression. This was followed up in the next decade by Steven C. Hayes and Spencer Smith (2005), who developed ACT (acceptance

and commitment therapy) to increase psychological flexibility. Zindel V. Segal, J. Mark G. Williams, and John D. Teasdale. (2002) established MBCT (mindfulness-based cognitive therapy) during the 1990s as an approach to combat major depressive disorder. Finally, the 2000s saw Kristin Neff (2011) develop MSC (mindful self-compassion), an alternative program designed to reduce levels of anxiety and depression.

Moreover, in 2003 the prominent meditation teacher Joseph Goldstein published a book subtitled "The Emerging Western Buddhism". Roughly a decade later, even Catholic congressman Tim Ryan (2012) urged the nation to utilize Buddhist techniques in order to reduce stress and increase productivity. Therefore, Spirito-Occidentalism, both on- and off-screen, warrants a discussion of cultural appropriation and paradoxical instrumentalization with regards to East Asian spiritual traditions. Thankfully, Kimberly J. Lau (2000) as well as Jeremy Carrette and Richard King (2004) have opened the debate around the same time as the release of *TLS*. In Jane Iwamura's (2011) words, this seemingly benevolent transformation of Orientalism "constructs a modernized cultural patriarchy in which Anglo-Americans reimagine themselves as the protectors, innovators, and guardians of Asian religions and culture and wrest the authority to define these traditions from others" (21).

In the following final case study, I examine a television series which self-reflexively combines elements of both Techno-Orientalism and Spirito-Occidentalism. The resulting exploration of imperialism and American insecurities about modernity presents an opportunity to focus on previously undertheorized elements of (Far) Orientalism such as projection and fascination.

4) Yellow Future and Racial Frontier: *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-09)

The military science fiction television series *Battlestar Galactica* (*BSG*), I selected for my third case study, is Ronald D. Moore's adaptation of a series of the same name that aired from 1978 to 1979. It was preceded by a three-hour miniseries (2003) and accompanied by two television films: *Razor* (2007) and *The Plan* (2009). Following the success of *BSG*, the short-lived prequel series *Caprica* aired in 2010.

BSG begins in a star system far away where humans live on a group of planets they call the "Twelve Colonies". In the past, they have created a cybernetic race that was supposed to take hard labor off the hands of humanity. These so-called "Cylons" (Cybernetic Life Form Node), however, rebelled against their masters and eventually disappeared into outer space. In the miniseries, the Cylons destroy most of the human Colonies in a sneak attack and start hunting the roughly 50,000 survivors aboard the eponymous battlestar *Galactica* and some civilian space ships. In the course of *BSG*, they encounter the only other still existing battlestar *Pegasus*, settle briefly on the barely habitable planet "New Caprica" – where they are discovered and subjugated by the Cylons until they can escape once more – and eventually settle on our planet "Earth".

These events constitute merely a single iterative loop, it turns out, in a possibly endless cycle of time. Approximately every two millennia, a humanoid species develops and produces artificial intelligence which eventually rebels and often forces its former masters to abandon their home planet(s) and begin anew somewhere else. The earliest cycle known to the characters of *BSG* is the one of the planet Kobol. Separated into the "Twelve Tribes", these humans create the organic machines which later settle on another planet and become known as the "Thirteenth Tribe". Independently from one another, both humans and machines then develop robotic servants. The inevitable rebellions culminate in nuclear wars, almost completely wipe out the Thirteenth Tribe, and forces the "Exodus of the Twelve Tribes".

Though the humans manage to settle on twelve planets in the Cyrannus star system, they enter a technological dark age, lose most of their knowledge regarding the exodus, and, thus, begin the cycle anew. Of the Thirteenth Tribe only the "Final Five", a handful computer engineers, survive by utilizing the resurrection technology they have (re-)discovered. They download into auxiliary bodies on a research vessel in orbit and begin their journey to the

Twelve Colonies. Since they have understood the nature of the cycle of time, they intend to break it. Their vessel lacks the capability to travel faster than light, however, and they arrive too late to warn the humans. At this point, the "First Cylon War" rages for ten years already. Nevertheless, the Final Five arrange an armistice by handing over their resurrection technology to the Cylons.

Whereas the Colonials modernize their military, the Cylons develop eight new humanoid models. The first of these, however, turns increasingly resentful of the Final Five for creating it in the image of humans and thereby severely limiting its ability to experience the universe. Eventually, this model usurps power, captures the Final Five, creates a single resurrection body for each of them, wipes their memories, and plants them in the Twelve Colonies to live as humans. Its plan is to exterminate humanity in an all-out nuclear assault 40 years later. The Final Five are supposed to die in the attack, resurrect on his ship, and admit their mistake. Yet they all survive.

In the course of the prolonged conflict following the "Fall of the Twelve Colonies", the humanoid Cylon models begin to disagree with each other about how to deal with the fleeing Colonials. The ensuing "Cylon Civil War" results in the destruction of both the "Resurrection Hub" and the genocidal faction. United in their mortality, the surviving Colonials and Cylons settle on Earth during prehistoric times to begin anew. Fully aware of the cycle of time and in hopes of breaking it, they abandon all their technology. The series ends, however, with a glimpse of our modern day and indications of artificial intelligence being developed.

BSG is a complex series that incorporates many themes. Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr. (2005) points out that science fiction texts have always "engage[d] in real world political and colonial parallels" and that more recent ones do not necessarily "promot[e] imperialism" (29), but continue to "explore the meeting of cultures and the variety of violent and military responses to that meeting" in a way that "mirrors the intercultural and intersocietal relations of our world" (32). Therefore, any critical reading of these texts, John Rieder (2008) asserts, needs to "decipher the fiction's often distorted and topsy-turvy references to colonialism" (3). In the first section of this chapter, I compare *BSG* to the original series in this vein in order to illustrate it's relevance for this study. With regard to themes like technology, imperialism, and Asia, these two texts differ significantly. I argue that the original series has been reimagined through the lens of American Far Orientalism. For the remaining part of this chapter, I follow Jane Park's (2010) recommendation to focus on undertheorized elements in Orientalism such as projection and fascination.

In the second section, I treat *BSG* as an entry point for a media ecological survey into science fiction, a genre which has been tied ever more closely with Orientalism since the 1980s. In particular, I juxtapose the histories of cyberpunk, a dystopian subgenre of science fiction, and neoliberalism, the political ideology responsible for the rise of unrestrained capitalism. In the course of this discussion, I also explore the emergence of Techno-Orientalism in more detail, a concept I only mention briefly in the previous chapters. Finally, I argue that transhumanism, a quintessentially American ideology, is projected onto East Asia whenever the future is believed to be both Asian and dystopian.

The last section is dedicated to the ways in which *BSG* and other texts frame East Asia as admirable or desirable at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Overall, I argue, the series emphatically recommends biological and cultural fusion of the West with a Spirito-Occidentalist vision of the East. Significantly, this fusion is brought about by the first of many Occidentalist heroines on American screens. Moreover, the rehabilitation of Asian American masculinity continues. Yet America's image of East Asia remains fundamentally ambiguous: It represents both the worst expression of modernity and the solution to its dehumanizing side.

Battlestar Reimagined

It is insightful to examine how *BSG* differs from the original series (*OGB*). Both texts, of course, are products of their time: the late 1970s and the early 2000s respectively. During the roughly 30 years separating *OGB* from *BSG*, the latter's creators witnessed the postmodern challenges to Western rationality, the September 11 attacks, and the economic and technological rise of East Asia. Therefore, these series are significantly set apart from each other, I argue, in the ways they relate to (1) technology, (2) imperialism, and (3) Asia.

(1) In both the original as well as the reimagined series, technology can hardly be thought about separately from religion. In *OGB*, technology paves the way to the divine. Gods, the devil, and angels simply are beings from more advanced civilizations. James E. Ford (1983) asserts that Glen A. Larson infused the series with Mormon theology. In "War of the Worlds, Part 2" (S01E16), technologically far superior white-robed beings convey the following words to their perplexed human audience: "As you are now, we once were. As we are now, you may become". Ford identifies the "unique concept behind this maxim … as the "law of eternal progression" (86). Humans may become gods by way of technology.

The story of *OGB* is also set in a far-off star system and concerns the endeavors of a fugitive fleet. The pursuing Cylons, however, have not been created to serve the Twelve Colonies as mechanical slave labor, but by a reptilian race which has fallen victim to them a long time ago. They are not a penance for hubris, but a divine stimulus for the Colonials to evolve. Moreover, the Cylons never delved into biotechnology and, therefore, remained entirely mechanical. They do not aspire to become more humanoid. If anything, it is the Colonials who yearn to become more cylonoid. In "Greetings from Earth, Part 2" (S01E20), Lieutenant Starbuck (Dirk Benedict) reveals his disdain for human irrationality: "Whatever's logical and in the interest of all mankind, we'll do exactly the opposite." He opines that androids should be put on the "Council of Twelve" in order to "start a world that reacts to logic instead of passion, greed, jealousy."

In *BSG*, irrationality is given an entirely different significance. Geoff Ryman (2010) finds a plethora of reasons to declare the reimagined series a "religious fantasy" rather than science fiction (37). "Prophecies come true", for instance, and characters "mystically intuit jump coordinates" (54). Moreover, the conflict of "artificial intelligence and synthetic life vs. human sentience and biological life", Christopher Deis (2008) notes, can also be interpreted

as a clash of "monotheism and polytheism" (157). This is because some Cylons seemingly believe in an Abrahmic God, whereas the Colonials put their faith in deities resembling those of Ancient Greece and Rome. However, *BSG* exhibits "a profound skepticism with regard to the veneration of God-like figures", Val Nolan (2013) observes, and proposes that "arbitrary religious division manifests always as destructive, disastrous conflict" (164, 169). More importantly, the series features several divine messengers which eventually unite Cylons and Colonials in their joint rejection of technology. Besides Virtual Six (Tricia Helfer) and Kara "Starbuck" Thrace (Katee Sackhoff), Dr. Gaius Baltar (James Callis) is the most remarkable of these characters.

In *OGB*, Count Baltar (John Colicos) betrays the Twelve Colonies hoping the Cylons will install him as dictator of his home colony. *BSG*'s Gaius is a traitor, too, but undergoes the most significant transformation of the series: a "journey from atheist lab-coat through cynical politician and cult-leader to … true believer in the saving power of spirituality" (164). He starts out as an admirer of the Cylons who expressly opposes the recent ban on artificial intelligence research. Increasingly plagued by self-loathing, he even dreams of being a Cylon himself in "Taking a Break from All Your Worries" (S03E13). Yet, among the Colonials, it is him who understands the nature of the cycle and the need to break it first. In "Escape Velocity" (S04E04), Gaius realizes that God loves him despite his faults such as having been "a profoundly selfish man". Eventually, this epiphany leads him to abandon the quest to transcend humanity and settle down as a farmer instead. In *BSG*, as in Yamada's trilogy of Easterns I discussed in the previous chapter, there is nothing wrong with irrationality per se and rationality is anything but a panacea. Rather there are good as well as bad aspects of emotions. Gaius' growth from self-hatred and ambition to self-compassion and gratitude redeems him. *BSG* is spiritual fantasy as much as it is science fiction.

In *Galactica 1980* (1980), the sequel series to *OGB*, the Colonials find that the humans of Earth are not technologically advanced enough to defend themselves against the Cylons. Consequently, they begin to work with the scientific community in order to speed up Earth's development. As mentioned above, the Colonials of *BSG* do exactly the opposite: By destroying all their technology, they try to retard development as much as possible. In "Daybreak, Part 3" (S04E21), Lee "Apollo" Adama (Jamie Bamber) comments on their deliberate return to the stone age: "Our brains have always outraced our hearts, our science charges ahead, our souls lack behind." Yet these efforts may not have been sufficient to break the cycle. The final scene depicts modern-day America, includes shots of advertised robots

and androids, and is accompanied by the words of Virtual Six: “Commercialism, decadence, technology run amok. Remind you of anything?” The development of artificial intelligence inevitably results in the fall of man. As punishment for their hubris, the Colonials are hunted down relentlessly by demons until they give up their wicked ways for a time. In “Occupation” (S03E01), Laura Roslin (Mary McDonnell) writes in her diary: “It is simply not enough to kill Cylons, because they do not die. They resurrect themselves and continue to walk among us. It is horrifying.” Between *OGB* and *BSG*, the desire to overcome human limitations has turned from virtue to sin and technology has become the path to damnation rather than salvation.

(2) *OGB* reads like an advertisement for benign imperialism. The Colonials believe in the eternal law of progression and see themselves in an evolutionary struggle with the Cylons. They are thoroughly militarized and doubt in military rule is punished immediately. Shortly after the Council of Twelve votes to end the emergency in “Baltar’s Escape” (S01E21), all members are taken hostage. Unsurprisingly, the edict is rescinded and emergency powers are restored to the fleet commander. The idea of civilian rule is ridiculous in a universe that is all about survival of the fittest. More importantly, in the name of freedom, the Colonials infringe upon other peoples sovereignty without hesitation. When they encounter the “Eastern Alliance” and the “Nationalists” in a Cold War-like standoff in “Experiment in Terra” (S01E22), Captain Apollo (Richard Hatch) justifies their interference by right of having superior technology in a speech: “I came from a world where the people believed the opposite of war was peace. We found out the hard way that the opposite of war is more often slavery.”

Whereas war is glorified and abuse of power is practically unheard-of in *OGB*, *BSG* is commenting on imperialism as a force that inevitably creates potentially endless cycles of paranoia and violence. The contrasting treatment of Cain, the commander of the battlestar *Pegasus*, is illustrative. In “Living Legend, Part 2” (S01E13), Commander Cain (Lloyd Bridges) immortalizes himself in a daring attack against two Cylon basestars. For *BSG*, the character is reworked from war hero to war criminal. Already traumatized by her experiences as a child during the First Cylon War, Rear Admiral Helena Cain (Michelle Forbes) becomes unhinged by the Fall. Flashbacks in *Razor* (2007) detail her crimes: She summarily executes her Executive Officer for insubordination, orders a massacre of resisting Colonial civilians, and allows her crew to torture a Cylon agent.

Whereas race does not play a role among the Colonials who come in all colors and sizes, it is the base for the Manichean world view that needs to be overcome in order to break the cycle. There are only two races in *BSG*, the human Colonials and the cybernetic Cylons.

However, many Colonials are fierce, stubborn, and brutal racists. They call Cylons "toasters" or "skin-jobs" and beat, torture, rape, or kill them without remorse. Lieutenant Athena (Grace Park), for instance, complains bitterly, "To [the commander], to the president, to all of them Cylons aren't people. I'm not a person to them. I'm a thing." in "Home, Part 2" (S02E07). Jack Fisk (Graham Beckel), the Executive Officer of the battlestar *Pegasus*, reminds Lieutenant Helo (Tahmoh Penikett) that "you can't 'rape' a machine" in "Resurrection Ship, Part 2" (S02E12). The most significant racist act in the narrative, however, is President Laura Roslin's (Mary McDonnell) order to destroy the unborn first human-Cylon hybrid arguing that "allowing this thing to be born can have frightening consequences" in "Epiphanies" (S02E13).

Though *BSG* mostly depicts the ensuing events from the perspective of the surviving Colonials, the series should not be misunderstood as simply one-sided. In *The Plan* (2009), for instance, the universe can be seen through the eyes of the Cylons. Matthew Gumpert (2008) puts it succinctly: "*BSG* is more cynical than … other pop culture post-Colonial fantasies" because "it does not let us forget that … it was we humans who ruled over our machines as Colonial masters" and, thus, the attack is "an act of revenge against Colonial rule" (147). Occasionally, as in "Lay Down Your Burdens, Part 2" (S02E20), Cylons speak like former colonized subjects: "We got it into our heads that we were children of humanity. We became what we beheld; we became you. […] We're machines, we should be true to that."

Morally, *BSG* does not easily take sides either. Battlestar Commander William Adama (Edward James Olmos) says the following during a speech delivered in the first part of the miniseries: "We still commit murder because of greed, spite, jealousy. And we still visit all of our sins upon our children. We refuse to accept the responsibility for anything that we've done". In "Resurrection Ship, Part 2" (S02E12), the Cylon Lieutenant Athena refers to this speech when she tells William, "You said that humanity never asked itself why it deserved to survive. Maybe you don't". Colonial scientist Gaius sighs the following words in the episode "Fragged" (S02E03): "It's all so pointless. We kill them, and they kill us, so we kill more of them, so they kill more of us". *BSG*, I argue, is about finding a way out of a Manichaean world full of violence: At the end, in "Daybreak, Part 2" (S04E22), Gaius asks the Cylon John Cavil (Dean Stockwell) as well as the American viewer: "Good and evil, we created those. Want to break the cycle?"

(3) Whereas *OGB* is devoid of any references to Asia, I read *BSG* as discussing (Far) Orientalism. For instance, Colonial scientist Gaius, as Eve Bennett points out in "Techno-Butterfly" (2012), is "a man whose designated function is to do for the Cylon race what eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Orientalists did for the Orient": He is to research it to produce a body of knowledge useful for their subjugation but his "erotic fascination with several of the female Cylons" is so intense that it almost completely "compromises his objectivity as a scientist" (25). Moreover, as Juliana Hu Pegues (2008) points out, there are several references to America's recent relations with West Asia. The attack on the Colonials are "a thinly veiled metaphor for the World Trade Center attacks" (196), torture practices on the *Pegasus* evoke "Abu Ghraib" and "Guantanamo" (198), and the disastrous attempt to colonize New Caprica "serves as a metaphor for the occupation of Iraq" (199).

More importantly, I read the human Colonials and the cybernetic Cylons as stand-ins for European (Americans) and East Asian (Americans) respectively. Jinny Huh (2015) asserts that "the Cylons are perhaps best embodied by its only black instantiation, Simon" (Richard Worthy), because they were "created as slave labor" (108). In contrast, I suggest that they are best understood as embodying the fears of Techno-Orientalism. The Cylons are more machine than human, cold, rational, and bent on either subjugating or eradicating humanity entirely. In addition, as Bennett (2012) mentions, they "are 'networked' in such a way that they share thoughts and memories" and "have a 'collective will' and do not accept individuality" (29). From the perspective of the Colonials, therefore, the Cylons are both technologically (vastly) superior and morally (somewhat) inferior.

The most significant character for the discussion of Orientalism in *BSG* is the Cylon Model Eight portrayed by Korean American/Canadian actress Grace Park. Whereas in *OGB* Lieutenant Boomer and Lieutenant Athena were humans played by African American actor Herbert Jefferson, Jr. and European American actress Maren Jensen, in *BSG* both characters are Eights: Sharon "Boomer" Valerii and Sharon "Athena" Agathon. Many Eights are thoroughly Orientalized. Bennett points out, for instance, that the Eights Boomer encounters aboard a Cylon baseship "are naked, making them impossible to distinguish from one another" although "there is no narrative explanation for their nakedness" (31).

John, himself a Model One, characterizes the Eights as "torn apart by conflicting impulses" in "No Exit" (S04E17). In fact, the two principal Eights, Boomer and Athena, seem to embody opposites. Boomer is a sleeper agent that cannot be trusted and uses sexual seduction to reach her programmed objectives. She even almost successfully assassinates

Galactica's commander. Athena's role, on the other hand, seems to be constructed to subvert the old stereotypes (and/or construct a new one). This has been noticed by Bennett, too. (1) Athena is "able to 'break' her programming" and "eager to prove that she is capable of thinking independently" (39). She chooses, for instance, to go to the *Galactica* with her human lover Helo and marry him instead of following her Cylon orders. Bennett remarks that "bestowing such marked American-style individualism on a 'good' Cylon like Athena forms part of a slightly distasteful valori[z]ation of this quality in *BSG* as a whole, as opposed to the conformity advocated by the (much less sympathetic) Cylon models One, Four and Five" (39-40). (2) "Athena's faithfulness to Helo prevents her from falling into the "Asian seductress" stereotype, as does the fact that the narrative ultimately allows the couple to be together in spite of their different 'races'". She is also by no means passive, eager to please, or dependent on her husband. Bennett makes clear that she is actually "a stronger person than Helo both physically … and in terms of her feisty personality". On top of that, (3) Athena "subverts the Madame Butterfly trope" (40). In "Rapture" (S03E12), for instance, in order to reclaim her abducted biracial daughter, she "forces an extremely reluctant Helo to shoot her so that she can resurrect" on a Cylon ship and rescues her – effectively reworking "the Butterfly tale, turning it from a submissive, pointless act into an active, productive one" (41). Finally, (4) Athena "does not try and disavow her own, different identity" but "continues to refer to the humans as 'you' and the Cylons as 'us'" and is neither "afraid to express a baldly Cylon point of view" nor willing "to do anything that could harm Cylons who are not an immediate danger to the Colonials" (40).

Furthermore, Athena and Helo's happy interracial marriage is the only one in *BSG* that is not burdened by distrust, anxiety, and infidelity and, as Bennett points out, is "clearly meant to indicate that relationships between Cylons and humans are a potentially positive phenomenon" (41). Though Boomer caused a lot of trouble when Helo "slept with her, while a bound and gagged Athena looked on from a half-open locker" implying that he is unable to "tell [Athena] apart from the rest of her model", the couple is "last seen holding hands with Hera in a beautiful meadow" (41). Moreover, Athena and Helo are the only real anti-imperialists. Other humans, for instance, immediately imagine new imperial projects as soon as they arrive on Earth and encounter indigenous people: Gaius, "like the good Orientalist he is, immediately sets to work studying them and making pseudo-scientific judgments about them, such as that they are a 'preverbal', 'early, ritualistic tribal society'". Apollo "opines that

the settlers should ‘give’ the indigenous people their language and ‘the best part of [themselves]’” (44).

Cylons in the Shadow

Boomer is a deeply conflicted character, because John cruelly places her onboard the *Galactica* as a sleeper agent with false memories and incomplete authority over her functions. Initially, she truly believes she is Sharon Valerii, a loyal Colonial Raptor pilot hailing from the planet Troy. Whenever her Cylon programming takes over, however, she commits acts of treachery. As George A. Dunn (2008) points out, "poor Boomer is afflicted with a profound form of *self-alienation*": either she is a Colonial "whose captive will lacks *self-control*" or a Cylon "whose deluded thinking lacks *self-knowledge*" (136, italics in original).

In "Water" (S01E02), Boomer is still sure it was not her who sabotaged *Galactica*'s water tanks: "I would never do something like that". Nevertheless, fearing she might actually be a Cylon, she increasingly agonizes over her identity. Boomer becomes horrified by, in Dunn's words, her "sense of being possessed by an *alien* power that's using her to execute an agenda she abhors" and attempts to kill herself (128, italics in original). Since her programming does not allow suicide, Boomer lives on believing she is a Colonial susceptible to evil impulses. Eventually, her defenses break down and she realizes that she has been created for a sole purpose: executing a hidden agenda while fully identifying with her cover. In "Downloaded" (S02E18), she cries out: "I didn't pretend to feel something so I could screw people over. I loved them. And then I betrayed them. [...] And why? Because I'm a lying machine!"

Boomer's predicament evokes the Cold War-fear of mind control evidenced in John Frankenheimer's thriller *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962). The film concerns the brainwashing of Raymond Shaw (Laurence Harvey), a US Army soldier captured during the Korean War and brought to Manchuria. Utilizing a newly developed technique, Dr. Yen Lo (Khigh Dhiegh) implants false memories of battle heroism into Raymond and programs him to become a mindless killer whenever triggered by his handler. Back in America, Raymond assassinates the rivals of Sen. John Yerkes Iselin (James Gregory) and thereby almost ensures his ascent to the presidency. Jonathan Demme's remake (2004) updates the scenario to a dystopian near-future America. This time a multinational company employs nanotechnology to turn soldiers into sleeper agents.

Another recent remake, Dan Bradley's action film *Red Dawn* (2012), also revolves around fears of communist and Asian takeovers. The Korean People's Army invades the

United States on both the East and the West coasts after disabling communication systems and thereby crippling the military with electromagnetic pulse weapons. John Milius' original (1984) was released during Ronald Reagan's reelection campaign. According to Dylan Yeats (2015), these films hail "a tradition of attacking Americans in order to convince them they are, or could be, under attack from so-called Orientals" (128). Key to this tradition, he asserts, was a succession of groups called Committee on the Present Danger (CPD). Founded in 1950, the first group advocated placing Cold War strategy "squarely in the charge of a vastly expanded military to develop … technological supremacy" (128). The second group played and instrumental role in former CPD member Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign and was rewarded with "the largest military buildup in human history" (131-32).

Reagan did not only make good on his pledge to "rearm America", he also ushered in the age of neoliberalism. In order to facilitate economic growth, he pushed financial deregulation, lowered taxes for the wealthy, and cut down non-military programs. With the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 Reagan lowered the top marginal tax bracket from 70 to 50 percent and with the Tax Reform Act of 1986 he dropped the top rate to 28 percent while he increased the lowest tax bracket from 11 to 15 percent. Moreover, during his presidency, the minimum wage was frozen at 3.35 dollars an hour, the federal assistance to local governments was slashed by 60 percent, the budget for public housing and Section 8 rent subsidies was cut in half, and the antipoverty Community Development Block Grant program was completely eliminated. On top of that, Reagan allowed for virtually unfettered marketing to children and teens.

The excesses of Reagan's new America became the subject of popular culture texts. With his drama film *Wall Street* (1987), Oliver Stone created a character symbolic of the times: the corporate raider Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas). During a speech, Gordon utters the following now infamous lines: "Greed, for lack of a better word, is good. […] And greed, you mark my words, will … save … the USA." Yet, later he admits that "the richest one percent of this country owns half our country's wealth" and most of this wealth comes from inheritance, interest accumulation, and stock speculation: "I create nothing. I own." Mary Harron's dark comedy film *American Psycho* (2000) even likens investment bankers to serial killers and "mergers and acquisitions" to "murders and executions".

More importantly, fears of unrestrained capitalism and further Reaganization also led to the creation of cyberpunk, a new subgenre of science fiction. Cyberpunk began as a literary movement started by writers William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, John Shirley, Rudy Rucker, and

Lewis Shiner, who built upon the works of Philip K. Dick, H. G. Wells, and the New Wave. Fredric Jameson (1991) called it "the supreme literary expression if not of postmodernism, then of late capitalism itself" (419). Cyberpunk features near-future societies which have taken all reins off their economic systems: Life is governed by multinational mega-corporations rather than nation-states; security is privatized, corruption is ubiquitous, and the underworld thrives; the deterioration of nature proceeds unchecked; social upheaval is widespread as the gap between the rich and poor has assumed astronomical proportions; the world is on the brink of collapse. The action takes place in dark, run-down, and overcrowded cityscapes lit up only by the neon light of advertisements. Though many characters distrust authority and rebel in one way or another, revolutionary change seems impossible. Cyberpunk "often fantasizes niches of resistance or escape", John Rieder (2020) points out, but "seldom imagines the possibility of a structural transformation in economic or political terms" (339).

Cyberpunk emphatically rejects utopian futurism. Technologies like computer processing systems, communications networks, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, robotics, and neural implants worsen the situation rather than improving it. In the words of Mike Featherstone and Roger Burrows (1995), the genre "sketches out the dark side of the technological-fix visions of the future" (3). Many innovative ways to enhance the body, for instance, would not be equally accessible to everyone. If only the most affluent members of society were able to utilize them to become smarter or even immortal, inequality would increase dramatically. Thus, one of the hallmarks of cyberpunk is the dichotomy of technological growth and social decline, which gets boiled down to the most basic definition of the genre: "high tech, low life".

Most importantly, cyberpunk frequently incorporates elements of Techno-Orientalism, causally linking the capitalist dystopia with East Asia. The common references to Japan mark "the obsession with the great Other", Fredric Jameson (1994) asserts, "who is perhaps our own future rather than our past, the putative winner in the coming struggle" (155). After World War II, Japan developed so rapidly that in the 1980s it seemed as if its usurping of the global throne of economic and technological leadership was inevitable. In the words of Christine Cornea (2006), Japanese corporations like Sony, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, and Mitsui "were moving from being the copiers/providers of Western-led technology to becoming the inventors/initiators of new technologies" (74). This development had drastic effects on the American imagination. According to David Morley and Kevin Robins (1995), Japan increasingly became synonymous with the technologies of the future: "screens, networks,

cybernetics, robotics, artificial intelligence, simulation" – and since the future is generally seen as technological, this "suggests that the future is now Japanese" (168). The chronological projection was so powerful that it still found its way into an American blockbuster about twenty years later. When Sam Witwicky (Shia LaBeouf), the protagonist of Michael Bay's film *Transformers* (2007), first catches sight of one of the titular machines, he exclaims: "It's a robot. But like a different … you know, like a super-advanced robot. It's probably Japanese. Yeah, that is definitely Japanese."

The "neat correlation between West/East and modern/pre-modern", as Morley and Robins call it, was now thoroughly destabilized (160). And so was the correlation between between West/East and superiority/inferiority. Japan's rise was tantamount to a technological emasculation of the United States, as it was the US military that brutally subjugated the Pacific country by dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki some forty years before. In the face of technological inferiority, it became all the more important to claim moral superiority. The Japanese may "conduct themselves with superb technological efficiency and capitalist expertise", as Stephen Hong Sohn (2008) puts it, but are characterized by "an undeveloped or, worse still, a retrograde humanism" (8). The "American subject", however, is not willing to give up individualism and "looms as an embattled but resistant fighter" (9). Moreover, Japan comes to be seen as "an eccentric and techno-fetishist paradise of pointless consumerism, the land where capitalism has gone awry", Artur Lozano-Mendez (2010) asserts, "thus making capitalist excesses in Western societies look reasonable" (190).

In the Orientalist imagination, Morley and Robins (1995) state, the "association of technology and Japaneseness now serves to reinforce the image of a culture that is cold, impersonal and machine-like, an authoritarian culture lacking emotional connection to the rest of the world" (169). At the core of Techno-Orientalism is the belief that, as they put it, "the barbarians have now become robots" (172). Yet, cyberpunk does not simply demonize technology but celebrates it, too. Protagonists often are hackers or cyborgs who use their computer literacy or cybernetic enhancements to rage against the machine. The genre remains "fundamentally ambivalent about the breakdown of the distinctions between human and machine", Istvan Csicsery-Ronay (1988) observes, as it indulges in technological marvels but highlights "the pressures exerted by multinational capitalism's desire for something better than the fallible human being" (275).

Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) surly is the most iconic cyberpunk film to this date. The story is set in the year 2019 and takes place in Los Angeles. The local Tyrell Corporation produces short-lived synthetic humans called "replicants" to be used as slave labor in extra-terrestrial colonies. Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford) is the titular "blade runner" tasked with hunting down a group of replicants which made their way back to Earth in order to demand extension of their life-spans. References to East Asia are plentiful: The cityscape evokes images of a crowded Hong Kong and a futuristic Tokyo. Between many *kanji* neon signs, a large electronic billboard depicts a young Japanese woman wearing a *kimono*, a *shimada*-style wig and *oshiroi* make-up. Moreover, some secondary characters representing the working class, like the Sushi Master (Robert Okazaki), converse in a multilingual pidgin which privileges Cantonese and Japanese. On top of that, two characters both link East Asia with technology: Chew (James Hong) deals with artificial eyes and is hooked to a machine; the Cambodian Woman (Kimiko Hiroshige) uses a microscope to reveal hidden traits of objects.

Robert Longo's action thriller film *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995) is a cyberpunk classic, too. The expository intertitle sets the stage: In 2021, "corporations rule" but are "opposed by the LoTeks, a resistance movement risen from the streets: hackers, data-pirates, guerilla-fighters in the info-wars". To defend themselves, the corporations "sheath their data in black ice, lethal viruses waiting to burn the brains of intruders", and entrust it to "mnemonic couriers, elite agents who smuggle data in wet-wired brain implants". PharmaKom, a multinational corporation has developed a cure for a new plague caused by information overload and electromagnetic radiation but holds it back to protect its profit margin, because "treating the disease is far more profitable than curing it". However, renegade scientists give the cure information to Johnny (Keanu Reeves), a rogue courier, who is to smuggle it to the LoTeks in Newark. Again, references to (South) East Asia abound: Johnny got his implants in Singapore, received the data in Beijing, and is threatened to be brought to Saigon where his head could be "run through a quantum interference detector". Moreover, PharmaKom, once an American company, is now in Chinese hands and uses the yakuza, "the most powerful of all crime syndicates", for enforcement. Takahashi (Takeshi Kitano), the main villain, is both a member of the yakuza and the executive of PharmaKom in the United States.

Unsurprisingly, the first cycle of cyberpunk films reveals the American obsession with Japan in the 1980s. Whereas *Blade Runner* and *Johnny Mnemonic* also refer to China and South East Asia, most cyberpunk films released in the eighties and nineties focus exclusively on Japan. Albert Pyun's B movie *Nemesis* (1992), for instance, features a world in which the

United States and Japan have merged and the dollar has lost much of its value. Yoshiro (Yuji Okumoto), a cyborg freedom fighter, puts it this way: "We only accept yen. American is so very ... how you say? ... questionable, yes?" The merging of America and Japan in favor of the latter is also a theme in Iain Softley's cult film *Hackers* (1995). Plague (Fisher Stevens), the main villain, declares hackers to be both the "samurai" and the "keyboard cowboys" of the new order. Significantly, however, the public faces of the American hackers scene are two Japanese American men: Razor (Darren Lee) and Blade (Peter Kim).

The 1990s saw further financial deregulation. In 1999, for instance, Bill Clinton signed the Financial Services Modernization Act into law. Thereby he repealed the Banking Act of 1933 which separated commercial and investment banking and was passed in reaction to the Wall Street crash of 1929. Less than a decade later, banks caused the 2008 financial crisis, the worst crisis since the Great Depression, but where bailed out with public money. In response, Occupy Wall Street emerged in 2011, a protest movement against greed, corruption, and inequality. Hollywood reacted with a number of films critical about Wall Street: Oliver Stone's *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps* (2010), J. C. Chandor's *Margin Call* (2011), Martin Scorsese's *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013), Adam McKay's *The Big Short* (2015), and Jodie Foster's *Money Monster* (2016). Moreover, cyberpunk was revived on the silver screen: Miguel Sapochnik's *Repo Men* (2010), Andrew Niccol's *In Time* (2011), and Neill Blomkamp's *Elysium* (2013) all feature capitalist dystopian storyworlds.

At the same time, Techno-Orientalism evolved, too. In 1991, Japan entered a decades-long period of economic recession, while Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan impressed the West with increasingly apparent success. The so-called "Four Asian Tigers" developed into high-tech industrialized countries with high-income economies. During this time, Korean technology companies like Samsung and LG became household names. Since the 1990s, thus, the imagined threat to the West emanates from the whole of East Asia rather than from Japan alone.

Consequently, the films of the second cyberpunk cycle do not focus on Japan. Instead, they re-cycle classic cyberpunk films and add arbitrary references to East Asia. Vincenzo Natali's *Cypher* (2002), for instance, updates *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) by transforming it into a thriller about corporate espionage. Before the final revelations, it appears that Morgan Sullivan (Jeremy Northam) is brainwashed to become a double agent in the information war between two ruthless technology companies: Digicorp and Sunway Systems. Moreover, he is being manipulated by a mysterious Asian woman portrayed by Lucy

Liu. Steven Spielberg's award-winning action film *Minority Report* (2002), in turn, pays homage to *Blade Runner* (1982). On the run, "PreCrime" police officer John Anderton (Tom Cruise) is bombarded with personalized advertisements made possible by retina scanning. One of these projects the image of an exotic Asian woman in a tropical paradise into his eyes while he hears an alluring voice: "Stressed out, John Anderton? Escape from it all. Get away, John Anderton. Forget your troubles." To avoid being identified by retina scanning, he purchases the eyeballs of a Mr. Yakamoto on the black market.

This cycle also saw remakes of two cyberpunk classics. Whereas Paul Verhoeven's *RoboCop* (1987) and *Total Recall* (1990) are devoid of any reference to East Asia, the reimagined films are Techno-Orientalized. In Len Wiseman's *Total Recall* (2012), at the end of the twenty-first century, Australia is referred to as the "Colony" and features cityscapes replete with East Asian influences: hip-and-gable roofs, Asian neon ads, straw-hatted gondoliers, Chinese lanterns, oil-paper umbrellas, and people donning neon-glowing Asian dragon tattoos. Moreover, protagonist Douglas Quaid (Colin Farrell) gets his news from a Vietnamese anchor, Lien Nguyen (Emily Chang), and is referred to Rekall by his Asian co-worker Marek (Will Yun Lee). Represented by McClane (John Cho), Rekall is a company dealing with dreams and false memories which operates from an office resembling an East Asian fantasy temple replete with red lanterns, Buddha statues, guardian lions, and terracotta soldiers. José Padilha has reworked the original in much the same way for *RoboCop* (2014). When police detective Alex Murphy (Joel Kinnaman) first wakes up after having been critically injured, he tries to escape the premises. He runs past seemingly endless rows of assembly line workers in pink clean-room suits and eventually collapses in a rice field tended to by farmers wearing conical hats. As it turns out, OmniCorp has transformed Alex into a cyborg in a testing facility somewhere in mainland China.

Ridley Scott's contributions to cyberpunk also got revitalized in this cycle. More than three decades after the release of *Blade Runner* (1982), the classic got a sequel: Denis Villeneuve's *Blade Runner 2049* (2017). According to Matthew Flisfeder (2020), whereas the original "registered our latent fears about the end of the welfare state" and "the deregulated plane of unfettered multinational capital", the continuation "responds to our current awareness of dystopia already realized" (144). Of course, there is no lack of references to East Asia. On his quest for identity, replicant KD6-3.7 (Ryan Gosling) uses a genetic analyzer, for instance, which speaks Japanese with a heavy American accent. And above the entrance of the deteriorated hotel he finds Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford) in, the Korean word *haengun* ("good

luck") is emblazoned. Moreover, the *Alien* franchise moved toward Techno-Orientalist cyberpunk. It features the mega-corporation Weyland-Yutani, which develops bio-weapons, produces combat androids, and colonizes extra-solar planets and moons. When the company receives a transmission warning about an unknown deadly alien species, it ruthlessly deceives and sacrifices employees in order to capture and study specimen. Between Ridley Scott's films *Alien* (1979) and *Alien: Covenant* (2017) the history of the company has been embellished significantly: Weyland-Yutani was formed when the Japanese Yutani Corporation won a bidding war with the Chinese Combine and took over the San Francisco-based Weyland Corp. This evokes the fears of East Asia buying out America which first manifested after Sony acquired Columbia in 1989 and re-emerged when Dailan Wanda bought AMC in 2012 and Legendary in 2016.

In 2017, Donald Trump was inaugurated as president of the United States and revived both Ronald Reagan's slogans and policies. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, for instance, dismantled Barrack Obama's Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010, which had improved financial regulation by enforcing accountability and transparency on the stock market to protect consumers and taxpayers. As a result, the next financial crisis looms. Trump was not just the figurehead of a reanimated neoliberalism, however, but also of the rise of antidemocratic politics. When "neoliberal economic policy devastated rural and suburban regions", Wendy Brown (2019) observes, the blame was shifted "from Wall Street to Washington because the latter mopped up the mess by rescuing the banks while hanging little people out to dry" (3-4). What grows "in the ruins of neoliberalism" is a "right-wing plutocracy", a "curious combination of libertarianism, moralism, authoritarianism, nationalism, hatred of the state, Christian conservatism, and racism" (2). Unsurprisingly, cyberpunk is booming. In 2018 alone, six films were released: Steven Spielberg's *Ready Player One*, Leigh Whannel's *Upgrade*, Federico D'Alessandro's *Tau*, Jeffrey Nachmanoff's *Replicas*, and Drew Pearce's *Hotel Artemis*.

Meanwhile, Techno-Orientalist fears refocused on China. The Chinese economy is the world's largest since 2010 and the six largest Chinese technology companies are now forces to be reckoned with: Huawei, Xiaomi, Baidu, Tencent, ByteDance, and Alibaba. Fears about China have intensified to such an extent that a new variation of Orientalism emerged: Fan Yang (2016) identifies "U.S. national debt to the Chinese state" as the central signifier of "Fiscal Orientalism" (386). Although she doubts that the 2008 financial crisis was the exact starting point, Yang believes this strain of the Yellow Peril discourse has manifested itself

ever since “in myriad U.S.-originated media artifacts” (376), such as political YouTube ads and Ridley Scott’s film *The Martian* (2015). Usually, in these narratives, public spending on social welfare is seen as the main cause for national debt. Since it requires the United States to borrow money from China, it is feared that this debt will eventually result in takeover by a communist power. Furthermore, Yang speculates, a “latent anxiety” that “China is only ‘returning’ to its glorious past as the world’s greatest power” may also play a role (389). As a matter of fact, however, China holds “no more than 10 percent” of American debt to which military expenses contribute to a much greater degree than social welfare programs (377). Fiscal Orientalist discourse, thus, suppresses “the linkage between state violence and national debt” (390).

Trump firmly established China as the main scapegoat during his term of office, Lok Siu and Claire Chun (2020) observe, in order to “punish it with new sanctions, tariffs, and even the cancellation of U.S. debt obligations” (422). In 2018, without economic justification, he started a trade war with China. Trump has demanded punitive tariffs on Japanese goods in the eighties and enforced them on Chinese goods about three decades later. He also stoked fears about scientific espionage and is responsible for “the removal of top Chinese American scientists from research institutions in the United States” (429): In 2019, among others, epidemiologist Xifeng Wu as well as neuroscientists Li Xiao-Jiang and Li Shi-Shua lost their positions. As Siu and Chun assert, “it is the potential loss of the commoditization of science and technology in the race for control of global market shares that drives this ‘witch hunt’ for possible intellectual property theft” (430). At the same time, the Chinese technology company Huawei and its subsidiaries were charged with “sanctions violations”, “conspiracy to steal trade secrets from American companies”, and even “federal racketeering” (434). Moreover, Trump blamed the COVID-19 outbreak on China, referring to the disease as either “the Chinese virus” or “kung flu”: The coronavirus supposedly “originated in the Wuhan Institute of Virology” and was either “intentionally bioengineered” or “carelessly leaked” (422).

Given these circumstances, it is likely that the next cycle of cyberpunk films will focus on China. So far, the most interesting text is *Mr. Robot* (2015-19), a television series written by Sam Esmail. Elliot Alderson (Rami Malek), the show’s protagonist, dreams of “saving everyone from the invisible hand” and is hellbent on taking down the megacorporation E Corp (S01E01). To this purpose, he leads a double life: During the day he works as cybersecurity engineer, but at night he leads the hacker group “fscociety”. Elliot and his fellow hacktivists succeed in practically erasing all consumer debt by encrypting E Corp’s

data. In response, the Bank of E uses bailout money to create a new digital currency. Elliot is devastated at first: We "didn't get rid of the invisible hand", he ruminates, but "turned it into a fist that punched us in the dick" (S03E01). Eventually, however, fsociety finds a way to evenly disperse all of E Corp's money into their costumer's digital wallets.

Most importantly, it turns out, E Corp is all but a front for an even more powerful organization: the Deus investment group. According to Phillip Price (Michael Cristofer), the CEO of E Corp, Deus was formed by Zhi Zhang (Bradley Darryl Wong), the Chinese Minister of State Security, with the goal to "bring together the world's wealthiest, most powerful men to consolidate control and manipulate global events for profit" (S04E02). On top of that, Zhi is the leader of the Dark Army, a Chinese group of hackers and terrorists who kill themselves when they fail their missions or are about to be captured. Its top operatives, especially Gao Xun (Lyman Chen) and Wang Shu (Jing Xu), are shown to be ruthless and even sadistic.

On the one hand, therefore, *Mr. Robot* is an expression of USA Network executives' belief in the "increased industrial significance of millennials", as Anthony N. Smith (2019) points out, a demographic group deemed to place "a high value on social equality" (444, 449). On the other hand, however, the series reboots an almost forgotten form of Orientalism. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Chinese supervillain Fu Manchu haunted American silver screens in no less than five films: from Rowland V. Lee's *The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu* (1929) to William Witney and John English's *Drums of Fu Manchu* (1943). Originally created by British novelist Sax Rohmer, the character's aspiration is world domination. Like Zhi Zhang, Fu Manchu plots in the background and sends agents of secret organizations to do his bidding. In Rohmer's novels and the films they spawned, Ruth Mayer (2014) asserts, "the constellations of the imperial situation are thoroughly and shamelessly inverted" since "the will to invade, take over, appropriate, and exploit is exclusively associated with the East" (47).

Techno-Orientalism has been characterized differently over the past twenty years. Stephen Hong Sohn (2008), for instance, asserts that it "manifests through ambivalence due to both a desire to denigrate the unfeeling, automaton-like Alien/Asian and an envy that derives from the West's desire to regain primacy within the global economy" (7). According to Dylan Yeats (2015), Techno-Orientalism produces "visions of the purportedly technologically sophisticated economies and peoples of East Asia as foils for Western anxieties about the digital or information age" (126). Envy, a desire to denigrate, and anxiety certainly do play a

role, but there might be emotions on deeper levels at work, too. I subscribe to Toshiya Ueno's (2001) ideas, which have been stated more precisely by Brian Ruh (2020). Techno-Orientalism functions as "a semi-reflective two-way mirror between Japan and the West": "We see a distorted image of what is on the other side, but we also see a reflection of ourselves superimposed on the image, which we may mistake for the reality of the other" (405). In conjunction with this concept, Jane Chi Hyun Park (2010) suggest that Techno-Orientalism reflects "the West's unconscious hatred for … traits of modernity *within itself*", such as "rationality, development, and progress" (8, italics in original).

At this point, the Jungian concept of the shadow is useful. According to Connie Zweig and Jeremiah Abrams (1991), "we bury in the shadow those qualities that don't fit our self-image" (xvi). In other words, everything we cannot accept about ourselves is repressed into the unconscious. Furthermore, "we see the shadow mostly indirectly, in the distasteful traits and actions of other people, *out there* where it is safer to observe it, and "we *project* by attributing [these qualities] to the other person in an unconscious effort to banish it from ourselves, to keep ourselves from seeing it within" (xviii, italics in original). Techno-Orientalism, thus, can be characterized as the projection of hatred for rationality and progress, or postmodern American self-hatred, onto East Asia. Cylons lurk in America's shadow.

Arguably, in the modern world, there are two converging pressures coercing us to become machines, one from the outside and another one from within: 1) capitalism's drive to maximize our exploitability and 2) our desire to transcend human limitations. Both pressures are made palpable in *BSG*'s cyberpunk prequel, the television series *Caprica* (2010). In "Gravedancing" (S01E05), Daniel Graystone (Eric Stoltz) gives a speech to the company's board of directors, essentially rendering his prototype as a modern slave: "This Cylon will become a tireless worker who won't need to be paid. It won't retire or get sick, it won't have rights or objections or complaints." At the same time, Clarice Willow (Polly Walker), a cell leader of a monotheistic terrorist group, misappropriates Graystone Industries' avatar program, which can be used to digitize a human mind. In "End of Line" (S01E10), she pitches Virtual Heaven to the Conclave of the Church: "Imagine a world in which death has been conquered, in which eternal life is not just a dream but a reality."

BSG focuses on the inability to accept human limitations. John, the leader of the Cylons, is not only bent on eradicating the Colonials. He is also driven by rage against his creators, the Final Five, because they designed him and the other seven models to be as human as possible. In "No Exit" (S04E15), John vents his anger in a conversation with Ellen Tigh (Kate Vernon),

one of the Final Five: “I don’t want to be human. I want to see gamma rays, I want to hear x-rays, and I want to smell dark matter. […] I am a machine and I could know much more. I could experience so much more, but I’m trapped in this absurd body.” John is absolutely obsessed with his limitations and even intents to open up Ellen’s skull, because he “can’t wait to see what perfection looks like on the inside” (S04E15).

“Perfection” is the key concept here. There are several predecessors of the reimagined Cylons, ranging from the replicants in *Blade Runner* (1982) to the machines in *The Terminator* (1984) and *The Matrix* (1999). The most interesting, however, is a species of cyborgs which featured in the television series *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987-94) and *Star Trek: Voyager* (1995-2001) as well as the film *Star Trek: First Contact* (1996): The Borg assimilate other species and enhance themselves with invasive technology, as Locutus (Patrick Stewart) puts it in *The Next Generation*, in order to “raise quality of life for all species” (S04E01). In *Voyager*, former Borg drone Seven of Nine (Jeri Ryan) stresses that they follow the “lure of perfection” (S05E02) and do “not tolerate imperfection” (S05E07). Yet, Captain Kathryn Janeway (Kate Mulgrew) considers them to be “the most destructive force [the Starfleet has] ever encountered” (S05E02).

Patrick Thaddeus Jackson and Daniel H. Nexon (2003) cite commentators suggesting the Borg represent Japan or communism and declare them to be “the collectivist enemy par excellence” (143). From a Techno-Orientalist perspective, the Borg certainly represent Japan or China. Like the Cylons, however, I read the them as a projection of American self-hatred rather than an expression of American anti-collectivism. In the Borg’s “obsession with ‘achieving perfection’ via technology”, Dan Dinello (2016) asserts succinctly, they echo and ultimately critique the techno-utopian philosophy of transhumanism” (88). Significantly, transhumanist thought did not emerge in East Asia. It “owes its roots to the age of the Enlightenment in Europe”, David Koepsell (2008) points out, and to René Descartes and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola specifically, who “considered a benefit of science to be the ability for humans to better ourselves, to ease or eliminate our frailties, and even extend lifespans” (244). Most importantly, transhumanism derives from “the ‘cyberculture’ that emerged in the 1980s and matured in the 1990s (245). In part, therefore, Techno-Orientalism is a negative reaction to an American philosophy which takes Enlightenment ideas to their extremes and, in Koepsell’s words, seeks to “legitimize the quest to overcome our humanity” (241).

America is just as alienated from itself as *BSG*'s Boomer. Both the Cylon and "the Manicheans exhibit the universal tendency to align one's identity with the good", George A. Dunn (2008) observes, "even at the cost of disavowing aspects of oneself that don't fit comfortably with that identity" (134). Significantly, these aspects are disavowed for their social unacceptability, irrespective of the subject's evaluation of said aspects. The shadow is showing, Connie Zweig and Jeremiah Abrams (1991) assert, "when we react intensely to a quality in an individual or group … and our reaction overtakes us with great loathing or admiration" (xviii). The "good" American subject embraces modernity, secularism, rationality, and progress. It buries its fear of becoming a robot and its unwillingness to give up compassion; it represses its loathing of rationality and progress and its admiration for spirituality. Thus, the American shadow is populated with both robots and monks. This is the Manichean split between Techno-Orientalism and Spirito-Occidentalism.

Breaking the Cycle

In *BSG*, three male characters are particularly fascinated with Cylon model Eight: John Cavil, Gaius Baltar, and Karl "Helo" Agathon. John, for instance, enjoys scantily-clad Boomer dancing for him in "Six of One" (S04E02) and Gaius stares at a naked Eight practicing *tai chi* in "Torn" (S03E06). These scenes seem to be designed, Eve Bennett (2012) points out, "to present the Eights as beautiful, exotic and mysterious and to mark them out as objects of desire for a white male viewer" (32). Significantly, as I explicate in the previous sections, the male characters involved share an adherence to transhumanist thought and the corresponding drive to perfection. The emotional basis for perfectionism, however, is shame expressed in the fundamental belief to be not good enough. In *Mr. Robot*, Zhi says that society constantly tells us that "we are the root of everything that is wrong" which is why by now "self-hatred is no longer considered an anomaly but a given" (S04E11). Interestingly, shame researcher Brené Brown (2007) seems to agree with this view: She finds that America is plagued by a shame epidemic.

John and Gaius are in need of compassion, the antidote to perfectionism. In *Star Trek: Voyager*, the Borg Queen (Susanna Thompson) tells Seven: "You're experiencing compassion, a human impulse. You've forgotten what it means to be Borg" (S05E15/16). Unfortunately, John seems to be beyond salvation. In "No Exit" (S04E15), Ellen attempts to save him: "We didn't limit you. We gave you something wonderful. […] The ability to … reach out to others with compassion. […] You are not a mistake. If you could just accept yourself as what you are …" Nevertheless, John commits suicide by putting a gun in his mouth and pulling the trigger. In many respects, therefore, this character resembles the Broken Knights I discuss in the last section of the second chapter.

Gaius, on the other hand, is a Romantic Savior. He was born to dairy farmers on Aerilon. Deeply ashamed of his family background, he sheds the Aerilon accent and becomes a computer technology engineer on Caprica. Yet, all attempts to compensate for his low self-esteem with ever greater achievements ultimately fail. Gaius' healing begins, however, when he discovers Cylon spirituality. In "Escape Velocity" (S04E04), he relates the insights he has gained: "Love your faults; embrace them. […] You have to love yourself. […] The truth is, we're all perfect." Eventually, he is able to return to his roots and settle down on Earth as a farmer. I read Gaius' staring at an Eight practicing *tai chi* as a representation of America's

admiration for East Asian spiritual traditions. In the last section of the third chapter, I discuss the continuous adoption of Buddhist practices by American health care professionals since the 1970s. Most recently, Kristin Neff (2011) has popularized the importance of self-compassion.

Spirito-Occidentalism also features in recent cyberpunk texts. In *Mr. Robot*, for instance, Elliot comes to an essentially Buddhist realization: He does not need to fight for a revolution, but shine brightly instead in order to kindle the flames of others around him. What matters is "showing up no matter how many times we get told we don't belong, by staying true even when we're shamed into being false, by believing in ourselves even when we're told we're too different" (S04E13). Moreover, *Tron: Legacy* (2010), Joseph Kosinski's sequel to the cyberpunk classic *Tron* (1982), can be read as a Zen-Buddhist refutation of perfectionism. Kevin Flynn (Jeff Bridges) is being detained in virtual reality by Clu (John Reardon), a program he created twenty years earlier. Kevin used this time to immerse himself in mediation. In the final confrontation, Clu rages against his creator's disapproval: "I took this system to its maximum potential. I created the perfect system!" Kevin calmly replies: "The thing about perfection is that it's unknowable. It's impossible but it's also right in front of us all the time."

In contrast to John and Gaius, Helo is neither a Broken Knight nor a Romantic Savior. He is not damaged by past experiences and therefore does not require healing by an Asian Fairy or Eastern spirituality. Even after the attempted genocide by the Cylons, he remains free of Colonial racism. Helo is blessed with exceptional moral integrity. In "Litmus" (S01E06), Athena's intuition tells her this much although she has yet to really get to know him: "He's a good man. He always does the right thing." When the Colonials also attempt genocide in "A Measure of Salvation" (S03E07), Helo considers the plan to be an atrocity and prevents its realization. He also strongly objects to the double crossing of the Cylon Rebels in "The Hub" (S04E09). Of course, Helo is no Pinkerton either. He never even thinks about abandoning Athena. In fact, his loyalty to both his wife and his daughter repeatedly brings him in conflict with crew members and Colonial fleet command.

Helo has most in common with White Knights, because he turns Athena away from the Cylons. Athena's defection is an unintended consequence of the experiment on Caprica in "Litmus" (S01E06): When the Cylons realize that Helo is trying to rescue Athena, they brutalize her mercilessly in order to make the pretense of captivity believable. Since the Cylons possess resurrection technology, risking ones life is meaningless to them. For Athena, therefore, Helo's actions are all the more impressive. Moreover, as Robert W. Moore (2008)

observes, he treats her with "affectionate solicitude" and makes her feel "valued and unique", effectively turning her into a person rather than a copy (9-10).

Nevertheless, as I discuss in the first section of this chapter, Athena is no Lotus Blossom. Neither is she an Asian Fairy since Helo does not need one. Instead, Athena is *BSG*'s Occidentalist main heroine, not just by virtue of her consistent moral superiority over every other character, Cylon or human, but because she is the one who breaks "the cycle" almost single-handedly by bridging the divide between Colonials and Cylons.

To begin with, Athena saves the remaining Colonials from annihilation several times. In "Flight of the Phoenix" (S02E09), for instance, a logic bomb is about to enable the Cylons to take control of the *Galactica.* Athena prevents this catastrophe by interfacing with the affected systems via optic cable, modifying the virus, and sending it back to the Cylon ships and thereby disabling them. During the Cylon occupation of New Caprica, she facilitates the escape of the Colonials. The fleet's ships are grounded since the Cylons took possession of the launch keys. In "Exodus Part 1" (S03E03), however, Athena manages to infiltrate the occupiers and retrieves the keys. Not long thereafter, in "The Passage" (S03E10), the fleet's food supply is contaminated in a highly radioactive star cluster and the Colonials face starvation. Due to her Cylon physiology, Athena is the only pilot able to withstand the radiation, do reconnaissance, and discover a planet rich in edible algae.

Moreover, Athena inspires trust in everyone. Commander William Adama, who was shot and almost killed by her lookalike Boomer in "Kobol's Last Gleaming, Part 2" (S01E13), even swears her in as an officer of the Colonial fleet in "Precipice" (S03E02). Athena also changes President Laura Roslin who was bent on killing her interracial child earlier: In "The Oath" (S04E15), Laura gives a speech addressing the fleet in which she explains that of all the decisions she had to make, "none was more frightening or more difficult than agreeing to this alliance with the Cylons". Inspired by Athena's actions, however, she understands now that "we have been locked in a struggle that has seen both sides suffer unspeakable loss" and asks her people to "reject those traitors who would use [their] fear of the Cylons to destroy Colonial civilization".

Motherhood is another key aspect of Athena's heroism. In "Valley of Darkness" (S02E02), Helo notes that Boomer and Athena share the "same grin, same laugh, all the little things". As established above, however, they have contrasting personalities. Amy Kind (2008) isolates the presence or absence of "maternal instincts" as the most significant difference (70). In "Rapture" (S03E12), for instance, Athena "will go to any length to save" Hera, whereas

Boomer "threatens to snap her neck" (65). LeiLani Nishime (2011), therefore, concludes that Helo's wife is "saved and redeemed by motherhood" (460), just like Vietnamese mothers of children fathered by US Army soldiers have been after the passing of the Amerasian Homecoming Act in 1987. In my reading, however, *BSG* transcends assimilation narratives about the acceptance of Alien/Asians. Athena is elevated to main heroine by giving birth to and protecting the child of prophecy.

Hera is the very first hybrid and the "Shape of Things to Come". In Christopher Deis' (2008) words, she is imbued with "fetishistic attributes" which range from the "metaphysical" to the "almost magical" and symbolically portrays her as a "child of destiny and a key to resolving the human and Cylon conflict" (164). Hera's blood cures cancer in "Epiphanies" (S02E13), for instance, and she appears in the Opera House Prophecy, a vision shared by Athena, Laura, and Caprica Six compelling all three to save her in "Crossroads, Part 2" (S03E20). In the end, Athena's daughter facilitates the realization that Colonials and Cylons are essentially the same and, thus, she represents the culmination of the cycle, the end of violence between supposed eternal enemies.

Several texts succeeding *BSG* also feature Occidentalist heroines. *Cloud Atlas* (2012), directed by Lana Wachowski, Andy Wachowski, and Tom Tykwer, entangles scenes from six different time periods spanning five centuries in a stream of social injustice. The responsible value system is best expressed in the line uttered by both Henry (Tom Hanks) and Georgie (Hugo Weaving): "The weak are meat, and the strong do eat." In 1849, for instance, Americans enslave the Moriori on the Chatham Islands and, in 1973, oil lobbyists arrange for the meltdown of a nuclear reactor in San Francisco. The developments of previous centuries culminate in a worldwide corporatocracy. Interestingly, in order to illustrate this part of history, the film switches focus from America to East Asia. In 2144, Neo Seoul is a cyberpunk dystopia. Sonmi-451 (Doona Bae), an enslaved humanoid clone, wakes up to reality and joins the rebellion. Eventually, she goes on a suicide mission to deliver a speech to the entire world and four offworld colonies: "From womb to tomb, we are bound to others, past and present, and by each crime and every kindness, we birth our future." Her revelation comes to late, however. Somni-451 is executed and civilization falls in 2240. Yet, in the post-apocalyptic world of 2321, people worship her and manage to migrate to a distant planet.

Another Occidentalist heroine saves the world from a zombie apocalypse in Karl Schaefer and Craig Engler's television series *Z Nation* (2014-18). Under the code name "Red Death", European American doctors Walter Kurian (Donald Corren) and Merilyn Merch (Lisa

Coronado) create the zombifying virus ZN1. In 2016, the virus gets released from the underground laboratory in Colorado and spreads fast. The United States fall and there is little hope for a cure until the arrival of Dr. Sun Mei (Sydney Viengluang), a Laotian virologist trained in Beijing (S03E02). She is accompanied by a group of Pan Asian soldiers equipped with high tech weaponry like the anti-zombie grenade, which acquiers targets via laser beams and fires explosive projectiles. Her mission is to harvest anti-bodies from American survivors in order to create a vaccine. At the end of the series, Sun Mei even finds a cure for ZN1 (S05E12). The United States cause a global catastrophe which is remedied by Pan Asian efforts.

Most recently, the episode "Good Hunting" (S01E08) of the Netflix animated anthology series *Love, Death & Robots* (2019-present) also features an Occidentalist heroine. The story takes place in China and focuses on the plight of a young *Huli jing*, a mythological creature able to transform itself. Yan (Elaine Tan) hunts chicken as a nine-tailed fox and charms men as a beautiful woman. When the British colonize Hong Kong and advance industrialization, however, China is drained of its magic and Yan loses her ability to turn into a fox. Since she cannot hunt anymore, Yan has to rely on her beauty to get by and prostitutes herself to British suitors. Eventually, she becomes the mistress of Hong Kong's governor, who drugs her and replaces most of her body with mechanical parts. Yan comments this event in this way: "The truth is, he could only get hard for machines, and he wanted the ultimate machine to serve that twisted desire."

Interestingly, whereas Ken Liu's (2012) original short story stops at criticizing both the West's sexual exploitation of the East and it's fetishization of machines, screenwriter Philip Gelatt and director Oliver Thomas radicalize it into a tale of anti-colonial revenge. In both versions, Yan meets Liang (Matthew Yang King), a Chinese engineer who modifies her mechanical body in order to restore her ability to transform. In the adaptation, however, Yan is not satisfied with being able to hunt for food again. Instead, she wants to hunt "the men who perpetrate evil, but call it progress". The final scene, missing in the original, shows Yan attacking a group of British sexual predators, who corner a Chinese woman in a dark alley.

Besides Occidentalist heroines, the 2010s have also seen more Asian Fairies. In Rian Johnson's science fiction thriller *Looper* (2012), for instance, an American assassin and drug addict is reformed by the love of his Chinese wife. Young Joe (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) executes a crime syndicate's enemies who are sent back to the year 2044 to circumvent the tracking systems of the future. When Old Joe (Bruce Willis) comes back from 2074 to prevent

to prevent the murder of his wife (Summer Qing), he lectures his young self: “Let’s take a look at your life. You’re a killer, you’re a junkie, you have a fucking child mentality. […] You’re so self-absorbed and stupid. She’s gonna clean you up and she’s gonna ... You’re gonna take her love like a sponge.”

Significantly, this time the romance between a Broken Knight and an Asian Fairy takes place within a broad Occidentalist vision of the future. The rise of China coincides with the decline of the United States and Europe. This is evidenced visually and emphasized in a conversation Young Joe has with his boss Abe (Jeff Daniels). Consecutive shots of Kansas City and Shanghai contrast American and Chinese cityscapes: dilapidated and crime-ridden on the one hand, modern, clean, and safe on the other. Abe notices that Young Joe plans to leave his old life behind by going oversees and asks him which language he is studying. Joe’s reply astounds him: “Why the fuck French? […] I’m from the future. You should go to China.” *Looper* imagines East Asia to be morally and technologically superior to the West at the end of the twenty-first century.

Amazon’s alternate history television series *The Man in the High Castle* (2015-19), an adaptation of Philip K. Dick’s novel from 1962, also features an Asian Fairy, although the original does not. In a parallel universe, the United States lost World War II and got split along the Rocky Mountains between Nazi Germany and the Empire of Japan. Frank Frink (Rupert Evans), one of the show’s main characters, tries to stay out of trouble as a factory worker in San Francisco. When the *Kempeitai*, the secret police of the Imperial Japanese Army, discover that his girlfriend’s sister is involved with the Resistance, however, they torture him and kill his sister, niece, and nephew. He falls into suicidal depression and is pulled out only when he meets Sarah (Cara Mitsuko), a Japanese American freedom fighter. She helps Frank tap into his dormant defiance and convinces him to join the Resistance. Soon he is initiated by killing a Japanese policeman who threatens to shoot Sarah.

In “Escalation” (S02E04), Frank is elated: “I kept my head down for so long, I forgot what it feels like to stand up. So yeah. I feel better than I have in a long, long time.” Yet he has mixed feelings toward Sarah. On the one hand he hates the Japanese, on the other hand he is very attracted by Sarah who he admiringly calls a “firebrand”: “What’s a Japanese woman doing fighting the Japanese?” Sarah explains that she was born in America and that she and her family have been treated like traitors by both the Americans and the Japanese ever since World War II started. The episode ends with the first sex scene of the series. Tragically, Frank cannot get over his racist hatred and begins to distance himself from his Fairy. Like some of

the Broken Knights I discuss in the last section of chapter two, therefore, he cannot be redeemed. Significantly, Frank gets decapitated with a *katana* at the site of the Manzanar concentration camp (S03E09).

Interracial love is obviously promoted in *BSG*, but only in a particular and familiar form. Asian (American)-European (American) mixings, Jinny Huh (2015) points out, seem to be "acceptable only when the Asian partner is female, highlighting the invisibility and silencing of Asian male sexuality" (110). She also asserts that the "limited visions of black-white mixings reveal a fear of blackness that continues to prevail today" (109). This, of course, has to be seen in the context of the Model Minority myth. Interestingly, both of these shortcomings have been overcome in a television series which has surpassed *BSG* in terms of grittiness, reach, and revenue: *The Walking Dead* (2010-22).

Since the release of the aforementioned film *Bridge to the Sun* (1961), Asian (American) male characters have hardly ever been seen in romantic relationships with European (American) female ones on American screens. In *The Walking Dead*, Steven Yeun continues the representational trailblazing begun by James Shigeta. Glenn Rhee, the Korean American character portrayed by Yeun, not only proofs to be a capable survivor and resourceful provider for the group, he also ends up marrying Maggie Greene (Lauren Cohan), an Irish American farmer. Moreover, the couple features in the show's most prominent sex scenes and eventually produces a son.

In "Cherokee Rose" (S02E04), Glenn starts to have an eye for Maggie and shortly thereafter she offers herself to him on a supply run because her options are "not vast these days". Despite perceiving him as a stopgap solution initially, Maggie soon begins to admire Glenn. In "Secrets" (S02E06), she tells him, "You're smart. You're brave. You're a leader." More and increasingly passionate lovemaking follows in "Killer Within" (S03E04) and "Arrow on the Doorpost" (S03E16). In "This Sorrowful Life" (S0315), Glenn gets the approval of Maggie's father and proposes marriage. The couple's son, Hershel Rhee, is first seen on ultrasound in both "Knots Untie" (S06E11) and "The Other Side" (S07E14). Glenn is the shows Model Lover.

Importantly, Glenn is also presented as superior to main European American male characters in regard to morality and survival skills. In "When the Dead Come Knocking" (S03E07), for instance, he heroically withstands torture at the hands of the racist and sadist Merle Dixon (Michael Rooker). At the very beginning of the show, Glenn even both saves and ridicules the stetson-wearing and horseback-riding protagonist Rick Grimes (Andrew

Lincoln) after he gets overwhelmed by zombies in "Guts" (S01E02). This is especially significant since the cowboy arguably is one of the most recognizable symbols of America. *The Walking Dead* features the first true Occidentalist hero.

Glenn's ascent to new heights of Asian American masculinity on screen is not happening in a postapocalyptic scenario by chance. "Zombie television", Helen K. Ho (2016) points out, gives viewers a "vicarious opportunity to see the benefits and limitations of existing social structures and hierarchies" (59). In other words, the postapocalypse can be read as a "dystopian space with utopian possibilities" (72). When faced with an "absolutely inassimilable and threatening race of zombies", the Alien/Asian suddenly feels a lot more assimilable to European American survivors (62). Moreover, while Glenn's "growth as a character on the margins to one central to the survival of the group" takes place, the "institution of white patriarchy and its modes of domination over others" become an "unsustainable solution" (66-67). Rick, for instance, is unable to save his wife and his actions contribute to the loss of both the farm and the prison as safe havens for the group. Eventually, he loses the trust of his followers and even his son doubts his ability to lead. Since the Model Minority myth "was created to uphold the virtues of white masculinity", Ho concludes, the category itself" must dissolve as the qualities of white masculinity become untenable" (71).

LeiLani Nishime (2011) recognizes *BSG* for bringing a "new element to the representation of the interracial family" since "earlier filmic representations were primarily set in Asia and ended before questions of family or reproduction arose" (460). Although groundbreaking in certain important respects, however, *BSG*'s treatment of the interracial family is not entirely without precedent. The assimilation narrative found in previously discussed films like *Japanese War Bride* (1952), *Bridge to the Sun* (1961), and *Come See the Paradise* (1990) has been adapted to new sociocultural and media ecological circumstances for *BSG* and again for *The Walking Dead* (2010-22).

With regard to the significance of the mixed-race offspring, these texts can be allocated to three separate categories. In the films preceding *BSG*, children only compound the hardships their parents have to face in a profoundly racist society. *Japanese War Bride* serves as a prime example. Fran Sterling (Marie Windsor), Jim (Don Taylor) and Tae's (Shirey Yamaguchi) own sister-in-law, uses the newly-born baby as an attack vector when she sends an accusatory letter to the head of the family anonymously: "Talk is getting around that this girl's baby looks a hundred percent Japanese. Has it occurred to you that she may have been a little to friendly with Shiro Hasagawa?" In contrast, the characters of *The Walking Dead* are

"colorblind". Glenn and Maggie's son has no added significance beyond being the product of two survivors falling in love. The show's stance is expressed through Rick when he lectures Merle in "Guts" (S01E02): "Things are different now. There are no 'niggers' anymore; no dumb-as-shit-inbred-whitetrash-fools, neither. Only white meat and dark meat." In *BSG*, however, Hera being the child of an interracial couple is of utmost importance.

Christopher Deis (2008) detects a "dual tendency of fascination and revulsion to the mixed-race body" (163) in *BSG*. Whereas the Colonials start out fearing everything Cylon and wanting to get rid of Hera, the Cylons are fascinated by her since they long for gaining the ability to reproduce naturally. Whereas Geoff Ryman (2010) believes that *BSG* replicates the American myth of the "melting pot", anybody not belonging to the "white folk … in power" gets "assimilated completely" (47), I side with Matthew Gumpert (2010) who argues that Hera is an unprecedented entity whose "true hybridity signifies the end of race itself" (153). Interracial reproduction is the key to shattering the Old World of *BSG*. Thus, like Maria P. P. Root (1995), the series can be seen as proposing that "racial borders" are the "new frontier". At it's most extreme, the series turns eugenic when Colonel Saul Tigh (Michael Hogan), one of the Final Five, expresses his contempt for purity in "Deadlock" (S04E16): "Pure human doesn't work. Pure Cylon doesn't work. It's too weak." Diverging significantly from preceding texts, therefore, *BSG* reimagines a "hybrid version of eugenics for the postmodern world" (2), Anne Kustritz (2012) asserts, and "proposes a happily-ever-after based on breeding difference out of humanity by breeding in hybridity, an oxymoronic offer of simultaneous inclusion and erasure" (9).

I conclude this chapter with an examination of the Cylon Civil War. The humanoid Cylon models created by the Final Five are divided ideologically from the very beginning of *BSG*: the loyalist Number Ones, Number Fours, and Number Fives versus the rebel Number Twos, Number Threes, Number Sixes, and Number Eights. These two factions clash repeatedly until the conflict is ended with violence. The war begins during the Battle of the Ionian Nebula in "He That Believeth in Me" (S04E01), when John removes the Raiders' inhibition to attack fellow Cylons. To retaliate, the rebels release the Centurions' self-awareness and turn them against John's faction during the Battle of the Trinary Star System in "Six of One" (S04E02). The ensuing extremely self-destructive war ends in "Daybreak, Part 2" (S04E20) with the complete loss of resurrection technology and only a few rebels surviving.

The contrast in treatment of Hera serves to illustrate the ideological divide between the two factions. As revealed in "The Farm" (S02E05), John and his followers try and fail to unlock the secret of biological reproduction by implanting captured Colonial women with hybrid embryos. Driven by perfectionism, therefore, John callously views Hera as a "half-human-half-machine object of curiosity that holds the key to our continued existence somewhere in her genetic code" and wants to dissect her in "Daybreak, Part 1 (S04E19). The rebels, in contrast, believe both that conception requires love and that their God literally is love. Consequently, they declare Hera to be "truly ... a miracle from God" and start revering her in "Final Cut" (S02E08). Another major source of conflict is John's adherence to a strict moral dualism. Throughout the series he remains hellbent on punishing the Final Five and eradicating the Colonials. In Daybreak, Part 2 (S04E20), the rebels' viewpoint is best expressed by converted Gaius: "God is a force of nature beyond good and evil."

In my reading, *BSG* has been cleansed of the Mormon theology found in *OGB*. Becoming gods by way of technology is not the goal. There is no divine law of eternal progression. Instead, the Cylon leader's endless desire to transcend human limitations is rooted in profane but profound feelings of deficiency. John's self-hatred is a form of hubris: measuring himself against the highest standard, a perfect machine. The rebels offer a spiritual solution to his predicament. As it turns out, the Cylon rebels may not worship an Abrahamic God, but rather understand the universe to be governed by a balancing force akin to the *tao*. John refuses to take the path to salvation paved by both acceptance and (self-)compassion and pays the price. Transhumanism is the disease and a mixture of Taoist and Buddhist beliefs is the antidote. The Cylon Civil War represents the Manichean split between Techno-Orientalism and Spirito-Occidentalism; the battle between robots and monks raging in the American shadow I have sketched in the previous section.

What I have tried to explicate in this discussion of Orientalism/Occidentalism can be visualized in a fourfold table:

"The East" is	morally inferior	morally superior
technologically inferior	Orientalism	Spirito-Occidentalism
technologically superior	Techno-Orientalism	Occidentalism

Neatness and simplicity of this table falsely suggest unmitigated distinctiveness and historical universality. This is the downside of my effort to reduce complexity in order to achieve conceptual clarity. Particular cases in social reality usually are not clear-cut enough to warrant easy categorization. Moreover, these types are far from timeless. Classic *Orientalism* has risen steadily in the West between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, justifying expansionism and economic exploitation of the Rest. A backlash long dammed up, anticolonial *Occidentalism* finally broke loose in a triumphant East Asia during the 1980s and 1990s. As a non-Western type, however, it is the least relevant here. This study focuses on the remaining two types: *Spirito-Occidentalism* developed in conjunction with European Romanticism or Anti-Industrialism and flourished in America as a response to the war of aggression in Vietnam to protect the free market, whereas *Techno-Orientalism* was genuinely American anxiety provoked by the breathtaking speed of post-WWII economic growth in East Asia. The latter is a projection of radical rationalization and everything else that is dehumanizing about Western modernity onto the peoples of East Asia to preserve self-respect, the former is an expression of self-disgust in conjunction with hope for salvation by the spiritual traditions of Buddhism and Taoism.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, the evolution of American Far Orientalism has reached a point at which Occidentalism should not be considered a non-Western type anymore. A case in point beside the increasing number of Occidentalist heroines and heroes populating the representational ecology is the origin story of Bitcoin, which was chronicled, for instance, by Benjamin Wallace (2011). In 2008, a group of American tech-enthusiasts disguised themselves as a single East Asian genius inventor when they released upon the world a new technology which has a chance to achieve what Occupy Wall Street could not: Bitcoin. Two of the cryptocurrency's most important features are its publicly distributed ledger and the fixed supply. Private banks are no longer needed to facilitate and verify transactions; central banks are no longer needed to manage the money supply. Among other things, the continued adoption of this technology would mean the disruption of the global financial system and the end of the US dollar hegemony.

In the 1990s, about a decade after the birth of the cyberpunk movement, a group of libertarian cryptographers working on privacy-enhancing technologies began to refer to themselves as "cypherpunks". Most evidence points to the core developers of Bitcoin being of European descent. Yet they chose to name the supposed inventor "Satoshi Nakamoto". Whether or not this is a "sly portmanteau of four tech companies: SAmsung, TOSHIba,

NAKAmichi, and MOTOrola", this choice suggests Hal Finney et al. believed that imbuing their project with an aura of East Asia would somehow be conducive to its success. A project, mind you, which from their point of view would drastically change the world for the better. The cypherpunks, therefore, turned the dystopian vision of an East Asian future into a utopian one and contributed to the ongoing rehabilitation of Asian American masculinity.

5) Conclusion:

The Many Faces of American Far Orientalism

The previous three chapters chronicle the evolution of American Far Orientalism from the 1980s to the 2010s. The first case study focuses on Michael Cimino's crime thriller *Year of the Dragon* (1985). My analysis is embedded in discussions of contemporary films related to the Vietnam War and its sociocultural aftermath as well as the emergence of both the Model Minority myth and the redemption narrative. Ultimately, I read *YTD* as indicating the beginning of a gradually deepening cultural insecurity about American modernity in the face of perceived East Asian successes. The next chapter is concerned largely with contextualizing Edward Zwick's epic historical drama *The Last Samurai* (2003) within the genre histories of both the American Western and the Japanese Eastern in order to determine its position towards modernization and American imperialism. These efforts culminate in investigations of the ways of how the film relates to the popularization of Buddhism and reworks the White Savior trope. As a result, I read *TLS* as associating America with degrading materialism and East Asia with revitalizing spiritualism. The final case study offers an analysis of Ronald D. Moore's science fiction series *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-09) on the background of the rise of neoliberal economic policy and transhumanist philosophy as well as in relation to the genre history of cyberpunk. In conclusion, I read *BSG* as innovation on the assimilation narrative and as another significant step towards American Occidentalism.

My research results enable me to distinguish four phases in the history of American Far Orientalism and offer some suggestions for expanding the conceptual toolbox. The period from the 1920s to the 1940s was characterized by relatively definite cultural hostility. The Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) and the Asiatic Barred Zone Act (1917) both reflected and stoked the fears associated with the Yellow Peril and severely restricted immigration from East Asian countries. During this time Chinese immigrants came to be associated with epidemic plagues and sexual threats. Chinese women, for instance, were imagined to be manipulative agents in a racial war who spread disease deliberately. Many films, thus, featured Dragon Ladies: East Asian female characters who are mysterious and alluring but also evil and scheming.

In the aftermath of the wars in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, both the War Brides Act (1945) and the Amerasian Homecoming Act (1987) played important parts in changing this

perception. In a backlash against domestic feminism, the image of East Asian women morphed from mercenary prostitute to preferable spouse. Thus, the Lotus Blossom became the predominant stock character in the period from the 1940s to the 1970s. Salvation and assimilation narratives represented hypersexuality and submissiveness as integral parts of East Asian femininity. Male characters, in contrast, transformed from Lecherous Fiends to Sadistic Soldiers.

During the following period from the 1980s to the 1990s, the level of ambiguity rises substantially. As a result of the Immigration and Nationality Act (1965) and in another backlash against affirmative action, East Asian immigrants came to be seen as the Model Minority. At first, male characters were thoroughly desexualized and lost their menacing aura. When Japan and other East Asian nations started to pose a threat to American economic dominance, however, the Meek Geek turned into the Ruthless Businessmen. At the same time, the salvation narrative reversed polarization. White Knights do not save Lotus Blossoms from barbarians anymore but turn into Broken Knights in need of an Asian Fairy's magic. Whereas in the previous period these stories were set in East Asia and concerned the rescue of passive damsels in distress, at the end of the twentieth century they were set in America and featured spirited, resourceful, and compassionate heroines who save disillusioned and embittered men.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a significant shift can also be noticed in redemption narratives. Typically, these stories were concerned with a White Savior who help the African or Native (American) Other and thereby redeem themselves as well as American history and culture. In the period from the 2000s to the 2010s, however, an interesting variation emerged. The Romantic Savior is motivated by admiration rather than pity and helps the East Asian Other in a futile attempt to fend off imperialism. This character is even more disillusioned with American modernity than the Broken Knight. Its recovery requires not only an Asian Fairy's loving embrace but also an Oriental Monk's spiritual guidance. Moreover, during this period the assimilation narrative changed as well. Whereas mid-twentieth-century stories focused on the hardships an interracial couple has to face, more recent variations occasionally elevate mixed-race offspring to symbols of a better future.

Whereas large-scale and rather abrupt developments can be attributed to sociohistorical events like international conflicts, the passing of public laws, and the emergence of social (justice) movements, smaller-scale and more incremental changes are the result of cinematic struggles against previous representations. All in all, these small adaptive shifts amount to an evolutionary process from Asiaphobia towards Asiaphilia. Since the geographical dualism is

an integral part of American Far Orientalism, the upvaluing of East Asia is concomitant with the devaluing of America. During the period from the 1920s to the 1940s, there is very little doubt about Western superiority and Eastern inferiority. This is classic Orientalism. The level of ambiguity rises throughout the twentieth century, however, before the scale starts to tip at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Two major historical events helped upset the neat distinctions of Orientalism: Whereas the defeat in the Vietnam War challenged the West's superiority in terms of morality, the economic rise of Japan and the Four Asian Tigers did so in terms of technology. During the period from the 1980s to the 1990s, many films began to indicate a deepening insecurity about American modernity. Some European American protagonists cannot handle the shattering of Manifest Destiny and turn towards the East for salvation or redemption. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, these variations on Orientalism became more pronounced. Whereas Techno-Orientalism asserts both technological superiority and moral inferiority of the East, Spirito-Occidentalism is the mirror image: the East is technologically inferior but morally superior. American modernity is associated with the dehumanizing effects of materialism and East Asia represents either the dark future or the bright past.

More recently, these developments can be traced as far as interactive screen media produced in Europe. The highly anticipated and controversially discussed role-playing video game *Cyberpunk 2077* (2020), for instance, is replete with references to East Asia and amalgamates the themes of Techno-Orientalism and Spirito-Occidentalism in its discussion of neoliberalism, transhumanism, and Buddhism. In a world in which the Japanese megacorporation Arasaka and its competitors literally and figuratively wage war on humanity in order to achieve ever increasing profit margins, the only true rebels seem to be Buddhist monks. By completing the quest "Losing my Religion" or finding and reading the info shard "Buddhism and Cyberware: A Perspective", the attentive player might learn that these monks refuse to be pulled into the maelstrom of technology. While an ever increasing number of people succumb to "cyberpsychosis", a mental disorder caused by the excessive use of cybernetic implants, they advocate Buddhist principles like non-attachment and compassion.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, some American science fiction and post-apocalyptic fiction films and television series even suggest a complete reversal of classic Orientalism. This development was foreshadowed in the previous period by the metamorphoses of stock characters: The relationship between Broken Knights and Asian Fairies is now reproduced on the level of nation states. Occidentalist narratives feature

storyworlds in which America is in steep economic and cultural decline or the cause of catastrophic events on a global scale. Hopes for salvation are usually projected onto China.

Edward Said was interested in tracing continuities from the past into contemporary culture. A complementary focus on change, however, reveals that representations of East Asia(ns) on American screens have evolved significantly over time. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, American Far Orientalism cannot be adequately characterized by the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Eastern inferiority. However, the developments mapped in this study do not signify the imminent overcoming of Orientalism. Neither have stereotypes been shattered nor have fantasies been dispelled. Merely the levels of variety and ambiguity have risen to new highs. The very core of Orientalism – the Manichean dualism – is still intact.

Much has been repeated and recycled. Philip Noyce's political drama *The Quiet American* (2002), Paul McGuigan's crime thriller *Lucky Number Slevin* (2006), Michael Mann's action thriller *Miami Vice* (2006), and David Fincher's biographical drama *The Social Network* (2010), for instance, feature hypersexualized and fetishized Asian (American) female characters paired with European (American) love interests. Extreme close-ups during sex scenes and high color saturation emphasize racial difference. Interestingly, however, the most blatantly Orientalist productions have flopped recently. Two examples are the medical drama series *The Knick* (2014-15) and the historical drama series *Marco Polo* (2014-16).

Marco Polo is a visualization of perhaps the most quintessential Far Orientalist text: the travel report of the Italian merchant that introduced Europeans to Central Asia and China in the fourteenth century. The show features a precious and graceful China Doll princess (Zhu Zhu as Kokachin), a blind martial arts super hero monk (Tom Wu as Hundred Eyes), a feisty Mongolian warrior girl (Claudia Kim as Khutulun), a heartless Fu Manchu style Chinese villain (Chin Han as Jia Sidao), and a royal prostitute/caring mother that is most deadly in the nude (Olivia Cheng as Mei Lin). Ultimately, *Marco Polo* is not about the life of the adventurer but about his mythical accounts, about beautifully shot scenes from a European (American) man's dreams. The episode "Hashshashin" (S01E05), for instance, is not only the result of creatively mixing the complete repertoire of cinematic Orientalism (that the story takes place in Northern China does not stop creator John Fusco from throwing in Syrian ninja-assassins and Japanese Geisha aesthetics), but culminates in a steamy hash-induced sex orgy presented in kaleidoscopic vision.

The Knick concerns the professionalization of surgery in the New York of the early twentieth century and frequently broaches the issue of anti-African American racism. Yet it uses the historical setting to Orientalize Chinese Americans. Dr. John W. Thackery (Clive Owen) frequently visits the opium den on Mott Street, owned by the mysterious Ping Wu (Perry Yung) and populated by many prostitutes eager to please like the mesmerizing Lin-Lin (Ying Ying Li). Both television series were canceled after their second seasons. Classic Orientalism is still alive but may have lost its profitability.

This study is limited by its focus on European American productions and narratives featuring interracial couples. Future research could include interactive screen media like video games. By my count, for instance, just shy of 100 entries into the cyberpunk genre have been released since the 1980s. Texts devoid of interracial romance or Asian characters may be of interest as long as they touch on relevant themes. Jason Reitman's drama film *Up in the Air* (2009) can serve as an example. It examines some ways in which life in modern America has become undignified and discusses Buddhist principles like non-attachment and compassion.

Moreover, some genres may deserve special attention. Parody films and television series, for instance, are often overlooked by critics. Some forms of this comedy subgenre, however, are well worth an investigation. According to Wes D. Gehring (1999), there are two main types: On the one hand, parodies of reaffirmation adore the objects they mimic and are abound in the age of postmodernity. They rely chiefly on metafiction and intertextuality. On the other hand, parodies of overt puncturing often make use of satire and attack their targets with derision. This latter form is interesting for it being "the most palatable of *critical approaches*, offering insights through laughter" (3, italics in original). Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg's film *The Interview* (2014), for instance, can be analyzed in terms of the merits and dangers of working satirically with stereotypes.

The plot revolves around an eventually successful attempt to assassinate Kim Jong-un (Randall Park). When talk show producer Aaron Rapaport (Seth Rogen) is able to set up an interview with the supreme leader of North Korea, he and his host Dave Skylark (James Franco) are approached by CIA agent Lacey (Lizzy Caplan). She lets them in on the plan to kill Jong-un by exposing him to a dose of highly toxic ricin on a transdermal patch via handshake and they agree to do their part. Interestingly, *The Interview* can be read as political satire that skewers the entertainment media industry by using stereotypes reflexively.

Rogen and Goldberg establish manipulation as the film's main overall theme via the concepts of "honeypotting" and "honeydicking": Victims with things they enjoy or that

arouse them sexually in order to get whatever desired out of them. North Korea's chief propagandist Park Sook-yin (Diana Bang) honeypots Aaron even more aggressively when she initiates sex in the principal guest bedroom suite to recruit him for her secret plan to lead North Korea to democracy. Jong-un honeydicks Dave, too, in order to ensure a favorable interview. Together, they spend a night partying with a number of Korean women dressed only in lingerie. By letting characters discuss the manipulation at play repeatedly, Rogen and Goldberg suggest that the supposed hypersexuality of East Asian women, for instance, is nothing but a fantasy of naive European American men that is catered to (by media corporations).

It is also worth mentioning that *The Interview* is another example of recently released media texts that feature an Asian heroine. Granted, Dave gets the most screen time, but he is, first and foremost, a vehicle to poke fun at the United States and Americans. When he gives a brief speech to the North Korean welcoming committee, for instance, he makes a point of using the phrase "same same but different", commonly associated with the tourism industry in Thailand, and closes with the Japanese greeting "konnichiwa". Not surprisingly, the Koreans refer to him as the "American idiot". In contrast, Sook-yin devises a better plan than the CIA, manipulates the producer of America's most popular talk show for the common good, singlehandedly kills most of Jong-un's guards with a light machine gun, and manages North Korea's transition to democracy.

Most importantly, future research about American Far Orientalism could include films and television series created by Asian Americans. Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert's recently released comedy-drama *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022), for instance, is one of the most awarded films of all time. Moreover, video essayist Jonathan McIntosh (2022) notes, it aims to rehabilitate East Asian masculinity. Initially, the story seems to concern the hardships of Evelyn Wang (Michelle Yeoh), a Chinese American immigrant who struggles to accept her daughter's homosexuality and is overwhelmed by the stresses of running a laundromat. Soon the film takes the viewer on an absurdist roller coaster ride through parallel universes, however, and juxtaposes (American) nihilism and (East Asian) compassion.

At first, Evelyn's husband, Waymond (Ke Huy Quan), seems to be yet another sweet, goofy, and timid Meek Geek. He lets his wife run the business, sticks googly eyes everywhere, and refuses to fight back against whoever stands in the family's way. Interestingly, neither do Kwan and Scheinert let other characters mock Waymond as a weak

and effeminate coward, nor do they set him on a path to hypermasculinity. The conflict they construct cannot be resolved with violence, after all, since the main antagonist is a giant floating bagel which devours love and meaning. Waymond does not need to change, as it turns out, because his worldview is the antidote to nihilism.

In a pivotal scene, Waymond pleads with everybody for putting a stop to the pointless fighting. He speaks as much to the viewer as he does to the other characters when he explains that we are just "scared and confused" and that "we have to be kind", "especially when we don't know what's going on". Eventually, Evelyn adopts Waymond's perspective: She sticks a third googly eye on her forehead, uses her multiversal powers to learn what her enemies are suffering from, and gives them what they need. In essence, therefore, I read the film as follows: Nihilism causes fear and confusion. Anger and violence, the American gut reaction, only begets more anger and violence. Patience, communication, and empathy stops the fighting. America is afflicted with nihilism. Chinese immigrants introduce compassion as the antidote. Waymond is neither submissive nor naive. He is an Occidentalist hero.

Finally, nonfiction films may warrant attention. According to John Ellis' book-length study with the subtitle "Witness and Self-Revelation" (2012), documentary films have entered a "new third phase" in their evolution in which they commonly document the encounters between filmmakers and their subjects. This applies to Debbie Lum's documentary *Seeking Asian Female* (2012) about racialized desire and misconceptions. In the provided synopsis, the film is described as following the "eccentric modern love story" of "an aging white man" who is "obsessed with marrying any Asian woman" and "the young Chinese bride he finds online". The Chinese American filmmaker, however, is as much part of this story as Steven and Sandy. Lum firmly approaches the topic from a personal perspective. She begins her narration by stating that she "had to fight the urge to turn around and leave" when she first met Steven. Her professed "worst nightmare" is becoming "a picture in his wall as well". Lum relates that she has "been stared at, hit on, and harassed by so many men like Steven" who "usually strike up conversation by saying 'hello' in Chinese, or Japanese, or Korean".

At first, Lum is very skeptical about the authenticity of the "love" which binds Steven and Sandy. She suspects Steven to be on the lookout for a young and replaceable combination of housekeeper and prostitute rather than a real flesh-and-blood woman with an individual personality and she worries about Sandy. She soon learns, however, that Steven is incredibly innocent and naive. She reveals: "I can see that his obsession with any Asian woman has been replaced by real life with Sandy with all its joys and all its flaws". Sandy, on the other hand,

repeatedly confides to her that she plans to leave Steven at the earliest opportunity. Lum quickly becomes suspicious and begins perceiving Sandy as deceitful and exploiting Steven for her hidden agenda to obtain a green card. Some conversations later, she realizes that this is the way Sandy blows off steam.

Ultimately, Lum questions and changes her initial sentiments in the course of events and ends up reframing her film as a sympathetic tale about three very different people growing to trust, understand, and like each other. In a globalizing world often painfully indifferent to human fears and desires, the film asks its viewers to be less judgmental and more compassionate. If only we tried to listen to each other with an open mind, it suggests, understanding would be possible. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, American Far Orientalism has many faces. David Henry Hwang's (1989) "plea to all sides to cut through our respective layers of cultural and sexual misperception", therefore, is as relevant as ever in a world so saturated with myths that "truthful contact between nations and lovers can only be the result of heroic effort" (98).

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Abstract

In 1978, Edward Said redefined Orientalism as a Western interpretation of the Middle East best characterized by an inherent cultural hostility. It's essence, he declared, was the invariable distinction between Western superiority and Eastern inferiority. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, cultural critics Darrell Y. Hamamoto (2000), Vijay Prashad (2000), Jane Chi Hyun Park (2010), Jane Naomi Iwamura (2011), and David Weir (2011) have shed light on America's long fascination with the Far East and more affirmative forms of Orientalism. Building on their work, I map developments of Far Orientalism on American screens at the turn of the century from an evolutionary perspective. In three case studies, I read audiovisual texts in their sociohistorical and media ecological contexts to trace representational shifts from the 1980s to the 2010s. Since the intersection of race and sex is significant for any discussion of Orientalism, I am mostly concerned with narratives featuring interracial romance. The first case study focuses on Michael Cimino's crime thriller film *Year of the Dragon* (1985). My analysis is embedded in an examination of contemporary films related to the Vietnam War as well as the emergence of both the Model Minority myth and the redemption narrative. The next chapter is concerned largely with contextualizing Edward Zwick's epic historical drama film *The Last Samurai* (2003) within the genre histories of both the American Western and the Japanese Eastern. These efforts culminate in investigations of the ways of how the film relates to the popularization of Buddhism and reworks the White Savior trope. The final case study offers an analysis of Ronald D. Moore's science fiction television series *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-09) on the background of the rise of neoliberal economic policy and transhumanist philosophy as well as in relation to assimilation narratives and the genre history of cyberpunk. My research results demonstrate a trend from classic Orientalism to Techno-Orientalism, Spirito-Occidentalism, and outright Occidentalism. In the American imagination, I argue, East Asia has come to represent both the worst expression of modernity and the solution to its dehumanizing side. Neither have stereotypes been shattered nor has the geographical dualism been shed. Older fantasies merely have been complemented by more recent variations. I consider this study to be an extension of Said's studies of Orientalism as well as a contribution to the fields of American cultural history, Asian American studies and, to a lesser extent, postcolonial studies, gender studies, and media studies.

Kurzfassung

1978 definierte Edward Said den Orientalismus neu als eine westliche Interpretation des Nahen Ostens, die durch eine inhärente kulturelle Feindseligkeit gekennzeichnet ist. Der Kern sei die unveränderliche Unterscheidung zwischen westlicher Überlegenheit und östlicher Unterlegenheit. Zu Beginn des einundzwanzigsten Jahrhunderts haben die Kulturkritiker Darrell Y. Hamamoto (2000), Vijay Prashad (2000), Jane Chi Hyun Park (2010), Jane Naomi Iwamura (2011) und David Weir (2011) die lange Faszination Amerikas für den Fernen Osten und die affirmativeren Formen des Orientalismus beleuchtet. Aufbauend auf ihren Arbeiten zeichne ich die Entwicklung des Fernorientalismus auf amerikanischen Bildschirmen um die Jahrhundertwende aus einer evolutionären Perspektive nach. In drei Fallstudien lese ich audiovisuelle Texte in ihrem soziohistorischen und medienökologischen Kontext, um Repräsentationsverschiebungen von den 1980er bis in die 2010er Jahre nachzuzeichnen. Da die Überschneidung von Ethnie und Geschlecht für jede Diskussion über Orientalismus von Bedeutung ist, befasse ich mich hauptsächlich mit Erzählungen, in denen ethnienübergreifende Liebesbeziehungen vorkommen. Die erste Fallstudie konzentriert sich auf Michael Ciminos Krimi *Year of the Dragon* (1985). Meine Analyse ist eingebettet in eine Untersuchung zeitgenössischer Filme im Zusammenhang mit dem Vietnamkrieg sowie über das Aufkommen des Mythos der Musterminderheit und der Erlösungserzählung. Das nächste Kapitel befasst sich vor allem mit der Kontextualisierung von Edward Zwicks epischem Historiendrama *The Last Samurai* (2003) innerhalb der Genregeschichten des amerikanischen Western und des japanischen Eastern. Diese Bemühungen gipfeln in der Untersuchung der Art und Weise, wie der Film mit der Popularisierung des Buddhismus zusammenhängt und die Figur des weißen Erlösers überarbeitet. Die letzte Fallstudie bietet eine Analyse von Ronald D. Moores Science-Fiction-Fernsehserie *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-09) vor dem Hintergrund des Aufstiegs der neoliberalen Wirtschaftspolitik und der transhumanistischen Philosophie sowie in Bezug auf Assimilationserzählungen und die Genregeschichte des Cyberpunk. Meine Forschungsergebnisse zeigen einen Trend vom klassischen Orientalismus zum Techno-Orientalismus, Spirito-Okzidentalismus und regelrechten Okzidentalismus. Ich behaupte, dass Ostasien in der amerikanischen Vorstellung sowohl den schlimmsten Ausdruck als auch die Lösung für die entmenschlichende Seite der Moderne darstellt. Weder wurden Stereotypen zerstört noch wurde der geografische Dualismus überwunden. Ältere Phantasien wurden lediglich durch neuere Varianten ergänzt. Ich betrachte diese Studie als

eine Erweiterung von Saids Studien zum Orientalismus sowie als einen Beitrag zu den Bereichen amerikanische Kulturgeschichte, asiatisch-amerikanische Kulturwissenschaften und, in geringerem Maße, postkoloniale Studien, Geschlechterforschung und Medienwissenschaften.