The Persistence of Orientalist Stereotypes: The Representation of Chinese Americans in S.J. Rozan's Detective Fiction Series

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Amerikkalaisessa populaarikulttuurissa esiintyy paljon aasialaisiin liittyviä stereotypioita, ja orientalismi, länsimainen tapa tulkita ja kuvata itämaita, on vaikuttanut siihen, miten aasialaisia on kuvattu kirjallisuudessa. Tutkielmani käsittelee aasialaisiin, erityisesti kiinalaisiin ja kiinalais-amerikkalaisiin, liittyviä stereotypioita dekkarikirjallisuudessa. Käytän esimerkkinä ja vertailukohteena valkoisten kirjailijoiden 1920–1940 –luvuilla luomaa jännityskirjallisuutta, mutta tärkein tutkimusmateriaalini on S.J. Rozanin dekkarisarja, josta tutkin romaaneja *China Trade* (1994), *Mandarin Plaid* (1996), *A Bitter Feast* (1998) ja *Winter and Night* (2002). Tarkoitukseni on esitellä tunnetuimmat stereotypiat ja selvittää, miten niiden vaikutus näkyy Rozanin teoksissa.

Teoreettiselta taustaltaan tutkielmani kytkeytyy kulttuurintutkimukseen, orientalismiin ja postkolonialistiseen tutkimukseen sekä aasialais-amerikkalaisuuden tutkimukseen. Ensin esittelen representaatiota ja stereotypioita yleisellä tasolla, sitten tarkastelen orientalismin perinnettä ja vaikutusta populaarikulttuuriin.

Vanhimmalla, kaikkein negatiivisimmalla aasialaisiin liittyvällä stereotypialla oli suuri vaikutus amerikkalaiseen populaarikulttuuriin etenkin vuosina 1850–1940. Aasialaisia pidettiin moraalittomina ja julmina ihmisinä, jotka maahanmuuton varjolla valloittaisivat koko maan ja tuhoaisivat valkoisen rodun. Nämä pelot näkyivät selkeästi 1920-luvun dekkarikirjallisuudessa, ja stereotypian vaikutukset näkyvät myös S.J. Rozanin teoksissa. Analyysissäni tarkastelen erityisesti kiinalais-amerikkalaisten jengien kuvausta ja rikollisuuden arkipäiväisyyttä kiinalais-amerikkalaisessa yhteisössä.

1960-luvulla aasialais-amerikkalaisten representaatioissa tapahtui suuri muutos, kun heitä alettiin pitää mallivähemmistönä, ja aasialais-amerikkalaisuuteen liitettiin positiivisia ominaisuuksia, kuten ahkeruus, älykkyys, perhekeskeisyys ja halukkuus sopeutua amerikkalaiseen yhteiskuntaan. Jo ennen esimerkillisen vähemmistön stereotypian vakiintumista dekkarigenressä oli esiintynyt kiinalais-amerikkalaisia etsivähahmoja, joiden menestys perustui kykyyn miellyttää valkoisia. Myös Rozanin teoksissa esiintyy runsaasti esimerkillisiä maahanmuuttajia, ja päähenkilön perheen historia vahvistaa tähän stereotyyppiin kuuluvan ajatuksen siitä, että amerikkalainen unelma toteutuu, jos maahanmuuttajat riittävän lujasti päättävät menestyä uudessa maassaan.

Aasialaisiin naisiin liittyvät stereotyypit vaihtelevat vaarallisesta viettelijättärestä avuttomaan uhriin, mutta tunnetuin stereotypia on alistuva nainen, joka tekee kaikkensa miellyttääkseen valkoista miestään. Osa Rozanin teosten naisista sopii näihin rooleihin, kun taas toiset vastustavat perinteisiä rooleja. Erityisesti Lydia Chin, yksityisetsivänä toimiva kiinalais-amerikkalainen nainen, on uudenlainen hahmo amerikkalaisessa populaarikulttuurissa.

Asiasanat: kiinalais-amerikkalaiset, orientalismi, stereotypiat, representaatiot, S.J. Rozan.

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1. Introduction

American popular culture is filled with stereotypes of Asians, such as the sinister criminal, the loyal servant, the submissive sex object, the hard-working immigrant and the intelligent college student. These stereotypes are a part of Orientalism, the Western discourse "dealing with the subject and subjugation of the East".[1] Orientalism has served all kinds of political and ideological purposes, and has changed its shape in response to changing situations, but representations of Asians have always been a powerful way to spread and maintain Orientalist ideology. In particular, stereotyping is an efficient way to create long-lasting ideas about what Asian people are like. Orientalist stereotypes have proven to be extremely persistent, and even conscious attempts to avoid repeating them in literature have often failed. In 1982, Kim claimed that especially white authors are incapable of representing Asians correctly: "Anglo-American literature does not tell us about Asians. It tells us about Anglos' opinions of themselves, in relation to their opinions of Asians".[2] Many contemporary scholars working in the field of Asian American Studies share Kim's opinion, and in fact, Ma goes even further by arguing that Orientalism affects even Asian American authors to such an extent that in American popular culture, "Orientalism and Asian American identity are...ultimately symbiotic".[3]

The aim of my study is to examine the effects of Orientalism on American popular culture, particularly detective fiction written by white authors. I will study the most famous stereotypes of Asians, especially of the Chinese and Chinese Americans, and trace the tradition of these stereotypes in the genre of detective fiction. My primary research material is S.J. Rozan's series of detective fiction, which interests me because it seems that the author has wanted to create a new kind of Chinese American character who resists old stereotypes. The aim of my study is to find out

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[1] Sheng-mei Ma, *The Deathly Embrace: Orientalism and Asian American Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) xi.
[2] Elaine H. Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982) 20.
[3] Ma xii.

to what extent Rozan has succeeded. How are the Chinese represented in this series? Can traces of stereotypes be seen in the novels? Can a white author create credible Asian characters?

In order to find out whether Rozan's representation of the Chinese is stereotypical, I need to present some of the most well-established stereotypes of Asian Americans. To understand these stereotypes, I need to examine the historical context in which they were created, and study their political, sociological and ideological roles. This background information is a significant part of my work, because stereotypical representations are always connected to a certain discourse and cannot be fully understood without examining their history. Hence the focus of my study is not just on Rozan's novels, but on the stereotypes and their persistence in American popular culture. In order to illustrate the stereotypes I present, I will study how they can be seen in some detective fiction written by white authors mostly in the 1920s or 1930s. I will use Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu – novels, because the most famous embodiments of negative stereotypes of the Chinese can be found in them. Dashiell Hammett's short stories also include some of these stereotypes, and because of Hammett's great influence on the development of the genre of hard-boiled detective fiction, it is interesting to compare his stories to Rozan's contemporary hard-boiled series. In section 4, I focus on stereotypes that are at least seemingly more positive, and will study Earl Derr Biggers's Charlie Chan and Hugh Wiley's James Lee Wong as examples of early Chinese American detective figures. When examining stereotypes of Asian women, I will return to Rohmer's and Hammett's fiction. In addition, I will discuss Juanita Sheridan's novel *The Chinese Chop* because its protagonist, Lily Wu, is one of the first female Asian American private investigators in American literature. My approach is historical and comparative, as I study the contexts of origin of the stereotypes and make comparisons between older and contemporary detective fiction.

Nevertheless, my foremost aim is to examine how stereotypes of the Chinese are visible in S.J. Rozan's series. Rozan's novels are set in her native city, New York, and much of the action takes place in Chinatown. The most distinguishing feature of the series is that it has two alternating main

characters, two private investigators that work together. In the first novel of the series, *China Trade* (1994), the main character and narrator is Lydia Chin, a 28-year-old Chinese American woman. In the next novel, the focus is on Bill Smith, who also narrates the story. Thus every other novel is told from the point of view of a Chinese American woman, and every other from the point of view of a white man. Hence Rozan tries to include both the traditional perspective of a white man and the different point of view of a non-white woman, which makes her novels interesting material for a study of stereotypes connected to race, ethnicity and gender in detective fiction. Furthermore, the issues of ethnicity and bicultural existence are a significant part of the narratives, since Lydia is living between two cultures. She has to balance the expectations of her ethnic community, especially the role of the good Chinese daughter, which her traditional mother and brothers want her to accept, and her own desire to be an independent Chinese American woman, free to live her life as she wishes. Because of these themes, Rozan's series can be classified as ethnic detective fiction, and since the protagonist is a strong, independent female private investigator, the series also continues the tradition of feminist detective fiction. Furthermore, like many other writers of feminist or ethnic detective fiction, Rozan uses some of the generic conventions of hard-boiled crime fiction. In the course of my study, I examine how generic conventions have participated in maintaining stereotypes of the Chinese, and how the representation of Asians in the hard-boiled genre has evolved as the attitudes toward them have changed. I will return to this idea at the end of this introduction.

At the moment there are nine novels in Rozan's series, and I have chosen to focus on four of them. It feels logical to include the first novel of the series, *China Trade* (1994), in my analysis, because the characters are introduced for the first time in it, and it gives a detailed description of Lydia Chin's ethnic community. Chinatown is full of contradictions, as honest, hard-working immigrants and dangerous gangsters live side by side. Similarly, the events of *A Bitter Feast* (1998) also take place in Chinatown, and the novel deals with influential Chinese American criminals,

whose representation provides material for a discussion of the most negative stereotypes of the Chinese, but the novel also presents ordinary Chinese immigrants and their living conditions. In *Mandarin Plaid* (1996), interracial romance is one of the main themes, which makes this novel useful for my study, since many stereotypes of Asian women are connected to interracial relationships. In addition, I want to include one of the novels that are narrated by Bill Smith in my discussion of the series, because it is useful to see Lydia from another point of view. *Winter and Night* (2002) offers a chance to see how Lydia works in a different environment, outside Chinatown.

My research is related to three fields of literary study: Cultural Studies, Orientalism (and Postcolonial Studies in general) and Asian American Studies. Cultural Studies provides useful theories about how reality is constructed through representations, and how meaning is produced by contrasting opposites. I am particularly interested in how things and people that are considered different and unacceptable are turned into the 'Other', that is, they are represented as fundamentally different, frightening, but also fascinating. 'Othering' is significant for my study, because I want to find out how Asia and Asian people have been represented as the 'Other' for the West. Furthermore, I will discuss stereotyping as a signifying practice, one of the ways in which meaning is created by explaining what certain things or people are like through reducing "people to a few, simple, essential characteristics, which are represented as fixed by Nature".[4] Stereotyping is closely connected to power, because it is one of the means by which "subordinated social groups... are categorised and kept in their place".[5]

In my discussion of representation and power, I will use Edward Said's theory of Orientalism. Said defines Orientalism as a discourse "by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient".[6] For Said, the 'Orient' primarily meant the Middle East, whereas my study

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[4] Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other'," *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 1997) 257.
[5] Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997) 12.
[6] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978) 3.

concerns the Far East, mainly such countries as China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. I will study the ways in which the West has turned the Orient into the 'Other' for various reasons, and how stereotypes have participated in preserving this discourse. The role of representations in maintaining Orientalism is significant, and there is a close connection between Orientalism and popular culture, which produces and reproduces stereotypes of the 'Orientals'. Hence Orientalism is an important concept for my study, because as already mentioned, many critics argue that Orientalism still governs the representation of Asians and Asian Americans in American popular culture, and my aim is to find evidence that supports or contradicts this argument.

Whereas Cultural Studies provides useful general information on representation and stereotypes, Asian American Studies offers more specified theories about how Asian people have been represented and stereotyped. I intend to present the most prominent stereotypes of Asians in American popular culture and the historical context in which they were created. My study focuses on the Chinese and Chinese Americans, because the central characters of Rozan's novels are Chinese American, and also because there are more representations of the Chinese than of any other Asian group in American popular culture. Moreover, many of the representations of the Chinese have been generalized to all Asians.[7] This is a part of the Orientalist discourse, which promotes the idea that all Asians are alike, and thus most stereotypes have been applied to all Asians, regardless of nationality. To avoid repeating this racist idea, it would be logical to only use the terms Chinese and Chinese American in my study. However, when studying the historical background of stereotypes of the Chinese, I often have to talk about Asians and Asian Americans, as the stereotypes cover all nationalities, but when possible, I use the Chinese as an example. To make things more complicated, some scholars make the distinction between different Asian nationalities, others do not, and I have tried to preserve the original terms when referring to their works. In addition, in S. J. Rozan's novels, the term Chinese refers to cultural rather than national identity,

[7] Kim 4.

that is to say, characters are often called Chinese even though they are Chinese American. When I discuss Rozan's works, I sometimes adopt this practice as well.

I will first present the oldest stereotype, the Yellow Peril stereotype that presents the Chinese as a threat to the Western world. This stereotype originated in the nineteenth century, when Asians began to immigrate to the United States and were seen as dangerous, immoral people. White Americans feared that Asians would pollute the nation with their heathen beliefs, deviant sexuality and criminality, and eventually take over the whole country. In detective fiction, the most obvious example of the Yellow Peril is Sax Rohmer's Dr. Fu Manchu, who wants to conquer the West and destroy the white race. I will also discuss the Chinese villains of Dashiell Hammett's short stories. Although the representation of the Chinese is certainly less one dimensional in Rozan's novels than in Rohmer's and Hammett's fiction, traces of the Yellow Peril stereotype can be seen in them, mainly in the depiction of Chinese gangs. Rozan portrays crime as an inescapable part of Chinatown life, and dangerous Chinese American gangsters operate on all levels of society.

In the 1960s, the Yellow Peril stereotype became less dominant, as a completely different stereotype, the model minority myth, emerged. According to Frank Wu, Asian Americans are considered to be a model minority, because they are said to be "intelligent, gifted in math and science, polite, hard working, family oriented, law abiding, and successfully entrepreneurial".[8] This stereotype has been widely accepted, because it portrays Asian Americans in a positive manner and vindicates the American Dream, the idea that anyone can come to America and have a successful life, regardless of race. Granted that the model minority myth is seemingly positive, it creates hostility between minority groups, gives the impression that racism is not a serious problem and, like any other stereotype, reduces Asians Americans to a certain set of characteristics. Detective figures created by Earl Derr Biggers and Hugh Wiley in the 1930s exemplify what is expected of Asian Americans who want to succeed in America: politeness, submissiveness, hard work and

[8] Frank Wu, *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White* (New York: Basic Books, 2002) 40.

patience. In Rozan's novels, the representation of Chinese American characters is clearly influenced by this stereotype. Chinatown is crowded with hard working, honest immigrants who respect their elders and value the reputation of the family. Lydia Chin's family is a good example of a stereotypical model minority family that reaffirms the idea that immigrants can succeed through hard work and willingness to assimilate. However, Rozan also offers some critical views on the model minority myth and the American Dream.

I will also study the representation of Asian women in American popular culture, focusing on the most famous stereotypes. There are many negative stereotypes of Asian women, for instance the image of a 'Dragon Lady', a dangerous, treacherous, but seductive woman. I will discuss Sax Rohmer's Fah Lo Suee, the daughter of Fu Manchu, as an example of a 'Dragon Lady'. However, the most established stereotype is the submissive and servile Asian woman, a geisha girl whose purpose of life is to please her man. In Anglo-American literature, one of the most powerful images of Asian women is Madame Butterfly, whose tragic romance with a white man helped to produce the stereotype of the Asian woman who is willing to sacrifice herself for the happiness of white men.[9] The theme of interracial romance is connected to many stereotypes of Asian femininity, for instance the sexual model minority, the idea that Asian women are perfect wives and can assimilate into the American way of life by marrying American men.

Rozan's representation of Asian American women is generally very positive, and the most negative stereotypes are not present in her novels. Rozan has even managed to avoid the stereotype of the treacherous Asian woman, which was so prominent in the 1940s that even Lily Wu, the female protagonist of Juanita Sheridan's detective fiction series, appears untrustworthy at times. However, Rozan's novels reinforce some stereotypes of Asian women, particularly ideas connected to the traditional gender roles, which govern the lives of the older women. In contrast, the younger generation strongly challenges the stereotypical notions of Asian femininity. Lydia Chin and her

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[9] Gina Marchetti, *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993) 78.

friend, police officer Mary Kee are independent and strong-willed women who make their own decisions and do not let men control their life. Lydia even resists the mutual attraction between her and her partner Bill, possibly because she wants to keep her independence. However, I will argue that Rozan has not completely avoided reproducing the Madame Butterfly image, because some female characters, even Lydia, often end up making sacrifices for white men.

This kind of research has been very rare in Finland, which is one of the reasons that motivated me to choose this topic. Furthermore, not many scholars have focused on the genre of detective fiction when studying the representation of Asian Americans. The most famous Asian American characters, the criminal genius Fu Manchu and the pleasant detective Charlie Chan, have been extensively studied, but contemporary crime fiction featuring Asian Americans has not attracted the attention of many literary critics. In particular, there are very few studies on S.J. Rozan's novels, although they are mentioned in some articles and books on contemporary detective fiction. For instance, Maureen Reddy (2003) uses Rozan as an example of a white author who fails to create credible non-white characters. Reddy discusses the difficulty of avoiding racism and stereotypes in hard-boiled detective fiction, which has traditionally been a white man's genre. This makes Reddy's research relevant to mine, because I am interested in the persistence of Orientalist ideology and the reproduction of old stereotypes in detective fiction. In my opinion, this kind of study is important, because popular culture reflects the dominant ideology of a given period of time, and can also create, reproduce or challenge stereotypical images.

To explain why detective fiction is suitable research material for a study on Orientalist stereotypes, I will now discuss how genre fiction, particularly detective fiction, maintains or challenges dominant ideologies. As Cranny-Francis points out, "as a form of political resistance the use of generic fiction has a long history"[10] and it has been used as a means for political debate. Cranny-Francis offers a simple explanation for this: "People like to read genre fiction and if you are

[10] Anne Cranny-Francis, *Feminist Fiction: Feminist Uses of Generic Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990) 6.

looking for a populist audience, where best to start than with their entertainment".[11] Because of its popularity, genre fiction is an effective way to spread new ideas to large audiences. However, that is not to say that genre fiction is always radical and progressive. In fact, many critics argue that genre fiction is conservative, because it is written for the great masses, and thus has to be in accordance with mainstream ideology in order to ensure its popularity.

Detective fiction has been considered particularly conservative, because even the generic conventions support dominant ideology: "the 'order and meaning' that the detective restores is that of dominant ideological discourses".[12] Walton and Jones explain the contradiction between genre fiction's apparent conservatism and great potential for subversiveness: "Formula fiction is sustained by a reciprocal relationship with culture at large, both affirming existing values and beliefs and, potentially, helping readers assimilate changes to traditional ways of seeing".[13] Whether transgressive or conservative, genre fiction is always connected to the attitudes, values, concerns and fears of contemporary society, and is hence worth studying. As Horsley puts it, "being intertwined with the codes and conventions of society, generic codes and conventions are particularly effective context for the investigation of such issues as race and gender".[14]

Hard-boiled detective fiction is a genre that is particularly suitable for investigating social issues, because ever since its origins in the 1920s, this American version of detective fiction took a very direct approach to social commentary. Moreover, the hard-boiled genre was "innovation that made room for new voices and previously unwritten experiences in crime fiction" by removing the detective from the upper-class environment of classical detective fiction.[15] However, for many decades, hard-boiled fiction supported white, male-dominant ideology by glamorizing the white male hero and demonizing everyone else. Reddy claims that "white heterosexual men are at the

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[11] Cranny-Francis 9.
[12] Cranny-Francis 149.
[13] Priscilla Walton and Manina Jones, *Detective Agency: Women Rewriting the Hard-Boiled Tradition.* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1999) 6.
[14] Lee Horsley, *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 5.
[15] Maureen Reddy, *Traces, Codes, and Clues: Reading Race in Crime Fiction* (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2003) 15.

centre of all true hard-boiled fiction...everything and everyone we see in this fiction is filtered through those characters' perceptions".[16]

The idea that only white men could be credible heroes in hard-boiled fiction remained unchallenged until the 1980s, when women writers began to rewrite the genre. Of course, female and ethnic authors and detectives had appeared before, but conscious attempts to revise the genre begun in the 1980s. Removing the white man from the centre of the genre paved the way for other changes in the persona of the detective, and in the 1990s, feminist detective fiction was followed by a growing interest in ethnic detective fiction. Fischer-Hornung and Mueller summarise the greatest genre modifications created by writers of ethnic detective fiction:

> In ethnic detective fiction the importance of the detective's community of origin often supersedes the traditional loneliness of the detective. Sometimes the 'ethnic plot', frequently dealing with aspects of the traditional way of life of the community from which the detective derives, also seems to diminish the importance of the detective plot. Furthermore, ethnic detective novels address issues of personal and social identity that reflect the importance of the ethnic community for the particular detective.[17]

Although ethnic detective fiction is a relatively new genre, it has established its position in American popular culture, and continues to expand its significance.

Ethnic detective fiction has become very popular in the United States since the 1990s, and the heroes represent many different ethnicities. Asian American detectives are still quite rare, but they have also begun to appear, for instance in the works of Qui Xialong, Christopher West, Sujata Massey, Lisa See and Eliot Pattison. Having a female Asian American detective as the main character makes S.J. Rozan's series stand out, because with the exception of Sujata Massey's Rei Shimura, there are no famous female Asian detective figures. Furthermore, Qui Xialong is one of the few Asian Americans who write detective fiction, and it is important to notice that most Asian American detective figures have been created by white authors. This is significant, considering the long tradition of white representations of Asians in the genre of detective fiction. For a long period

[16] Reddy 8.
[17] Dorothea Fischer-Hornung and Monika Mueller, "Introduction," *Sleuthing Ethnicity: The Detective in Multiethnic Crime Fiction*, ed. Dorothea Fischer-Hornung and Monika Mueller (London: Associated University Presses, 2003) 12.

of time, Asian Americans could only play the role of the criminal, and detective fiction was strongly influenced by the Yellow Peril stereotype; the most obvious example of this is Rohmer's Fu Manchu. Detective fiction is also responsible for the creation of the second well known Asian American, the polite, submissive and unthreatening Charlie Chan, who is an embodiment of the model minority stereotype. Hence the most famous examples of how the stereotypes of the Chinese have been used in literature can be found in the genre of detective fiction. This indicates that detective fiction is a genre that exploits stereotypes, and the representation of the Chinese in detective fiction written in different time periods is worth studying, because it reveals whether these old stereotypes still prevail in the genre.

Since the majority of Asian American detectives that have appeared in American popular culture have been created by white authors, it is perhaps useful to present some criticism that has been raised against white authors of ethnic crime fiction, and consider some of the problems that a white author faces when representing ethnic characters. Although writers who create non-white detectives often receive good reviews,[18] Pepper is not convinced that all these novels deserve to be praised. He argues that critics of the contemporary American crime novel have too often

> surveyed the transformed ethnic and racial character of the American landscape like delighted tourists on safari, gazing out at the exotic panorama and marvelling at the full range of species on view... and have sought to learn or understand more about the different cultures themselves with the detective or protagonist as tour-guide.[19]

Reddy sees Tony Hillerman's detective fiction about American Indians as an example of this. She argues that Hillerman "assumes a white audience", and makes American Indians "the objects of attention", the Other that needs to be explained to the white readers.[20] In my analysis of Rozan's fiction, I try to find out whether the same criticism can be applied to Rozan's treatment of Chinese Americans.

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[18] Reddy 169.
[19] Andrew Pepper, *The Contemporary American Crime Novel: Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Class* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000) 5.
[20] Reddy 170-171.

Pepper criticises the idea that the ethnic detective functions as a mediator and interpreter between two cultures, because this role disregards the conventions of the genre: "Most detectives are not, and have never been, polite cultural mediators, but rather usually violent, always conflicted figures who operate out of selfish as well as selfless motivations".[21] Furthermore, Pepper claims that crime fiction that uses the detective as a cultural tour-guide often presents "a vision of America that is far too nice", that is to say, it presents racial diversity in "harmonious, mannered terms", which Pepper finds "at best, naive, and at worst, dishonest".[22] In other words, multicultural detective fiction does not always fully acknowledge the complex nature of race issues in America, particularly the deep impact of racism.

Especially white authors have been accused of failing to represent race relations realistically, and in fact, some critics question white authors' ability to create credible non-white characters at all. Moreover, many critics feel that the hard-boiled genre is particularly unsuitable for representing non-white characters. In Reddy's opinion, "the genre of detective fiction...is irremediably a white genre, dependent on white readers", and hence it is nearly impossible to avoid repeating and reproducing the white, racist ideology that forms the basis of the genre.[23] Reddy claims that "even those writers who appear to set out with the goal of revising conventions end up reproducing the most conservative elements of the genre".[24] This argument is closely related to my study, since Reddy uses Rozan as an example of these well-intentioned white authors who fail to break free from the ideological heritage of hard-boiled crime fiction. In my analysis of Rozan's novels, I try to find evidence that supports or contradicts Reddy's claim.

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[21] Pepper 6.
[22] Pepper 6.
[23] Reddy 172.
[24] Reddy 189.

2. Theoretical Framework

My study is primarily related to three fields of literary study: Cultural Studies, Postcolonial Studies (particularly theories about Orientalism) and Asian American Studies.

Cultural Studies originates in the United Kingdom in the 1960s, when the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University was founded, and since then different versions of Cultural Studies have emerged all over the world.[25] The core interests of this interdisciplinary field are representation as a means of constructing reality, the relationship between power and culture, and popular culture as an object of academic research. The practises of creating meaning are a significant part of Cultural Studies, because "cultures are formed around the meanings people construct and share...Culture, in fact, is best understood as the processes of meaning-making within a given social group".[26] According to Storey, the core interest of Cultural Studies is the relationship between culture and power, and popular culture is "an arena of struggle and negotiation between the interests of dominant groups and the interests of subordinate groups".[27] Therefore the representation of race, ethnicity, class, and gender in popular culture is an important object of study in Cultural Studies, and consequently its theories are applicable to my study, as I am interested in the power relationship between the West and Asia, and the role of American popular culture, especially detective fiction, in maintaining it.

Another field that is useful to my study is Postcolonial Studies, which is very much connected to Edward Said's theory of Orientalism. Said's *Orientalism* was published in 1978, and is considered a starting point for Postcolonialism, because it provoked many scholars to analyse the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, which led to the establishment of Postcolonial Studies in the 1980s. Postcolonialism and Orientalism are relevant to my study, because they deal with representations and power, mainly the ways in which the coloniser creates representations of the

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[25] Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* (London: Sage, 2000) 6.
[26] Jeff Lewis, *Cultural Studies: The Basics* (London: Sage, 2002) 3.
[27] John Storey, *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2006) 4.

colonised in order to justify colonisation. In particular, Said's theory of Orientalism shows how the West has had the power to define the Orient and represent it in ways that support Orientalist ideology. The issue of representation and power is connected to my study, as I aim to find out how representations of Chinese Americans have served various ideological and political purposes.

Said's theory has often been applied in Asian American Studies, an interdisciplinary field of study that emerged in the late 1960s as a result of community activism of Asian Americans.[28] The primary aim of Asian American Studies is to study the lives and experiences of Asian Americans and the historical, sociological, anthropological, psychological, political, legal and cultural circumstances that affect them.[29] Asian American Studies is interested in representations of Asians in the United States, and one of the central ideas is that Asia and Asian people function as the 'Other' for the Western world, and Western representation of Asians emphasise and even create the differences between West and East. Before studying this idea, I will discuss the representation of difference in general, and stereotyping as a signifying practice.

2.1. Representation, Difference, and Stereotypes

Stuart Hall gives a simple explanation for the term representation: "representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully to other people".[30] However, the matter is quite complicated, and there are several theories of representation. Within Cultural Studies the constructionist theory is the most prominent approach, and it is also the most useful theory for the purposes of my study. The constructionist theory of representation assumes that although things and people exist in reality, they do not have any

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[28] Jean Wu and Min Song, "Introduction," *Asian American Studies: A Reader*, ed. Jean Wu and Min Song (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2000) xv.
[29] Wu and Song, xx-xxi.
[30] Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation," *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 1997) 15.

meaning in themselves. Their meaning has to be constructed through representations. Storey gives the following definition of representation in this constructionist sense:

> Representation...constructs the meaning of what is represented. The world certainly exists outside representation, but it is only in representations that the world can be made meaningful. Representation is, therefore, a practice through which we share and contest meanings of ourselves, of each other, and of the world.[31]

Furthermore, in the constructionist approach, meaning is never absolute. Meaning is understood to be relational, that is, the meaning of a certain object is produced "in and through the differential relation to other signifiers".[32] Hence, the constructionist approach to representation connects meaning to the concept of difference.

Hall discusses difference and offers four explanations for its importance. The first explanation originates from linguistics, mainly de Saussure's ideas about creating meanings. According to Hall, difference matters, because it is "essential to meaning", as without difference there would be no meanings.[33] In other words, meaning is produced by contrasting things with each other. Difference is crucial to meaning, and as a result, it is necessary to create representations of things that are different. People create meanings through contrasting opposites, for instance the opposite of white is black, and if we did not have this opportunity to measure two opposites against each other, neither one of them would have any meaning. Hall emphasises that binary oppositions are seldom neutral, as one pole of the binary is usually more dominant. In other words, in Western discourses, when the binary opposites "white" and "black" are contrasted, "white" has traditionally been in a dominant position.[34]

Hall's second explanation is based on Mikhail Bakhtin's argument that meanings are constructed through dialogue. Nobody can create a meaning alone, because "meaning arises through the

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[31] Storey 5-6.
[32] *The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism,* ed. Joseph Childers and Gary Hentzi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) 58.
[33] Hall, *Spectacle* 234.
[34] Hall, *Spectacle* 235.

'difference' between the participants in any dialogue".[35] Nobody can own or control meanings, because they cannot exist without constant negotiations with others. In other words, there could be no meanings without the 'Other'. Thus difference is essential for Western discourses, as the West could not exist without an 'Other'. If the West could not be contrasted with, for instance, Asia, it would not have the same meaning. This kind of defining the self through the 'Other' has a long history in the genre of detective fiction. As Pepper points out, in hard-boiled detective fiction, the persona of the detective has traditionally been "constructed by silently demonising all those things which he is not – not a woman, not gay, not black, not working class".[36]

Hall's third reason to consider difference so important has to do with anthropology. He argues that "culture depends on giving things meaning by assigning them to different positions within a classificatory system" and "marking of 'difference' is thus the basis of…culture".[37] In other words, groups of people create cultural order by organizing things into classificatory systems. They decide what is normal and acceptable in a particular culture, and the people and things that do not fit into that category become the 'Other'. The idea is that when a thing is placed into a certain category, it should stay there or otherwise the cultural order is disturbed. Boundaries between the normal and the 'Other' are crucially important to culture, because they protect the cultural order. However, as Hall points out, the threatening and forbidden nature of the 'Other' also makes it more fascinating and attractive, which draws more attention to difference and makes it more powerful.[38]

Hall's fourth explanation for the importance of difference in our lives is psychoanalytical. His argument is that "the 'Other' is fundamental to the constitution of self, to us as subjects, and to sexual identity".[39] Many psychoanalysts argue that a child begins to recognize himself as an individual only when he sees himself in a mirror. Thus the reflection from outside oneself is the first

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[35] Hall, *Spectacle* 236.
[36] Pepper 40.
[37] Hall, *Spectacle* 236.
[38] Hall, *Spectacle* 237.
[39] Hall, *Spectacle* 237.

clue that there is an 'Other', and the 'Other' is necessary, because without it we could not understand ourselves as individual subjects.

My own understanding of difference is a combination of Hall's explanations, and the cultural, social, and historical reasons for the importance of difference are very relevant for my study. Particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Asia has functioned as the 'Other' for the West, and for this reason it is interesting to find out how Asian people have been placed in the classificatory system, what kinds of boundaries have been drawn between them and white people in order to protect the cultural order, and how popular culture, particularly detective fiction, has participated in this process of othering. The focus of my study is on stereotyping, which is one of the ways in which the difference of the 'Other' is emphasised.

Before moving on to stereotypes, it is useful to pay closer attention to the concept of power in connection with representation, because this idea is crucial to understanding stereotyping. It is important to keep in mind that, as Gledhill points out, "in fiction, 'reality' is always constructed" and representations that aim to describe reality actually refer to "what the dominant culture *believes* to be the case, to what is generally accepted as credible, suitable, proper".[40] The connection between knowledge and power is one of the crucial issues in Michel Foucault's work, and his term 'discourse' will be used in my study.

Foucault's term 'discourse' can be understood as groups of statements that create "an account of reality by generating 'knowledge' about particular objects or concepts, and also by shaping the rules of what can be said and known about those entities".[41] In other words, people are never entirely free to talk or even think about a particular topic, because the prevailing discourse governs the 'knowledge' and 'truth' about all subjects. In fact, Foucault calls into question the whole notion of knowledge by saying that "there is no knowledge without a particular discursive formation".[42] Since

[40] Christina Gledhill, "Genre and Gender: The Case of Soap Opera," *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 1997) 360.
[41] Julian Wolfreys, *Critical Keywords in Literary and Cultural Theory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 84.
[42] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1974) 183.

there is no real, objective knowledge, it is impossible know the truth about anything. Foucault uses the term 'régime of truth' to explain why some things are still considered to be the truth:

> Each society has its régime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.[43]

Foucault argues that knowledge is always connected to power, and discourses are created by people who have the power to decide what the truth is and how a subject can be represented.

However, no group of people can hold on to its power forever, and for this reason discourses are eventually replaced by new ones. The fact that all discourses are tied to a certain time and context is essential to my study, as my aim is to trace the representation of the Chinese from the nineteenth century to the present and try to show how the discourse has changed. Genre fiction is good material for this kind of study, because as Walton and Jones point out, genres are "responses to specific social situations" and always "encode ideological information", and "as society changes, formerly accepted conventions become unacceptable or are revised".[44] In other words, changes in discourses can manifest themselves as changes in generic conventions. With the help of some detective fiction written during the first half of the twentieth century, I will illustrate how the Chinese were represented at that time, and the similarities and differences between this older material and Rozan's novels will reveal to what extent old stereotypes of the Chinese are a part of the present-day discourse.

Before discussing the role of stereotypes in maintaining the Orientalist discourse, it is perhaps useful to present some of the general characteristics and functions of stereotypes. The word stereotype originally referred to a printing plate that enabled typesetters to reproduce the same material over and over again. Although the word is now used differently, the original meaning has

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[43] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) 131.
[44] Walton and Jones 17.

not disappeared completely, as stereotypes still carry the idea that the same characteristics can be attributed to more than one individual.[45] A stereotype can be defined as “an exaggerated belief associated with a category”,[46] in other words, a stereotype is an overgeneralization about a group of people.

According to Hall, stereotyping is a signifying practice, that is, one of the ways in which things are given meaning. The basic function of stereotyping is to create meaning, which makes it easier for us to understand the world.[47] In this sense stereotyping is very close to typing, which is the practice of classifying things into certain categories. That is, we often consciously or unconsciously divide things or people into groups based on certain characteristics that they allegedly have in common. Types are simple characterizations that highlight a few traits and function as a basis for our classificatory systems. Types are important to us, because without them we could not make sense of the world. [48]

Stereotypes differ from types in many ways. The most important thing to notice about stereotypes is that they draw attention to a few characteristics about a person, overemphasise and simplify them so that they become easily recognisable and remembered. Stereotypes reduce a person into a couple of traits, and soon the meaning becomes fixed so that all people who have these characteristics are the same in every way.[49] However, Richard Dyer argues that although stereotypes are “a very simple…easily-grasped form of representation”, they are “capable of condensing a great deal of complex information and a host of connotations”.[50] In other words, stereotypes are much more informative than they seem to be. In Dyer’s opinion, stereotypes always carry at least one clear connotation, and that additional meaning is another difference between types

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[45] Willard F. Enteman, ”Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination,” *Images that Injure: Pictorial Stereotypes in the Media*, ed. Paul Lester and Susan Ross (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2003) 16.
[46] Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice,* 25th ed. (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1979) 191.
[47] Hall, *Spectacle* 257.
[48] Hall, *Spectacle* 257.
[49] Hall, *Spectacle* 258.
[50] Richard Dyer, *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993) 12.

and stereotypes: "types are representations of those who 'belong' to society" whereas "stereotypes are those who do not belong, who are outside of one's society".[51]

According to Dyer, the effectiveness of stereotypes comes from their ability to create the impression that everyone in society believes that the content of the stereotype is true:

> The stereotype is taken to express a general agreement about a social group, as if that agreement arose before, and independently of, the stereotype. Yet for the most part it is *from* stereotypes that we get our ideas about social groups.[52]

Therefore stereotyping is always connected to power. According to Hall, stereotyping fixes boundaries between what is normal and acceptable and what is not. People and things that are considered abnormal and unacceptable are excluded.[53] Those that have the power make the decisions about who or what should be excluded, and they have the power to represent the 'Other' in a stereotypical manner.

In the West, the most obvious example of the connection of stereotypes and power is the great number of stereotypes of non-white people and the lack of racial stereotypes of the white. According to Dyer, the "privilege of being white in white culture is not to be subjected to stereotyping in relation to one's whiteness".[54] There are, of course, many stereotypes about white people, but those stereotypes have to do with gender, class, nationality or some other characteristic other than race. Furthermore, it is likely that racial stereotypes of the white do exist, but they are not as well established as stereotypes of other races, and white people are not even aware of their existence. This demonstrates the fact that white people have historically had power over all other races. Dyer argues that stereotyping characterizes the "representation of subordinated social groups and is one of the means by which they are categorised and kept in their place", and in Western countries, white people have traditionally been the ones who create the stereotypes of other races.[55]

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[51] Dyer, *Matter* 14.
[52] Dyer, *Matter* 14.
[53] Hall, *Spectacle* 258.
[54] Dyer, *White* 11.
[55] Dyer, *White* 12.

Describing what subordinated social groups are like is not the only way to use stereotypes as a means of oppression. Stereotypes have had a significant function in racial relations in the United States and have had a direct influence on the lives of minority groups. Collins discusses stereotypes of African American women and argues that they are controlling images that are "designed to make racism, sexism, and poverty appear to be normal, natural, and an inevitable part of everyday life".[56] For instance, the controlling image of the Mammy supports the idea that a Black woman should be a "faithful, obedient domestic servant" who "has accepted her subordination".[57] Similarly, there are controlling images of Asian Americans that "serve as part of a mechanism of social control" and are used "to suggest, and even mandate, how Asians and Asian Americans must behave if they are to 'fit in'".[58] In other words, minority groups have to mimic stereotypes of themselves in order to be accepted.

2.2. Orientalism

Representations are always connected to power, because they are made by a group of people who have the power to decide how others are represented. Edward Said deals with this issue in *Orientalism*, in which he argues that the West practically invented the Orient: "The Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West".[59]

Said defines the term Orientalism as "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient".[60] Although Said's Orient primarily means the Middle East, his theory has been applied to the Far East, and Orientalism is a significant concept in the field of Asian

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[56] Patricial Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991) 68.
[57] Collins 71.
[58] Hemant Shah, "'Asian Culture' and Asian American Identities in the Television and Film Industries of the United States," *Studies in Media and Information Literacy Education Vol.* 3 No. 3 (2003) [no page numbers]
[59] Said 5.
[60] Said 3.

American Studies. It is also relevant to my study, because I aim to find out whether the influence of Orientalist ideology can be seen in Rozan's representation of the Chinese.

Said uses Foucault's notion of discourse to explain how Orientalism works:

> My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively.[61]

Said argues that all Western disciplines that create knowledge about the Orient, for instance geography, history, politics and literature, belong to the discourse of Orientalism, and therefore produce only certain kinds of "facts" about the Orient. Consequently it is impossible to find any information that contradicts Orientalist ideology, as all fields of study confirm it. As Lee points out, "Orientalism, like other theories of domination and difference, relies heavily on establishing authority over the Other through knowledge of and access to the Other's language, history, and culture as privilege of the colonial agent".[62]

Although Asia was not colonised by the West to the same extent as, for instance, African countries, there is a connection between Orientalism and colonialism. Childs and Williams argue that colonialism is a difficult concept to define, because its influence is not limited to the actual colonies: some "areas, notably the Middle East and China, were not colonies, but were more affected by 'colonialism' than many countries that were".[63] Orientalism and colonialism share a similar ideological base[64] and use similar techniques of Othering. In the following, I will refer to scholars of postcolonialism and use their terminology as I study Orientalist strategies of representing the Orient as the 'Other'.

Because the Orient was in a subordinated position, the West could determine what it was like and what kind of people "the Orientals" were. In any colonialist discourse, the subordinated people are considered to be incapable of representing themselves, and so the West must do it for them,

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[61] Said 3.
[62] Robert G. Lee, *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999) 114.
[63] Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory* (London: Prentice Hall, 1997) 10.
[64] For instance, American Orientalism is partly motivated by imperial desire to expand, which will be discussed later.

disregarding their opinions.[65] According to Bhabha, representations serve an important purpose: "the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest".[66] Stereotyping is an efficient way to achieve this purpose, and numerous negative stereotypes of Asians were invented to support the Orientalist ideology.

There are also psychological reasons for representing the Orient as the 'Other'. Said argues that "the Orient has helped to define Europe...as its contrasting image".[67] Childs and Williams clarify this idea by stating that representations of the Orient seem to be "surreptitiously confirming a positive Western identity while appearing simply to describe those features which constitute the non-West".[68] In other words, claiming that "the Orientals" were stupid, lazy and degenerate conveys the message that the Western people are intelligent, hard-working and morally superior. Furthermore, despite the negative representations, the 'Other' is also secretly desirable, and the remote and mysterious Orient offers exciting fantasies about the exotic, attractive and fascinating. For these reasons, the Orient is one of Europe's "deepest and most recurring images of the Other".[69]

It is important to note the conflicting nature of different representations of the 'Other'. Some stereotypes of the colonized can even seem positive, which is interesting, because they contradict their negative counterparts and could threaten the credibility of the whole discourse. However, the fact that stereotypes conflict with each other does not seem to diminish their credibility, even though they may appear simultaneously. For instance, African American women can be stereotyped as Mammies, faithful servants who take care of white children, or sexually aggressive whores.[70] Analogously, in my study, I will present numerous conflicting images of the Chinese, for instance

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[65] Childs and Williams 104.
[66] Homi K. Bhabha, "The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," *Literature, Politics and Theory*, ed. Francis Barker et al. (London and New York: Methuen, 1986) 154.
[67] Said 1-2.
[68] Childs and Williams 101.
[69] Said 1.
[70] Collins 71-77.

the Yellow Peril and the model minority, and demonstrate that negative and positive stereotypes are present in Rozan's novels at the same time.

According to Bhabha, discourse of colonialism is ambivalent, because it attempts to represent the colonised "as a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible".[71] As McLeod puts it, "colonised subjects are split between contrary positions. They are domesticated, harmless, knowable; but also *at the same time* wild, harmful, mysterious".[72] The identity of the colonised subject keeps shifting between these extreme opposites, and stereotyping is "an arrested, fixated form of representation" that enables the colonizer to control the slippery identity of the colonised.[73] However, according to Bhabha, "as a form of splitting and multiple belief, the stereotype requires, for its successful signification, a continual and repetitive chain of other stereotypes".[74] This is one possible explanation for the great number of various stereotypes that seem to contradict each other.

In the case of Asian Americans, conflicting stereotypes are very common, and the Chinese, for instance, have been represented as intelligent or stupid, cruel murderers or loyal servants.[75] Even China itself has been depicted as either a wise, ancient civilisation or a barbaric heathen country. Longxi claims that "Americans have two sets of images, of which the modulation, with one advancing and the other receding alternately, is tuned in to the social and political atmosphere".[76] When the atmosphere is positive and relations between the United States and, for instance, China, are good, positive stereotypes of the Chinese prevail. When the common opinion is against China, the Chinese are portrayed in a negative manner with the help of negative stereotypes. For this reason, it is important to take the historical context into consideration when studying Orientalism and stereotypes of the Chinese.

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[71] Bhabha 156.
[72] John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000) 53.
[73] Bhabha 162.
[74] Bhabha 164.
[75] William F. Wu, *The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction 1850-1940* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1982) 4.
[76] Zhang Longxi, "The Myth of the Other: China in the Eyes of the West" *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 15, No.1 (1988): 124.

Said has been criticised for not paying enough attention to the historical contexts of individual countries in his study. His decision to ignore specific historical moments can be explained by his conviction that there are two forms of Orientalism, latent and manifest. Although Orientalism manifests itself differently at different times, the "underlying or latent premises will always be the same".[77] In other words, contemporary, seemingly positive representations of Asians may share the same Orientalist ideology as the openly racist writings of the nineteenth century.

Said has also been accused of ignoring gender issues, and many scholars have demonstrated that Orientalism was in many ways gendered and sexualized. For instance, in Yoshihara's opinion, "notions of power and difference were typically expressed in gendered terms: the powerful West was associated with virile masculinity, and the subordinate East with passive femininity".[78] Furthermore, Orientalism has been "created, challenged, and/or reinforced by women as well as men".[79]

Said's theory about Orientalism is in a prominent position in Asian American Studies, although in this field of study, the emphasis is on Asian Americans and the ways in which the Orientalist discourse has affected and continues to affect their lives. In this context, scholars occasionally use the term American Orientalism.[80] According to Leong, American Orientalism has its roots in European Orientalism, but in the nineteenth century it "took a form specific to and supportive of the United States' emerging role as a worldwide moral and economic force". [81] As Leong points out, American Orientalism reflected American ideology, and its "pathological interpretation" of, for instance, "Chinese people and culture justified uninvited American intervention to 'protect' China and to convert it into something more Christian, modern, and American".[82] American Orientalism

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[77] McLeod 43.
[78] Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (Cary, NC, USA: Oxford University Press, 2002) 4.
[79] Yoshihara 193.
[80] American Orientalism has two directions, one focusing on the Middle East and the other on the Far East. Because my study deals with Asian Americans, I am interested in the latter.
[81] Karen Leong, *China Mystique: Pearl S. Buck, Anna May Wong, Mayling Soong, and the Transformation of American Orientalism* (Ewing, NJ, USA: University of California Press, 2005) 7.
[82] Leong 8.

contains a certain amount of imperialist desire to expand towards Asia, of which the colonisation of the Philippines (1898-1946) and the annexation of Hawaii in 1898 are clear signs. Lowe argues that American Orientalism has been a factor in most significant events in the relations between the United States and Asia. According to Lowe, the motivation behind the colonisation of the Philippines was the desire to expand and gain "exploitable labor force", whereas the war against Japan in World War II was a means for "asserting and assuming hegemony in the world system".[83] The wars in Korea (1950-1953) and Vietnam (1959-1975) "reflected the general desire to incorporate the extractive economies of Asia into the industrial core" of the United States and "laid the groundwork for the U.S. investment and material extraction in Asia".[84] As Lowe points out, "the foreign policy of the United States in relation to Asia...must be understood in relation to a contradiction between the growing need for economic internationalism and the desire to fortify the political nation-state".[85]

Trade and the work of missionaries contributed to American Orientalism by spreading the idea that 'the Orient' is an exotic and fascinating place full of barbaric heathens that need to be rescued by the West. However, the most important event that shaped American Orientalism and changed the relationship between the United States and Asia was immigration. The great distance between the West and Asia was a crucial factor in maintaining the Orientalist discourse. Lee argues that the discourse of Orientalism was able to control the Asian Other as long as it stayed in Asia, but for Americans, the situation changed drastically when thousands of Chinese settlers arrived in California in the nineteenth century. Previously, in the imagination of most Americans, the Chinese had been exotic creatures living far away, where their different appearance and culture did not bother anybody. However, as the Chinese immigrants became a part of everyday life in America, white people had difficulties accepting their difference. It became impossible to control all knowledge about Asia, because Western imagination lost its power to determine Asian people. As

[83] Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996) 17.
[84] Lowe 18.
[85] Lowe 17.

Lee puts it, the "construction of racial difference as distant and exotic was displaced…by a construction of racial difference as present and threatening….Chinese in America were now alien and threatening".[86]

Frightened by the difference of Asian immigrants, many white Americans wanted to protect their own culture and the white race. For this purpose, Asian immigrants had to remain aliens who could not become real Americans. The Orientalist discourse aimed to portray Asian Americans as more Asian than American, and according to Lowe, the state played an important role in establishing this discourse. During the period from 1850 to World War II, special immigration laws were designed to keep Asians away, and many Asians were denied citizenship because of their race. For instance, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 barred Chinese people from entering the United States, and even prior to that, the immigration of Chinese women was restricted, because they were considered a sexual and moral threat that could pollute white men, and because the state wanted to prevent the growth of Chinese American communities.[87] In addition, numerous political decisions, such as the interment of Japanese Americans during World War II, made it clear for all Americans that Asian Americans are not real Americans and do not have the same rights as other citizens. The state's actions are part of the "orientalist discourse that defined Asian Americans as culturally and racially 'other'".[88]

From the late 1800s to the mid-twentieth century, the state emphasised the otherness of Asians by condemning interracial relationships. Marriage between Asians and white people was prohibited, and white women who married noncitizen Asian men could lose their own citizenship.[89] Of course, this kind of treatment was not exceptional during this period of time, considering the position of other non-white races in America. Particularly African Americans were considered an inferior race for a long time after the abolition of slavery, and interracial relationships between white and black

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[86] Lee 28.
[87] Susan Koshy, *Sexual Naturalization: Asian Americans and Miscegenation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004) 10-11.
[88] Lowe 5.
[89] Koshy 1.

people were regarded as a great threat to the purity of the white race. In the case of Asian people, according to Koshy, "miscegenation laws worked in conjunction with immigration and naturalization laws to impede the reproduction of Asian immigrant communities, position Asians as racial aliens and sexual deviants, and secure the future of the United States as a white nation".[90]

According to Li, although the period of legal exclusion of Asians ended in the 1960s, identification of the Asian American as "representative of the United States' national imaginary has not yet occurred", because "the regulatory function of the law in defining citizens and aliens is increasingly subsumed by mass media and public education".[91] In other words, despite the fact that the old exclusion laws are no longer valid, Asian Americans remain aliens, because American culture still portrays them as the 'Other'. Li argues that culture is as significant as any legal discourse: "a nation is composed of both the institutional and the imaginary, the political that regulates the juridical and territorial boundaries, and the cultural that defines origins and continuities, affiliations and belongings".[92] Lowe considers the role of culture to be even more crucial than political and legal decisions:

> Culture is the material site of struggle in which active links are made between signifying practices and social structure…Because culture is the contemporary repository of memory, of history, it is through culture, rather than government, that alternative forms of subjectivity, collectivity, and public life are imagined.[93]

Because Asian Americans have historically been treated as foreigners even though they are citizens, they have become "distanced… from the terrain of national culture".[94] Asian Americans have not had much influence on the way in which they are presented in American culture, so it is obvious that most representations of them are strongly influenced by Orientalism. This has lead to what

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[90] Koshy 2.
[91] David Leiwei Li, *Imagining the Nation: Asian American Literature and Cultural Consent* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) 6.
[92] Li 7.
[93] Lowe 22.
[94] Lowe 30.

Frank Wu calls the “perpetual foreigner syndrome”, the idea that even those Asian Americans that have been born in the United States are always foreigners.[95]

Popular culture is an effective tool in promoting ideology, and for instance, crime fiction played a role in maintaining the colonialist discourse in the colonial era. Matzke and Mühleisen argue that “order and discipline as primary colonial interests could...be affirmed through the investigation of crime and the reconstruction of social stability so typical for the genre”.[96] Similarly, there is a close connection between Orientalism and popular culture. Orientalism determines what kinds of roles Asian characters can play, and once the roles have been established, it can be very difficult to go against the mainstream and create new representations of Asians, because the audience already expects certain things of all Asian characters. For instance, in nineteenth-century popular culture Asians had two main roles: they could be either criminals or loyal servants. Similarly, Marchetti argues that in twentieth-century Hollywood films, there are strict rules that govern narratives that deal with romantic relationships between white people and Asians.[97] Popular culture produces ideas about Asians, and the audience begins to believe in these ideas, because they are repeated over and over again in popular culture. Ma argues that Orientalism is an integral part of American cultural heritage and affects all forms of popular culture.[98]

In Lee’s opinion, it is essentially important to study popular culture, because popular culture reflects society’s values and opinions, and thus studying popular culture reveals what Americans think of Asians in any given historical moment. This is what I do in my study, as I compare older detective fiction to Rozan’s series in order to find out how changes in the discourse of Asian Americans can be seen in her novels. However, popular culture does not simply mirror prevailing values and attitudes, it produces them. Popular culture has played a great role in constructing the

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[95] Frank Wu 79.
[96] Christine Matzke and Susanne Mühleisen, “Postcolonial Postmortems: Issues and Perspectives,” *Postcolonial Postmortems: Crime Fiction from Transcultural Perspective,* ed. Christine Matzke and Susanne Mühleisen (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2006) 4.
[97] Marchetti 8.
[98] Ma xii.

position of Asian Americans, and in Lee's opinion, the idea of "the Oriental as racialized alien...originates in the realm of popular culture, where struggles over who is or who can become a 'real American' take place and where the categories, representations, distinctions, and markers of race are defined".[99] In other words, popular culture defines national identity, and because the idea that Asians can never become 'real Americans' is constantly reproduced in popular culture, Asian Americans remain outsiders. In my study, I examine to what extent Rozan participates in the reproduction of Orientalist ideology that keeps Asian Americans excluded from the realm of national identity.

Kim discusses the power of stereotypes from the point of view of authors, and points out that "racist stereotypes have hindered the Western writer in his ability to understand and interpret the Asian".[100] Similarly, the "existence of race stereotypes about Asians in American popular culture" has been a "fundamental barrier to understanding and appreciating Asian American literary self-expression". Kim argues that people cannot enjoy a work of fiction that does not represent Asian characters in a stereotypical manner, because the stereotypes have become so familiar and accepted that people cannot believe that the Asians could be different.[101] In other words, an author who rejects the stereotypes of Asians and tries to represent Asian characters as they "are", not as they are believed to be, is likely to be criticised for not being able to portray Asians correctly, because their representation differs from the accepted stereotypes.

In Koshy's opinion, it is also possible that popular culture has influenced the lives of Asian Americans in positive ways. She takes the American popular culture's long-lasting interest in interracial romance as an example of slowly progressing ideological work. According to Koshy, interracial love stories explore "the possibility of love across racial divisions despite the existence of social norms or laws that stigmatise such relations" and often raise sympathy for the lovers.[102]

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[99] Lee 5.
[100] Kim 21.
[101] Kim xv.
[102] Koshy 21.

Granted that such discussion of interracial love simultaneously reinforces the social norms by reproducing them, it cannot be denied that popular culture is an effective tool in shaping people's opinions. As Koshy points out, popular culture is so powerful because of its "ability to address social questions precisely by seeming not to".[103] In other words, stories about interracial love transform the political and social issue of miscegenation into a personal problem of two individual who are in love with each other despite their different races. Popular culture seems harmless and entertaining, but nevertheless it deals with serious issues and plays a significant role in determining who is allowed to become an American.

Although popular culture has the potential to resist racism and affect people's opinions in a positive manner, all critics agree that racist representations prevail in American culture. Kim reminds of the racist function of stereotypes: "the function of stereotypes of Asians in Anglo-American literature has been to provide literary rituals through which myths of white racial supremacy might be continually reaffirmed, to the everlasting detriment of Asians". [104] Because stereotypes are the most visible result of the impact of Orientalism on American culture, I believe that the effects of Orientalism can be examined through studying the most famous stereotypes of the Chinese: the Yellow Peril, the model minority and images of Asian women.

[103] Koshy 21.
[104] Kim 21.

3. The Yellow Peril

In this section I present the Yellow Peril, the most negative stereotype of the Chinese, and briefly examine the historical context in which it was created. In 3.1 I will study detective fiction written by Sax Rohmer and Dashiell Hammett in order to illustrate the strong influence that this stereotype had on popular culture in the early nineteenth century. In 3.2 I analyze Rozan's novels and try to indicate how some traces of the Yellow Peril can be seen in them.

The Yellow Peril stereotype is the oldest stereotype of the Chinese and other Asian people. This extremely negative stereotype depicts the Chinese as a threat to the Western world and white people. The idea of the Yellow Peril was a part of the Orientalist discourse of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and was well established in most Western countries. Representations of Asia as a threat to the West and Asian people as the inferior 'Other' served as a justification for colonialist intentions. Colleen Lye summarises the nature of the East-West conflict by stating that in the early twentieth century, "the Western imperialist struggle *for* Asia was...depicted as a struggle *between* East and West".[105] In the United States, the Yellow Peril stereotype had already become prominent in the 1850s when the first Chinese immigrants arrived in California to take part in the Gold Rush. As William Wu points out, they were the "first free nonwhites to arrive in the United States in significant numbers", so it was unavoidable that they raised curiosity and fear in white Americans.[106] It is also noteworthy that California did not offer a warm welcome to any non-white people at the time, because California was perceived to be "God's free soil", a white region "free from both slavery and racial difference" and the Chinese immigrants were seen as pollutants who would destroy the purity of the land that belonged to white people.[107] Furthermore, the Chinese had a bad reputation even before their arrival. Wu argues that the hostility between the Western world

[105] Colleen Lye, *America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893-1945* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005) 23.
[106] William Wu 12.
[107] Lee 45.

and Asia dates back to the thirteenth century when the Mongol armies conquered Europe. Before the 1850s, missionaries and traders had for decades spread rumours about the cunning, deceitful and cruel Chinese, so the Chinese were already represented in a very negative manner even before the first immigrants arrived.[108] The situation became even more difficult, because most of the Chinese immigrants were sojourners, who wanted to earn as much money as soon as possible so they could return to China as wealthy men. They wanted to preserve their own culture and were not interested in becoming assimilated. This increased the hostility that the white Americans felt toward the Chinese, who were considered to be aliens and heathens.[109]

Wu gives some reasons for the quick establishment and wide acceptance of the Yellow Peril stereotype in the United States. The first explanation has to do with the conflict between the Chinese immigrants and the white working class. The white workers felt that the Chinese were stealing their jobs, because they worked too hard and settled for low wages. This led to the creation of one of the most established elements of the Yellow Peril stereotype, that is, the image of great hordes of Chinese people who will soon outnumber the whites and conquer the West. And because of the great cultural differences between the Chinese and Christian Americans, Chinese immigrants were feared because of the threat that they would spread their heathen beliefs and moral corruption.[110]

According to Wu, the Yellow Peril was "the overwhelmingly dominant theme in American fiction about Chinese Americans" from 1850 to 1940.[111] Fiction reflected the concerns of white Americans, so many authors wrote about the possibility that Asians would conquer the United States, the suffering caused to the white working class by the effective Chinese labourers, the frightening amorality of the Chinese and the horrifying prospect of miscegenation. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, many short stories involving Chinese characters appeared in

[108] William Wu 7-10.
[109] William Wu 8.
[110] William Wu 11.
[111] William Wu 1.

magazines. In the vast majority of these stories the Chinese are portrayed as the Yellow Peril or otherwise in a negative manner. The stories about Chinese invasion are the most obvious example of the Yellow Peril. Often the stories imply that the Chinese immigrants have arrived with the intention to occupy the United States as soon as there are enough Chinese people in the country.[112] Military invasion from China is made more horrific by representing the Chinese as “perfect soldiers, possessing no mental, and little physical, sensitivity”.[113] They are practically indifferent to pain, and they “simply do not value human life”.[114] They are presented as mindless masses with no individual characters. This kind of depiction amplified the fear of the Yellow Peril.

Not all literature about the Chinese written in the nineteenth and early twentieth century dealt with the threat of war, but the Chinese are usually represented in a negative manner. The Chinese are associated with opium, and they are a threat to white society because they all use and sell drugs. The Chinese are also portrayed as a threat in many other ways. They are characterised as deceitful and secretive people with criminal tendencies. The idea that the Chinese can never be trusted is repeated over and over again, and readers are constantly warned of the moral corruption of the Chinese.[115] Sexuality plays a significant role in representing the Chinese as the Yellow Peril. According to Robert Lee, the sexuality of the Chinese was considered to be deviant, “ambiguous, inscrutable and hermaphroidic”.[116] At the end of the nineteenth century, the Chinese presented an erotic threat in the form of the over 10,000 Chinese women prostitutes as well as the numerous Chinese males who worked as domestic servants, very close to the white women and children.[117] Lee states that Chinese prostitutes were seen as a “source of pollution” and “a particular threat to the physical and moral development of young white boys”.[118] The most threatening aspect of

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[112] For instance, in ”The Battle of Wabash” written by an author named only Lorelle in 1880, Chinese immigrants prepare the conquest of the United States, and a massive army finishes the task. See William Wu 42.
[113] William Wu 39.
[114] William Wu 42.
[115] For instance, the Chinese villain of Marian Allen’s story ”Ah Foo, the Fortune Teller” (1915), is a professional con artist and loan shark. See William Wu 51.
[116] Lee 85.
[117] Lee 88.
[118] Lee 90.

Chinese sexuality has always been the possibility of sexual relationships between the Chinese and white people. The idea that Chinese men could marry white women and settle permanently in the United States was unbearable to most white Americans in the nineteenth century, and miscegenation was considered a great threat to the purity of the white race. Literature of the time reflects these concerns by depicting the Chinese as sexually deviant and warning the readers of the dangers of interracial relationships.[119] Stories involving miscegenation invariably have unhappy endings, and disease and death are the most common results of relationships between Chinese and white characters.[120]

In 1882, the threat of the Yellow Peril was considered so great that the Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which "characterized Chinese immigration as 'aggression and encroachment' equivalent to actual warfare".[121] In other words, Asian people were identified as enemy soldiers, and this idea was strengthened in the twentieth century, as the Americans fought against Asians in World War II and the wars in Korea and Vietnam. In the war in Vietnam, Americans were constantly having trouble distinguishing the Viet Cong from civilians, and the term 'gook' was used "to describe Vietnamese, enemy and ally alike".[122] According to Lee, the idea that it is impossible to tell the difference between Asian enemies and allies is still alive in America, and Asian Americans are sometimes accused of having loyalties to other countries than the United States. Lee claims that "Asian Americans are represented as agents of foreign or multinational capital"[123], hence, they are suspected of acting against the interests of the United States.

The idea that Asian people are treacherous has persisted, even though the representation of the Chinese has otherwise become less racist. As a whole, the Yellow Peril stereotype has never disappeared completely, because it has been constantly reinforced by new factors, for instance the

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[119] For example, in "After Strange Gods" written by Frank Norris in 1894, a Chinese woman deliberately blinds her white lover to prevent him from seeing the scars of small-box on her face. See William Wu 57.
[120] William Wu 58-60.
[121] Frank Wu 92.
[122] Lee 190.
[123] Lee 11.

threat of communism and the economic competition between the United States and Asia. In fact, Frank Wu believes that the Yellow Peril stereotype still affects the daily lives of Asian Americans. He mentions that a study done in 2001 shows that many Americans have negative attitude towards Chinese Americans, because they believe that Chinese Americans are more loyal to China than the United States, pass secret information to China and take too many jobs away from other Americans.[124] This reminds of the classic invasion stories in which the Chinese slowly take over the United States. Wu argues that many Americans still consider China to be a threat to their country, and this can be seen in contemporary futuristic writing. For instance, many science fiction writers exploit the old theme of the Yellow Peril and "have revived the paranoia about an Asian horde that will overwhelm the white people of the world".[125]

3.1. The Legacy of the Terrifying Dr. Fu Manchu

The Yellow Peril stereotype had a strong influence on the way in which the Chinese were represented in detective fiction especially during the first half of the twentieth century. The Chinese could only play the role of the criminal, and Chinatowns were excellent settings for evil crimes. The most famous embodiment of the Yellow Peril is Dr. Fu Manchu, the archetype of the evil Chinese villain who terrorizes the Western world in fiction written by Sax Rohmer. Rohmer was a British author, but his Fu Manchu stories became so popular in the United States that Fu Manchu can be considered a "major figure in the American popular culture".[126] Between 1913 and 1959, Rohmer published thirteen novels and some short stories about Fu Manchu, and comics, movies and television series featuring Fu Manchu were also made, and millions of people became well acquainted with this sinister Chinese character.[127]

[124] Frank Wu 12.
[125] Frank Wu 117.
[126] William Wu 164.
[127] Lee 114.

Fu Manchu is first and foremost a frightening character, which becomes clear in the very beginning of the first novel of the series, *The Mystery of Dr Fu-Manchu,* even though Fu Manchu has not yet appeared in person. The readers are introduced to the heroes, Dr. Petrie who narrates the story, and Nayland Smith who is the principal sleuth. Smith shows up in Petrie's apartment late in the evening, has already been injured by Fu Manchu, and appears very agitated as he explains that he has come "in the interests of the entire white race" whose "survival depends largely upon the success of my mission".[128] Smith makes it clear that Fu Manchu is a terrifying adversary, and Petrie soon begins to fear "Fu-Manchu, whom I had never seen, but whose name stood for horrors indefinable!" (33). According to Sheng-mei Ma, Sax Rohmer skilfully exploited the Yellow Peril and created a character that would appeal to his white readers who felt fear and hostility toward the Chinese. The beginning of the twentieth century was an ideal time to create a Chinese villain, because people remembered the events of the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900. From the point of view of the Chinese, the rebellion was justifiable as they were trying to defend themselves against colonial rule, but for Western people, the reasons behind the killing of hundreds of English officials were incomprehensible, and the Boxer Rebellion made them accept the idea that the Chinese are a threat.[129] Fu Manchu was "a ruler image for all the negative stereotypes",[130] and Sax Rohmer's description of Fu Manchu makes it perfectly clear that he wants his readers to associate Fu Manchu with the Yellow Peril:

> Imagine a person, tall, lean and feline, high-shouldered, with a brow like Shakespeare and a face like Satan, a close-shaven skull, and long, magnetic eyes of true cat-green. Invest him with all the cruel cunning of an entire Eastern race, accumulated in one giant intellect, with all the resources, if you will, of a wealthy government which, however, already has denied all knowledge of his existence. Imagine that awful being, and you have a mental picture of Dr. Fu-Manchu, the yellow peril incarnate in one man. (15)

Fu Manchu's evilness and cruelty is emphasised by Rohmer's detailed descriptions of his unique assassination techniques and torture methods. His most frightening characteristic is his superior

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[128] Sax Rohmer, *The Mystery of Dr Fu-Manchu. The Fu Manchu Omnibus* Vol.1. (London: Allison and Busby, 1998)
[129] Ma 8.
[130] Ma 8.

intellect and the fact that he "has mastered Western knowledge and science without comprehending Western compassion and ethics".[131] Seshagiri claims that Fu Manchu's complete control over every aspect of modern Western society "makes him a monstrous reflection of the very Western civilization he threatens to subsume".[132]

Nayland Smith is never able to catch Fu Manchu, and at times he appears to be a poor match to the evil genius. In Smith's own words, he is "a child striving to cope with a mental giant" (92). However, he is able to solve Fu Manchu's crimes, manages to save some of his victims and assures the readers that the Yellow Peril cannot defeat a true white hero. In addition, Smith is a white expert who explains and defines Asian culture to the readers, which is a typical feature of the Orientalist discourse. Nayland Smith is an expert of all things related to Asian cultures and is therefore in the "position of authority over the East" and has interpretive power over all Asian characters.[133] Despite his great intellect, Fu Manchu's behaviour is always "determined by his Asian culture and race".[134] As mentioned in 2.1, a stereotype reduces members of a certain group into a few characteristics that they supposedly have, and creates the idea that they are all alike. In Rohmer's fiction, the Yellow Peril stereotype plays such an important part that all Asian people are represented as criminals, and Fu Manchu is their great leader.[135] As Seshagiri points out, Fu Manchu has an army of Asian criminals at his disposal, and the white heroes often manage to eliminate them, but never their brilliant leader. Seshagiri argues that Fu Manchu's subordinates represent the body of the Oriental evil, while Fu Manchu is the mind, which can never be destroyed.[136] The minor Asian criminals are necessary for Rohmer's series, because they allow the white heroes at least partial victories. The depiction of Chinese immigrants and their surroundings also gives support to assumptions about the dangerousness of Chinese immigrants and the "latent

[131] Kim 8.
[132] Urmila Seshagiri, "Modernity's (Yellow) Perils: Dr. Fu-Manchu and English Race Paranoia," *Cultural Critique* 62 (2006): 182.
[133] Lee 117.
[134] William Wu 166.
[135] William Wu 168.
[136] Seshagiri 175.

dangers of miscegenation and opium addiction" that are always present in Chinatowns.[137] All in all, the Yellow Peril stereotype is the foundation of Rohmer's novels, and Fu Manchu is indeed an embodiment of the Yellow Peril who "will use any means to… overthrow the white race".[138]

Fu Manchu became a well-established figure in American popular culture, and Ma claims that he was the inspiration for many evil Chinese characters that appeared in comic strips and films in the 1930s.[139] Similarly, Wu argues that in the 1930s, many "pulp writers copied Fu Manchu...and gave the Yellow Peril new life in the pulps" by depicting the Chinese as evil criminals, opium dealers or cruel soldiers invading the United States, thus constantly reproducing the stereotype.[140] For instance, terrifying Chinese criminals appear in Dashiell Hammett's hard-boiled detective fiction, particularly in his Continental Op –stories that were mostly published in the pulp magazine *Black Mask* in the 1920s and the early 1930s. At the time, Asians were challenging the race-based citizenship- and immigration laws in American courts, and calling into question the privileged position of whiteness. Consequently, Americans were struggling with "widespread anxiety about race and about the difficulties of maintaining the whiteness of the United States", and hence it is understandable that the Chinese are "the racial other posing the greatest threat to order" in Hammett's stories.[141] In addition to being suitable adversaries to the white hero, non-white characters are significant to the hard-boiled genre, because they function as the 'Other' in the "process of defining the self by what it is not"[142] through which the identity of the white male detective is constructed (see 2.1). According to Reddy, Asians have typically been cast in the role of the Other: "Asian men often stand as the dangerous Other against whom the detective must struggle to preserve the integrity and supremacy of an idealized whiteness in hard-boiled fiction".[143]

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[137] Seshagiri 170.
[138] Kim 8.
[139] Ma 5.
[140] William Wu 184.
[141] Reddy 18.
[142] Reddy 9.
[143] Reddy 165.

In this context, it is not surprising that the Yellow Peril stereotype is present in Hammett's fiction. In "The House in Turk Street", the Continental Op encounters Tai, the leader of a small group of criminals. Tai bears a certain resemblance to Fu Manchu, as he is smart, cunning and merciless. Before seeing Tai, the Op hears his voice and accent, which is "unmistakably British; cultured British".[144] Tai also wears Western clothes, so in the Op's eyes, the only Chinese part of his appearance is his face, the "round yellow mask" that hides all emotions (97). Just like Fu Manchu, Tai is an "Anglicized Oriental" (97) who masters Western manners and is in charge of the other criminals, even though they are white. Reddy argues that the combination of Tai's British accent and his Chinese face signifies "things out of their rightful places", and the real threat posed by him to white people is his ability to speak perfect English and act as a leader to white people. As Reddy points out, the story implies that Asians "can never be trusted to stay in their 'natural' places...but instead will move to positions of power and control".[145] However, later in the story Tai turns out to be "true to racial form" (107). The Op explains that "the Chinese are a thorough people; if one of them carries a gun at all, he usually carries two or three more...when a Chinese shoots he keeps on until his gun is empty" (107). Tai meets these expectations, and thus he is efficiently turned into 'the Other', a Chinese man who can never become fully Western, and should not be allowed any power.

Not all fictional Chinese criminals aim to destroy the white race or take over the United States, but narratives that are influenced by the Yellow Peril stereotype imply that it might happen anyway. In another story, "Dead Yellow Women", Hammett introduces a Chinese criminal that does not try to hide his ethnicity or gain power over white people. Chang Li Ching is a powerful and feared man in his own community, but his influence seems to be restricted to Chinatown. The Op notes that Chang's English is "a lot clearer than my own",[146] but Chang does not attempt to mimic Western people. He wears satin trousers and a purple rope, and enjoys trying to overwhelm the Op "with an

[144] Dashiell Hammett, "The House in Turk Street," *The Continental Op* (London: Pan Books, 1984) 93.
[145] Reddy 23.
[146] Dashiell Hammett, "Dead Yellow Women," *The Big Knockover and Other Stories* (London: Penguin, 1988) 202.

exaggeration – a burlesque – of the well-known Chinese politeness" (203). At times Chang even appears sympathetic, and the Op admits that he likes him: "he had humor, brains, nerve, everything" (205). Nevertheless, Chang and the Chinese people that work for him are extremely dangerous and often kill without a moment's hesitation. At the end of the story, Chang remains free and powerful, and the Op confesses that "I've stopped eating in Chinese restaurants, and if I never have to visit Chinatown again, it'll be soon enough" (234). The fact that the fearless white hero is afraid to go to Chinatown implies that the Chinese have already taken over parts of the United States.

3.2. The Yellow Peril in Rozan's Novels

I will now analyse how traces of the Yellow Peril stereotype can be seen in S.J. Rozan's novels, particularly in the representation of Chinese American gangsters and other criminals in *China Trade* and *A Bitter Feast.* In *China Trade,* the original crime that Lydia Chin is hired to solve is the theft of some valuable porcelains from a museum in Chinatown. Lydia begins her investigation by interviewing Chinese American gangsters, because they control everything that happens in their turf. Later it turns out that the theft was commissioned by the old Chinese American lady who donated the porcelains to the museum, and her motive was to hide the fact that her late husband had bought them knowing that they were stolen. The real villain is Dr. Caldwell, a museum director who buys and sells stolen porcelains and kills people in order to avoid being captured, but he is upstaged by the threatening Chinese American gangsters. The depiction of Chinese American gangsters and criminals is an important part of the narrative, and gangs and crime are portrayed as an inescapable part of Chinatown life. Gangsters also play a significant role in *A Bitter Feast,* and in addition, the novel presents some highly influential Chinese American criminals who are a threat to American society because they are actively involved in politics. In this novel, Lydia's task is to find

three Chinese American waiters who have gone missing. The waiters have joined a worker's union, and the organisers of the union fear that anti-union forces, such as the powerful businessman and community leader H.B. Yang, are behind the disappearance. In *A Bitter Feast,* the influential Chinese American criminals are capable of very sophisticated schemes, for instance importing gangsters from China with the help of a corrupt Chinese American agent of the United States government.

Lee argues that there is a modern form of the Yellow Peril stereotype, the "contemporary yellow peril, the invasion of new Chinese immigrants and their gangs".[147] As the preceding discussion of Hammett's fiction suggested, this "new" Yellow Peril has been present in detective fiction since the 1920s. Cacioppo argues that "unsympathetic and often xenophobic representations of foreigners" were a typical feature in early American detective fiction, and these representations emphasised the most "sensational aspects of life in ethnic enclaves", such as "stories of Tong and gang wars, opium smuggling...gambling dens and white slavery".[148] In Rozan's novels, a modern version of the Yellow Peril is definitely present in the form of Chinese American gangsters and drug dealers, who are a significant part of the narrative in *China Trade,* because Lydia suspects that they are responsible for the theft of the porcelains that she was hired to find, and consequently has to enter the world of gangsters during her investigation.

Lydia briefly explains how the criminal world is organised in Chinatown:

> All of Chinatown, with very few exceptions, is divided among a small number of gangs who extort protection money from the shopkeepers, guard the gambling dens, deal drugs, and run whatever rackets there are to be run on their blocks. They're one of the worst facts of Chinatown life, but they are a fact, and I've never seen the point of pretending to outsiders that it doesn't happen like that. (*China Trade*, 15)

The gangsters depicted in the novel are all extremely unpleasant. They are violent, threatening, and force hard-working citizens pay them "lucky money" so that they would leave them alone. As Lydia

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[147] Lee 197.

[148] Marina Cacioppo, "Insider Knowledge versus Outsider Perspective in Early Italian American and African American Detective Stories," *Sleuthing Ethnicity: The Detective in Multiethnic Crime Fiction*, ed. Dorothea Fischer-Hornung and Monika Mueller (London: Associated University Presses, 2003) 23.

puts it, the gangsters “aren’t cute, or courtly, like the Mafia you see in the movies. They’re nasty” (*China Trade*, 26). They are also very sexist, and their attitude toward women alone makes them natural enemies and opponents for a female detective. Lydia’s encounters with the gangsters are charged with tension, as the gangsters try to intimidate her by threatening her with sexual violence and chauvinistic comments. Trouble, the leader of a gang called Golden Dragons, remarks that Lydia is “pretty cute” (27) and decides to search her body for a gun. Lydia clearly feels violated as “he patted me down from behind, including places I couldn’t have been carrying a gun” (27-28). It seems to bother Trouble that a woman is working as a private investigator, and whenever they meet, Trouble draws attention to Lydia’s femininity by using insults such as “little bitch private eye” (93). Finally Trouble’s hostility culminates in an attack, and the Golden Dragons beat Lydia and threaten to rape her. Being a woman makes it harder for Lydia to deal with the gangsters, but yet her chances are better than her white partner’s. Bill offers to accompany Lydia to her meeting with Trouble, but she explains that “they may not talk to me, but they certainly won’t talk to you” (15). Bill suggests that “I could pretend I’m a bad guy” (15), but Lydia answers: “unless you could pretend you were a Chinese bad guy it wouldn’t help” (16). For the gangsters, race is more important than gender, and being Chinese American gives Lydia the chance to enter their world. It is a typical feature of ethnic detective fiction that “color allows” the detective “access where whites, including the police, dare not go, or would be ineffectual”.[149]

In *China Trade,* the gangsters commit all kinds of crimes and do terrible things throughout the novel, but yet everyone knows that even worse things can happen. Mary, Lydia’s best friend and a police officer, feels pressured to find out who murdered a gangster before the other members of the gang do, because “we can’t let that get started”. Lydia does not need to be explained what “that” refers to:

> “That” was gang war, when icy, crowded streets and steamy restaurants become as dangerous as minefields, when any minute a car could whip around the corner or a

[149] Hans Bertens and Theo D’Haen, *Contemporary American Crime Fiction* (New York: Palgrave, 2001) 180.

> door could burst open and rattling gunfire could turn a wedding banquet or a child's birthday party into a horror of screams and blood. (*China Trade,* 68)

The threat of a potential gang war seems to be constantly hovering above Chinatown, which corresponds with the way Chinatowns have traditionally been depicted in detective fiction. For instance, in Hammett's "Dead Yellow Women", the Op's aid reports that "strange Chinaboys are in town" and that they are "hatchetmen" gathering for a tong war (194). In Rozan's representation of Chinatown, the emphasis is on the good, law-abiding Chinese Americans, but there is nevertheless an atmosphere of tension and fear, because the threat posed by the gangs is so great. Moreover, the fact that Lydia, who plays the role of the hero, is so concerned about the gangsters makes them seem more threatening, just like Smith's and Petrie's frightened comments about Fu Manchu emphasise his dangerousness.

One of the striking aspects of Rozan's representation of Chinatown life is the way everyone seems to accept gangs, violence and crime as an unavoidable part of everyday life. Everyone who lives in Chinatown is somehow connected to gangsters. As Lydia puts it, gangs are like feudal lords: "Your loyalty, expressed in protection dollars, guarantees smooth daily operation uninterrupted by pipes that mysteriously burst in your basement or armed men who mysteriously burst through your front door...everyone belongs to some feudal lord, and everyone pays" (*A Bitter Feast*, 14). In *China Trade,* it becomes very clear that gangs cause great difficulties for shopkeepers and owners of other small businesses by demanding more protection money than they could afford and generally terrorizing the neighborhood, but yet no one tries to do anything about them. One baker even had to pay "lucky money" to two gangs at the same time, but when Lydia asks if he went to the police, "he winked to show he understood my ridiculous joke" (87), and tells her that he managed to reason with the *dai lo* of Golden Dragons. People in Chinatown are disinclined to even talk about gangs, and protesting against them openly is not an option. When Lydia interviews all business owners on a certain block, she notes that only one in four people is brave enough to answer her questions about the gang that operates in that area (88), and they have good reason to be careful,

since the gangsters seem to know everything that goes on in their block. The Golden Dragons threaten Lydia in a restaurant kitchen, and Lydia notices that the restaurant workers are "silent and riveted, pressed against walls as far away as they could get", and she knows that none of them is going to call the police, because they "knew better than to help" (91).

However, someone from the community, the baker, does help Lydia by calling the powerful tong[150] leader Gao and telling him that she is in trouble. This shows that people in Chinatown are not simply cowards, even though they do not take action against the gangs by reporting crimes to the police. The explanation is that they seem to think that gangs are an internal problem of the community, and the police are outsiders. When the baker, for instance, has trouble with the gangsters, he turns to local authority figures, the *dai lo* of a gang and Grandfather Gao, and does not even consider going to the police. Practically everyone in Chinatown seems to share this attitude, which makes it virtually impossible for the police to stop the gang-related criminality. Mary tries to convince Lydia to stay away from the gangs and let the police handle them, but even Lydia does not think that talking to the police about gangsters is a good idea, although she understands the consequences of keeping silent:

> I avoided the question of why, if the police could deal with it, there were so many gangs running their brutal operations in this small neighborhood. I knew the answer: That will continue as long as honest citizens like me refuse to come forward to talk to the police. (*China Trade,* 50)

Lydia does not think that it would do her any good to report to the police that she was attacked by the Golden Dragons. She does report a stolen gun and tells Mary about the attack, but when Mary perfunctorily asks if she wants to press charges, she answers: "No. Why? There won't be any witnesses, and Trouble and his boys will have a dozen respectable citizens to alibi them" (105). Mary does not try to contest this, which shows that the police is powerless against the gangsters.

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[150] Lydia explains that tongs are "the organized crime down here, and the gangs are their foot solders" (*China Trade,* 26). Hence tong leaders are powerful figures in the world of the gangsters, even though not all gangs are controlled by the tongs.

Lydia’s attitude towards gangsters is realistic and pragmatic. She has no illusions about the nature of the Chinatown gangsters, she knows that they can ruin someone’s life at any given moment, but she also knows that there is not much anyone can do to change this fact of Chinatown life. As a private investigator, she often comes into contact with gang members, and she usually knows what is happening in the world of the gangsters, but she seldom tries to do anything more than find the information that she needs to solve the case she is currently working on. Lydia does not have any quixotic ideas about trying to eliminate the gangs, and the existence of gangs does not even seem to provoke any strong emotions in Lydia. Of course, she is often very angry after her meetings with the Golden Dragons, especially when they attack her: “I want them stomped and kicked and punched and walking barefoot on broken glass!” (98). However, when Grandfather Gao offers Lydia the chance to have Trouble punished for the attack, she is not too upset to hear Gao’s subtle warnings: “You mean, as long as it’s cost me this much already, I shouldn’t mess up my chances of solving this case by taking Trouble out of circulation?” (100). Lydia also understands that “if Mr. Gao and the Three Brothers punished the Golden Dragons for attacking me, I would owe them”, and that she should “think twice before incurring that kind of debt” (100). Only moments after being brutally attacked, Lydia calmly decides that solving her case is more important than punishing the gangsters, and so she lets them escape punishment. However, later she sees an opportunity to set a trap for Trouble, and is eager to take that chance, even though it means putting herself in great risk. She explains to Mary that she wants to prevent the gang war: “it’s going to happen unless we stop it...you know what it’ll be like if it does. We can’t let it” (230). In addition, Lydia has a more personal motive: “And I want Trouble, Mary. This is my chance” (230). Lydia cooperates with the police and gives them the perfect opportunity to arrest Trouble, but eventually the police can only watch as another gang leader kills Trouble right in front of them and escapes from the scene. In a similar way to Rohmer’s Fu Manchu stories, some individual gangsters are caught or killed in order to ensure partial victories to the detective, but as a whole the Chinese

American gangs appear to be invincible, and everyone seems to accept that as a part of their reality. In this regard Rozan follows the conventions of hard-boiled detective fiction, as the detective can only “hope to achieve limited success – exposing the murderer, apportioning blame – but the idea...of him or her replicating this ‘success’ in a wider context...is never realised”.[151]

The representation of the Chinese gangsters in *China Trade* is close to Lee’s idea of the new Yellow Peril, except for one important difference: the gangsters are not portrayed as a faceless mass of dangerous Asians, but instead, some of the gang members have names, personalities and backgrounds. This is possible, because the story is told from the point of view of a Chinese American, in contrast to the white perspective of the older fiction discussed in 3.1. As Reddy points out, first-person narration is one of the key elements of hard-boiled detective fiction, and “this narration is as much about the detective himself as it is the events that comprise the plot”.[152] Because “the voice of the detective” is “central to the readers’ experiences of the text”,[153] Reddy argues that “replacing the traditional central consciousness with another that does not share the ideology or the racial (or sexual or gender) identity around which the genre formed” is absolutely necessary, if an author intends to “let the Other speak” in detective fiction.[154] Because the Chinese American gangsters are seen through Lydia’s eyes, they are multifaceted individuals, not just a threatening mass. The most obvious example of this is Matt, Lydia’s old high school sweetheart, who has become a leader of a gang. Matt acts just like the other gangsters, makes stupid jokes about female private investigators and, in short, plays the role of the tough, macho gangster. However, when Lydia first meets him, she sees how “a slow, self-possessed smile took over; but before that, before his guard was up…I saw a ghost of the eager joy Matt Yin and I used to bring to the times when we were together” (*China Trade*, 164). Matt pretends that he does not have any feelings, and that he does not care about Lydia or his family, but his actions tell a different story. He protects his

[151] Andrew Pepper, *The Contemporary American Crime Novel: Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Class* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000) 58.
[152] Reddy 8.
[153] Reddy 8.
[154] Reddy 9.

sister from a distance and makes sure she does not have to pay lucky money to anybody, which shows that family is still important to him. Moreover, he kills the gangsters who are about to murder Lydia. Matt is given a personality and a background, which makes it impossible to see him simply as part of the Yellow Peril.

Furthermore, Rozan introduces the mother of a dead gangster to show that even these bad Chinese men have families and backgrounds. Mrs. Hsing seems to be oblivious of her son's criminal activities, and proudly tells Lydia that he was a part-time cook and studied electrical engineering. Lydia realizes that "she loved him", and begins to see the dead gangster as a person as she thinks "about a nineteen-year-old kid whose whole life had been reduced to that: he was 'the dead Golden Dragon'" (*China Trade,* 128). Similarly, even the most obnoxious gangster, Trouble, appears very human at times, especially when he explains to Lydia how he makes money easily by renting a small part of his turf to another gang: "'Trouble, Big-Shot Landlord!' He smiled the smile with all the teeth in it" (30). Trouble is proud of his clever way to make money, and has his own version of the American Dream: "Some day soon, retire, just collecting rent!" (30). Lydia tells about Trouble's "entrepreneurialism" to Nora Yin, who works for an organization that tries to improve the community, and she sees it as proof of the fact that gangsters have potential for much greater things: "They're not stupid, you know, these kids. God, it's such a loss. We lose twice, the community: by what they do, and by never having what they could have contributed" (55). Lydia dryly points out that "Trouble's not a kid. And he's not from the community", but Nora remains compassionate: "He was a kid once. And we're all immigrants here" (55).

Compared to the one-dimensional representations of Chinese American criminals in Rohmer's or Hammett's works, Rozan's *China Trade* gives a far less stereotypical impression. Instead of reducing the Chinese American gangsters to the role of the modern Yellow Peril, Rozan tries to show that they are human beings who can be many things in addition to being gangsters, for instance loving sons and brothers, intelligent students and businessmen, ordinary people with

dreams for the future. Furthermore, it is important to notice that in Rozan's novels, the gangsters and criminals do not represent all Chinese people in the same way as, for instance, in Hammett's stories. Reddy argues that in "The House in Turk Street", the criminal character Tai is "repeatedly called 'the Chinese' in the story, with his racial/national identity substituting for a personal identity and also causing him to stand in for all Chinese".[155] In *China Trade*, it is clear that the gangsters do not represent all Chinese people, because the majority of the Chinese characters are good citizens. So even though the stereotype of the threatening Chinese criminal is present in the novel, the representation of the gangsters and the great number of good Chinese characters prevent the readers from seeing all Chinese Americans as the Yellow Peril. In addition, it needs to be remembered that some of the people who try to catch the criminals are also Chinese American.

However, it must also be noted that the depiction of the Chinese Americans is rather black and white, since the characters are divided into two categories, the "good" and the "bad" Chinese Americans, which corresponds with the fact that positive and negative stereotypes have traditionally coexisted in Anglo-American representations of the Chinese. Moreover, in *China Trade,* the main conflict is between good and bad Chinese Americans, not between Chinese Americans and white people. This is noteworthy, because ethnic detective fiction usually involves some kind of discussion about the relationship between the ethnic minority and white people, with emphasis on racism and societal injustices. For instance, Bertens and D'haen discuss Walter Mosley's Easy Rawlins -novels and argue that criticism of white racism is, in fact, what the series is about.[156] Of course, the amount of explicit criticism of racism might depend on the ethnic background of the author, since the works of many black authors, for instance Walter Mosley and Barbara Neely, contain very critical examination of race relations in America, whereas white authors are perhaps less inclined to give discussion about racism such a central position in the narrative. Rozan's *China Trade* does not contain criticism of white racism, because the focus is on dangerous Chinese

155 Reddy 21.
156 Bertens and D'haen 180.

American gangsters, which directs the reader's attention away from the white characters and the issue of racism. In fact, there are also white criminals in the novel, and particularly Dr. Caldwell, a museum director, who kills his assistant because she finds out that he has been buying and selling stolen porcelains for years, could be considered the true villain of the story. Dr. Caldwell is the one who comes up with the idea to assassinate Lydia and Bill, but that fact is soon forgotten when the terrifying Chinese gangsters show up and start shooting. The role of the villain is reserved for Chinese American gangsters, and criminality is presented as an internal problem of the Chinese American community.

The Yellow Peril theme appears in a different form in *A Bitter Feast,* where the focus is on Chinese American criminals who operate on a much higher level than the ordinary gangsters depicted in *China Trade.* This novel subtly echoes the idea that if Chinese people are allowed into the United States, they will slowly take over the whole country. On a local level this process has already started: Chinatown has its own power structures and is controlled by its own leaders, not by the police and other authorities. In *A Bitter Feast*, Rozan presents one of these leaders, the 79-year-old H. B. Yang who has been in the United States for 65 years and become a very successful businessman. In my opinion, Yang has something in common with Hammett's Chang, since they both are influential and feared men in Chinatown, prefer politeness and veiled threats, and manage to be sympathetic and threatening at the same time. As Lydia puts it, Yang is a "legend" (65), "one of the kings" (66), and "revered and respected" (79) by everyone in the community. Lydia also admits that Yang "was sort of like the bogeyman of my childhood" (81), because he seemed so all-powerful, and even as an adult Lydia seems slightly afraid of him. She finds it surprising that the people who work in Yang's restaurants have the courage to form a union and demand better wages: "Doesn't it make you nervous to be going up against H. B. Yang?" (8). There is good reason to be nervous, as Yang considers the worker's union as "an unacceptable intrusion into my relations with those who work for me" (84). Yang is not used to such intrusions, because he smuggles his workers

into the United States, and practically owns them until they have managed to pay for the journey. When the price is paid, the immigrants still remain in Yang's debt. Even Lydia has to admit that "personally, I owe him. He brought my father over here, too" (83).

So the power of H. B. Yang is absolute, and it is no longer limited to Chinatown and its inhabitants. He has become a significant political figure and functions as the mayor's adviser. It is common knowledge that Yang entered the country illegally and has gained his success through criminal measures, and yet he is supported and protected by the mayor. To all intents and purposes, Yang is above the law and can do whatever he wants without having to worry about the police. Mary explains to Lydia that the police have been "told from above to tread very, very carefully" (115) if Yang seems to be involved in a case, and when the police suspect Yang of a crime and want to question him, they cannot ask him to come to the police department: "'Not H. B. Yang,' she said in a voice more dispirited than I'd heard from her before. 'You don't ask him to come here'" (114). Mary admits that questioning Yang is totally useless: "Of course, he was shocked and saddened that anyone thought he might have had anything to do with this. He hoped the mayor didn't feel that way, too; he'd have to give him a call and find out" (114). Yang has reached such a high position in society that he can play the role of the respectful community leader and solve his problems with his political influence and his powerful connections. Hard-boiled crime fiction often depicts the extreme poles of society, and in *A Bitter Feast*, there is a sharp contrast between the rich, influential Yang and the poor immigrants that he exploits. Yang, who represents crime and corruption on the higher levels of society, remains in his position at the end of the novel, which is another typical feature of hard-boiled detective fiction. In Pepper's words, crime is "shown to be an inevitable part of the institutional superstructure of American life", and although the detective can capture individual transgressors, he or she is powerless against those who have reached positions of great power and influence.[157]

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[157] Pepper 10.

The Chinese American criminals that appear in *A Bitter Feast* are much more intelligent than the simple gangsters in *China Trade,* and their criminal operations are very sophisticated. For instance, Lydia discovers that a dangerous gang leader, Duke Lo, "was importing his own gangsters…with valid United States papers" (283). Because Duke Lo's gangsters are citizens, they cannot be deported back to China despite their criminality. Duke Lo has managed to make this scheme work with the help of Joe Yee, who works for the State Department. Duke Lo is on his way to become the next H. B. Yang, and knows the importance of having connections and maintaining the appearance of legality. That is why the power struggles between Duke Lo and H. B. Yang are fought in new, subtle ways. A Chinatown lawyer describes the new situation: "It's not like it used to be. Tongs and hatchet men and all that. Now men like H. B. Yang are community leaders and hang out with the mayor. It's all done in court these days" (10). This indicates that the violent tong wars are history, but it also gives the criminals the appearance of respectable citizens. It is hard to distinguish Chinese American criminals from law-abiding Chinese Americans, which makes the whole ethnic group seem threatening.

Joe Yee is a good example of the 'gook' stereotype, the inscrutable Chinese American who appears to be a trustworthy, loyal American citizen, but has no difficulty betraying the government by granting citizenship to Chinese criminals. Warren Tan is another excellent example of the stereotypical dubiousness and unreliability of Chinese Americans. At the beginning of the novel, he appears to be a heroic social reformist, a Yale graduate dedicated to serving and improving his community. In fact, he is one of the few characters who openly challenge the way things have always been done in Chinatown. He wants to free Chinatown of all gangs, tongs and their leaders:

> 'We have to take Chinatown back from those guys...It's over, the way they used to run things. The ways they brought from China, where a few old men have all the power and that's okay with everyone as long as we're taken care of...It's time for Chinatown to reunite with America.' (26)

Warren Tan is determined to make Chinatown a better place, and his first step is to improve the position of immigrant workers by building a powerful labour union. He is certain that the battle

against the criminal leaders of Chinatown can be won by using legal methods, but soon realizes that he is wrong, and decides to plant a bomb in his own office in order to frame his enemies for the crime and gain support for the union. A man dies in the explosion, and at the end of the novel, the guilt-ridden Tan kills himself. Lydia is shocked to find out that Tan resorted to using the same criminal methods as the people he wanted to remove from power, and Tan claims that "it will always be done this way" (301). In *A Bitter Feast,* crime is an inescapable part of Chinatown life, and illegal Chinese immigrants are polluting the country with their treacherous criminality. This shows that Rozan's representation of Chinese Americans is influenced by the Yellow Peril stereotype.

4. The Model Minority Myth

In this section I focus on the opposite image of the Yellow Peril, the model minority myth. First, I present this seemingly positive stereotype and its complex political purposes; in 4.1 I will study how these ideas can be seen in detective fiction written in the 1930s, and in 4.2 I will analyse Rozan's novels against this background.

These days Asian Americans have an exceptionally good reputation, and they are considered to be much more successful than other minorities. Frank Wu lists some of the characteristics that Asian Americans supposedly have: they are "intelligent, gifted in math and science, polite, hard working, family oriented, law abiding, and successfully entrepreneurial".[158] Because of their good reputation, Asian Americans are often said to be a model minority, and stories about their great success in the United States have become a popular myth. The model minority myth is basically a touching story about penniless Asian immigrants who come to the United States determined to succeed in their efforts to gain a better quality of life. Because of their supreme intellect and work ethic, their small businesses soon become prosperous, and their children can receive the best education and become even more successful than their parents. All this is accomplished without any help, and yet the Asian immigrants are very grateful to their new country that made everything possible for them.

The origins of the myth can be found in the nineteenth century when the first Chinese immigrants arrived in the United States. One of the central notions of the model minority myth is that Asian people are extremely hard working and do not complain about small hardships that they meet on their way to prosperity. This stereotype was preceded by the image of the Chinese 'coolie', a Chinese labourer who was willing to work harder than others, demanded less wages and did not whine about the working conditions. Although the 'coolies' were not slaves, they did not have the

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[158] Frank Wu 40.

same rights as other workers, and were subordinated and servile.[159] 'Coolies' were such effective workers that plans were made to use them as replacement for the freed African slaves. Chinese workers were also compared to the Irish, and were considered much better. This kind of comparison of racial minorities led to racial rivalries and hostility between different minorities.[160]

The term model minority was created by journalists in the 1960s, when the media became interested in the apparent success of Asian Americans. Asian Americans were portrayed as wealthy, well-educated people who did not cause any trouble, in other words, they were considered to be a fully assimilated minority. One of the things that impressed Americans in the 1970s was the extreme self-reliance of Asian Americans. Although many Asian American families were in need of public assistance, most of them did not ask for it. This pleased white people, and Asian Americans were praised for their ability to take care of themselves, although it has later been argued that Asian Americans simply did not trust the authorities enough to use their services.[161]

The most common explanation for the success of Asian Americans is their families. There are some persistent myths about the Asian American family that have helped create the image that Asian Americans are a model minority. Lee describes the nearly mythical "traditional Asian American family, an 'intact' family" that "provides a secure environment for children…pushes those children to work harder; and…fosters savings".[162] The stereotypical Asian American family is very close-knit and the family members take a keen interest in each other. Children are brought up to obey their parents and the authorities, and their parents teach them to work hard at school and expect good results. Asian people are supposed to respect their elders and old traditions, which is why it is so important for them to follow conventions and protect the honour of the family.[163]

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[159] Lee 9.
[160] Frank Wu 60-61.
[161] Lee 151.
[162] Lee 185.
[163] Frank Wu 45.

The stereotype of Asian American model families has been criticized, because "tradition is reduced to the values of obedience, discipline, and motivation enacted by the family".[164] Lee also sees a strong connection between the creation of the image of Asian American model families and Cold War ideology. He argues that "at the heart of civil defence was the belief that the nuclear family was the primary social unit through which the American way of life could be preserved" and Asian American families were chosen as models for other minorities.[165] The fact that Asian American families were put on a pedestal is certainly surprising, considering that Americans fought wars in Asia during the Cold War, and also because the image of the exemplary family contradicts earlier representations of Asian Americans, especially Chinese Americans. In the nineteenth century, "the image of the Chinese prostitute as a source of pollution" was the prevailing notion of Chinese women,[166] and special exclusion laws were passed to keep them from moving into the United States. The scarcity of Chinese women and the prohibition of interracial relationships prevented Chinese American men from having families, and forced them to live in bachelor communities, a form a living which white Americans considered morally suspicious.[167] Thus, earlier stereotypes promote the idea that Chinese Americans are immoral and sexually deviant, and hence it is quite remarkable that they are now praised for their harmonious family life. The emergence of the model family stereotype despite the conflict with earlier images can be considered an example of the conflicting nature of stereotypes and the tendency of negative and positive stereotypes to co-exist, which was discussed in 2.2.

On the surface the model minority myth may appear to be harmless and even a refreshingly positive representation of Asian Americans. However, its political functions are complicated, and although it is a stereotype of Asian Americans, it also affects other racial minorities. In fact, Lee claims that "the elevation of Asian Americans to the position of model minority had less to do with

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[164] Lee 186.
[165] Lee 161.
[166] Lee 90.
[167] Koshy 7-8.

the actual success of Asian Americans than the perceived failure – or worse, refusal – of African Americans to assimilate".[168] The model minority myth is a powerful political tool that serves the purposes of white Americans and works against all minority groups. Asian Americans were turned into a model for all other minorities, especially African Americans, for obvious reasons. In the 1960s, when the model minority myth was established, African Americans were actively fighting for their civil rights, and radical African American movements and organisations such as the Black Power or the Black Panthers frightened many white Americans. In contrast, Asian Americans were politically silent, that is, they did not fight for their rights or try to oppose racial discrimination that was making their lives difficult. As Frank Wu satirizes, "Asian Americans do not whine about racial discrimination; they only try harder".[169] The representation of Asian Americans as a minority whose assimilation was the result of their "stoic patience, political obedience and self-improvement" sends a message to other minorities: success in America can be achieved by hard work and obedience, not by fighting for civil rights and equality.[170]

According to David Li, the model minority myth serves two functions: it "reaffirms the validity of the American democratic promise" and erases "the repetitive historical differentiations of citizenship between white ethnicities and people of color".[171] In other words, the model minority myth supports the American Dream, the idea that anybody can succeed in America, regardless of race. In the words of Frank Wu, the model minority myth "tells a comforting narrative of America as having progressed to become a place where race does not matter anymore", and at the same time it is "a cautionary parable about the good minority and the bad minority."[172]

In addition to creating tension between Asian Americans and other minorities, the model minority myth also complicates the relationship between Asian Americans and white people. The myth promotes the idea that Asian Americans are dubious and unreliable, because it is connected to

[168] Lee 145.
[169] Frank Wu 44.
[170] Lee 145.
[171] Li 9.
[172] Frank Wu 59.

another stereotype, the 'gook'. Lee argues that the crucial element of the model minority myth, representing Asian Americans as silent and disciplined, is "used in constructing the Asian American as a new yellow peril". Because the model minority myth represents Asian Americans as silent, inscrutable people who never show their true emotions, the "Asian American model minority becomes the enemy within, economically productive but culturally inauthentic".[173] Furthermore, David Palumbo-Liu argues that although the model minority myth appears to celebrate the successful assimilation of Asian Americans, it simultaneously suggests that Asian Americans cannot become "real" Americans without losing their success. According to Palumbo-Liu, the model minority myth contains the idea that Asian Americans have formed their own subnations, and the traditional values of these subnations are the reason why Asian Americans are doing so well in the United States. Palumbo-Liu considers the notion of a subnation to be dangerous, because it suggests that Asian Americans "must remain locked in a luminal, segregated, detemporalized zone *between* Asia and America".[174] Thus the model minority myth isolates Asian Americans from other Americans, which is not surprising, since as mentioned in 2.1, dividing outsiders from those who belong is one of the main functions of all stereotypes.

Wu feels that the model minority stereotype is particularly treacherous, because it is not openly racist. It is "neither outlandish nor objectionable…it relies more on acquired behavior than on inborn biology".[175] And because the stereotype is superficially benevolent, it is tempting to accept it. However, Wu points out that "the model minority myth whitewashes racial discrimination", because everyone assumes that Asian Americans are doing so well that they cannot possibly have experienced any problems with racism.[176] In reality, the model minority myth exposes Asian Americans to racism, because their alleged success raises envy and hate. The myth can even be used as a justification for racism, because attacks against Asian Americans "become compensation or

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[173] Lee 190-191.
[174] David Palumbo-Liu, *Asian / American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999) 179.
[175] Frank Wu 48.
[176] Frank Wu 69.

retaliation".[177] Furthermore, if Asian Americans accept the pleasant parts of the stereotype, they would be "precluded from rejecting its unfavorable interpretations".[178] In Wu's opinion, "it is the stereotyping itself, not the positive or negative valence it assumes temporarily, that is dangerous", because "a stereotype confines its subjects."[179]

Moreover, the model minority myth is an excellent example of controlling images, which were discussed in 2.1. As a controlling image, the model minority myth implies to Asian Americans what kind of behaviour is expected of them if they want to be accepted. For instance, Asian people are often portrayed to be meek and passive, which supports the notion that they are the ideal minority. According to Li, the Chinese immigrants initially started to hide their emotions behind the mask of expressionless passivity "to dignify their imposed silence". Because of white racism, the Chinese developed a survival mechanism, which was interpreted by the whites as a Chinese virtue. Li emphasizes the incredible power of stereotypes: "The result is stunning: what was invented as an adaptive mask by early immigrants became for succeeding generations of U.S. –born Chinese Americans a cultural trait".[180] That is to say, the Chinese Americans have accepted the stereotype of Chinese passivity as a truthful description of their own nature, and begun to mimic the controlling image. Li quotes Chin and Chan's words and argues that Asian Americans have been conditioned into "becoming the stereotype, live it, talk it, embrace it, measure group and individual worth in its terms, and believe it".[181] This can be seen as a victory for white racism.

4.1. The Well-Behaved Chinese American Detectives of the 1930s

After Fu Manchu, the second fictional Asian character to become widely known in the United States is Charlie Chan. He is also the first notable Asian American detective, and although he

[177] Frank Wu 79.
[178] Frank Wu 67.
[179] Frank Wu 76.
[180] Li 24.
[181] Li 25.

appeared before the term model minority was introduced, he is an excellent example of a well-behaved, harmless Chinese American who improves his position in society because he knows how to please white people. Charlie Chan was created by Earl Derr Biggers, who wrote six novels about Chan's investigations between 1925 and 1932, but the character is better known from the 48 films that were made after the novels. The events of the first Charlie Chan novel, *A House Without a Key* (1925), take place in Hawaii, which was the only location where the idea of a Chinese police detective was plausible, because there were hardly any Chinese American policemen in other parts of the United States.[182] According to Rzepka, Biggers challenged the prevailing stereotypical depictions of Chinese Americans that were set in Chinatowns by making "Chan a resident of a dramatically different American landscape, both geographically and culturally".[183] Furthermore, Chinese detectives had not appeared in detective fiction, as the genre had previously allotted Chinese characters only the role of the criminal. Hence Charlie Chan brought a new image of the Chinese in American literature, and the contrast between him and the Chinese characters represented as the Yellow Peril is striking. In fact, William Wu argues that Charlie Chan is "an example of overcompensation in an author's attempt to break away from the Yellow Peril".[184]

It cannot be denied that the representation of Charlie Chan is as stereotypical and unrealistic as Fu Manchu's, but in an opposite way. Chan's most defining characteristic is his non-threatening appearance and behaviour:

> He was very fat indeed, yet he walked with the light dainty step of a woman. His cheeks were chubby as a baby's, his skin ivory tainted, his black hair close-crobbed, his amber eyes slanting. As he passed Miss Minerva he bowed with a courtesy encountered all too rarely in a work-a-day world… [185]

Charlie Chan's appearance makes him an object of ridicule, but it effectively distances him from the Yellow Peril, and his speech and manners serve the same purpose. In Kim's opinion, Chan's speech is one of the things that attracted the white audience of Chan films, because it is very humorous, and

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[182] William Wu 174.
[183] Charles J. Rzepka, "Race, Region, Rule: Genre and the Case of Charlie Chan," *PMLA* Vol. 122, No.5 (2007): 1468.
[184] William Wu 174.
[185] Earl Derr Biggers, *The House Without a Key* (Holicong: Wildside Press, 1925) 76.

"combines the inevitable 'pidgin' with pseudo-Confucian aphorisms".[186] Chan behaves in an exaggeratedly polite manner, and is always calm. Wu criticises Chan's unrealistic depiction and claims that Biggers does not "allow any hint of aggression, assertiveness, or temper to show in his detective". [187] Of course, this is also in keeping with the generic conventions, since Biggers' novels belong to the genre of classic detective fiction, which has a long tradition of detectives who are "emotionally detached... and rarely showed any kind of emotional response".[188]

Chan's behaviour is always extremely submissive and apologetic, which is significant, because it makes him more acceptable to the white audience. During his investigations, Chan is often faced with racism, but he never loses his calmness, concentrates on his work and is rewarded in the end. For instance, in *The House Without a Key*, Miss Minerva, the cousin of the murdered man, strongly disapproves of a Chinese detective. Instead of an angry protest against her racist attitude, Chan makes a polite request: "Humbly asking pardon to mention it, I detect in your eyes slight flame of hostility. Quench it, if you will be so kind. Friendly cooperation are essential between us" (84). Due to his patience, politeness, and competence as a detective, Chan slowly gains the trust and respect of Miss Minerva. From the perspective of white people, this makes him a suitable role model for Asian Americans. As a matter of fact, Wu sees Chan as a "model-minority American, who…never exhibits direct anger, frustration or displeasure at white people; and who has no desires involving white society other than the execution of his assigned job".[189] Ma shares this opinion and claims that "Biggers anticipated the model minority argument" and made Chan an example of a Chinese man who rises upward in society because of his suitable behaviour and "cultural…amalgamation with the superior race".[190] Kim adds that "as permanent inferior, the 'good' Asian can be assimilated into American life", and this seems to be Charlie Chan's faith.[191]

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[186] Kim 18.
[187] William Wu 176.
[188] Cranny-Francis 156.
[189] William Wu 181.
[190] Ma 13.
[191] Kim 18.

In the 1930s, another Chinese American detective figure emerged and served the same ideological purpose as Charlie Chan. Hugh Wiley's James Lee Wong, a secret agent for the government, appeared in some short stories and films, but did not become as widely known as Charlie Chan. Like Charlie Chan, James Lee Wong, "listed more simply on the federal pay rolls as James Lee",[192] does not have a very strong identity as a Chinese American. He does not seem to have any emotional connections to other Chinese Americans or the Chinatown community. He does interact with Chinese Americans, but only because he uses them as informants or aids in his investigations. Wong does not have a family or a private life, and the only information given about his background is that he studied at Yale. Some of his old friends from Yale appear in the stories, but only in connection to the cases he is working on. Wong's life seems to consist of nothing but his work: "I work four or five regular weeks every seven days" (19). His hard work has given him a comfortable position as a wealthy man who can employ many servants.

In Wiley's stories, the representation of Chinese characters is not very original, and Chinese culture is reduced to brief notes about "the Ritual of Right Conduct" that all Chinese American characters, including Wong, follow. However, although Wong often uses phrases associated with traditional Chinese politeness, it is implied that he only does so because he knows it is expected of him: "'sons to mourn at your grave', James Lee said, following the Ritual of Right Conduct" ("A Ray of Light", 34). Chinese culture does not have any real meaning for Wong, and it seems that he prefers Western manners:

> Chin Hoy bowed to James Lee. 'A wise man understands a nod', he returned. 'I hope Kwan Yin may smile upon you'. James Lee nodded and held out his hand for his countryman. 'Good luck', he said, shaking hands in the western manner. ("Ten Bells", 25)

James Lee Wong is respected by white people and never has to face racism. Wong is a perfect example of the idea that if Chinese Americans become truly assimilated and learn to act like Americans, they will not be discriminated against and can succeed in America. Wong has chosen to

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[192] Hugh Wiley, "Ten Bells," *Murder by the Dozen* (Blackmask, 2007) 18.

be an American, and consequently has no connection to Chinese culture. As William Wu points out, Wong is "not a Chinese American who represents an American ethnic culture but a converted, or even coopted, former member of the Yellow Peril who has now become a functionary solely in white American society."[193]

In many ways, James Lee Wong and Charlie Chan are good examples of white authors' failure to represent Chinese American identity. However, this failure is quite understandable, since Asian American identity did not exist in the 1920s-1940s in the same way as, for instance, African American identity. Whereas African Americans already had their own culture and literature,[194] Asian American literature was very rare, and all in all, an awareness of Asian American identity had not yet developed. Nevertheless, Biggers's and Wiley's fiction shows that an authentic ethnic detective hero cannot be created by simply substituting the white detective with a non-white character. Despite the race of the protagonists, the stories are told by a white author and narrator, and meant for a white audience. This white perspective was a defining characteristic of detective fiction until the emergence of the ethnic subgenre in the 1990s, which may be one of the reasons for the rarity of Asian American detective figures even today.

4.2. The Model Minority Myth in Rozan's novels

In this subsection I examine the ways in which Rozan's representation of Chinese Americans conforms to the model minority myth or challenges it. To begin with, I will discuss Lydia Chin's appearance and behaviour, and make comparisons between her and the early model minority detectives Charlie Chan and James Lee Wong. Then I will move on to analysing the aspects of Rozan's series that support the model minority myth: the impression that racism is not a serious problem in the lives of good Chinese American characters, and the stereotypical representation of

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[193] William Wu 144.
[194] In particular, writers and other black intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance.

Chinese American families. Finally, I will discuss Rozan's portrayal of immigration and the American Dream.

Whereas in the discourse of the early twentieth century it was necessary to downplay the ethnic difference of the non-white detective in order to make him acceptable to the white audience, in the modern genre of multicultural detective fiction ethnicity is an advantage. Ethnic detective fiction became very popular in the United States in the 1990s, and novels about ethnic detectives have often been well received by critics and readers, regardless of how well the author has represented ethnic difference.[195] Furthermore, the issues of ethnic identity and bicultural existence were seldom addressed in the popular culture of the 1930s, but from the 1960s onwards, growing ethnic awareness has made the difficulty of living between two cultures a major topic in contemporary ethnic detective fiction. In this context, it is not surprising that Rozan constantly draws attention to Lydia's ethnicity, and strives to make her seem "genuinely" Chinese. Indeed, Lydia Chin is closely connected to Chinese culture, speaks fluent Chinese, often uses her Chinese name Chin Ling Wan-ju, and even answers her phone in both English and Chinese. She has lived in Chinatown her whole life, has extensive knowledge of Chinese culture and customs, and her ethnicity is an important part of her identity. For instance, when Bill comments on her decision to not tell Warren Tan's family that he committed suicide by saying that "to me that sounds very Chinese", Lydia answers: "Well, I sort of can't help it...I *am* Chinese" (*A Bitter Feast,* 306). Lydia is proud of her ethnicity, and is deeply hurt when an old Chinese man calls her "hollow bamboo", an insult that means "Chinese on the outside, nothing on the inside" (*A Bitter Feast,* 227). Interestingly, this insult corresponds with criticism posed against ethnic detectives created by white authors. Among others, Reddy argues that these detectives are "domesticated Others", inauthentic characters who think and behave just like white people, thus supporting the white ideology of the hard-boiled genre.[196]

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[195] Reddy 169.
[196] Reddy 157.

Even though Lydia denies the accusation that she is Chinese only on surface, it cannot be denied that Rozan's representation of Chinese culture is rather superficial. In Rozan's novels, being Chinese means eating Chinese food, drinking tea, and generally behaving in a manner that is perceived as Chinese. For the most part, Rozan's vision of "Chinese behaviour" corresponds with the stereotypes that are connected to the model minority myth, and it even has something in common with "the Ritual of Right Conduct" that manifests Chinese culture in Hugh Wiley's fiction. In particular, the stereotypical idea that the Chinese are always polite occurs over and over again in Rozan's series. For instance, when Lydia interviews an elderly Chinese woman, she begins by assuring her that she knows how hard she works and does not want to be taking her time, and explains to the reader that "that was the appropriate response" although she knows that Mrs. Chan is not at all busy. After some more polite conversation, Lydia states that "We had now been talking long enough that it was not unreasonable of me to get to the point" (*Mandarin Plaid,* 181). Rozan portrays politeness as a crucial part of Chinese American identity, and even criminals are no exception. It is worth noting that the dangerous Chinese criminals that threaten Lydia's life in *China Trade* and *A Bitter Feast* also serve her tea.

As mentioned in 4.1, in the discourse of the 1930s it was very significant that the Chinese American detective figure was as nonthreatening as possible, and in Charlie Chan's case his physical appearance served this purpose. On the surface Lydia fits in this tradition, as her small stature makes her seem rather harmless. When Lydia is first introduced to the readers in *China Trade,* she admits that "at five-one, a hundred and ten pounds, I'm not very intimidating" (13). Later, this image is strengthened as she mentions that "I look twelve when I'm insecure" (38). The harmless appearance of the detective is a generic convention of ethnic detective fiction, and ethnic detectives often benefit from the fact that people do not take them seriously or see them as a threat. For instance, detective fiction has a long tradition of African American detectives who hide behind the mask of the domestic servant, a position that allows them to "move in and out of the white

world with safety and profit".[197] Similarly, Charlie Chan's ridiculous behaviour and Lydia's harmless appearance serve the same purpose of hiding their real capabilities. In addition to her rather stereotypical hobby, martial arts, Lydia also carries a gun, and is not as harmless as she looks: "I'm a good bodyguard, I'm a great shot, and I can fight" (13). This kind of physical fitness and activity would probably have disturbed Biggers's readers, because of the possibility that the Asian American character could use his/her strength against white people. Interestingly, Lydia never engages in a physical confrontation with white people, although she fights with Chinese American gangsters on a few occasions. Lydia never initiates fights, avoids using violence, and reprimands Bill for hitting a man: "You didn't have to hit him...You're twice his size, he's not armed, and there were two of us" (*Winter and Night,* 92). Lydia's attitude towards violence is in keeping with the generic conventions of feminist detective fiction, as most women detectives reject the readiness to resort to violence which is characteristic of the traditional male hero of hard-boiled detective fiction.[198]

Lydia's tendency to try to solve all conflicts peacefully makes her as non-threatening as Charlie Chan, but one the other hand, Lydia has certain characteristics that clearly differentiate her from Chan and James Lee Wong. While Chan and Wong always remain in the same calm state, Lydia can display all human emotions. Because Lydia is the narrator in half of the novels in Rozan's series, the reader has access to her thoughts and feelings, whereas Chan and Wong do not have the chance to tell their own stories. Another possible explanation for Lydia's emotionality is that women writers have revised the generic conventions of detective fiction so that the female detective does not have to be as dispassionate as the traditional male hero. Lydia can become very angry and lose her temper, and by her own admission, patience is "one of the virtues I have a little trouble with" (*China Trade,* 22). She has heated arguments with her brothers, is furious at the gangsters

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[197] Stephen F. Soitos, *The Blues Detective: A Study of African American Detective Fiction* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1996) 36.
[198] Horsley 72.

who abused her, and also becomes so upset that she cries, which makes her a more realistic and genuine character than the perpetually calm Chan and Wong.

Nevertheless, although Lydia is physically strong and has a temper, her behaviour shows that she is not a threat to white society. She is polite, unable to use bad language, and all in all she behaves in a manner which is consonant with the model minority myth. Most importantly, she protects social order by catching Chinese criminals, and thus contributes to keeping the modern "Yellow Peril" under control. This type of position as a protector of white society is deeply conflicted for most ethnic detectives, and Pepper argues that "success as a detective equals cultural annihilation as an immigrant", because the detective cannot be simultaneously loyal to his/her ethnic minority group and the white society that oppresses it.[199] However, Lydia does not struggle with this conflict, because eliminating Chinese gangsters is good for the Chinese American community as well as the whole American society.

Furthermore, Lydia escapes the complications of defending unfair social order, because racial discrimination is not a significant factor in her life. However, racist white characters do appear in Rozan's novels, which challenges the model minority myth, particularly the idea that if Asian Americans are willing to become assimilated, they will not have any problems with racism. Racism can be considered at least a minor theme in *Mandarin Plaid,* in which Lydia's client is Genna Jing, a young, talented fashion designer whose sketches have been stolen. The thief threatens to sell the sketches to cheap clothes manufacturers if he does not receive money from Genna, and the plot eventually involves greater crimes, such as murder and prostitution. However, one of the most evil characters is Mrs. Ryan, a rich lady who goes to great lengths to destroy her son's relationship with Genna Jing, because she is Chinese American. Mrs. Ryan tries to make Lydia see "how unsuitable a match like that would be", because Genna is "an immigrants' child, raised among you people", and claims that Genna is only after her son's money (63). After her meeting with Mrs. Ryan, Lydia is

[199] Pepper 173.

quite upset, and takes it out on Bill: "No, I'm not okay! Why should I be okay? A woman who spends more at the hairdresser in a month than my mother ever made in a year just told me I'm not good enough for her son" (66). Bill reminds Lydia that Mrs. Ryan's insults were directed at Genna, not her, but Lydia takes them personally, and is angry at Bill for not understanding why:

> 'It's the same thing! She probably couldn't even be able to tell us apart. Because, you know, we do all look alike... You act as if this weren't a big deal. Like I should just get over it and make jokes about it. You have no idea how it feels!' (66)

Thus Lydia rejects the idea that being the model minority protects Asian Americans from racism and discrimination, and demands Bill to take the issue more seriously. Lydia is clearly not as submissive and politically silent as Charlie Chan and other early representatives of the model minority myth. Of course, living in today's multicultural society shaped by the civil rights movement, Lydia does not face the same requirements as the ethnic detective figures of the 1930s.

However, although Lydia has strong feelings about racism, she does not really try to oppose racists or take action against discrimination. Mrs. Ryan's accusations make her angry, and she attempts to defend Genna by explaining that she does not need a rich husband, but then she stops and silently admonishes herself: "*What are you doing, Lydia?* I demanded, furious with myself. *Those things aren't the point anyway*" (63). Lydia is angry at herself for losing her self-control and engaging in any kind of debate with Mrs. Ryan. Apparently she thinks that it is futile to try to argue with a racist, and that she should concentrate on her case. Lydia shows the same kind of self-discipline in *Winter and Night,* when an unpleasant gun dealer addresses her in pidgin-English and calls her a slant-eye, and she acts as if she does not even notice. Then, Bill admiringly notes that "when Lydia's working, she's working" (143), and later congratulates Lydia for her "tremendous strength of character" (145). Interestingly, this kind of thinking is consistent with the idea that Asian Americans became the model minority by simply focusing on their work and ignoring racism. Lydia's decision not to protest when she faces racism appears to be wise, since she always

triumphs in the end, but at the same time it reinforces stereotypical notions about Asian American success that is the result of self-discipline and submissiveness.

Moreover, although Lydia encounters some racist individuals, society as a whole is not portrayed as racist, and racism is not really a central part of the narratives. This is rather unusual, since racism is usually a significant theme in ethnic detective fiction, and according to Horsley, for instance in novels featuring black detectives, the real crime is “the whole system of oppression and the institutional discourses that hide the system’s underlying brutality”.[200] In contrast, in Rozan’s novels racism does not seem to have a great influence on the Chinese American characters, granted that Genna Jing’s personal life is very much affected by Mrs. Ryan. In fact, Reddy argues that in *Mandarin Plaid,* racism is seen as “identical to personal prejudice, a seriously limited analysis that ignores the systemic nature of racism and thus offers no challenge to existing power relations”.[201] That is to say, Rozan reduces racism to the personal opinions of a few individuals, and does not portray it as a serious problem that affects the whole American society. As a matter a fact, only one character in the novels that I have read makes the argument that institutionalized racism exists and has an impact on the lives of Chinese Americans. In *A Bitter Feast,* Warren Tan claims that the Chinese Restaurant Workers’ Union does not have the support of the New York Labor Council because of racism: “It’s not like we’re real red-blooded Americans or anything...Yerrow people, eat lice, talk funny, ah-so, math geniuses, go correge, their kids get better jobs than my kids, to hell with them” (25). Tan’s statement indicates that Rozan is well aware of the negative side of the model minority myth and its tendency to evoke racist attitudes and hostility against Asian Americans. However, this awareness does not evolve into a serious discussion of racism and discrimination, and therefore the novels give the impression that model minority citizens do not really have to face racism at all.

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[200] Horsley 269.
[201] Reddy 166.

One of the most significant things that differentiate Lydia Chin from such model minority detective figures as Charlie Chan and James Lee Wong is the fact that her family is an important part of the narratives. Whereas Chan's family mostly remains unseen and Wong does not appear to have one, Lydia's mother and brothers are constantly present and influence not only her private life, but also her work. It is quite exceptional that Lydia is so closely connected with her family, since the heroes of hard-boiled detective fiction have traditionally been very solitary figures, lonely men without family or close friends, and Munt describes the traditional hard-boiled male detective as "a contemporary crusader/knight" who is "fighting a lone battle against urban chaos".[202] Naturally, this lone battle becomes complicated, if the hero also has to find time for family responsibilities, and thus it is understandable that most male detective figures do not have families, although there are some exceptions, for instance Walter Mosley's Easy Rawlins who has two adopted children. Furthermore, according to Vanacker, many female detectives, such as Sara Paretsky's V.I. Warshawski or Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone, are estranged from their biological families, which makes them "free from the frustrations and limitations that characterise the traditional patriarchal family, free from the daughter role".[203]

For Lydia, these frustrations and limitations are multiplied because the expectations for a Chinese American daughter and a representative of the model minority are very high. Rozan's representation of the Chinese American family re-affirms the model minority myth, and in fact, virtually all stereotypes of the Chinese American family can be found in Rozan's crime fiction series. Lydia's family is a perfect example of a model minority family that thrives because of hard work and traditional values. All members of the family are dedicated to protecting the reputation of the family, and this makes them keep a close eye on each other. Family members take care of each other, even though they do not necessarily like each other. For instance, Lydia's brother Tim does

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[202] Sally R. Munt, *Murder by the Book? Feminism and the Crime Novel* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) 3.
[203] Sabine Vanacker, "V.I. Warshawski, Kinsey Millhone and Kay Scarpetta: Creating a Feminist Detective Hero," *Criminal Proceedings: The Contemporary American Crime Novel*, ed. Peter Messent (London and Chicago: Pluto Press, 1997) 71.

not want to hire Lydia to work for the organisation he represents, and Lydia is equally reluctant to accept the job offer, but Lydia explains that "in Chinatown… it's not that easy. They can't not ask you, and you can't say no" (*China Trade*, 2). Throughout the series, Lydia is hired by family and friends, and similarly she employs her relatives, for instance Linus Kwong. Linus is the son of Lydia's "mother's second cousin's brother-in-law" (*Winter and Night,* 76), but Lydia and Linus seem to think they are closely related, which reinforces stereotypical notions about close-knit Chinese families. Linus is also a 15-year-old computer genius, a typical role of a model minority youngster.

The members of the Chin family obviously care about each other, although they certainly do not always live in perfect harmony with each other. Lydia's father has been dead for years, so there is no real patriarch in the family, but traditional gender roles are still valid, and Lydia's brothers think they have some authority over Lydia as men of the family. Lydia's brothers are very protective of her, and constantly try to stand in her way when she is working, which makes Lydia furious, but she never questions the importance of having her family in her life: "family was family. I fight with my brothers all the time... but I'm not sure I'd like it any better if they just sort of pretended I didn't exist" (*China Trade*, 3). She tries to reason with one of her brothers so that he would accept her profession: "This is what I want to do, Andrew. This makes me happy. Don't you want me to be happy?" Andrew's answer is revealing: "I want you to be alive" (*Mandarin Plaid,* 122). Lydia does not always see how concerned her brothers are when she puts herself at risk. However, it is sometimes difficult to tell whether the apparent affection that Lydia's brothers seem to feel towards her is genuine, because Lydia's brothers often try to disguise their disapproval of Lydia's profession as concern for her safety. For instance, Tim tries to make Lydia resign from her case by explaining to her how dangerous gangsters can be and how devastated their mother would be if anything happened to her. However, Lydia sees through Tim's faked concern: "You're not worried about Ma and you're not worried about me. What you're really afraid of is that I can't solve this case. You're

worried I'm going to screw up then everyone, not just you, will know what a jerk Tim Chin's little sister is. Your face. That's what this is about" (*China Trade*, 63).

The concept of saving "face" is very crucial in *China Trade,* and it is the main motive behind the crimes, especially the theft of some porcelains from a museum. It turns out that the theft was commissioned by the old Chinese American lady who donated the porcelains to the museum, and her motive was to hide the fact that her late husband had bought them knowing that they were stolen. Lydia very insightfully realizes that the case was all about "Face. Reputation. People desperate to protect their good names" (258), and she understands the ridiculousness of the obsessive need to protect family members: "I swallowed some tea so I wouldn't start to giggle. Matt was protecting Nora. Lee Kuan Yue was protecting Mrs. Blair. Brothers making a mess all over New York, taking care of their sisters" (247). However, Lydia is certainly not indifferent to the reputation of the family. When she is attacked by gangsters and left in an alley with her pants down, the first thing she tells herself is that "If you're found like this...your mother will never be able to show her face in Chinatown again" (*China Trade,* 95). Furthermore, even though she has good reason to be angry at her brother Tim for hiring a shady private investigator to keep an eye on her, she protects his face by asking Mary to make sure that the police "keep a low profile" when they go to question him about his involvement in the case. She explains that "I'd like to take him outside and slug him, but I'd rather he not lose face in front of the people in his office" (257). The Chin family seems to be nearly obsessed with keeping up appearances and protecting the illusion that they are a perfect Chinese American family. Lydia's decision to choose the career of a private investigator is a great disappointment and an embarrassment for the family, but that is a well-kept family secret. The family deals with the shame caused by Lydia's profession by simply denying that they feel it at all, and telling everyone that Lydia is an excellent private investigator. Lydia is constantly amazed to hear from other people how proud her family is of her: "Leave it to my

mother. What I do for a living is a daily aggravation to her, but let it never cross anyone's mind that I'm anything but the world's biggest success at it" (*Mandarin Plaid*, 181).

Members of the Chin family have numerous complicated unspoken understandings that allow everyone to protect their own "face" and that of the family. The most interesting arrangement is the one concerning the elderly Mrs. Chin, who cannot manage living on her own. Lydia dutifully lives with her mother and takes care of her, but explains that she will not have to do it indefinitely:

> My mother and I have a deal. I live at home...My mother's allowed not to admit that I live there because she needs help...Until she's ready to move in with Ted's family in Flushing, someone needs to keep an eye on her. We've proposed the move, my brothers and I. It'll take her a few years to get used to the idea. Then one day she'll announce, as though she'd just thought of it, "Chinatown is so crowded now...I'll move to Flushing" ... Meanwhile, while she adjusts to the idea, Ma gets to claim that I'm still at home only because I can't make a decent living at my unsuitable profession. (*Mandarin Plaid,* 47-48)

In other words, everyone in the family, including Mrs. Chin, knows why Lydia still lives at home, but it cannot be spoken of, because it would embarrass Mrs. Chin, and that is unacceptable to her children. Taking good care of their mother and keeping her happy is essential to Lydia and her brothers, and it is irrelevant that the arrangement does not really give Lydia much freedom to live her own life:

> For my part of the deal, I get to keep whatever hours I need to keep, and I have a right to not answer any of her questions I don't want to answer. As a Chinese mother, though, she has the eternal, inalienable right to keep asking them. (*Mandarin Plaid,* 48)

The idea that Chinese Americans have unwavering respect for their elders and other authority figures is apparent in *China Trade,* especially in the character of Mr. Gao. In Chinatown, most people call him Grandfather Gao, and Lydia explains that "the title was one of respect" (20). Mr. Gao runs an apothecary and treats illnesses with herbs. Because of his old age, great wisdom, and connections to the Three Brothers tong, he is in a powerful position in the community. Mr. Gao is depicted as a mysterious character who always expresses himself in a very subtle, indirect manner, usually with the help of nature metaphors. Mr. Gao appears to know practically everything that goes

on in Chinatown, and is able to help Lydia in her investigation, because nobody can say no to him. Mr. Gao is the embodiment of traditional Chinese family values, and as Lydia notes, a father figure for the whole community: “Mr. Gao surveyed the bustling Chinatown scene with the air of a patriarch whose children’s flaws are only too well known to him but who found them, on the whole, satisfactory” (123). Mr. Gao functions as a surrogate father for Lydia, and she has a warm, if respectful, relationship with him. According to Vanacker, “the image of the benevolent patriarch, the harmless elderly man” is typical in feminist detective fiction, because surrogate fathers “combine the censorship of the patriarch with the absence of any real power over the women”.[204]

However, because of his age and position in the Chinatown community, Mr. Gao has power over everyone. In *China Trade*, all Chinese Americans, including the most heinous criminals, seem to share the traditional values of respecting old people, especially leaders of the community. Even the gangsters respect Mr. Gao and avoid doing anything that would make him angry. Gangsters beat Lydia up, and one of them intends to rape her, but the leader of the gang stops him, because Mr. Gao would not like it: “You got to learn respect elders” (94). Similarly, even gangsters take care of their family members, even if they do not have a close relationship with them. Matt thinks that his sister is “stupid and she’s wasting her life”, but nevertheless he makes sure that nobody tries to make her life harder, because that is what Chinese American brothers are supposed to do: “You’ve got to have face. What would it look like if I couldn’t protect my own sister?” (166).

In Rozan’s novels, the Chin family is an excellent example of a model minority family that has made the American Dream come true. Lydia’s parents were poor immigrants, and especially the detailed descriptions of her mother’s hard work as a sewing lady in a sweatshop emphasise the great difficulties the family has overcome. As a child Lydia had to spend her afternoons in the factory, sometimes working with her mother, so she knows the “smudged-window sweatshops where women – most of them new here, most of them illegal – work twelve-hour days in rooms that are

[204] Vanacker 72.

hot in summer, cold in winter, where the whine and shriek of twenty, fifty, a hundred machines never stops", and it is clear that Lydia could not stand doing the same kind of work all her life (*Mandarin Plaid,* 21). Because of the parents' hard work and parenting skills, the children of the family have had excellent opportunities and become successful. One of Lydia's brothers is a lawyer, another is a doctor, and even though Lydia's profession does not please her mother and brothers, it is still a victory for the family that she has been able to choose what she wants to do, instead of having to settle for minimum wage job like her mother.

Furthermore, Lydia's mother is an embodiment of an immigrant who believes in the model minority myth. She opposes attempts to improve the living conditions of immigrants, particularly the idea of a labour union. Lydia asks what she could possibly have against new immigrants wanting better treatment, and receives the following answer:

> "Newcomers", she said with the eternal contempt of all those who've just stepped through the door for the ones still outside. "Troublemakers." Then the final insult: "Fukienese. They are too good for what was enough for your father. He worked hard, he was paid for his work. Your father didn't need a union." (*A Bitter Feast,* 108)

Lydia's mother has thoroughly internalized the model minority myth, and is proud of her family's ability to live up to its expectations. She and her husband conquered great difficulties on their own, without any help from anybody, and she thinks everyone else should do the same. Even though Mrs. Chin has refused to learn English or assimilate to American society outside Chinatown, she clearly feels that she is different from, and better than, the newcomers and "troublemakers".[205] She has played by the rules of the model minority myth, and has received her reward in the form of successful children who will take care of her for the rest of her life. The fact that Mrs. Chin has accepted the model minority myth as her guideline exemplifies the power of stereotypes to function as a means of social control, which was discussed in 2.1.

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[205] It is worth noting that Mrs. Chin's opinion of the Fukienese also shows that instead of representing the Chinese as a homogenous group, Rozan is aware of the fact that the population of China contains many ethnicities, languages and religions, and that there are great regional differences.

However, in *A Bitter Feast,* Rozan also presents critical views about immigration and the American Dream. Lydia finds it difficult to accept the idea that the suffering of poor immigrants is justified, even though she understands the great appeal of the American Dream. She explains that in Chinatown, the hardships of new immigrants are just a fact of life:

> As immigrants become citizens and sponsor their families;... as threadbare and thin villagers choose cold, hungry, two-month trips in the lowest holds of cargo ships, all packed in the same windowless, rolling room, breathing stale air, never coming on deck, for their chance to work sixteen hours a day on the slopes of Gold Mountain because they think it's better than their chances back home; as all these things happen, Chinatown grows. (54)

Although Lydia knows that the arrival of new immigrants can be good for the community as the increase in population creates new jobs and more wealth, she seems to think that the price that new immigrants have to pay for the opportunity to become Americans is too high, especially when the American Dream does not always keep its promises. Nevertheless, although Lydia explicitly criticises the American Dream, it is important to note that Rozan implicitly turns China into the 'Other' by representing it as a place from which the poor Chinese people want to leave at any cost and come to America. As mentioned in 2.2, stereotypical images that describe the negative characteristics of the Orient simultaneously promote the idea that the West does not have those characteristics, and hence this kind of representation of China as America's inferior is a typical feature of American Orientalism.

Lydia frequently muses on the harshness of the reality that immigrants live in. Investigating the fate of disappeared immigrants makes Lydia thoughtful and sad, and she often criticises their poor living conditions. She tries to imagine what the missing immigrants thought of their lives, first focusing on the great opportunities that the American Dream promises to the model minority: "maybe this was a place of optimism and excitement, a first new home in the new world, the first step up Gold Mountain for these men and so for their families back home" (34). However, Lydia cannot believe that dreaming about a better future makes immigrants oblivious of their current miserable situation: "this shabby room felt to me like a sad place, a place no one would come to, no

one would stay in, if he didn't think he had to" (34-35).When she finds a photograph that belongs to a Chinese immigrant, she wonders: "why couldn't this man…be home with this woman and her child, laughing in the cool breeze from the pines, instead of a in a damp and smelly basement in a strange land on the other side of the planet?" (36). It pains Lydia to think about the fact that in China the immigrants had real homes and people who loved them: "they'd come from that to a place where they'd touched down so lightly that it hardly noticed they were here, a place they could disappear from as though they'd never existed" (46). Although the depiction of the history of the Chin family supports the idea that the American Dream can be achieved, Rozan is critical of the price that poor immigrants have to pay for it.

The younger generation of Chinese Americans does not have the same unwavering belief in the American Dream as their parents. Warren Tan, a young Yale graduate who is trying to organize a labour union for Chinese American restaurant workers, sees the model minority myth as a tool of oppression. He is trying to help the community and "actually bring these guys into the American dream...instead of throwing them crumbs and telling them how lucky they are and to work hard so their children can do well" (*A Bitter Feast,* 26). However, even though Warren Tan disapproves of the model minority ideology, he cannot free himself from it. He is motivated by gratitude towards his father who did everything for him, and the need to somehow pay him back: "Look at us: educated, healthy, middle-class *Americans*. Our folks lived hard lives so we could be that...my dad's gone. I can't pay him back for what he did any way but this" (27). Lydia points out that he is actually taking care of his ancestors in a complicated American Born Chinese way, and Warren responds by stating that "you never stop being Chinese, no matter how American you are" (27).

5. Stereotypes of Asian Women

In the following section I present stereotypes of Asian women starting from the most negative images that are connected to the Yellow Peril. Then I will study stereotypes of Asian women as victims, and the numerous stereotypes of Asian femininity and sexuality which are connected to the representation of interracial romance and miscegenation in American popular culture. I will also briefly discuss how Asian American women have learned to take advantage of these stereotypes.

The Yellow Peril stereotype has greatly influenced the depiction of all Chinese people, including women. As a matter of fact, the Yellow Peril has a female embodiment in American culture, a dangerous and treacherous Chinese woman called Dragon Lady. The term "Dragon Lady" comes from a journalist's description of the Chinese Empress Cixi, "a reptilian dragon lady who arranged the poisoning, strangling, beheading or forced suicide of anyone who challenged her rule".[206] According to Kim and Chung, "Dragon Lady" has become the "epithet for belligerent, cunning, and untrustworthy" Asian American women.[207] This image can be seen in the representation of Asian women for example in films, literature and advertising. According to Shah, many Hollywood films depict Asian women as "diabolical, sneaky and mean", but at the same time as "sexually alluring, sophisticated and determined to seduce and corrupt white men". Even the most negative representations of Asian women emphasise their sexual attractiveness, but connect it with danger. The idea that Asian sexuality is a threat is typical of the Yellow Peril stereotype, which represents Asian men as potential rapists of white women and Asian women as seductresses of white men.

Granted that the "Dragon Lady" is a strong and memorable image of Asian women, the dominant representation is quite different. One of the oldest and most persistent stereotypes of Chinese women is that they are victimised by the patriarchal society in China. This notion was created at the end of the nineteenth century by missionaries who wrote about women's low position

[206] Shah, [no page numbers].
[207] Minjeong Kim and Angie Chung, "Consuming Orientalism: Images of Asian/American Women in Multicultural Advertising," *Qualitative Sociology* Vol. 28, No.1 (2005): 79.

and various forms of oppression, particularly footbinding. The reason for Chinese women's low status was considered to be Confucian ideology, so the oppression of women was seen as an integral part of Chinese culture. Women's oppression became the symbol of China's "cultural backwardness" and was used to justify the imperialist agenda.[208] The image of Chinese women as weak victims persisted even in the 1970s when the women's studies movement took interest in Chinese women. Chinese patriarchy was considered to be extreme, and the position of Chinese women seemed particularly difficult. However, according to Teng, new research has challenged Western ideas about Chinese women as "uniformly oppressed and unempowered", and therefore the "universal and timeless" victimisation of Chinese women is just another stereotype invented by the West.[209]

Besides the traditional patriarchy of Chinese culture, other factors contributed to the establishment of the stereotype of the victimised Chinese woman. In the nineteenth century, thousands of Chinese women were brought to the United States to work as prostitutes "often under brutally coercive conditions".[210] They were seen and portrayed as victims by many Christians and social reformers, who wanted to end the practise of prostitution altogether, and used the silent and passive figure of the Chinese woman as a symbol for the victimisation and suffering of all prostitutes.[211] However, despite the fact that many of the Chinese women had been brought to the country against their own will and lived in pitiful conditions, many white people were hostile toward them and saw them as a threat. Chinese prostitutes were considered to be pollutants who ruined the health and moral of white men. In fact, even those Chinese women who were not prostitutes were assumed not to have the high morality and virtues that white women supposedly had.[212] The general attitude toward all Chinese women was negative, and Koshy claims that Asian

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[208] Jinhua Emma Teng,"The Construction of the 'Traditional Chinese Woman' in the Western Academy: A Critical Review," *Signs* Vol. 22, No. 1 (1996): 121.
[209] Teng 133.
[210] Lee 89.
[211] Lee 91.
[212] Lee 42.

women were seen as an even greater threat than Asian men, because "their bodies symbolized the power of the ethnic community to reproduce itself within the United States".[213] Although the presence of Chinese women very much concerned Americans, the issue could not be dealt with in popular culture, because the fact that white men cooperated with Chinese men in order to bring Chinese prostitutes in the United States was unspeakable. Therefore "the Chinese woman is an almost invisible and absolutely voiceless figure in nineteenth-century popular entertainment".[214] When Chinese women appeared at all in popular culture, they were portrayed as "victimized, passive, and silent" women whose only hope was to be rescued by white people.[215]

Another powerful stereotype emerged in the 1920s, when Asian women were given the role of exotic sex objects. According to Koshy, the source of the exoticism of Asian women was the fact that they were associated with "extraterritorial sexual license".[216] The idea that Asian women are exotic and fascinating has been well established in twentieth-century popular culture, and their femininity and sexuality have been overemphasised. According to Marchetti, Hollywood films made in the 1980s represent "Asian femininity as alluring, provocative, and mysterious as well as passive, yielding, and vulnerable". Marchetti argues that fictional Asian women seem to be "both erotic and pure, apparently reconciling the impossible duality of femininity as both unobtainable Madonna and sexually available whore".[217] This combination of eroticism and purity has created opposite stereotypes that conflict with each other, which has perhaps made Asian women seem even more exotic and interesting.

The most common stereotype of Asian women is the Lotus Blossom, also known as Madame Butterfly, China Doll, Geisha Girl or shy Polynesian beauty. According to Kim and Chung, the Lotus Blossom images represent Asian women as "exotic, enticing, subservient, pampering, self-

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[213] Koshy 10.
[214] Lee 90.
[215] Lee 91.
[216] Koshy 18.
[217] Gina Marchetti, *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993) 105.

effacing, self-sacrificing and sensual".[218] Shah adds that this stereotype portrays Asian women as "submissive, meek and ready to serve a man's every need". The Lotus Blossom stereotype has its origins in the numerous stories about Madame Butterfly, one of the most powerful images of Asian women in Anglo-American literature, whose story has been told over and over again in different forms. The original story, *Madame Chrysanthemum*, was written in 1887 by Pierre Loti, a French naval officer who wrote travel books. The first American version was a short story named "Madame Butterfly" published in 1898 by John Luther Long. In 1904, Giacomo Puccini turned the story into an opera. Several plays and films have been made based on this story, and in 1988, David Henry Hwang wrote a play *M. Butterfly* in an attempt to counter the Orientalist myths of the story. [219]

Madame Butterfly is a Japanese woman who marries an American man, is soon abandoned by her husband and later has his child. The husband returns home and marries a white woman, and later the couple adopts Madame Butterfly's child. Madame Butterfly sacrifices herself in order to make her husband happy and give her child a better life. As Marchetti puts it, Butterfly is "an angelic martyr who willingly and nobly sacrifices herself for her American god".[220] According to Marchetti, the Butterfly stories "ennoble female sacrifices of all sorts" and promote the idea that "it is only through total submission to men and complete faith in their superiority that women can fulfill themselves and express 'genuine'…femininity".[221] All in all, the Butterfly stories have helped to produce the stereotype of the Asian woman who is willing to sacrifice herself for the happiness of white men, and greatly influenced the conception of Asian femininity.

The issues of interracial romance and miscegenation are closely connected to the representation of Asian women in the West. Koshy claims that sexuality and the possibility of interracial relationships has been a significant factor in the creation of negative as well as positive attitudes toward Asian American women. In the nineteenth century and during the first decades of

[218] Kim and Chung 80.
[219] Koshy 29.
[220] Marchetti 85.
[221] Marchetti 78-79.

the twentieth century, interracial marriage was not accepted in the United States, but overseas sexual relationships between white men and Asian women were common. American servicemen often came to contact with Asian women while stationed in Asia, so it is understandable that relationships between white men and Asian women became the dominant form of interracial romance. Another possible explanation is that white men had more freedom to do what they wanted, whereas white women were fiercely "protected" from non-white men.

In popular culture, most representations of interracial romance involve the white man-Asian woman dyad, and as Marchetti points out, Asian women are portrayed as sexually available to white men.[222] In the twentieth century, popular culture has fostered the idea that Asian women are always willing and eager to engage in relationships with white men. Kim argues that "the docile and seductive Asian woman is a foil to the virility and attractiveness of the white male" and the white man is "the key to her liberation from her own Asian culture, which is the source of her oppression and suffering".[223] In other words, in Anglo-American representations, Asian women are constantly waiting for a white man to rescue them, and this rescuing means that they are disconnected from Asian culture and made part of the Western world. The perception that Asian women are willing to abandon their own culture and become assimilated in their white husbands' culture has created the image of Asian women as a sexual model minority. Koshy states that the first step toward the formation of this image was taken between the 1940s and 1965 when new immigration laws enabled American servicemen to bring their Asian wives into the United States. This changed the conception of Asian women significantly, because it meant that Asian women were no longer seen as exotic sex objects whose company white men could enjoy in faraway places, but instead, they became legitimate wives who lived in America. Asian femininity, which had previously been

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[222] Marchetti 2.
[223] Kim 17.

associated with foreign exoticism, was brought closer to home. In Koshy's words, this reconstructed "images of Asian femininity from sexually licentious to domesticatedly feminine".[224]

The image of Asian women as a sexual model minority was established in the 1970s as a result of transformed social landscape. Overt racial boundaries had been broken, and because of multiculturalism and the model minority myth, attitudes toward Asian Americans had become more positive. Furthermore, white American women had begun to question the justification of traditional gender roles and women's position in the patriarchal world, and their demands for equal rights disturbed many men. As many white women refused the conventional role of a wife and a mother, Asian American women took their place. Koshy argues that "the Asian American woman came to stand in for the more traditional model of family-centred femininity challenged by feminists", and was "domesticated to mediate a crisis for the white bourgeois sexual order".[225] However, even though Asian American women were domesticated, they did not lose their sexual attractiveness. Although they were now respectable American housewives, their previous role as exotic sex objects was never entirely forgotten, and Asian American women have "become emblematic of the perfect match between family-centrism and sex appeal".[226]

The idea that Asian women should be Westernized and domesticated for their own good seems racist and offensive, but according to Koshy, Asian women have indeed been emancipated through Westernization. The Asian American woman has "moved from being a sexual commodity to becoming the possessor of *sexual capital*". Koshy's term sexual capital means "the aggregate of attributes that index desirability within the field of romantic or marital relationships in a given culture and thereby affect the life-chances and opportunities of an individual".[227] Interracial desire

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[224] Koshy 12.
[225] Koshy 137.
[226] Koshy137.
[227] Koshy 136.

has given Asian women "the possibility of greater power through access to mainstream culture" and "the possibility of power over white American men through the force of exotic sexuality".[228]

Koshy also claims that Asian American women have learned to use stereotypes of themselves to their advantage. Koshy gives a new meaning to the term *passing*, which previously meant trying to appear white: passing "involves acting out the dominant scripts of exotic otherness as an avenue to the American Dream".[229] That is to say, Asian American women have acquired the ability to act as they are expected to act in order to gain acceptance and success in the United States. Trying to take advantage of stereotypes is a complex issue, because this kind of approach is likely to strengthen the stereotypes, which are a product of white racism. Similarly, attempting to achieve feminist goals through exploiting female sexuality is problematic. On the other hand, Koshy argues that in some cases, "strategies of oppression can be strategies of empowerment", as long as the stereotypical roles are played voluntarily.[230] Moreover, Ma asserts that "a minority's survival in America often hinges on exploiting rather than subverting stereotypes and banalities".[231]

5.1. Asian Women in Detective Fiction

As I mentioned in the introduction, very few female Asian American characters have appeared in detective fiction, and Sujata Massey's Rei Shimura -series is perhaps the only truly successful series featuring an Asian American woman. Hence the idea of a female Asian American detective has not attracted many authors, nor has the issue been studied much. One plausible explanation for the scarcity of Asian women in detective fiction is the tradition of representing them as victims or sex objects. The role of the detective, which requires activity, independence, strength and trustworthiness, may not seem suitable for Asian women, who are, according to stereotypes,

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[228] Koshy 144-145.
[229] Koshy 133.
[230] Koshy 148.
[231] Ma xxi.

passive, submissive, weak, and treacherous.[232] Similarly, even the role of the *femme fatale,* the female criminal, is not intended for a weak sex object, because it demands activity, determination, resourcefulness and intelligence. However, a few Asian women have appeared in various roles in detective fiction, and in this chapter I will present one female criminal, some victims and one of the first female Asian American detective figures.

In Sax Rohmer's novels about Dr. Fu Manchu, the Dragon Lady stereotype appears in the form of Fu Manchu's daughter Fah Lo Suee, who is, according to Nayland Smith, "the most dangerous woman living".[233] The narrator, Shan Greville, finds it difficult to resist Fah Lo Suee, because of her beauty, seductiveness, "bell-like, hypnotic voice" (121) and the resulting power "of stealing men's souls" (165). Fah Lo Suee is often referred to as a witch or "Chinese she-devil" (120), which dehumanises her and emphasises her otherness. She is a formidable enemy, who intends to unite "the dangerous religious sects of the East" and reconstruct the *Si Fan*, the criminal organisation that her father led before his retirement (80). Fah Lo Suee fits the well-established role of the female villain, who, according to Cranny-Francis, "is motivated by desires which contradict patriarchal descriptions of femininity" and "tries to become as powerful as men by corruptly acquiring wealth and/or influence".[234]

Fah Lo Suee is intelligent and resourceful enough to accomplish her goal, but she herself admits that she has one weakness: "Sometimes I know I am only a woman, and that all I see before me ends in nothing if it brings me only power and no love" (101). Shan Greville notices that she has "conceived a sudden, characteristically Oriental infatuation" (101) for him, and saves his life in order to spend some time with him. This shocks and frightens Shan:

> This woman, kin of the super-devil, Fu Manchu, my enemy, enemy of all I counted worth while – petted me as a mother pets her child! And a coldness grew in my heart – yet I remained powerless to resist the spell – because I realised that if she willed me not to hate, but to love her, I should obey...I could not refuse! (99)

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[232] However, this theory does not explain the great number of African American female protagonists that have appeared in detective fiction despite the numerous negative stereotypes of African American women.
[233] Sax Rohmer, *The Daughter of Fu Manchu. The Fu Manchu Omnibus* Vol. 2. (London: Allison and Busby, 1997) 56.
[234] Cranny-Francis, 160.

This paragraph is a good example of the stereotypical sexual power of Asian women, and white men's inability to resist it. The Dragon Lady stereotype portrays Asian women as threatening, because they have power over white men. Furthermore, Shan realises that Fah Lo Suee is particularly dangerous, because she is also in control of her own sexuality: she is "so far above the weaknesses of her sex" that "even her curious infatuation for myself was a mere...fancy, ordered and contained...She would have sacrificed nothing to it" (179).

Indeed, Fah Lo Suee does not sacrifice herself for a white man, but in the end, she cannot escape the role of the submissive Chinese woman. Dr. Fu Manchu does not approve of his daughter's aspiration for power, and comes to stop her. Shan describes the meeting between father and daughter: "Fah Lo Suee, a chalky quality tingeing the peach bloom of her skin, had lowered that insolent head! As I turned, staring, she dropped to her knees!" (182). Rohmer combines two stereotypes, as the formidable Dragon Lady turns into a victim of Chinese patriarchy. Fu Manchu explains that in China, fathers "expect, and exact, obedience" (185), and Shan remarks that "it was in my heart to pity her, so utterly was she fallen, so slavishly did that proud woman bow her head to this terrible, imperious old man" (183).

One of the typical roles reserved for women in hard-boiled detective fiction is the victim.[235] Traditionally the female victims have been white, but the role of the victim is suitable even for Asian women. For instance, in one of Dashiell Hammett's Continental Op –stories, "Dead Yellow Women", the crime that initially needs to be solved is the murder of two female Chinese servants. The victims are not really important characters in the story, and the reader is not given much information about them. As the name of the story implies, they are significant only because they are dead and "yellow". However, the same story also presents a more important female character, Lillian Shan, a well-educated, independent young woman whom the Op describes as a "modern Chinese-American" woman (185). Lillian is so strong-willed that the Op has to admit that "this

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[235] Horsley 244.

woman who looked like the queen of something wasn't easy to handle the way I wanted to handle her" (228). Nevertheless, a group of criminals led by Chang Li Ching has found a way to handle her and take advantage of her. They make Lillian think that she is helping Chinese patriots by allowing them to use her house on the shore for loading weapons into boats to be transported to China and used in battle against the Japanese, but in reality, the criminals are using her house for smuggling alcohol. Lillian is in love with John Garthorne, the white man who helps the criminals by keeping her out of the house when the gang is using it, and refuses to listen to the Op's warnings about him. Hence Lillian Shan turns out to be a "naive and romantic victim, fooled by a man but totally enamored of him", a typical role of female characters in traditional hard-boiled crime fiction.[236] In the end, despite her intelligence and independence, Lillian needs the help and protection of the Op, the white male hero.

"Dead Yellow Women" also presents a different kind of victimised Asian woman, Hsiu Hsiu, whom the Op meets in Chang Li Ching's house. The Op describes her as "a living ornament from somebody's shelf" (215), a beautiful woman in traditional Chinese outfit complete with bound feet. Hsiu Hsiu cannot speak English, but manages to communicate that she is a slave and prove it to the Op by showing her arm: "on it were five finger-shaped bruises ending in cuts where the nails had punctured the flesh. She let the sleeve fall over it again, and gave me more words. They didn't mean anything to me, but they tinkled prettily" (216). Hence Hsiu Hsiu is practically silenced, and the Op has the power to interpret her any way he likes. He does not doubt that Hsiu Hsiu is a victim, Chang Li Ching's slave, and promises to rescue her. Later it turns out that Hsiu Hsiu is loyal to Chang Li Ching, and betrays the Op by making noise that reveals the Op's presence in the house. It becomes clear to the Op that Hsiu Hsiu is far from an innocent victim: "Hsiu Hsiu sat on the bottom step, her head over her shoulder, experimenting with different sorts of yells and screams, enjoyment all over

[236] Reddy 35.

her laughing doll's face" (231). Again two stereotypes are merged, as the victimised sex-object turns out to be treacherous and evil.

Among the first Chinese American women to appear in the role of the investigator is Juanita Sheridan's Lily Wu. The first novel of the series, *The Chinese Chop*, was published in 1949 and was followed by three more Lily Wu mysteries. Lily Wu is the first female Asian American in the main role in a series of detective fiction, which makes her an interesting predecessor to Rozan's Lydia Chin. However, it must be noted that Lily Wu does not actually tell her stories in her own voice. The events of *The Chinese Chop* are narrated by Lily's friend Janice Cameron, which means that the story is told from the point of view of a white woman. In Janice's eyes, Lily Wu initially looks "pathetically tiny and fragile", but she soon realizes that she is "neither weak nor timid; she was as strong as steel. And her spirit was indomitable."[237] Lily is intelligent, resourceful and capable of thinking quickly in difficult situations. She is in total control of her emotions and does not seem frightened even when a dead man is found in her home.

Sheridan's novel is a good example of the connection between stereotypes and historical contexts, which was discussed in 2.1. In 1949, when *The Chinese Chop* was written, the Yellow Peril stereotype was still prominent, but it does not have a strong effect on the representation of the Chinese in the novel, because at the time, Japan was the primary Asian enemy of the United States because of the events of World War II. This meant that the Yellow Peril stereotype was mostly directed at the Japanese, while the discourse of the Chinese was much more positive, even though Mao's Communist China was emerging. In fact, the only negative stereotype that appears in *The Chinese Chop* is the notion of Chinese inscrutability. It is clear from the beginning that Lily is capable of lying and deceiving. Janice is often frustrated, because she knows that Lily is keeping secrets from her, and she does not know if Lily should be trusted or not:

> Lily Wu. The girl I lived with was most incomprehensible of all. Lying, unscrupulously rearranging other lives to suit her hidden purpose. Stealing from the

[237] Juanita Sheridan, *The Chinese Chop* (Boulder, Colorado: The Rue Morgue Press, 2000) 26.

> dead. Pretending to be artless and gay when actually she was infinitely complex and deep, obsessed by some secret, inexorable purpose... (57)

Janice calls her "Lily Wu of the multiple personality" (32), because her character seems to change constantly, making it impossible to really know her. This idea is repeated over and over again, and finally Janice decides that "concealment was automatic with Lily" (105).

In addition to Chinese inscrutability, Lily has some stereotypically Chinese characteristics, mainly her devotion to her family and her determination to defend its honour. Her motivation in the case is to take back the property that was stolen from her father so that he can resume his old position in the community. Janice finds it "old-fashioned and melodramatic" that Lily is so "driven by obsession to redeem the prestige of her family at any cost to herself", but then attempts to understand the Chinese girl: "Lily was the product of a culture countless generations older than mine, of a family whose traditions were as much a part of them as were their physical features" (82). Lily is intelligent, independent, and capable of catching dangerous criminals, but she can never stop being a Chinese daughter.

5.2. The Representation of Chinese American Women in Rozan's Novels

I will first discuss Rozan's representation of female Chinese American criminals, and the noticeable absence of truly evil female characters. Then I study to what extent Chinese American women are portrayed as victims of patriarchal culture, focusing particularly on the older generation, whose representation is rather stereotypical. In contrast, the younger women challenge traditional gender roles, but in their relationships with white men they echo the stories about Madame Butterfly. To conclude my analysis, I will look into the ways in which Lydia uses stereotypes to her advantage.

In Rozan's series, Chinese American women as a group are not represented as the Yellow Peril in the same way as Chinese American gangsters, and the "Dragon Lady" image is not present, as there are no truly evil female Chinese criminals in the novels. In fact, Chinese women are

represented in a rather positive manner, even the ones that do commit some sort of crimes. For instance, in *China Trade*, Mrs. Mei-li Blair donates her late husband's porcelain collection to a museum, and then hires someone to steal a part of it back, starting a series of events that leads to several murders. Despite her involvement in a crime, Mrs. Blair is never portrayed as a criminal. In fact, throughout the novel, Lydia openly admires the old lady for her "air of grace and authority" (4) and dignified behaviour in a difficult situation: "Such self-possession, I thought. Learn from this, Lydia" (215). Mrs. Blair's motive for the crime was to protect her dead husband's reputation, which would have been ruined if people at the museum had discovered that he had bought stolen porcelains. Lydia points out that Mrs. Blair risked her own reputation by commissioning the theft, and Mrs. Blair answers: "If my husband's reputation were ruined, would not mine be in any case?...I had nothing to lose" (222). Mrs. Blair loyal devotion to her late husband and her remorseful behaviour make it impossible to see her as a "real" criminal. She is also willing to confess to the police, which Lydia finds admirable: "it occurred to me as I looked at her that I'd never met a more courageous person" (223). However, the police never hear of Mrs. Blair's involvement in the crime, because the museum director, a Chinese American woman, understands her need to protect her husband's reputation and refuses to press charges.

The only Chinese American woman who can be seen as a threat to society is Dawn Jing in *Mandarin Plaid.* Before meeting Dawn, the sister of Lydia's client Genna, Lydia discovers that Dawn is a prostitute, and assumes that she must be desperate to "get out of this life" (119). Lydia expects Dawn to be a victim in need of rescuing, even though Dawn's hairdresser describes her as tough, and then corrects himself: "no, not tough. That makes her sound like something you couldn't chew. This one was something you'd break your teeth on if you even tried to bite. And you wouldn't leave a mark on her" (113). When Lydia finally meets Dawn, she realises that Dawn does not need her help. Dawn first assumes that Lydia is also a prostitute, and attempts to scare her away from her territory, and becomes even more hostile when Lydia tells her that she is a private

investigator: “She took a sharp step forward, caught my shoulders, and jammed me back against the sink. Face up close to mine, she snarled, ‘You made one big mistake, honey’” (156). Dawn behaves in a threatening and condescending manner, which makes her seem like a female counterpart to the male gangsters that threaten Lydia in *China Trade.* Furthermore, Dawn is connected to the Yellow Peril stereotype because of her profession. As mentioned in section 3, assumptions about the immorality and sexual deviancy of Chinese people were a significant part of the Yellow Peril, and Chinese prostitutes have been perceived as a threat to the American society because of their power to corrupt white men. Dawn’s approach to prostitution is very business-like, and she certainly does not seem ashamed of her profession as she announces that she is “the best goddamn whore in New York” (164). Dawn is in control of her own life, has the power to choose her clients, and even makes money by referring “creeps and losers who wanted me that I didn’t want to deal with anymore” to other prostitutes (167). Dawn’s emotional coldness, her ability to become wealthy at the expense of her white clients, and the fact that she enjoys being a prostitute make her a morally dubious, threatening character who could be seen as a form of the Yellow Peril stereotype.

However, Rozan’s representation of Dawn is not so straightforward that Dawn could indisputably be classified as a representative of the Yellow Peril. Dawn has similar positive characteristics as the gangsters in *China Trade*, particularly her devotion to her family. Although Lydia can deduce from her conversation with Dawn’s mother that she is “not a good Chinese daughter” (*Mandarin Plaid,* 97) and her family wants to pretend she does not exist, Dawn still cares about her family. She has changed her name, so that Genna would not have to be ashamed of her sister, and hopes that if Genna can deny her existence in public, “maybe she’d admit it in private” (159). Even though the sisters do not have a good relationship, Dawn keeps an eye on Genna, and regularly helps her without her knowledge by giving money to Genna’s boyfriend John, who then gives it to her. In the end, Dawn rescues John’s life by shooting two people, and Lydia notes that she does it “eyes shining, smiling a strange smile” (253). Dawn is a complicated character who is

undeniably dangerous and threatening, but also a human being who misses her family and is willing to do anything to protect them, even though they do not appreciate her.

There are remarkably few evil, criminal or even unpleasant Chinese American women in Rozan's series, and accordingly most negative stereotypes are missing. In particular, Rozan's Chinese American women are not treacherous or inscrutable. In fact, only one woman, Mei-li Blair, can be considered deceitful, since she is one of the people who hire Lydia to investigate the theft of the porcelains that she had stolen herself. Yet even Mrs. Blair turns out to be a sympathetic character, and her treacherousness is explained by her loyalty to her husband in the same way as Lily Wu's secretiveness in Sheridan's *The Chinese Chop* is the result of her devotion to her family. Whereas secretiveness is Lily's defining characteristic and doubts about her trustworthiness are a significant part of the narrative, Rozan's hero is totally reliable. Lydia is honest and trustworthy, and her loyalty to Bill, her clients, family and friends cannot be questioned. However, Lydia can be sneaky and deceitful, but only when she is working. She always prefers to use disguises and act under false pretences rather than simply tell the truth about her identity and profession. This is of course also a convention of detective fiction genre, but Lydia often chooses to adopt a new identity even though it would be easier to tell the truth. In *China Trade,* she admits that "my first instinct has always been towards subterfuge, fakery, and disguise" and the reason she did not reveal her identity is that "It just didn't occur to me" (*China Trade,* 138). Nevertheless, in the novels that I have studied, Lydia's deceitfulness seems to be restricted to her professional persona, and in general, Chinese American women are represented as trustworthy rather than treacherous.

In contrast, stereotypical notions about the victimisation of Chinese women can be found in Rozan's novels. The patriarchal order is still present in the Chinese community, although young women such as Lydia and Mary strongly challenge it. Men and women have different roles, and different things are expected of them. This has been part of Lydia's reality since childhood: "they were a club I couldn't join, my brothers, and their club had all the fun. They played baseball while I

learned how to embroider" (*China Trade,* 14). Even as an adult Lydia is expected to respect her mother and brothers and do whatever they say. The Chin family tries to control Lydia's life, and Mrs. Chin even tells her that one of her brothers "said I should lock the door and not let you out anymore until your brothers find a husband for you" (*China Trade,* 117). Lydia's family believes that finding a husband for Lydia would solve all their problems, which is why Mrs. Chin is always trying to encourage Lydia to date, and as Lydia puts it, any "living unmarried Chinese male" would be good enough (*A Bitter Feast,* 13). Mrs. Chin wants Lydia to marry a Chinese American man, because she believes that she would then give up her profession and focus on being a wife and mother. The fact that it is so important to Mrs. Chin that Lydia's husband is Chinese suggests that a Chinese man would never allow his wife to work as a private investigator.

Indeed, most Chinese American men in Rozan's novels seem to believe in traditional gender roles, and many of them have sexist and misogynistic ideas. Rozan's representation of Chinese American men is undoubtedly stereotypical, since all men, regardless of age, class, or how long they have lived in America, have the same attitude towards women and the same ideas about gender roles. For instance, a gangster who tries to scare Lydia off the case says to her: "Look for something else, husband maybe", (*A Bitter Feast,* 57) which is the same advice that she often receives from her well-educated brothers. In contrast, Bill, the only significant white male characters in the series, has nothing against Lydia's profession or her independence, in fact, he is even willing to work for her and take orders from her when the case is hers. Moreover, he does not think that Lydia's profession reduces her attractiveness as a woman or is an obstacle for a romantic relationship. This contrast between Chinese American men and Bill corresponds with Hall's ideas about the functions of representing difference that were discussed in 2.1. The white American man is contrasted with the 'Other', and representing the 'Other' as old-fashioned and sexist makes the white man seem more progressive and liberal, which confirms a positive white American identity.

A similar contrast exists between Chinatown and America, since Chinatown is portrayed as a patriarchal community, where the equality of men and women does not exist to the same extent as it does elsewhere in America, and Chinese American women do not have the same rights and opportunities as white American women. For instance, when Lydia and Bill go to meet the gang leader Duke Lo at his Family Association,[238] they are met with silent hostility: "I could see I was the only woman in the place. So could everyone else there. And they could also see that Bill was the only non-Chinese. I don't know which confused them more, but the potential for irritation was strong" (*A Bitter Feast*, 162). Lydia explains who they want to meet, but the men refuse to acknowledge her presence until she introduces Bill as her husband:

> The white husband of a Chinese woman was something they understood. This would be a man smart enough to get himself a real wife, not one of these loud, demanding, sexless women of his own race; and as for me, though they resented me for it, they could see the sense in my latching on to a man much closer to the possibilities of power and wealth by the fact of his birth than they would ever be no matter how hard and long they worked. (163)

Here Rozan paints a very clear picture of the position of women in Chinese American community, and in Koshy's terms, they are represented as the sexual model minority. Chinese women are real wives, that is to say, they are truly feminine women who are willing to be subordinate to their husbands. In addition, a smart Chinese woman tries to find a white husband and latches on to him, knowing that it is her only chance to improve the quality of her life. By presenting these ideas, Rozan supports the stereotypes of the chauvinistic Chinese man and the oppressed Chinese woman. Furthermore, she gives the impression that the stereotypes are true, as these ideas about Chinese woman as real wives and gold diggers come directly from the Chinese characters. Rozan lets Lydia, a Chinese American woman, explain the attitude of Chinese men in order to give this passage the appearance of an authentic description of Chinese American culture.

The older generation seems to be content with the traditional role of Chinese women. Mrs. Chin's life revolves around her children and domestic life, although she is capable of other things,

[238] Family Associations are clubs for Chinese American men whose families come from the same region in China.

for example playing the stock market. Her record is better than her son's, but that is a secret, because "it would embarrass her deeply to outshine her son" (*China Trade*, 62). Mrs. Chin has not made any considerable attempts to assimilate into the United States, but continues to live her life as if she was still in China, and that is why her daughter's American way of life horrifies her. According to Reddy, Mrs. Chin is a stereotype: "bossy, demanding, controlling, trying to keep her daughter Chinese in America".[239] Mrs. Chin keeps a close eye on Lydia and often knows what she has been doing even though Lydia tries to hide certain things from her. Mrs. Chin is proud of her children and of her late husband, and that makes her proud of herself as well. When Mrs. Chin praises her husband's hard work and the fact that he always "provided well for his family" (*Mandarin Plaid,* 108), Lydia silently adds that her mother's "twelve-hour days in Mr. Leng's sweatshop had helped some, too" (108), but knows better than to say it out loud:

> It was the husband's job to provide...My mother's pride came from having chosen a husband who could do that...Pointing out her contribution to the family's prosperity would only, in her eyes, have meant I didn't appreciate his. (*Mandarin Plaid,* 108)

As Bertens and D'Haen point out, much of Mrs. Chin's behaviour is "the result of social pressure: the traditional unspoken demand that women practice total unselfishness".[240] This becomes evident in many small things that Mrs. Chin does, for instance asking Lydia to bring her some almond cookies, "to put in the freezer in case your brothers come". Lydia knows that the cookies are really for her mother: "none of my brothers likes Maria's almond cookies. I don't either. My mother could live on them" (*Mandarin Plaid,* 92), but understands that her mother could never admit that she wants something for herself.

Reddy's argument about the stereotypical representation of Chinese mothers is strengthened by the fact that all Chinese mothers in Rozan's novels are alike. Mary's mother, Mrs. Kee, is almost an identical copy of Mrs. Chin, since they both try to control the lives of their children, and have the exact same attitude towards the career choices their daughters have made. Mrs. Chin and Mrs. Kee

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[239] Reddy 165-166.
[240] Bertens and D'haen 209.

enjoy a game that Lydia calls “offspring one-upmanship” (*A Bitter Feast,* 95), which means comparing the achievements of their children. Lydia describes how this game was played when the daughters chose their professions: when Mary went to the police academy, “my mother was horrified...and took every opportunity to console Mrs. Kee over her ill fortune in not having a daughter as exemplary as me. She had no idea what was in store for her. Now Mrs. Kee consoles her. At every opportunity” (*China Trade,* 46). Even though Mrs. Kee is slightly more assimilated to living in the United States, Lydia assures that the two mothers have the same mindset: “Unlike my mother, Mrs. Kee speaks English. Just like my mother, she has this idea that if everyone totally ignores this detective foolishness her daughter will get tired of it and find something respectable to do” (49). The similarity between these two Chinese mothers is so noticeable that it is unavoidable to see them as a stereotype. Furthermore, in *Mandarin Plaid,* Lydia tells her client Genna Jing that her mother hates her partner Bill, and Genna replies: “Let me guess: he’s not Chinese” (8). Lydia does not even need to answer: “Genna and I smiled, the same smile” (8). This implies that Genna’s mother also dislikes all white men in Genna’s life, which creates the impression that all Chinese mothers are alike.

While Rozan’s representation of older Chinese women is stereotypical, the younger women are completely different. Lydia and Mary have resisted gender roles ever since their childhood, or their “tomboy years”, as Lydia puts it (*A Bitter Feast,* 105). To their mothers’ horror, Lydia and Mary have not settled for the kinds of hobbies and interests that girls are supposed to have, instead, Lydia lists the activities that they truly like: “while I rollerblade and practice Tae Kwon Do, Mary lifts weights and plays soccer...she was known to bungee-jump when that was hot, and last summer she took up rock climbing” (*A Bitter Feast,* 93-94). Most importantly, they have had the courage to choose a profession that is considered unsuitable for women, and do not hesitate to do things that a more traditional Chinese woman would not even consider doing. For instance, when Bill asks if she has already met the gangsters who seem to have information about their case, Lydia’s answer

reveals how seriously such action would violate the behaviour code she is supposed to follow, and how little that matters to her:

> 'As if any decent young woman who respected her father's ghost would increase his sufferings in the spirit world by taking unnecessary chances, like for example speaking to a Golden Dragon.' I squared my shoulders righteously. 'Not yet', I added. (15)

On the surface, Lydia appears to be a very strong woman who does not let anybody tell her how to live her life, and she and Mary are clearly proud of the unconventional choices they have made.

Lydia is strong-willed and courageous, and is willing to take risks in order to succeed in her work. She knows that her job can be dangerous, but she does not let that stop her. In fact, she admits to herself that "in some place deep inside me that I don't look into very often, I enjoy that part" (*China Trade,* 63). Lydia enjoys the excitement and sense of adventure connected to her work, but unlike the traditional male hero of hard-boiled fiction, she does not enjoy violence. She only resorts to violence when she has to defend herself, and despite her skills in martial arts, she is aware of her vulnerability. For instance, in *China Trade,* when she knows that the gangsters are about to attack her, she is very scared, but does not show it: "'Tell them to keep their stinking hands off me,' I ordered Trouble, in the voice of someone used to being obeyed and totally unafraid. I wondered whose voice it was" (91). According to Vanacker, the courageousness of the female protagonist is a significant characteristic in feminist detective fiction: "The power and heroic appeal for the reader clearly lie precisely in this determination to accept fear, recognise the dangers, and yet go beyond them".[241] In Lydia's case, this heroic determination is emphasised by the fact that she constantly has to struggle against her family's attempts to protect her: "All they ever do, my family, is try to put a fence around me" (*Mandarin Plaid,* 125). Bill reminds her that their purpose is to keep her "safe inside", and Lydia responds: "But I don't want to be inside" (125). Mary seems less prone to taking unnecessary risks, as she often tries to talk Lydia out of doing something dangerous, but Lydia does not doubt that she takes her career equally seriously: "Mary's a good cop, and being that is

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[241] Vanacker 65.

important to her" (*A Bitter Feast,* 93). Both women are ready to take risks and make sacrifices for their careers. Professional pride is an important part of these women's identity, which is a significant difference between them and their mothers.

Moreover, in contrast to their mothers, whose identities are based on family and the roles of wife and mother, Lydia and Mary see themselves as individuals. For the older women, identity consists of membership in family and community, but for younger women, this collective identity is not enough. In fact, at times Lydia cannot even understand how the actions of one family member can affect the reputation of the whole family, and she feels that her family's concern is suffocating her. She cannot comprehend why everyone feels responsible for her: "I don't understand this, how everyone feels that way. Like they were in charge of what I do and I don't even make my own mistakes. If something happens to me it's *my* fault" (*A Bitter Feast,* 97). Independence and individuality are very important to Lydia, and she is willing to take the responsibility of her own actions. As D'haen points out, Lydia is much more Americanized than her mother, and that causes tension between them, as Mrs. Chin resents her daughter for "drifting away from her Chinese roots and for joining the outside world of mainstream America".[242] However, as D'haen puts it, despite all the confrontations with her mother, Lydia always "finally emerges as a modern American woman, fiercely jealous of her independence and her individual and professional integrity".[243] As modern American women, Lydia and Mary want to succeed on their own and be proud of their own achievements, not those of the men of the family.

Furthermore, instead of being dependent on men, Lydia and Mary both earn their own living. Hence the traditional role of the submissive victim of patriarchal culture certainly does not fit Lydia and Mary, who respect their self-sacrificing mothers, but do not want to become like them. Thus it is crucially important to avoid serious relationships with men who are a threat to their

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[242] Theo D'haen, "Samurai Sleuths and Detective Daughters: The American Way," *Sleuthing Ethnicity: The Detective in Multiethnic Crime Fiction*, ed. Dorothea Fischer-Hornung and Monika Mueller (London: Associated University Press, 2003) 44.
[243] D'haen 44.

independence. According to Lydia, Mary has found a Chinese American boyfriend who accepts her as she is: "Mary says he's the first guy she's dates who isn't interested in either competing with her or changing her into the soft, gentle creature of his dreams" (*A Bitter Feast,* 94). This kind of a man is very rare in Rozan's novels, since most Chinese American men in the series, as D'haen puts it, "try to hang on to the power they traditionally have within their own community".[244] The traditional Chinese American man is an impossible companion for Lydia, who can be considered a feminist, since she is very critical of women's position in the Chinese American community, and demands to be taken seriously as a female private investigator. The sexist comments and dismissive attitude of the gangsters she meets in *China Trade* irritate her, and she takes her anger on Bill: "Macho jerk. He wouldn't have treated me that way if I were a man. He wouldn't have treated *you* that way. Damn you all!" (33). In addition, Lydia does not think very highly of men, and often sounds rather condescending when she observes something that she considers to be typical male behaviour. For instance, in *Winter and Night,* she explains to Bill why a man that they interviewed is likely to comply with her request to contact them if he hears anything that would help them solve the case: "he'd love to prove to me how much more he knows than I do. He'd especially love to prove to me how much more he knows than *you* do. It's that male gorilla thing" (93). Although Lydia was raised in accordance with traditional gender roles, being subordinate to men is out of the question for her.

However, even though Lydia does not let other people tell her how to live her life, not living up to the expectations of the Chinese community still bothers her. Most importantly, her profession constantly conflicts with her private life as a daughter of a Chinese family. Bertens & D'haen argue that "because she is still part of her ethnic community…she also exemplifies the censure and restrictions that female investigators are often subjected to".[245] It is not hard to find support for this argument. Lydia's family strongly disapproves of her profession and her decision to remain single, and although Lydia seems rather indifferent to her family's opinions, she has not been able to free

[244] D'haen 45.
[245] Bertens and D'haen 208.

herself from their power. Bertens and D'haen discuss the socio-psychological restrictions that complicate Lydia's life, and state that "the traditional subservience to her mother and the family males that is expected of her is an additional burden".[246] The traditional role of the Chinese daughter does not suit Lydia at all, but she has not given up on trying to please her family. She could have distanced herself from her family by moving away, but she has stayed, because she is expected to take care of her mother. She has to listen to her mother's complaints every day and let her tell her what a disappointment she is to the whole family, and she cannot even show her own feelings, because losing her temper would be unacceptable: "Then I would have snapped at her, which would have been undaughterly of me and would have made me feel guilty" (*China Trade,* 32). The burden of being part of a traditional Chinese family weighs heavily on her, even though she tries to make a joke out of it. "Good Chinese daughters don't get any naughtier than this" (*China Trade,* 71), is Lydia's assessment of her own character, and although she is being humorous, it is clear that rebelling against her family sometimes makes her feel guilty, and her mother's criticism sometimes makes her cry. She is trying to cut herself loose of the role of the Chinese daughter, but it is not easy to fight against everybody's expectations.

Rozan's young female Chinese characters are in many ways original and unconventional, but when it comes to romantic involvements with white men, the stereotypes of Asian femininity resurface. In *Mandarin Plaid,* Rozan presents Genna Jing, a young, talented fashion designer, who is on the verge of success, and proud of her accomplishments. She wants to be independent, and refuses to take money from her boyfriend unless it is an investment in her business: "John, I don't want your money. That's not who I am" (7). She is a capable businesswoman, and quite strong-willed. In fact, during an argument with Lydia, one white man who has worked with Genna exclaims: "And they say the Chinese, especially the women, are self-effacing and shy. Where the hell did a pack of pushy little dictators get a rep like that?" (30). Genna's career means everything

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[246] Bertens and D'haen 208.

to her, and she even refuses to tell the police what she knows about a murder, because it could hurt her reputation: “If this gets around in the industry it’ll ruin me...I’ve worked all my life for this. And it’s almost here. I can’t give it up now” (39). However, when her boyfriend is kidnapped, the strong, determined businesswoman turns into a distraught, weeping woman who does not even care about catching the kidnappers: “I don’t even care who it is! I just want John back” (232). Genna has to beg John’s mother to give her the ransom money, and Mrs. Ryan takes advantage of her fragile state. She refuses to give the money, unless Genna signs an agreement that she will never see John again. Genna signs the paper, and sacrifices her happiness in order to save John’s life. Later she is willing to make a much greater sacrifice for John: she wants to defy Mrs. Ryan and break the contract, knowing that Mrs. Ryan would take her to court, which would ruin her financially. John warns her that she would probably lose her business, and Genna answers: “I don’t care about that...I can go back to work for someone else. I don’t need my own line. All I need is you” (268). The career that was so important to Genna is meaningless compared to the man she loves: “I don’t care about my career if it means losing him!” (272). Just like Madame Butterfly, Genna loves a white man so deeply that she is ready to sacrifice everything for him.

The character of Genna Jing alters considerably during the events of *Mandarin Plaid,* and as a result of her involvement with a white man she loses a part of her identity. In a way, Genna’s fate functions as a cautionary tale for Lydia, since her relationship with Bill poses a similar threat to her personality. When Lydia is seen through Bill’s eyes, her character changes significantly. Even her physical appearance seems completely different, when Bill describes it. Lydia does not consider herself beautiful: “Chinese people have standards of beauty like anybody else...and I don’t meet them” (*Mandarin Plaid,* 116), and does not generally pay much attention to her looks. In contrast, Bill notes in *Winter and Night* that “her hair was glossy and smelled of freesia” (19) and that she moves with “grace and sureness” (247). Being the object of Bill’s admiration and romantic feelings makes Lydia seem more feminine, and Bill emphasises this with several remarks about her exotic

beauty and "aloofness…elegant disdain…that makes men fall at your feet" (*Winter and Night,* 137). Bill associates Lydia with some traditionally feminine characteristics, such as patience, kindness and compassion, and in *Winter and Night,* these virtues define Lydia's character, whereas in other novels Lydia talks about her lack of patience and also loses her temper from time to time.

Moreover, Bill jeopardizes the most important part of Lydia's identity, her independence, by attempting to protect her without her consent. In *A Bitter Feast,* he does not let Lydia meet a gangster alone, even though she insists that the presence of a white man will ruin her chances of making him talk. Lydia is furious: "Nonnegotiable?...You're working for me. You can't give me ultimatums like that" (154). Bill answers that "I can and I will" (154), and indeed, only a moment later he turns Lydia's mind by convincing her that "this isn't about who lets who do what! It's not about who's boss" (155). He kisses Lydia, and she allows him to accompany her to the meeting, because she understands that Bill is truly concerned about her. Nevertheless, such incidents diminish Lydia, and create the image that she needs Bill to protect her and prevent her from putting herself in danger.

Having a male partner is also a threat to Lydia's credibility as a private investigator. As Cranny-Francis points out, female detectives usually work alone, because having a partner implies that the woman detective cannot manage the job on her own and needs a man to protect her.[247] For the most part, the partnership between Lydia and Bill functions well, and Bill respects Lydia's right to lead the investigation when the case is hers. Bill often does things without consulting Lydia first, but she does not mind, because she trusts him: "I know that Bill thinks highly of me and would never just sweep me under the rug and take over my case" (*Mandarin Plaid,* 13). However, when Lydia and Bill work together, people tend to assume that Bill is in charge and ignore Lydia. A case in point, in *China Trade,* Lydia begins interviewing Dr. Caldwell, and notices that he directs his attention to Bill, not her:

[247] Cranny-Francis 168.

> 'Well', said Caldwell expectantly, looking from Bill to me. 'Do you know, I don't think I've ever met a real private investigator before?' His look ended up back on Bill, as though he were waiting for Bill to tell him what was going on. That happens a lot when we're together. On Bill's cases it's reasonable, but this was my case. (38-39)

Lydia handles the situation by taking a dominant role, and Bill helps her by staying quiet while she does the talking. Caldwell has to adjust his ideas about what a real private investigator is like, and accept that Lydia is in charge: "He gave one more glance in Bill's direction. Bill just smiled and said nothing. I began to speak and Caldwell turned politely back to me" (39). However, despite Bill's respectful and polite behaviour in these situations, his presence diminishes Lydia, because he is in many ways the traditional male hero of hard-boiled detective fiction, and Lydia does not always bear comparison with him. For instance, as Bertens and D'haen note, Bill is "the classic loner, a man without family or friends"[248], which means that he is totally independent and free to do whatever he wants, whereas Lydia has to try to make it home in time for dinner or risk upsetting her mother. Bertens and D'haen summarise the differences between the two heroes of Rozan's series: "unlike Lydia Chin, Smith has seen it all and been through everything".[249] This makes Bill the more likely and credible protagonist of the two.

Bill's great influence over Lydia and the threat he poses to her independent spirit becomes evident in *Winter and Night,* in which Bill has the main role and Lydia assists him. First and foremost, Lydia's role in the investigation differs from the novels in which she is in charge. In *Winter and Night,* Lydia's main responsibility is to function as Bill's sense and conscience. Like most male detectives in hard-boiled crime fiction, Bill is usually rather unemotional and detached, but this time he is emotionally involved in the case, because it concerns his relatives, and Lydia has to make sure that his actions do not become too irrational. She stops Bill from beating a man, and repeatedly advises him to keep his head cool: "You have got to get a better grip...if you lose it, you're going to make it worse" (115). She also takes care of Bill, makes sure he remembers to eat and sleep: "You won't be any good to anybody if you wipe yourself out" (116). This kind of

[248] Bertens and D'haen 212.
[249] Bertens and D'haen 212.

behaviour is interesting, because in *Mandarin Plaid* Lydia makes it very clear that she does not approve of the idea that a woman should constantly look after her man and make sure he does not do anything stupid. To Lydia's mother this makes perfect sense, and she explains to Lydia why Roland Lum, an old acquaintance of their family, became a criminal:

> Men like Roland Lum are full of ideas...Some are good, some are bad. They need a woman to tell them which are which...If only you had stayed in touch with Roland Lum...Instead he became confused, as a man who has no wife, and he couldn't choose between his good and bad ideas. (*Mandarin Plaid,* 270)

Lydia is amazed at this: "I felt like I needed cold water splashed on me...She had completely outdone herself. My mother had made this my fault" (270). Although Lydia does not share her mother's ideas about women's duty to prevent men from doing the wrong thing, in *Winter and Night* she takes this responsibility, thus conforming to the traditional role of a Chinese woman.

Lydia bears a resemblance to Madame Butterfly in the sense that she is willing to make sacrifices for Bill. In *Mandarin Plaid,* Lydia and Bill have to decide whether to talk to the police about their clients' involvement in a murder case. The clients threaten to ruin their reputation as trustworthy private investigators, which would end Lydia's career, because she is "much newer in the business than Bill" and does not have "a reputation that might be able to ride out a wave of bad talk" (43). On the other hand, withholding the information could cost Bill his license, whereas that risk is considerably smaller for Lydia: "young and new, I might be able to bluff my way through an investigation. Gee, officer, I didn't have any idea my client's case was related to this murder..." (43). Even though going to the police is the worst choice for Lydia, she is inclined to do it to protect Bill. Bill does not accept this, but appreciates the offer: "you have two reasons not to go to the police and you were going to do it anyway. For me." (43). Here Bill understands and appreciates the sacrifice that Lydia was going to make for him, but in *Winter and Night* he completely misinterprets Lydia's actions. At the end of the novel, Lydia risks her own safety to prevent Bill from killing a man, and Bill asks why she took "that kind of risk, for a bastard like him?" (327):

> ’Him?’ She said the word as though she didn’t understand it. ‘You think I did that for him?’
> ‘To keep me from killing him.’
> ‘For *him*?’ She kept her eyes on me for a moment, then turned, clamp-jawed, to stare out the windshield at the other cars. (327)

Bill does not even understand that Lydia did what she did for his sake, to prevent him from ruining his life. It clearly upsets Lydia that Bill does not understand what she did for him, and her hurt feelings indicate that she wants Bill to thank her. Instead, Bill states that “I didn’t ask you for help” and when Lydia reminds him that she is his partner, Bill asks “when did that make you my conscience?” (327). Here Rozan’s representation of Lydia echoes the countless Madame Butterfly narratives in which the Asian woman makes sacrifices for a white man who does not appreciate her.

However, despite Lydia’s self-sacrificing behaviour, the relationship between Lydia and Bill is not a typical Madame Butterfly story. Rozan uses the traditional white man – Asian woman dyad, but has partly reversed the roles. Whereas it is usually the Asian woman’s fate to love the white man who does not truly reciprocate her feelings, in Rozan’s novels Bill is the one who is hopelessly in love. In the novels that are narrated by Lydia, Bill keeps declaring his undying love for Lydia, thus making a joke out of his attraction for her, but in *Winter and Night,* the depth of Bill’s feelings becomes evident: “I wanted to be with Lydia someplace else, on a broad empty field like this but someplace where the wind was still and the air warm and sweet and the sky was covered with stars” (278). Lydia also has feelings for Bill, but she keeps rejecting him, partly because she wants to keep her independence and avoid serious relationships, which is also in accordance with generic conventions, since female detectives are usually single. Lydia admits that the intensity of Bill’s emotions scares her:

> There’s something about Bill, about how he feels about me and what he wants, that makes him take risks sometimes, lets him make himself vulnerable in a way that confuses and upsets me. And frightens me, too: it gives me a power I’m not sure I want. (*Mandarin Plaid,* 80)

Lydia knows that she has the power to decide whether their relationship is allowed to develop, but seems to fear that if she started a romantic relationship with Bill, she, too, would become vulnerable

and dependent on him. Lydia's fear of losing control of her life is understandable, considering how hard Lydia has had to struggle with her family to gain her independence. Furthermore, a romance with Bill is a complicated issue for Lydia because of the strong opposition of her family, especially her mother, who does not try to hide the fact that she dislikes Bill. Bill seems to believe that Lydia rejects him because of the restrictive influence of her family and Chinese culture, and that they could be happy together somewhere else: "I turned to look at her, warm and solid beside me, and I almost laughed, so strong was the sudden idea that we could go away somewhere, up to my cabin in the country, to China, to a farm in New Zealand, leave and start over and never come back" (*Winter and Night,* 20). However, Lydia has her own doubts regarding interracial relationships, and tries to explain to Bill why they cannot be together: "Because of who I am and who you are. Where we come from and what we know. It's different, Bill. I can't make it the same" (*Mandarin Plaid,* 172). In American popular culture, Asian women have traditionally solved this dilemma by abandoning their own family and culture, but Lydia challenges stereotypical ideas about Asian femininity by rejecting a white man and refusing to give up her own ethnic identity. For Reddy, this is not enough to distance the novel from the Orientalist tradition of representing interracial relationships. She argues that "a white male / Asian female couple is...far less transgressive of social norms than any other interracial combination, especially when the woman is the pursued, the passive, or even the resistant objective of the aggressive male's desire" and "the novel thus remains firmly and comfortingly entrenched in white discourse".[250] In my opinion, granted that Rozan reinforces many stereotypical ideas about interracial romance, her decision to allow Lydia diverge from Madame Butterfly, the most famous image of Asian women in American popular culture, is a significant one and distances her series from the Orientalist tradition.

Because of Lydia's resistance to the Madame Butterfly image, she does not conform to Koshy's idea of the sexual model minority, but she does, nonetheless, possess sexual capital. Lydia skilfully

[250] Reddy 167.

uses both her femininity and her ethnicity to her advantage. Being a small Chinese woman makes her seem totally harmless, which helps her in her work, and being an attractive woman is also an advantage. For instance, in *Winter and Night,* Lydia repeatedly charms a security guard named Barboni into letting her into his boss' office. On the first occasion, Bill observes that she "leaned over, dropped her hands on his shoulders and shoved him back in his chair. She moved her jacket aside so her gun would show, smiled at him and put her finger to her lips" (87). Barboni is too astounded to stop Lydia and Bill from going in, and later he asks Lydia out. The conversation between Lydia and Bill implies that she is very much aware of her power over men:

> 'It seems he gets excited by girls with guns who push him around.'
> 'Here's a secret about men: We all do.'
> 'Here's a secret about women: We all know you do.' (92-93)

Lydia successfully uses the same tactic on Barboni more than once, which makes Bill mutter that "that's the same as wiggling your hips" (269). "How little you know" (269), answers Lydia, completely comfortable with her decision to use her femininity and attractiveness to her advantage.

Lydia is very much aware of all the stereotypes that can be applied to her, and exploits them. This is a typical feature of the protagonists of ethnic detective fiction, and for instance African American detectives often take advantage of stereotypes. According to Soitos, African American detectives use "double-consciousness" techniques, that is, they see themselves through white people's eyes and accordingly behave in a manner that makes them seem harmless and unnoticeable, for instance by assuming the role of the servant.[251] Similarly, Lydia knows what kinds of expectations people have of Asian Americans, especially women, and often acts in accordance with them, when it suits her purposes. Lydia often assumes the role of a Chinese immigrant, and once even avoids answering a police detective's questions by speaking bad English. Moreover, she consciously takes roles that make her seem harmless: "I'm young, I'm small, I'm a girl, I do 'Gee whiz' really well" (*Winter and Night,* 152). However, Lydia's roles are not all centred on

[251] Soitos 36.

stereotypical Asian femininity, and she can easily adopt identities that require, for instance, physical activity and aggression. As Bill puts it, in addition to the role of the small Chinese girl, she also does “evil kick-ass psychotic sidekick well” (152). Lydia’s own words suggest that she has found a way to make stereotypes empowering instead of oppressive. When Bill makes fun of her shortness, she replies: “It’s stereotypes like this that enable people like me to sneak unseen right up in the faces of people like you, and clobber you” (*Winter and Night*, 250).

6. Conclusion

The effects of Orientalism on the representation of Chinese Americans are visible in all my research material, and the persistence of the stereotypes of the Chinese cannot be doubted. My study confirms that there is a close connection between Orientalism and popular culture, and that detective fiction has participated in the Orientalist discourse by reproducing stereotypes of the Chinese. Furthermore, comparing older and contemporary detective fiction revealed that changes in the discourse of Chinese Americans can be seen in detective fiction, as the genre responds to specific social situations and portrays the Chinese in accordance with the prevailing attitudes and beliefs. Hence it is interesting to notice that Rozan's series, which was begun in the 1990s, partly contains the same stereotypes as detective fiction written in the 1920s. The fact that these stereotypes still persist suggests that Orientalism continues to affect the representations of the Chinese in American popular culture.

The Yellow Peril stereotype is present in Rozan's novels in the portrayal of Chinatown as a crime-ridden community ruled by its own corrupt leaders, a place where terrifying Chinese American gangsters can do whatever they want without anyone trying to stop them. Some Chinese American criminals have power outside Chinatown and even function in politics or work for the government, which corresponds with the idea that Chinese Americans are treacherous and should never be trusted. However, granted that the Yellow Peril stereotype is a significant part of Rozan's series, it does not completely confine the Asian American characters. Rozan does not reduce Chinese Americans to the role of the criminal, on the contrary, she gives some of the most unpleasant gangsters names, families, backgrounds and personalities, which makes them seem human. Furthermore, the gangsters do not represent all Chinese Americans, and the role of the criminal is not the only role reserved for Chinese American characters.

Compared to the early model minority detective figures that were presented in 4.1, Lydia Chin is much less influenced by the model minority stereotype. She is not as submissive, polite, non-threatening as Charlie Chan, and she is certainly much more connected to her ethnic community and culture than the detective figures of the 1930s who abandoned the Chinese culture in order to be accepted in America. Nevertheless, the model minority myth also appears in Rozan's novels, and the stereotype fits most of the law-abiding Chinese American characters. In Rozan's novels, numerous polite, hard-working, politically passive immigrants focus on improving their status, determined to succeed in America. Families are depicted in a stereotypical manner, and Lydia Chin's family is a good example of a model minority family that has made the American Dream come true by working hard and making sure that each member of the family honours traditions and protects the reputation of the family. However, the model minority myth and the American Dream are called into question as Lydia encounters the harsh reality of new immigrants.

Rozan's representation of Chinese American women reproduces some stereotypes, whereas some of the powerful stereotypical images in American popular culture are missing or challenged in her novels. A case in point, the most negative stereotypes attached to Asian women, the Dragon Lady image and the treacherousness of Asian women, are not repeated in the novels that I have studied, and the representation of Chinese American women is generally quite positive, since there are very few female criminals, and even they are presented as sympathetic characters. However, Rozan reproduces stereotypes of Chinese women as victims of the patriarchal Chinese culture. Gender roles govern the lives of the older women, and all Chinese American mothers in the novels live for their husbands and children. In contrast, the younger women, especially Lydia and Mary, decline the traditional roles of wife and mother, and bravely pursue their own dreams, despite the disapproval of the community. Lydia even struggles against the powerful Madame Butterfly image as she rejects a white man in order to preserve her independence. However, not all Chinese

American women manage to do the same, and even Lydia repeats some aspects of the Madame Butterfly stereotype, such as the willingness to make sacrifices for a white man.

To some extent, my study supports Maureen Reddy's argument that detective fiction as a genre is unsuitable for non-white protagonists. Hard-boiled crime fiction has a long tradition of white authors writing about white characters for a white audience, and it cannot be denied that the conventions of the genre are more suitable for preserving than challenging stereotypes of Asian Americans. For instance, the role of the sinister Chinese criminal, the image of great masses of Chinese gangsters, and the use of Chinatowns as threatening scenes are such well-established conventions in the genre that it is hard to avoid them in a detective fiction series set in Chinatown. Furthermore, the fact that the role of the detective was for decades reserved for white men in hard-boiled crime fiction certainly created some difficulties for writers who want to create non-white protagonists. This became evident in my discussion of Earl Derr Biggers's and Hugh Wiley's fiction, which substituted the white detective with a Chinese American, with the result of creating Chinese American detectives who have no real Chinese American identity. Until the 1990s, the position of the white hero in hard-boiled fiction was so secure that giving the role to a Chinese American was anything but uncomplicated, which is probably the reason why there are so few Asian American detective figures or Asian American writers interested in the genre.

However, whereas Reddy sees Rozan as an example of a well-intentioned white author who fails to create credible, non-stereotypical ethnic characters, my conclusions are less negative, and I disagree with the idea that all representations of Asian Americans created by white authors are inescapably Orientalist. In my opinion, Rozan challenges the Orientalist tradition by letting the 'Other' speak and function in a new role, as the main character and narrator of a detective fiction series. That alone is a significant change away from the traditional white perspective of the hard-boiled genre. Furthermore, although Orientalist stereotypes still appear in Rozan's novels, they do not confine the characters as strictly as they did in the older fiction that I studied, and Rozan has

also created new kinds of characters that resist some stereotypes. In addition, Rozan's representation of the Chinese does not support the Orientalist idea that all Asians are alike, as she portrays various differences between Chinese Americans. Whereas in the older detective fiction that I studied race and gender determined the characteristics of Asian Americans and assigned them to certain roles, Rozan's Chinese American characters differ from each other because of their age, class, immigrant status, personality, and many other factors, and a much wider range of roles is available to them. All in all, considering the rarity of Asian American detectives in American popular culture, Rozan's series is a significant contribution to the genre, since each new Asian American detective figure paves the way for the next one.

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