

Invention, Inversion and Intervention: The Oriental Woman in *The World of Suzie Wong*, *M. Butterfly*, and *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*

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The construction of the Oriental Woman—a fictional character of the Western imagination—can be dissected, according to Professor Kwan, by means of a cosynthetic analysis. The cosynthetic analysis is a means of understanding how certain stereotypes emerge out of a confluence of racial, sexual, gender, class and other identities. These identities interact in a catalytic manner, creating a stereotype that cannot be reduced to its parts. Kwan identifies this particular stereotype as often times the result of peculiar Western tropes such as the White Knight trope and the racial phallus, as demonstrated in the first two films referenced. Yet the very same Oriental Woman can be used to validate white deviancy, as shown in the final film discussed. This novel use of the Oriental Woman construct is accomplished by some alternative juxtapositions which nevertheless depend on the same cosynthesis of attributes, demonstrating the durability of the stereotype.

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INTRODUCTION

The figure of the Oriental Woman, and her relationship with the white man who becomes her lover is a theme repeatedly mined by Hollywood studios.¹ In many of these films, the category of the Oriental Woman is constructed through the white male gaze where, as Gina Marchetti describes, "Asian females are often depicted as sexually available to the white hero."² In contrast to the actual bodies of women from Asia, the Oriental Woman is a fictive creation, an invention of the western imagination deployed to justify sexual exploitation, dominance and not infrequently, violence to Asian women.³ The Oriental Woman is meek, shy, passive, childlike, innocent and naïve. She relies and is dependent on the white hero to satisfy her most basic needs and to perform the most basic tasks, including, of course, lessons on the proper uses and pronunciation of English. As Edward Said has written on Orientalists of the nineteenth century: "(Orientalism) viewed itself and its subject matter with sexist blinders. This is especially evident in the writing of travelers and novelists: women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy.⁴ They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing."⁵ Despite, or perhaps because of this, the white hero finds the Oriental Woman extremely sexually desirable. This racial-sexual fetish is often cast and recast in colonialist terms that reinforce the subjugation of the Oriental Woman and posit her as an object for western consumption

1. See, for example, GINA MARCHETTI, *ROMANCE AND THE "YELLOW PERIL"* (1993), in which the author theorizes on the issues of miscegenation, race, sex and gender through Hollywood films such as *The Cheat*, *Broken Blossoms*, *The Bitter Tea of General Yen*, *Shanghai Express*, *Lady of the Tropics*, *Madame Butterfly*, *China Gate*, *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing*, *The World of Suzie Wong*, *Sayonara*, *The Crimson Kimono*, *Japanese War Bride*, *Bridge to the Sun*, *My Geisha* and *Year of the Dragon*.

2. MARCHETTI, *supra* note 1, at 2.

3. See Sumi K. Cho, *Converging Stereotypes in Racialized Sexual Harassment: Where the Model Minority Meets Suzie Wong*, 1 J. OF GENDER, RACE AND JUSTICE 177, 193 (1997) (Cho quotes Tony Rivers who wrote in his article, *Oriental Girls*, in the British edition of *Gentleman's Quarterly*, that the "stereotype of the oriental girl is the greatest sexual shared fantasy among western men, and like all the best fantasies, it is based on virtual ignorance and uncorrupted by actuality.").

4. Using Flaubert's writing about the Middle East as an example, Edward Said's description of the relation between race and sex is worth quoting in full:

Woven through all of Flaubert's Oriental experiences, exciting or disappointing, is an almost uniform association between the Orient and sex. In making this association Flaubert was neither the first nor the most exaggerated instance of a remarkably persistent motif in Western attitudes to the Orient. And indeed, the motif itself is singularly unvaried, although Flaubert's genius may have done more than anyone else's could have to give it artistic dignity.

EDWARD SAID, *ORIENTALISM* 188 (1979). See also LISA LOWE, *CRITICAL TERRAINS: FRENCH AND BRITISH ORIENTALISM*, (1991) (especially "Chapter 3, Orient as Woman, Orientalism as Sentimentalism: Flaubert").

5. See SAID, *supra* note 4, at 207.

and the satisfaction of western desires. The Oriental Woman is therefore available to satisfy desires that would normally otherwise be socially and morally unacceptable if acted upon the bodies of white women. The Oriental Woman, for example, normatively permits acting out such desires such as pedophilia and sexual aggression and sexual violence upon the bodies of Asian women.

Like law, filmic representations not only create but reflect social norms and meaning.⁶ Films are important contemporary cultural texts whose analyses provide a rich source for the understanding of various social phenomena. In this Article, I describe three filmic and literary instantiations of the Oriental Woman: *The World of Suzie Wong*,⁷ *M. Butterfly*,⁸ and *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*.⁹ I employ these films as sites of visual culture on which to explore the (re)inventions and deployment of the Oriental Woman category. I show that the Oriental Woman is a category of fantasy used to support modes of subordination on Asian women. Moreover, this fantasy is fabricated out of multiple supporting matrixes that include racial, sexual, gendered and colonial subject formations. I examine the relationship between these formations within Oriental Woman identity, and examine this identity in terms of recent critical legal theories that have made important contributions to contemporary jurisprudential thought. These theories typically have challenged traditional liberal legal paradigms and explored the importance of different minority perspectives in an effort to understand the contributions of law to minority discourses and vice versa. Thus, for example, feminist jurisprudence, critical race theory and queer legal theory have each advanced and expanded our understanding of the impact of law on issues relating to personal identity and rights. Yet, as the names of those separate legal theory

6. See Ralph Berets, *Changing Images of Justice in American Films*, 20 *LEGAL STUD. F.* 161 (1996) ("Films are both reflectors of reality and predictors of the future."). See also *LEGAL REELISM: MOVIES AS LEGAL TEXT* (John Denvir ed., 1996). See also Margaret M. Russell, *Race and the Dominant Gaze: Narratives of Law and Inequality in Popular Films*, 15 *LEGAL STUD. F.* 243, 245 (1991) ("[C]inematic narrative . . . is a valuable source of insights about race and law.").

7. *THE WORLD OF SUZIE WONG* (Paramount 1960). *THE WORLD OF SUZIE WONG* appeared originally as a novel. See RICHARD MASON, *THE WORLD OF SUZIE WONG* (1957). It was then produced as a play before becoming a Hollywood film. The dramatic version of Mason's novel was adapted for the screen by Paul Osborn. For the purposes of critical enquiry, in this Article, I do not restrict my discussion of the treatment of the Oriental Woman to the filmic version alone, but I also examine the original novel version as well.

8. *M. BUTTERFLY* (Warner Brothers 1993). David Henry Hwang adapted the screenplay from his original Broadway play. See DAVID HENRY HWANG, *M. BUTTERFLY* (1989). The published play differs in significant respects from the film version. There are scenes and dialogue from the play that are omitted from the film, and some scenes from the film do not appear in the dramatic version (for example, in contrast to the ending of the film, Gallimard does not commit suicide in drag in the play). Nevertheless, for the purposes of critical enquiry, in this Article, I do not restrict my discussion of the treatment of the Oriental Woman to the filmic version alone, but I also examine the original dramatic version as well.

9. *THE ADVENTURES OF PRISCILLA, QUEEN OF THE DESERT* (Polygram 1994) [hereinafter *PRISCILLA*].

movements suggest, critical legal theory “movements” occasionally have been criticized (more often from within) for sectarianism, each for its failure to fully embrace the diversity within its ranks. Drawing upon my discussion of the *Oriental Woman*, I show how personal identity categories operate in a mutually supportive way, rather than with static and fixed boundaries. I have elsewhere described this notion as a “cosynthesis” of categories. A cosynthetic understanding of the subordinating praxis of categories both furthers our knowledge of how “stereotypes” work, and, as this Article shows, makes possible urgently needed ideological links between different strands of critical legal theory movements.

Thus, in Part I of this Article, I describe the way in which the *Oriental Woman* character in each of the films is constructed. I also show how the *Oriental Woman* reinscribes racial hierarchy and racial dominance. In Part II, I examine the racial fantasy the *Oriental Woman* creates and the role that fantasy plays in justifying violence on the bodies of Asian women as well as normalizing white sexual “deviance.” Finally, in Part III, I examine the theoretical implications of these explorations into the *Oriental Woman*; in particular, I wish to investigate how those theoretical explorations may advance identity and post-intersectional theories that are currently being debated in outsider legal scholarship. In Part III, I also discuss more fully how my exploration into the *Oriental Woman* in these films support my theory of the cosynthetic nature of categories.

I.

CONSTRUCTING THE ORIENTAL WOMAN

A. *The World of Suzie Wong*

Suzie Wong (played by Nancy Kwan¹⁰) is a Chinese prostitute working in the Wan Chai district of Hong Kong. Robert Lomax is an American seeking to change his career to become a painter. Almost immediately upon disembarking his ship, he meets Suzie, who pretends to be the virtuous daughter of a rich businessman. Looking for inexpensive accommodation, Lomax sees Suzie coming out of a Wan Chai hotel and rents a room initially unaware that it is a hotel used by Chinese prostitutes soliciting their white customers from the bar across the street. Lomax is portrayed as a hero because he overcomes the racial and class condemnations by the white elite establishment on which he has to rely. Lomax’s status as a loving white hero is also established in contrast to the hypocrisy of other

10. Born of a Chinese father and a Scottish mother, Nancy Kwan is an actress of the 1960s who played many leading Asian female roles, including the Rogers and Hammerstein musical, *THE FLOWER DRUM SONG*. A matter of incidental interest is that when I recently watched the video of *THE WORLD OF SUZIE WONG*, I noticed that the credits listed her in a starring role after William Holden, who plays her American lover. Yet studio publicity posters from 1960 clearly describe her as the co-star of the film.

white men in the film who use Chinese women only for their sexual pleasure. Lomax's bona fides is shown through his initial rejection of Suzie's amorous advances. Instead, he transposes his attraction for Suzie onto his art, producing (we are made to believe) wonderful portraits with Suzie as his main inspiration and model.

Facially, *The World of Suzie Wong* can be seen as not subscribing to, indeed even inverting traditional Orientalist themes. For example, unlike the character of Pinkerton in Puccini's opera, *Madama Butterfly*, Lomax is not portrayed as an abuser of the Oriental Woman. His intentions are noble and even (for its time) radically and progressively pro-miscegenistic. Moreover, Suzie is not presented as the virginal, self-sacrificing Asian lotus blossom. She is, after all, a prostitute with only the fantasies of being a virgin. Nevertheless, as I demonstrate below, *The World of Suzie Wong* is a Hollywood film set firmly within the Orientalist genre and dependant on its assumptions for its narrative effect. Moreover, the figure of the Oriental Woman is repackaged and contemporized for the audience of its time in ways that make the Oriental Woman palatable for that audience. Such (re)presentations ultimately leave undisturbed essential notions about the availability, the propriety and the proprietary qualities of the Oriental Woman.

The scene in which Suzie is first invited to enter Lomax's bedroom establishes Suzie's Oriental Woman identity. Lomax calls the front desk of his hotel to send a message to fetch Suzie from the bar. Upon receiving the message, Suzie is childishly excited. When she finally learns that Lomax does not want sex, but only called her to pose for a painting, she is disappointed and humiliated. This scene reinforces both Suzie's sexual availability as the Oriental Woman, and Lomax's virtue as the white hero. Yet the scene is nevertheless charged with sexuality and seduction - Lomax poses Suzie reclining on his bed, exposing her fleshy leg through the slit along the side of her Chinese dress.¹¹ We hear Suzie singing a Chinese

11. The film portrays Lomax as being particularly concerned with what Suzie wears. Her sexual attraction is directly linked to her Oriental costuming. In one scene, Suzie enters Lomax's room deliberately wearing western clothing, thinking that it would please Lomax. Instead, Lomax flies into a rage, and aggressively throws Suzie onto his bed, strips her new clothes off her body and throws them into the streets. Suzie had spent a lot of money trying to please Lomax, but was instead abused and scolded for her efforts. In a later scene, Lomax "redresses" the matter by giving Suzie a gift of expensive Oriental robes with a matching headdress made of gold and pearls. Suzie is humbled by such a lavish gift, and ceremoniously puts it on for Lomax, bowing to her master. Lomax, charmed with the vision, embraces Suzie in a moment of pure Hollywood schmalz. The importance of costume and dress in the construction of fantasy and the Oriental Woman in *THE WORLD OF SUZIE WONG* was also observed by Marchetti (although to be fair, Marchetti is probably exaggerating in describing Suzie's bowing as "kowtowing"—a genuflective gesture that requires hitting one's forehead on the floor):

Later, Suzie accepts Robert's right to define her identity when she agrees to be painted in a traditional Chinese costume. Dressed in the white (ironically, the color associated with death and mourning in China) finery that Robert has purchased for her, she kneels to him and takes on the attitude of a traditional Confucian bride, kowtowing to her master. Robert has defined "beauty," "femininity," and the "Orient" as a Western patriarchal fantasy of

children's song about boy clouds and girl clouds.¹²

While not fully subversive of the Oriental Woman construct, *The World of Suzie Wong* clearly presents inversions of motifs that the 1960 audience immediately would have recognized. This film is unlike the story of *Madama Butterfly*, a classic representation of the Oriental Woman. In the opera, the Oriental Woman and the white male hero do not consummate their relationship on stage; rather, the white hero (Pinkerton) is presented as a cad and too late learns the value and extent of Butterfly's love after she has committed suicide. In *The World of Suzie Wong*, however, it is the Oriental Woman, in the form of Suzie as a prostitute, who is cast as the morally questionable character. Lomax, on the other hand, provides the moral compass in the film as the self-restrained painter. Moreover, the film explicitly shows (for its time) their consummated affection for each other, and not only at the very end of the story. It is the virtue that shines forth from Lomax that absolves and transforms Suzie, rather than, as in *Madama Butterfly*, the guilt over her suicide and nobility of that gesture that in the end absolves and reforms Pinkerton.

B. *M. Butterfly*

In contrast, in *M. Butterfly*, David Henry Hwang deliberately wrote a play¹³ and screenplay that self-consciously deploys, inverts and thereby intentionally subverts the Orientalist tropes of western literature and culture.¹⁴

M. Butterfly is based on a true story that centers around two men, Song Liling and Rene Gallimard. Song is a male singer in the Peking Op-

white male domination.

MARCHETTI, *supra* note 1, at 121.

12. When Lomax finally shows Suzie the completed portrait, she exclaims:

Suzie: I like it very much, but not look like me.

Lomax: It's what I think you look like. That's the difference between an artist and a camera. An artist always tries to look deeper.

Lomax's remark may be taken facially as a simple statement about his art theory - that he is not trying to produce a precise representation of Suzie's image, but rather he is trying to convey on canvas his impressions and feelings for and about his subject. Yet, occurring as it does early in the film, it is possible to interpret his remark in a more ironic way. The film itself is the product of a camera. The director is creating images for a white audience and is trying to convey to the audience not what the life of a Chinese prostitute in Wan Chai is really like, but like Lomax's canvas, the film, *THE WORLD OF SUZIE WONG* is itself a portrait of what the director, a white man, thinks someone like Suzie Wong is like. In other words, the film itself is not a veridical representation of the life of a Chinese prostitute, rather, it is a portrait constructed and mediated through the impressions and presumptions of the white American male. Borrowing a term from Laura Mulvey, Margaret Russell has labeled as the "dominant gaze," "the tendency of American popular cinema to objectify and trivialize the racial identity and experiences of people of color, even when it purports to represent them." Russell, *supra* note 6, at 244. As I will demonstrate later in this Article, not only does the white hero's dominant gaze objectify and trivialize the Oriental Woman, the white hero gazes upon a fantasy that justifies abuses against Asian women, as well as serving white interests in other ways.

13. HWANG, *supra* note 8.

14. Hwang originally titled his play *Monsieur Butterfly*, but after a suggestion from his wife, he changed it to *M. Butterfly* because it was "far more mysterious and ambiguous." *Id.* at 96.

era. Gallimard is a French diplomat stationed in Peking. Fooling Gallimard that he is a woman, Song begins and maintains a love affair with Gallimard, an affair that lasts 20 years. During their time together, Song extracts diplomatic secrets from Gallimard and passes them on to an officer of the Chinese government. When the plot and deceit are revealed, Gallimard is arrested in France, put on trial and sent to prison. Gallimard is humiliated and in the film, eventually commits suicide in a French prison.

Describing the inspiration for his productions, Hwang mentions in the afterword to the published version of his play¹⁵ that when he heard of the facts on which his play was based - that the French diplomat, Bernard Bouriscot, explained how he had fallen in love with a Chinese spy who was a male opera singer - Hwang "concluded that the diplomat must have fallen in love, not with a person, but with a fantasy stereotype."¹⁶ Hwang also assumed that "to the extent the Chinese spy encouraged these misperceptions, he must have played up to and exploited this image of the Oriental woman as demure and submissive."¹⁷ In searching for some "angle"¹⁸ with which to retell this story, Hwang came upon the story of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. That story, he discovered, "contained a wealth of sexist and racist clichés" that confirmed what he knew of the stereotype contained in and instantiated by the phrase "'She's pulling a Butterfly,' which meant playing the submissive Oriental number."¹⁹ However, instead of writing a "straight" Butterfly story, Hwang decided to reverse the roles such that at the conclusion of the play, the French diplomat "realizes that it is he who has been Butterfly, in that the Frenchman has been duped by love; the Chinese spy, who exploited that love, is therefore the real Pinkerton."²⁰ In so doing, Hwang's work differs from *The World of Suzie Wong* in that it frontally challenges and forces the audience to question and acknowledge that the person Song Liling created for Gallimard was a token of the Oriental Woman type. The contemporary audience of *The World of Suzie Wong*, on the other hand, is presented with the image of the Oriental Woman as normalized reality.

In the final scenes of the film, Gallimard stages a performance in prison for the other prisoners. In his soliloquy, he puts on a kimono, make-up and finally a wig. As he does so, he acknowledges to the prison-

15. *Id.* at 94-100.

16. *Id.* at 94.

17. *Id.*

18. *Id.* at 95.

19. *Id.* at 95-96.

20. *Id.* While this might suggest that the person "pulling a Butterfly" is herself or himself responsible for perpetuating and thereby maintaining the racist stereotype, I believe this interpretation of the sociological phenomenon ignores the possibility of internalized racism wherein the actor internalizes the racial role that culture ascribes and therefore obscures the responsibility the master cultural narrative bears on individual action choices.

ers that he has been the laughing stock of the prison and of France. Yet, he tells them: "But really if you understood, you wouldn't laugh at all. Quite the contrary, men like you should be beating down my door, begging to learn my secrets, for I, Rene Gallimard have known and been loved by the perfect woman." As he slowly transforms himself into the Oriental Woman, he describes his vision of the Orient and Oriental Women:

Gallimard: There is a vision of the Orient that I have. Of slender women in cheong sams and kimonos who die for the love of unworthy foreign devils. Who are born and raised to be the perfect women. Who take whatever punishment we give them, and spring back, strengthened by love, unconditionally. It is a vision that has become my life. . . . I have a vision. Of the Orient. That, deep within its almond eyes, there are still women. Women willing to sacrifice themselves for the love of a man. Even when a man is completely without worth.

In concluding with Gallimard's cross dressing performance and suicide, Hwang reverses the gender roles as well as the fate of the Oriental Woman and the white hero that one finds in the standard *Madama Butterfly* story. This inversion creates for the audience a contrast with the story of Puccini's opera so that the audience is confronted with and forced to acknowledge the cultural distortion and artificiality of the standard Orientalist text. That standard text is always and already present in the minds of the western audience. It is a text that the audience would normally and expectedly reach for and impose in interpreting Orientalist cultural forms, as *M. Butterfly* would seem to be at first. However, Hwang's inverted story provides a dissonance with the standard Orientalist text, and it is precisely this dissonance, this intertextuality, that imbues the film with the subversive message of Orientalism as racism.

C. *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*

Unlike the two films discussed above, *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* is not a film in which the Oriental Woman takes a central role. Priscilla rather is the name of the bus in which two white Australian professional drag queens (Tony and Adam) and a transsexual (Bernadette) travel across the Australian desert to perform a series of shows at an isolated casino in the middle of the Outback.²¹ Unusual for its time, and perhaps even today, *Priscilla* was a film with major distribution that presented homosexuality and transgenderism in a sympathetic and positive way. Rather than deviance, transgenderism was portrayed as merely the flamboyant expression of artistic people who, other than their transgenderism, possess in large doses such virtuous and admirable qualities as kindness, sensitivity, compassion, and generosity.

21. The film won the Academy Award for Best Costume Design in 1995. *The 1995 Oscar Winners*, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 29, 1995, at C12.

The figure of the Oriental Woman arises in *Priscilla* around the middle of the film. Priscilla the bus breaks down in the middle of the Outback, and the trio eventually finds help from a mechanic who lives and works in a small and rough desert town. Cynthia is the Filipina wife of this mechanic, Bob, a straight white male with whom Bernadette forms a romantic relationship during the film. Cynthia is therefore a minor character at best. Nevertheless, like Suzie in *The World of Suzie Wong*, Cynthia is presented as a sex worker (indeed one who gives and derives erotic pleasure through comical and bizarre sexual performances), and—like both Suzie and Song—Cynthia is presented as an Asian woman who uses her sexuality to get what she wants from white men.

Cynthia's portrayal is both disturbed and disturbing. We notice her mental instability the moment she appears in the film. Her presence is an embarrassment to Bob and to all those around her. She speaks alternately in either a high pitched, broken English or she growls and rants in Tagalog, often schizophrenically to herself. She is depicted as incapable of doing simple tasks: the lemonade she makes is nothing more than half glasses of water with a wedge of lemon dropped inside; she serves meringue with lamb at dinner and does not know the difference between face cream and dairy cream.

More significantly, Cynthia is a sex worker who commodifies her sexuality as an entertainer performing bizarre feats involving ping-pong balls and her genitalia. When Bob tries to persuade the trio to put on a show for the locals in the pub, Cynthia exclaims excitedly in her heavily accented English:

Cynthia: Me perporm for you. Me sing.

Bob: You no perform. They perform. Not you.

(Cynthia then explodes rapidly and angrily in Tagalog, banging the table violently with her fists.)

Cynthia's depiction asks the audience to react with dismay and disgust at the Oriental Woman. This invitation is vividly made in the following scene. While the protagonists prepare for their performance at the pub, Cynthia is shown at home staring with a mad rage in her eyes at a chained and locked cupboard. She mumbles insanely in Tagalog, grabs a knife and forces open the cupboard. When the cupboard door flies open, she falls back as ping-pong balls cascade all over her. She laughs with glee. In the next scene, Cynthia enters the bar as the drag act ends. She is wearing a revealing and gaudy zebra-striped outfit. As a strip-tease melody plays in the background, the film-viewer sees Cynthia produce ping-pong balls and send them flying behind her as she bends over. Her expression is of sexual pleasure. While the pub audience reaction to the drag performance was one of stunned silence, they howl and cheer at Cynthia's grotesque act. Angry and humiliated, Bob grabs Cynthia's wrists and hauls her out of the pub on his shoulders while she resentfully kicks and

screams. As Bob explains: "She has a problem with alcohol. Every time she gets in the pub, she makes a complete fool of herself."

II.

DOMINATION AND DOMESTICATION: COSYNTHESIS AND THE FANTASY OF THE ORIENTAL WOMAN

The Oriental Woman invention has an immense power to impose counter-intuitional beliefs on the western mind. As these three films show, the Oriental Woman has the power to generate a fantasy strong enough to drive a presumably heterosexual man into the arms of a male lover, to make a virgin from a prostitute, a man from a woman, and a woman from a man. It also has the power to create a fantasy strong enough to rationalize and justify acts of sexual objectification that are often surrounded by extreme violence. It has the power, in other words, to normalize actions that, were they to take place within a totally white context, would be expected to be met with scorn and extreme adverse judgment. In this section, I describe this fantasy through a comparison of the scenes in *M. Butterfly* and *The World of Suzie Wong* in which the white protagonists first sexually seduce their Oriental Woman. This fantasy is constructed and maintained through a web of notions that involve the simultaneous participation of racial, gender, sexuality and class stereotypes.

I describe this "web" in terms of "Cosynthesis."²² I will argue that the Oriental Woman's unique characteristics as a fictional construct can only be fully understood through a cosynthetic analysis. Cosynthesis is a term and a methodology that describes the active and dependent matrix between subordinating categories. Cosynthesis firstly is a recognition that categories are artificial because they are synthesized. As a result, they are also fluid in nature with their meaning and signification varying according to their context.²³ Being synthetic, categories are instrumentally manufactured and deployed to serve specific and subordinating ends. But more importantly for legal analysis, Cosynthesis offers the view that categories seldom operate in isolation; instead, their construction and deployment often depends upon the coterminal existence and support of other categori-

22. See Peter Kwan, *Jeffrey Dahmer and the Cosynthesis of Categories*, 48 HASTINGS L.J. 1257 (1997) ("Cosynthesis offers a dynamic model whose ultimate message is that, the multiple categories through which we understand ourselves are sometimes implicated in complex ways with the formation of categories through which others are constituted. A fully deconstructed understanding of categories must include this insight and go beyond static and autonomous notions of categories that stand alone or next to or within others, thereby multiplying the boundaries between categories.").

23. See, for example, bell hooks' discussion of the "patriarchal 'feminization' of the black male body" as fetishized and commodified bodies, a stereotype that coexists with and stand in contrast to the "bestial, violent, penis-as-weapon hypermasculine" stereotype of black men. See *infra* text accompanying notes 54-58. In other words, depending on the context, there exists not only different formations of the black male, but even contradictory ones. Their commonality resides with their subordinating effect.

cal notions. A cosynthetic analysis therefore builds upon the insight of intersectionality in rejecting any “single axis” analysis that narrowly focuses on or privileges either a feminist perspective or a racial analysis of the subjectivity of the Oriental Woman.²⁴ Cosynthesis takes this intersectionality analysis one step further and urges an examination of the ways in which various categorical understandings like race, gender, sexuality, and class support each other in maintaining a subordinating effect. It is only in this way that one can avoid the solipsistic consequences of intersectionality as well as develop a more holistic critical theory of categories.

24. See *infra* text accompanying notes 95-97.

A. Cosynthesis and the Seduction of the Oriental Woman

"Robert, please put off the light."

I laughed. "You aren't shy about undressing?"

"Yes, shy - with you."

I turned off the switch over the bed. I could see Suzie's silhouette against the sky in the open balcony door - the sky over the mainland, the sky of China.

She stepped out of her cheongsam. Her hair fell forward across her face as she leaned to remove her stockings. She came and slipped into bed beside me. Her body was cool and unknown and nobody had touched it before, because it had been cleansed by a miracle of beginning, and it is the loveliest moment of all. And then the two imperfect halves had come together again to make their whole.

And then a strange thing happened; for at the moment of perfect unity, the moment at which there is no self-consciousness and no division of joy, Suzie burst into great sobs, so violent and cataclysmic that it was as though she was being shaken by some force outside herself; and I was half afraid, for her body seemed too tiny and fragile to be able to bear it.

Later she stirred and felt for my hand. She said, "Robert, that was funny, I never cried like that before."

"It was rather wonderful."

"But of course, I forgot - I never had a man before, did I? You are my first man."

SONG: No . . . no . . . gently . . . please, I've never . . .

GALLIMARD: No?

SONG: I've tried to appear experienced, but . . . the truth is . . . no.

GALLIMARD: Are you cold?

SONG: Yes. Cold.

GALLIMARD: Then we will go very, very slowly.

He starts to caress her; her gown begins to open.

SONG: No . . . let me . . . keep my clothes . . .

GALLIMARD: But . . .

SONG: Please . . . it all frightens me. I'm a modest Chinese girl.

GALLIMARD: My poor little treasure.

SONG: I am your treasure. Though inexperienced, I am not . . . ignorant. They teach us things, our mothers, about pleasing a man.

GALLIMARD: Yes?

SONG: I'll do my best to make you happy. Turn off the lights.

Gallimard gets up and heads for a lamp. Song, propped up on one elbow, tosses her hair back and smiles.

SONG: Monsieur Gallimard?

GALLIMARD: Yes, Butterfly?

SONG: "Vieni, vieni!"

GALLIMARD: "Come, darling."

SONG: "Ah! Dolce notte!"

GALLIMARD: "Beautiful night."

SONG: "Tutto estatico d'amor ride il ciel!"

"Yes, no wonder you cried."

"You were marvelous for a virgin."

"The best virgin you ever had?"

"I never had a virgin before. I never had any girl before."

"I'm the first girl you ever had?"

"Yes, of course, you're the first girl, and I'm the first man, and the world has only just begun."²⁵

*He starts to kiss her roughly.
She resists slightly.*

GALLIMARD: "All ecstatic with love, the heavens are filled with laughter."

*He turns off the lamp. Black-out.*²⁶

25. MASON, *supra* note 7, at 179-80.

26. HWANG, *supra* note 8, at 40-41.

The Oriental Woman's availability and her perceived willingness to serve as a sexual object is an essential element to her constitution. The extent to which this is true is most vividly revealed in the scenes in which her white lover first seduces her. In these scenes, we observe how gender, race, sexuality, colonial and class based notions all play a mutually supporting or cosynthetic role in actualizing and normalizing western access to the bodies of Asian women.

In the film, *The World of Suzie Wong*, Suzie and Lomax's first seduction scene is a stripped down and "sanitized" version of the novel's first seduction scene, quoted above. In the film, Lomax had just declared his feelings for Suzie, but rather than accepting his declaration immediately, Suzie coyly asks Lomax whether he has ever slept with a woman on the first date. Replying that he has not, Suzie decides to act as if she were a white woman and leaves, only to return immediately and pretending that a day had passed:

Suzie: It's now tomorrow, Lobert. I never do anything like this before. You my first man. You believe?

Lomax: I believe. And you're my first girl.

(They kiss)

Although Suzie has been working the streets since an early age after leaving the home of her sexually abusive uncle at the age of ten, the novel portrays Suzie as incredibly shy and coy about undressing in front of Lomax. She presents herself as so timid and shy that she cannot bring herself to turn the light off herself and instead asks Lomax to do so for her. But Suzie's modesty is, of course, a farce. She is, after all, a prostitute, and her modesty is play-acting. Nevertheless, the farce is essential to the allure of the Oriental Woman fantasy.

The conceit of Suzie's virginity as well as (why not?) Lomax's virginity only works against the background of what Marchetti calls the "white knight" trope:

Stepping out of the medieval romantic quest tales and into the present day, the heroic knight promises salvation from any number of woes ranging from simple lack of self-esteem, boredom, and sexual frustration to poverty, oppression, or the stifling confines of the family. As Sichtermann points out, the heroine is absolved by her passivity of any guilt related to the sexual nature of the fantasy. The knight spies her, finds her worthy, and scoops her up. She need not lift a finger.

The myth of the white knight circulates within a Western culture that has continuously defined itself against what it has identified as the nonwhite other from the Moor or the Jew of the medieval imagination to the black, Asian, or Hispanic of today. Thus, the myth operates to perpetuate not only gender inequalities but racism as well. Clearly, the knight's "whiteness" signifies his moral purity, his unquestionable natural right to carry

the heroine away without being accused of abducting her.²⁷

Whether or not Lomax is a virgin is irrelevant. As the white knight, he is ipso facto morally virtuous. Suzie, however, is fallen. She can pretend that she is virtuous but she cannot redeem herself except by artifice. Here, however, not only does Lomax as white knight carry away Suzie, he does the impossible - he makes her into a virgin so that she can offer herself up to him. Through his agency,²⁸ the first time he is to make love to her, Suzie is "cleansed by a miracle of beginning." Lomax's sexual conquest is re-presented as Suzie's salvation. Lomax can only achieve this heroic role on account of Suzie's condition as Oriental Woman. Thus, the Oriental Woman exists to make possible the role of the white knight for the white male protagonist. To make this possible, the Oriental Woman must play the role of the morally needy, expressed here as the corrupt and fallen, otherwise the white knight would not be able to offer her salvation.

Yet, at the same time, her farce of innocence is equally necessary to her identity, for it is her desire to be redeemed which makes this fallen creature worthy of the salvation offered by the white knight. Furthermore, that salvation must be convincing in its reality or else the potency of the white knight would be questioned. Thus, the surface text of the Oriental Woman portrays her as worthy of and capable of redemption. Indeed, Suzie's immediate topic of conversation after climaxing was about her just lost virginity - her first utterances after sex were to establish her worth as a virgin in the eyes of Lomax and to gain his approval:

"It was rather wonderful."

"But of course, I forgot - I never had a man before, did I? You are my first man."

"Yes, no wonder you cried."

"You were marvelous for a virgin."

"The best virgin you ever had?"

"I never had a virgin before. I never had any girl before."

"I'm the first girl you ever had?"

"Yes, of course, you're the first girl, and I'm the first man, and the world has only just begun."²⁹

In the film version, the audience is made to feel that Lomax's decla-

27. MARCHETTI, *supra* note 1, at 114.

28. Professor Margaret Chon commented to an earlier version of this Article that the Cinderella "archetype actually expresses some female agency since the woman has to work to present herself as worthy of being rescued." I agree, and only add two comments: one, since both Suzie and Cynthia are not simply workers, but sex workers, one wonders whether, in addition to their commodification, their "rescue" by their respective white male partners (Suzie from the life of a prostitute, and Cynthia from the impoverished life of a Filipina sex worker) is normatively justified through their work as sex workers, and if so, whether this suggests some limitation on the extent to which one can ascribe true agency to those women; secondly, I would still question the perspective from which the women's work is judged as "worthy."

29. MASON, *supra* note 7, at 179-80.

ration to Suzie that she is his “first girl” is made out of the affection that comes from pity, thereby reinforcing the image of the white knight - the white protector - which, coincidentally, adds the extra fetishized appeal of pedophilia.³⁰ In a non-racialized context, the scene instead might take on the blemish of an older man taking sexual advantage of innocence. The Oriental Woman fantasy recuperates the scene from this negative interpretive judgment.

Compare the scene just examined where Lomax and Suzie make love for the first time with the way in which Hwang treats the same event between Song Liling and Rene Gallimard. Gallimard, still thinking that Song is a woman, tries to coax Song into his bed. Both the Oriental Women, Song and Suzie, express their shyness and inexperience in their reluctance to undress with the lights on, which only makes their white male lovers more desirous of them and allows them to reassert their dominance as protector white knights (“my poor little treasure”). They both ask their white knights to turn the light off for them, even though they are perfectly capable of doing so. That request implicates their frailty that must be maintained in order to sustain the Oriental Woman fantasy (“Please . . . it all frightens me. I’m a modest Chinese girl”). Yet for all the similarities, Hwang subverts the traditional narrative in important ways. It is quite clear that Song is in command of the *mise en scène* in a way that Suzie is never allowed to be, as suggested in Lomax’s narrative.³¹ Simultaneously maintaining the sexual innocence and naïveté demanded of the Oriental Woman role, Song establishes the distinction between sexual inexperience and ignorance, confessing to the former, but claiming sexual knowledge nonetheless. This claim to knowledge allows Song to assert an agency denied to Suzie, an agency that provides Song the measure of control he needs to sustain the added fantasy that he is a woman. In this important way, Gallimard’s corresponding role as white knight is compromised, compounding the cognitive trauma that leads eventually to his suicide.

The moral justification for the sexual ravishment of the Oriental Woman lies not only in the salvation fantasy just described. It is also supported by the fantasy of conquest, where geopolitical conquest is cosynthetic with corporeal conquest. For example, in Suzie’s seduction scene quoted above, Suzie’s image is described in terms that suggest that Lomax is not simply about to make love to a Chinese woman, but as her silhouette merges “against the sky in the open balcony door - the sky over the mainland, the sky of China,” Lomax is about to lay claim to China.

30. Unlike the novel, however, Suzie’s English does not improve after having sex with Lomax.

31. It is not surprising that the novel, *THE WORLD OF SUZIE WONG*, was written entirely through the first person narration of Lomax. In other words, in its original form, the character Suzie was presented entirely as a creation of Lomax’s memory or imagination. In contrast, Hwang’s play presents Song in his own words, and the audience apprehends Song either fully “in the flesh” on stage or at least without the intermediate agency of some other person’s narrative.

Returning to the Suzie Wong novel, for example, the author reduces Suzie to a mere "silhouette." It is as if the more Lomax exerts his will and desire, the further Suzie's subjectivity recedes and is overwhelmed. Again, Said's analysis is particularly illuminating here. His description of the Orient as that which is felt by the West as absence in contrast to the Orientalist as presence, fits well with the fictive metamorphosis of Suzie into a silhouette as she becomes the object of Lomax's seductive desires.³² This narrative exposes the way in which the colonial and ideological are never far from the racial and the sexual. All three elements merge as Suzie steps out of her "cheongsam," Mason employing the exotic Chinese name for a tight fitting Chinese dress. A similar effect is suggested by the panoramic view of Hong Kong in the scene directly following the film's seduction scene. Lomax's desire for Suzie's Oriental body is described and rationalized in terms that transcend the corporeal, the physical. Lomax's conquest of Suzie matches the geopolitical context in which the seduction takes place, namely, the history of western colonization of Asia, including British control over Hong Kong, where the story takes place.³³

Colonialism as a metaphor for sexual conquest within the figure of the Orientalist genre figures as a prominent theme in *M. Butterfly*. When Song Liling is questioned by the French judge during the espionage trial of Gallimard, the judge wants to know how Song has been able to deceive Gallimard about his gender for so long. Song reveals two rules he learned from his mother, a prostitute in Shanghai before the Communist Revolution. Song describes the second rule:

SONG: Rule Two: As soon as a Western man comes into contact with the East - he's already confused. The West has sort of an international

32. See SAID, *supra* note 4, at 208. He asserts:

What those widely diffused notions of the Orient depended on was the almost total absence in contemporary Western culture of the Orient as a genuinely felt and experienced force. For a number of evident reasons the Orient was always in the position both of outsider and of incorporated weak partner for the West . . . I mean to say that in discussions of the Orient, the Orient is all absence, whereas one feels the Orientalist and what he says as presence; yet we must not forget that the Orientalist's presence is enabled by the Orient's effective absence.

33. It should be noted, however, that it is an important and almost necessary feature of Lomax's characterization that, as an American, he is also presented as different from Hong Kong's British colonial masters. The British were portrayed as snobbish and elitist, yet in the film Lomax was presented as an outsider - a poor and struggling American artist living in a Chinese brothel (although, amusingly, William Holden's bohemianism had certain limits - his Lomax wore a tie for most of the film). This outsider aspect of Lomax's character addressed the potential problem of Lomax's identification with the British, who were after all the anti-democratic Revolutionary War enemies of the U.S., and it allowed the American film viewer a further means of rationalizing Lomax's miscegenistic desires (if one were needed) since, placed in opposition to the British, Lomax's character can claim to be on the side of the local underdogs, a hero who fights racism with love, as well as proving the superiority of American ideals over British ones. Indeed, arguably the audience's impulse to understand the reason why Lomax spurns the woman white society had chosen for him (the glamorous daughter of a successful white banker) provides momentum to the film, as well as partly explaining the intrigue that made the film a success, rather than simply another predictable film within the Orientalist genre.

rape mentality towards the East. Do you know rape mentality?

JUDGE: Give us your definition, please.

SONG: Basically, "Her mouth says no, but her eyes say yes."

The West thinks of itself as masculine - big guns, big industry, big money - so the East is feminine - weak, delicate, poor . . . but good at art, and full of inscrutable wisdom - the feminine mystique.

Her mouth says no, but her eyes say yes. The West believes the East, deep down, WANTS to be dominated - because a woman can't think for herself.

JUDGE: What does this have to do with my question?

SONG: You expect Oriental countries to submit to your guns, and you expect Oriental women to be submissive to your men. That's why you say they make the best wives.

JUDGE: But why would that make it possible for you to fool Monsieur Gallimard? Please - get to the point.

SONG: One, because when he finally met his fantasy woman, he wanted more than anything to believe that she was, in fact, a woman. And second, I am an Oriental. And being an Oriental, I could never be completely a man.³⁴

In this scene, Hwang cosynthesizes the colonial discourse with the gender-sexuality discourse: the West thinking of itself in masculinist terms - big guns, big industry, with the co-relations of the East as feminine - passive, weak, delicate and submissive.³⁵ Song's perception as an Oriental Woman, in other words, fully depends upon not simply her racial ascription as Asian, but the cosynthetic connections between her Asian-ness, her gender, her sexuality, and her colonial subject position. This sets the conditions up for the representation of colonial domination as "international rape mentality,"³⁶ with all the violent implications attending to the term "rape."

B. Cosynthesis and the Racial Phallus

The deception Song Liling was able to carry out was spectacular. In his confession - his revelation - in court, he provides two reasons why his deception was so successful: "One, because when (Gallimard) finally met his fantasy woman, he wanted more than anything to believe that she was, in fact, a woman. And second, I am an Oriental. And being an Oriental, I could never be completely a man."³⁷ In truth, though, the two reasons are one and the same. The Oriental Woman is the fantasy that is created by the western imagination and deployed to justify and palliate the guilt

34. HWANG, *supra* note 8, at 82-83.

35. See also, Sumi Cho's discussion of "how colonial and military domination are interwoven with sexual domination to create the 'great western male fantasy.'" Cho, *supra* note 3, at 193.

36. *Id.*

37. HWANG, *supra* note 8, at 83.

wrought by racial and sexual subordination.

The reasons provided above were given to the judge as the second rule that Song learned from his mother, a prostitute who worked in Shanghai before the Revolution. The fact that Hwang placed Song's mother in Shanghai is significant. In pre-Revolutionary China, Shanghai was the most western city in Asia. It was populated by a significant number of Europeans who were drawn to Shanghai as a major international commercial, mercantile and banking center. The knowledge that Song learned from his mother is therefore not simply that of a Chinese prostitute, but one who plied her trade amongst westerners.

The first rule that Song learned from his mother is worth quoting entirely:

JUDGE: Would you care to enlighten this court with this secret knowledge? I'm sure we're all very curious.

SONG: I'm sure you are. (Pause) Okay, Rule One is: Men always believe what they want to hear. So a girl can tell the most obnoxious lies and the guys will believe them every time - "This is my first time" - "That's the biggest I've ever seen" - or both, which, if you really think about it, is not possible in a single lifetime. You've maybe heard those phrases a few times in your own lifetime, yes, Your Honor?³⁸

Straight men, in other words, are always gullible in the presence of women. They want to believe that their sexual conquest is a virgin, and that they are the best lover the woman has ever had. However, when Suzie tells Lomax that it was her first time, pretending to be a virgin before her first sexual encounter with him, the audience understands this to be partly an emotional defense to the news that one of her white clients has forsaken her to run back to his wife. In addition, the audience understands that her pretense is also partly to allow herself to feel "worthy" of Lomax's love. The viewer sympathizes with Suzie because she desperately wants to psychologically and emotionally disassociate herself from the experience of her usual sexual encounters. Her pretense in being a virgin is the way she achieves that disassociation. For Lomax, however, his pretense of being a virgin is quite different. In the quotation from the novel, the scene is described in similar and more direct and startling terms. Lomax, the narrator, describes Suzie's naked body as "cool and unknown and nobody had touched it before, because it had been cleansed by a miracle of beginning, and it is the loveliest moment of all." This "miracle of beginning" that transforms Suzie from a Wan Chai prostitute into a virgin is a complete fabrication, and refers to nothing more than the fact that this was the first time Suzie had intercourse with Lomax. But as Lomax recounts the story in fantastic proportions, Suzie not only regains her virginity through Lomax's intervention playing the role of the white knight savior, but the sex-

38. *Id.* at 82.

ual climax was also one so “marvelous” that Suzie broke down, weeping in “violent and cataclysmic” sobs. Lomax is a hero that not only offers salvation; he also offers sexual ecstasy.

The Orientalist fantasy is facilitated by sexualized preconceptions that have within their fabricating matrix anatomical bases that are linked to notions of racial difference. In particular, the iconic nature of racial difference in terms of genitalia plays a major role in supporting racial subordination.

The analytic power of the phallus is well established in psychoanalysis. From Freud’s castration complex to Lacan’s post-structuralist account,³⁹ the phallus has been an important investigative site in relation to the human consciousness. From the outset, it is important to distinguish the phallus from the penis. The phallus is an image, and should be distinguished from the organ of which it is an image. As Lacan has noted, “the phallus, that is, the image of the penis, is negativity in its place in the specular image”⁴⁰ In this phrase, as Kaja Silverman has pointed out, Lacan “stresses both (the phallus’s) iconic and its indexical connection to the male sexual organ; in other words, he relates the one term to the other both through similarity and contiguity. This double motivation not only links the phallus closely to the penis, but it distinguishes the phallus emphatically from the linguistic signifier, which conventionally entertains an arbitrary relation both to the signified and to the referent.”⁴¹ This disjunction between the signifiers “phallus” and “penis” has another important consequence, for one is then led to ask: what is it that is signified by the signifier “phallus,” if it is different from that which is signified by the signifier “penis?” For Lacan, the answer seems to point to the peculiarity of the phallic signifier, in that it is a “signifier for which there is no signified.”⁴² As Silverman remarked, “(I)f the phallus has no fixed meaning . . . (it is) because of its implicitly visual identity.”⁴³ Rather than translating Lacan as stating that “the phallus . . . is negativity in its place in the specular image,”⁴⁴ Silverman prefers the translation of “negativé” as “negatived.” In this sense, and referencing to Lacan’s work in “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I,” Silverman interprets this quotation from Lacan as one which imagines “a scenario in which the male subject looks at his image in the mirror, and sees in place of his reflected penis a nothing, a nullity, a blank.”⁴⁵ This veiling or concealment of the phallus is “something which the subject must surrender or lose in order to participate

39. Jacques Lacan, *The Signification of the Phallus*, in *ÉCRITS* 281 (Alan Sheridan trans., 1979).

40. *Id.* at 319.

41. Kaja Silverman, *The Lacanian Phallus*, 4.1 *DIFFERENCES* 84, 90 (1992).

42. Jacques Lacan, *A Love Letter*, in *FEMININE SEXUALITY* 149, 151 (Juliet Mitchell & Jacqueline Rose eds., 1982).

43. Silverman, *supra* note 41, at 90.

44. *Id.*

45. *Id.* at 91.

in signification.”⁴⁶ The important consequence of this is that the lack or concealment itself renders the phallus an object of desire for the subject, and the relation between the phallus and the deprived subject is manifest in a fantasy or fetish.⁴⁷ But although the phallus is a “signifier for which there is no signified,”⁴⁸ and the phallus is to be distinguished from the penis, Silverman nevertheless sees a way by which Lacan defines the phallus “through an extended analogy with the male sexual organ.” Even though the phallus is not reflected in the subject’s image in the mirror, the penis is in the image. According to Silverman, “the erect penis, at least in its reflected form, must somehow signify everything that has been mortgaged to language”⁴⁹ presumably because the meaning of the phallus is not fixed, and that which it signifies concealed. The erect penis, then, is the closest one gets to the properties of the phallic signifier. Whereas the “deflated” penis “constitutes a preeminent signifier of lack,”⁵⁰ the phallic signifier may be able to be described through the properties of the image of the erect penis, symbolizing the absence of lack; namely, “that which fills the empty space.”⁵¹ The power of the phallic signifier to banish lack is not surprisingly linked, to use Silverman’s terms, to “male and female sexuality” and “sexual difference” by which presumably she means heterosexual male and female sexuality.) Although the phallus is just as unavailable to men as it is to women, sexuality can be psychoanalytically understood in terms of “female lack” and the phallic signifier as the “ratio of the Other’s desire.”⁵²

We can begin to see the significance of Lacan’s understanding of the “phallus” in its possible application to the construction of racial categories. Lacan’s work on the phallus, Witkin and Makavejev assert, provides “insight into the dynamics of patriarchy. As the signifier of Western civilization, the phallus becomes a code for the structuring of desire and activity according to only the masculine body.”⁵³ Showing that the construction

46. *Id.*

47. See *id.* at 92, quoting Lacan’s passage in *Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in Hamlet*, 55/56 YALE FRENCH STUDIES 11, 15 (1977):

What is it that the subject is deprived of? The phallus; and it is from the phallus that the object gets its function in the fantasy, and from the phallus that desire is constituted with the fantasy as its reference.

48. Lacan, *supra* note 39. See also JUDITH BUTLER, *BODIES THAT MATTER* (1993). Butler writes:

The phallus, which Freud invokes in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, is considered the privileged signifier by Lacan, that which originates or generates significations, but is not itself the signifying effect of a prior signifying chain. To offer a definition of the phallus - indeed, to attempt denotatively to fix its meaning - is to posture as if one *has* the phallus and, hence, to presume and enact precisely what remains to be explained.

BUTLER, *supra*, at 60.

49. Silverman, *supra* note 41, at 93.

50. *Id.*

51. *Id.* at 95 (quoting Anika Lemaire).

52. *Id.*

53. Joel-Peter Witkin & Dusan Makavejev, *The Allegorical Nude*, in *THE MALE NUDE IN*

of the racial Other includes the projection of an image of the racial Other as incorporating this "female lack," would not only allow one to go some way in explaining the unequal treatment of non-white men qua men, but would indeed explain white justification (at least at some psychological level) for white patriarchal views towards subjugating members of racial minorities.

The colonialization of phallogocentricity has reached even into the communities and psyches of those who are colonized, demonstrating its subversive effect on indigenous beliefs. Moreover, the cosynthetic relationship between certain racial and sexual representations may vary not only across different races, but may also vary between different contexts within specific racial loci. These variations sometimes present conflicting representations. For example, I have elsewhere already noted⁵⁴ that within the African American context, writers such as bell hooks has described her encounters of depictions of Black men both as "'failures' who are psychologically 'fucked up,'"⁵⁵ such that within the discourse of Black resistance, their economic and material domination were equated with castration and emasculation.⁵⁶ Yet simultaneous with this discourse, hooks has also encountered representations of Black men as "dangerous, violent, sex maniacs whose insanity is informed by their inability to fulfill their phallogocentric masculine destiny in a racist context."⁵⁷

These cosynthetic representations of Blackness, gender and sexuality that inconsistently render Black men as castrated and emasculated on the one hand, and as hyper-masculinized "sex maniacs" on the other can be explained by noting the common ground they share within their racial subordinating functions. This common ground is mutually supportive and self-reinforcing: the sexual threat to white women (and therefore the reproductive efficacy of whiteness itself) represented by Black phallogocentric excess must be tamed by and through racial disciplining measures that render Black men emasculated and therefore no longer a threat.⁵⁸

CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY 135 (Melody D. Davis ed., 1991).

54. Kwan, *supra* note 22, at 1286.

55. *Id.*

56. *Id.* at 1287.

57. *Id.* at 1286.

58. Kobena Mercer has written forcefully about discipline and Blackness as fetishism. In an essay discussing his reaction to Robert Mapplethorpe's photograph, "Man in a Polyester Suit," Mercer's discussion of the psychological and historical implications of the Black phallus, including its implication in the mutilation of Black men's genitals during lynchings, is worth quoting in full:

As a phobic object, the big black prick is a "bad object," a fixed point in the paranoid fantasies of the negrophobe which Fanon found in the pathologies of his white psychiatric patients as much as in the normalized cultural artifacts of his time. Then as now, in front of this picture, "one is no longer aware of the Negro, but only of a penis; the Negro is eclipsed. He is turned into a penis. He is a penis." (Fanon, 1970: 120). The primal fantasy of the big black penis projects the fear of a threat not only to white womanhood, but to civilization itself, as the anxiety of miscegenation, eugenic pollution and racial degeneration is acted out through white male rituals of racial aggression - the historical lynching of black men in the United States routinely involved the literal castration of the Other's strange fruit. The myth

Indeed, legal sanctions exacted against Blacks for sexual offenses against white women, as well as the tragic and horrifying history of extra-legal Black lynchings⁵⁹ in the United States are replete with tales that attest to the close cosynthetic ties between racial hatred, and gender and sexual disciplining.⁶⁰

Although there were many social/racial offenses that could provoke a lynching against a Black man, it was undoubtedly his sexual behavior, or supposed sexual behavior toward white women that constituted the ultimate offense requiring the exacting of the ultimate "punishment."⁶¹ Despite the yawning gap between the perceived threat to the sexual integrity of white women (the signifier of purity, virtue and chastity) and its reality,⁶² the Black man as the signifier of brutality in turn normalized retributive brutality against him. The form of the retributive brutality against the Black man therefore had to take the form of sexual punishment. Winthrop D. Jordan, for example, has written that:

[T]hough white women still occasionally slept with Negro men, southern society was as determined as ever to punish rigorously any Negro sexual attacks on white women. In 1769, Virginia had excluded castration from the penal code except as punishment for that offense. . . . In North Carolina a tradition was inaugurated at the turn of the century when lynching

of penis size - a "primal fantasy" in the mythology of white supremacy in the sense that it is shared and collective in nature - has been the target of enlightened liberal demystification as the modern science of sexology repeatedly embarked on the task of measuring empirical prickles to demonstrate its untruth.

KOBENA MERCER, WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE 185 (1995). See also Anthony Farley, *The Black Body as Fetish Object*, 76 OR. L. REV. 457 (1997).

59. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall has defined lynching in the following terms:

[L]ynching consisted of "an illegal and summary execution at the hands of a mob, or a number of persons, who have in some degree the public opinion of the community behind them." It thus could be seen as a form of what the sociologist Emile Durkheim termed "repressive justice," designed not to punish or to rehabilitate the individual but to enforce social conformity. . . . [Lynching was] a communal ritual that demonstrated and reinforced white unity, intimidated blacks as a group, and ensured allegiance to caste roles on the part of both white and blacks.

JACQUELYN DOWD HALL, REVOLT AGAINST CHIVALRY: JESSIE DANIEL AMES AND THE WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST LYNCHING 139 (1974).

60. "[L]ynching was an instrument of social discipline intended to impress not only the immediate victim but all who saw or heard about the event." *Id.* at 136.

61. Of all aspects of racial etiquette, those governing sexual relations aroused the strongest emotions and carried with them the severest sanctions. Nowhere were the ethic of living Jim Crow more subtle and treacherous than when they touched on the proper conduct of black men toward white women. Any act of a black man, however innocent, that offended or frightened a white woman might cost him his life. Any transgression of the caste system was a step toward "social equality"; and social equality, with its connotations of personal intimacy, could end only in interracial sex. The white man, explained a participant in the Montgomery race conference of 1900, "regards the rape of white women by Negroes not as ordinary criminality, [but as] an attack on the integrity of the race."

Id. at 145.

62. Of the known victims of lynch mobs in the period 1882-1946, only 23 percent were accused of rape or of attempted rape. Every study of the crime has underlined the fact that despite the persistent mythology of black attacks on white women, rape has remained an overwhelming intra racial event, and the victims have been predominantly black women.

Id. at 149 (citation omitted).

parties burned a Negro for rape and castrated a slave for remarking that he was going to have some white women. Georgia in 1806 enacted a mandatory death penalty for any Negro raping or attempting to rape a white woman. As late as 1827 a Georgia court sentenced a Negro to castration and deportation for attempted rape, and the *Macon Telegraph* castigated the court for its leniency.⁶³

It is in fact quite remarkable the extent to which accounts of lynchings often do not describe a swift hanging or summary execution, but rather contain explicit references to genital mutilation as part of the lynching. Angela Davis quotes a newspaper account of a 1934 lynching of one Claude Neal in a swamp beside the Chattahoochee River in Florida:

First they cut off his penis. He was made to eat it. Then they cut off his testicles and made him eat them and say he liked it.

Then they sliced his sides and stomach with knives and every now and then somebody would cut off a finger or toe. Red hot irons were used on the nigger to burn him from top to bottom. From time to time during the torture a rope would be tied around Neal's neck and he was pulled over a limb and held there until he almost choked to death, when he would be let down and the torture begun all over again. After several hours of this punishment, they decided just to kill him.⁶⁴

This cosynthesis of race, gender and sexuality in the context of Black men and its connection to subordination has an analog in critical readings of the way Asian men's bodies are culturally scripted. For example, instantiation of the Asian "lack" has been explored by Richard Fung within the context of Asians in gay video porn. Fung asserts that within the "contemporary construction of race and sex . . . Asians . . . are collectively seen as undersexed."⁶⁵ He continues:

Asian men . . . have been consigned to one of two categories: the egg-

63. WINTHROP D. JORDAN, *WHITE OVER BLACK: AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE NEGRO, 1550-1812*, at 473 (1968) (citations omitted).

64. ANGELA Y. DAVIS, *BLUES LEGACIES AND BLACK FEMINISM: GERTUDE "MA" RAINEY, BESSIE SMITH, AND BILLIE HOLIDAY 188* (1998). Mutilation to the reproductive organs during lynchings is not something suffered only by Black men. Kendall Thomas recovered a chilling account, told by Walter White, of a Black woman in Georgia who was tortured by white men whom she sought to have prosecuted for having lynched her husband. The horrific details of her torture are made even more obscene by her murderers' mutilation of her reproductive organs and her unborn child:

[T]hey bound her ankles together and, by them, hanged her to a tree. Gasoline and motor oil were thrown upon her dangling clothes; a match wrapped her in sudden flames. Mocking ribald laughter from her tormentors answered the helpless woman's screams of pain and terror. The clothes burned from her crisply toasted body, in which, unfortunately, life still lingered; a man stepped towards the woman and, with his knife, ripped open the abdomen in a crude Caesarian operation. Out tumbled the prematurely born child. Two feeble cries it gave - and received for answer the heel of a stalwart man, as life was ground out of the tiny form.

Kendall Thomas, *Strange Fruit*, in *RACE-ING JUSTICE, EN-GENDERING POWER* 364, 371 (Toni Morrison ed., 1992).

65. Richard Fung, *Looking for my Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn*, in *HOW DO I LOOK? QUEER FILM AND VIDEO* 145, 146 (Bad Object-Choices ed., 1991).

head/wimp, or - in what may be analogous to the lotus blossom - dragon lady dichotomy - the kung fu master/ninja/samurai. He is sometimes dangerous, sometimes friendly but almost always characterized by a de-sexualized Zen asceticism. So whereas, as Fanon tells us, "the Negro is eclipsed. He is turned into a penis. He is a penis," the Asian man is defined by a striking absence down there.⁶⁶

To the extent that Asian men are effeminized in the way Fung describes, one begins to appreciate the cultural articulations that represent the Asian male as always and already effeminized. These frontal and subtle cultural representations culturally discipline Asian men by rendering them as phallically inferior to white men. Cultural assumptions that reinscribe claims about the comparative size of male genitalia play out in terms of power associated with the phallic signifier. Asian women are fetishized and their sexuality commodified as exotic, promiscuous and mysterious. This is the subtext that underlies all the films discussed. Thus, if gender can be decoupled from biological sex as Judith Butler and others suggest,⁶⁷ Asian men, to the degree that we are effeminized, can also be seen as disempowered and fetishized (although in many significant and different ways from the ways Asian women are disempowered and fetishized).⁶⁸ Song's amazing ability to hide his gender from Gallimard precisely relies on this cosynthetic racial-sexual construction.

There is an exchange in *M. Butterfly* between Gallimard and a young Dutch woman named Renee that illustrates the connection between co-synthesis and the racial phallus. Renee is almost the antithesis of the Oriental Woman. She is bold and speaks her mind. She was the first to initiate sex with Gallimard:

RENEE: Are you married?

GALLIMARD: Yes. Why?

RENEE: You wanna . . . fool around?⁶⁹

In contrast to Song's coyness in matters relating to sex and genitalia, Renee has no problems with either. In fact, much to Gallimard's annoyance, she engages Gallimard in a frontal discussion about the linguistic

66. *Id.* at 148.

67. See JUDITH BUTLER, *GENDER TROUBLE* (1990); see also Myra Jehlen, *Gender*, in *CRITICAL TERMS FOR LITERARY STUDY* 263, 264 (Frank Lentricchia & Thomas McLaughlin eds., 1990) ("The insurgent view that gender is a cultural idea rather than a biological fact shares the ground that it has been gaining with parallel arguments about other identities - of class, of race, of national or religious association.").

68. The stereotypes of API men as passive, weak, and effeminate are equivalent to the stereotypes of gay men, in general, thus making it easier to conceive of an API gay man. API women, whose stereotypes are sexual in nature and related to men, for instance exotic prostitutes and submissive, obedient servants to men, make it difficult to envision an Asian lesbian.

Alice Hom & Ming-Yuen S. Ma, *Premature Gestures: A Speculative Dialogue on Asian Pacific Islander Lesbian and Gay Writing*, in *CRITICAL ESSAYS: GAY AND LESBIAN WRITERS OF COLOR* 21, 43 (Emmanuel S. Nelson ed., 1993).

69. HWANG, *supra* note 8, at 53.

variations for the word “penis” as well as its cultural symbolic significance:

RENEE: You have a nice weenie.

GALLIMARD: What?

RENEE: Penis. You have a nice penis.

GALLIMARD: Oh. Well, thank you. That’s very . . .

RENEE: What - can’t take a compliment?

GALLIMARD: No, it’s very . . . reassuring.

RENEE: But most girls don’t come out and say it, huh?

GALLIMARD: And also . . . what did you call it?

RENEE: Oh, most girls don’t call it a “weenie,” huh?

GALLIMARD: It sounds very -

RENEE: Small, I know.

GALLIMARD: I was going to say, “young.”

RENEE: Yeah. Young, small, same thing. Most guys are pretty, uh, sensitive about that. Like, you know, I had a boyfriend back home in Denmark. I got mad at him once and called him a little weeniehead. He got so mad! He said at least I should call him a great big weeniehead.

GALLIMARD: I suppose I just say “penis.”

RENEE: Yeah. That sounds pretty clinical. There’s “cock,” but that sounds like a chicken. And “prick” is painful, and “dick” is like you’re talking about someone who’s not in the room.

GALLIMARD: Yes. It’s a . . . bigger problem than I imagined.⁷⁰

After a further dialogue which ends in Renee espousing a theory that wars are created by men with small penises wishing to hide that fact, and that the “whole world [is] run by a bunch of men with pricks the size of pins,”⁷¹ Gallimard turns to the audience to say that this “was simply not acceptable.”⁷² Gallimard ponders rhetorically whether Renee’s forthrightness altogether “too uninhibited, too willing, so as to seem almost too . . . masculine.”⁷³ In analyzing this passage, David Eng has persuasively argued that Renee’s unacceptability to Gallimard lies ultimately not simply in her assertiveness that is gendered as masculine, but in her challenge to Gallimard’s phallic authority, a challenge that in the end threatens to disrupt Gallimard’s carefully constructed homosexual closet:

Renee is everything that Gallimard is not and what Gallimard wishes he could be in his most acute masculine day dreams of phallic plenitude: assertive, dominant, straight. Relegating the Frenchman to a position of powerlessness, she undercuts Gallimard’s heterosexual presumption by assuming a macho subjectivity that installs him squarely on the side of

70. *Id.* at 54-55.

71. *Id.* at 56.

72. *Id.*

73. *Id.* at 54.

lack. . . . The “unacceptability” of her actions, of course, resides in her sex as a female, her aggressive usurpation of phallic authority.⁷⁴

We also see this “aggressive usurpation of phallic authority” in *Priscilla*. Cynthia’s parting words to Bob as she leaves him and loads her bags into her small car are worth noting. She says nastily to Bob: “I no like you anyway. You got little ding-a-ling.” Cynthia’s crazed departure sets the conditions for the romantic development between him and Bernadette, the transsexual. This is achieved through more than Cynthia’s physical departure. Her parting words to Bob effeminizes him as a white man suffering from masculinist lack. This is especially cutting coming from an Asian woman, who as supposedly fitting within the Oriental Woman construct is meant to retain the fixed position of the subordinate to the white man. It also symbolizes one of several scenes in which Bob cuts himself off from the white masculinist society in which he has lived up to this point.⁷⁵ As one who is emasculated by the Oriental Woman, Bob’s own masculinity is presented as already compromised. Again, race is demonized and made to serve the interests of the white characters—here, configured as the “proper” romantic liaison between Bob and Bernadette. Bob’s emasculation at the hands of his straight Filipina wife makes more palatable his liaison with drag queens, whose sexuality and gender performative gestures also compromise their gender privilege. As hooks has pointed out:

Within white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy the experience of men dressing as women, appearing in drag, has always been regarded by the dominant heterosexist cultural gaze as a sign that one is symbolically crossing over from a realm of power into a realm of powerlessness. Just to look at the many negative ways the word “drag” is defined reconnects this label to an experience that is seen as burdensome, as retrograde and retrogressive. To choose to appear as “female” when one is “male” is always constructed in the patriarchal mindset as a loss, as a choice worthy only of ridicule.⁷⁶

These theoretical linkages between cultural instantiations of race (Asianess), gender (femininity), sexuality (lack of phallic signifier), sexual orientation (manifested as deviance in transgenderism, promiscuity and bizarre sex acts), and class (prostitute, colonized female and sex industry

74. David L. Eng, *In the Shadows of a Diva: Committing Homosexuality in David Henry Hwang’s M. Butterfly*, in *ASIAN AMERICAN SEXUALITIES: DIMENSIONS OF THE GAY AND LESBIAN EXPERIENCE* 131, 138 (Russell Leong ed., 1996). For a critical analysis of Gallimard’s discussion with Toulon (the French Ambassador) in which the latter comments on Gallimard as having “become this new aggressive confident . . . thing,” HWANG, *supra* note 8, at 38, see Eng, *supra*, at 140. “What, after all, is the all-powerful ‘thing’ that Toulon attempts euphemistically to describe but the ever-present delegated symbol of male abuse - the white heterosexual penis as phallus?” *Id.*

75. Another occurs when his masculinity is questioned by his mates after he rescues Adam from their attempt at gay bashing Adam. Bob’s defense of Adam ostracizes him from his straight white mates in that mining town.

76. hooks, *supra* note 22, at 146.

worker) located within the discrete cultural representations of the Oriental Woman (Suzie, Song Siling and Cynthia) in the three films discussed in this Article, demonstrate the cosynthetic nature of these categories. None of these categories stand alone nor can any of them alone take credit for subordinating the Oriental Woman. Rather, we can view these categories as interacting in a manner that creates the unique fantasy figure of the Oriental Woman through a cosynthetic perspective. Cosynthesis is a theory that explicitly recognizes the conspiratorial nature of categorical hegemony and does not prioritize one form of oppression over the others, nor does it let one form of categorical oppression off the theoretical hook at the expense of other forms.

C. *Cosynthesis and Violence Against the Oriental Woman*

The Oriental Woman construction, while permitting the sexual exploitation of Asian women through the specter of sexual fantasy, is also a vehicle for violence on and against Asian bodies.⁷⁷ *The World of Suzie Wong* presents on its face, a touching love story between a white American man and a Chinese woman. Yet, white on yellow violence is scripted throughout the film and normalized within the Orientalist framework. There is a telling scene in which Suzie has an encounter with a white sailor in the stairway of the hotel. The sailor is obviously drunk but wants Suzie's attention. Suzie rejects him, and the sailor knocks her down. Upon hearing the disturbance, Lomax throws the sailor out of the hotel, wipes some blood off Suzie's face and sends her home. As Suzie is about to enter the bar, Suzie pauses at the door, deliberately bites her own lip until it bleeds and smears the blood across her chin. She then enters and seats herself next to her friend, Minnie Ho, also a Chinese prostitute. Shocked at the sight of the blood on Suzie's chin, Minnie asks Suzie what happened. Suzie blames it on Lomax:

Suzie: He crazy in love with me. I tell him I have tea in his room with my girlfriends, he not believe me. He think I have tea with sailor.

Minnie: We'll tell him the truth, Suzie.

77. For a discussion on the connections between harmful stereotypes and battered Asian American women, see Karin Wang, Comment, *Battered Asian American Women: Community Responses from the Battered Women's Movement and the Asian American Community*, 3 ASIAN L. J. 151 (1996).

Asian American women live amidst a number of stereotypes about their simultaneously exotic and passive sexuality. Among the many sexual images which white Americans have imposed on Asians are the particularly insidious ones of Asian women as "exotic sex objects imbued with an innate understanding of how to please, serve, and titillate [men]." Rooted historically in the belief that all Chinese and Japanese immigrant women were prostitutes, Asian women have yet to escape the "ultra-femininity myth" which portrays Asian women as sensual yet submissive. . . . The image of Asian women as ultra-feminine helps mask or, worse yet, condones sexual violence against Asian American women, including domestic violence.

Id. at 175-76 (citations omitted). On violence against Asian Americans generally, see Jerry Kang, Note, *Racial Violence Against Asian Americans*, 106 HARV. L. REV. 1926 (1993).

Suzie: He not believe you, Minnie Ho. Poor Robert can't help how he feels. Besides, he only hit me eight, ten times.

Gwinny Lee: That proves Robert very much in love with you.

Minnie: Oh, you're very lucky Suzie.

Suzie: I know tomorrow he be sorry. So sorry you don't have nice man to beat you up. Good night.

All: Good night, Suzie.

This dialogue suggests that for Suzie and her friends, the mark and proof of a white lover's devotion is that he cares enough to batter and commit assault against his Chinese girlfriend. The group of Chinese prostitutes that gathered around Suzie were quite envious of Suzie for having been the subject of physical abuse by Lomax. Suzie knew this and deliberately orchestrated this lie, boasting of the fact and sarcastically pitying her friends that they do not have a lover attentive enough to beat them up as well.

In another scene later in the film, Lomax notices that Suzie disappears without explanation from time to time. He stalks her to a wooden hut within the shanty town areas built on the hills of Hong Kong. There, he discovers that Suzie has been hiding a baby of illegitimate birth. After she explains the situation to a sympathetic Lomax, she kneels in front of Lomax and softly says to Lomax: "You beat me up, please?"

It hardly needs to be said that these scenes were not written nor drawn out of a sense of irony or satire. Although we never see Suzie being beaten by Lomax, it is sufficient in terms of constructing the fantasy of the Oriental Woman that she valorizes, glorifies and prostrates herself for physical abuse in the hands of her white knight. Suzie's submission to Lomax is also consonant with the pleasure of the text enjoyed by the intended audience of this film.

From an inverted sexual perspective,⁷⁸ one can see the dynamics of Asian sexuality serving white interests. Cynthia's portrayal in *Priscilla* occurs not only within a highly racialized context, but one that signifies but interestingly reverses the normal pattern of abuse and violence against Asian women by portraying Cynthia as the one who commits psychic violence and abuse on her husband. This inversion, I argue, is carried out deliberately in order to serve white interests and to normalize white deviance. This is possible when the surface text of the Oriental Woman trope (which is premised on the Oriental Woman's dependence on the white heterosexual knight) is stripped away leaving only its subtext.

Certainly, Cynthia's accent and appearance mark her as Asian and foreign. Her sexual deviance, portrayed as uncontrollable urges to perform

78. By the phrase "inverted sexual perspective," I do not mean in this context to imply that Asian women are somehow sexually empowered; but rather, I mean a portrayal that shows the white male as the victim of Asian female sexuality.

acts involving ping-pong balls and her genitalia, is a clear and unmistakable reference to the sex bars of South East Asia where these performances are attractions for white male tourists as well as special sex tours arranged for white male tourists.⁷⁹ The sex entertainment industry in South East Asia relies on the figure of the Oriental Woman. The consumption of this form of entertainment then serves to reinscribe and reinforce the Oriental Woman within the consciousness of sex entertainment customers.⁸⁰ Moreover, the presence of United States military bases, located in the Philippines in places like Subic Naval Base and Clark Air Force Base, played a large part in creating and maintaining the Filipino sex industry.⁸¹ Prostitution and the sex entertainment industries in the Philippines arose because and in the presence of the armed forces that represent and serve western colonial expansion interests.⁸² In a very real and tangible way, therefore, Cynthia's racial representation as an Oriental Woman is also co-synthetic with the masculinist and colonial "big guns, big industry and big money" of the West and the "feminine mystique" of the East that Song spoke of to the judge at the trial.⁸³

79. Although exact figures are impossible to obtain, one estimate suggests that 70-80 per cent of male tourists traveling from Japan, the United States, Australia, and Western Europe to Asian do so solely for the purposes of sexual entertainment. While Gay's estimate is almost certainly on the high side, especially given contemporary concerns over AIDS, it is likely that 'sexual entertainment' is a major motivating factor for many male travelers to the region.

C. Michael Hall, *Gender and Economic Interests in Tourism Prostitution: The Nature, Development and Implications of Sex Tourism in South-east Asia*, in *TOURISM: A GENDER ANALYSIS* 142, 143 (Vivian Kinnaird & Derek Hall eds., 1994).

80. "Sex tourism serves to establish certain erotic images of Asian women in Western society which are then perpetuated within the social institutional structures of the destination." *Id.* at 146.

81. The evolution of sex tourism in South-east Asia has generally gone through four distinct stages. The first stage is that of indigenous prostitution, in which women are already subject to concubinage and bonded prostitution within a patriarchal society which regards such sexual relations as acceptable and normal. The second stage is that of economic colonialism and militarisation in which prostitution is a formalised mechanism of dominance and a means of meeting the sexual needs of occupation forces. For example, the American presence in Taiwan from the Korean War through to the end of the Vietnam War provided a major stimulus for tourism prostitution centred on Shuang Cheng Street in Taipei. Similarly, until the closure of the bases, the 12,000 registered and 8,000 unregistered hostesses in Olongapo City provided the major source of sexual entertainment for the United States military personnel based at Subic Naval Base and Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines.

Id. at 150-51. See also Cho, *supra* note 3, at 57.

82. See Eddy Meng, *Mail-Order Brides: Gilded Prostitution and the Legal Response*, 28 U. MICH. J. L. REFORM 197, 229 (1994). Meng writes:

The Philippines - the primary exporter of mail-order brides today - provide a good case study of American military sexual colonialism. Five cabarets with fewer than a dozen prostitutes operated near Subic Naval Base outside Manila before the Vietnam War. . . . As the United States increased its presence in Vietnam, Subic became the "rest and recreation" stop for the American military.

Id. at 229, n.194 (quoting ELIZABETH UY EVIOTA, *THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF GENDER: WOMEN AND THE SEXUAL DIVISION OF LABOUR IN THE PHILIPPINES* 135 (1992)).

83. See *supra* text accompanying notes 34-36. See also Cho, *supra* note 3, at 193 ("Military involvement in Asia, colonial and neocolonial history and the derivative Asian Pacific sex tourism industry have established power relations between Asia and the West that in turn have shaped stereo-

However, Cynthia is presented not only as a demented sex entertainer, her marriage to Bob is fraught with other problematic images and suggestions. In one scene after Cynthia leaves Bob, Bernadette calls Cynthia a "mail-order bride" even though there is no evidence that she was one and subsequent disclosures in the film proves that she was not a mail-order bride. Nevertheless, after this description, Bernadette mockingly sticks her finger down her throat to demonstrate her distaste of Cynthia. The mail-order bride industry is an established and growing industry⁸⁴ that caters predominantly to white men seeking economically desperate Asian women.⁸⁵ Yet, as it appears later in the film, the dimension of exploitation involved in the mail-order bride industry is completely inverted in the film. Instead of showing Bob to be a relatively economically privileged white male taking advantage of the poverty and desperation of Asian women in countries like the Philippines, as Bob recounts the events, his marriage was brought about by a fraud instigated by Cynthia.⁸⁶ In a recollection scene, Bob is shown waking up confused and hung over in a strange bed. He looks around and sees Cynthia. Cynthia's voice is ingenuously sweet and loving at the beginning, but soon turns angry:

Bob: Hello.

Cynthia: Hello.

Bob: Who are you?

Cynthia: I your wife.

Bob: I'll be going home, then.

Cynthia: (angrily) No! You no going. I coming too. I your wife, see? (Waving a marriage certificate in front of Bob's face) I your wife.

This is followed by a scene in which Bob, Bernadette, Adam and

types of Asian Pacific women. Through mass media and popular culture, these stereotypes are internationally transferred so that they apply to women both in and outside of Asia.").

84. In 1986, the mail-order bride industry was described in a New York Times article as:

[A] growing international matchmaking business. Some 100 agencies in the United States alone now specialize in promoting mail-order romance, linking Asian women with men from the United States, Canada, Australia and Western Europe. Though mail-order marriages cannot be considered commonplace, they have become increasingly popular in the last decade, experts say. Tens of thousands of men write to Asian women each year, and an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 of them find wives in this fashion.

Lisa Belkin, *The Mail-order Bride Business*, N.Y. TIMES, May 11, 1986, § 6, at 28. See also Meng, *supra* note 82, at 200-01 ("Today, the mail-order bride industry is booming. The industry is transnational, involving procurers who recruit women from developing countries and marriage agencies in industrialized countries that print catalogues to solicit potential husbands.").

85. See Meng, *supra* note 82, at 204-05 ("The consumer-husband [in the mail-order bride industry] is usually Caucasian, typically American, Australian, Canadian, or from a Western European country, although Japanese consumer-husbands also are prevalent.").

86. See Margaret Chon, *Radical Plural Democracy and the Internet*, 33 CAL. W. L. REV. 143, 148 (1997).

Arguments in support of these [Filipina mail-order bride] transactions can even be framed in a way that makes the man seem to be taken advantage of - he is viewed primarily for his ability to be a conduit for immigration of his wife's relatives, or for his ability to be able to send payments back to her home, rather than for his wife's sex appeal.

Id.

Tony sit around a campfire at night.

Bob: Silly girl. Should have done her homework better. (laughs) She thought I was from Sydney.

Adam: Why in God's name did you bring her home?

Bob: She was me wife.

Adam: Couldn't you sell her off?

This inversion of the traditional patterns of sexual exploitation is startling. The mail-order bride industry is often linked to prostitution and sex tourism.⁸⁷ It is shot through with deception where Asian women are often lied to with regard to the age, wealth and appearance of the white men who subscribe to mail-order bride services.⁸⁸ The fate of Filipina mail-order brides is often one of violent sexual and physical abuse in the hands of the men who bring them into the United States.⁸⁹ Men who "acquire" Asian mail-order brides are often attracted to Asian women because of their perceived characteristics as Oriental Women - their submissiveness especially in contrast to liberated western women.⁹⁰ That abuse takes

87. See Meng, *supra* note 82, at 223 ("Organized crime and sex syndicates involved in both prostitution and sex tourism also have been known to operate mail-order bride agencies.").

88. Once the women reach this country, however, their stories do not always end happily. "It is a situation that is rife with the potential for fraud and also for people getting hurt," Mr. Jervis (a spokesman for the Immigration and Naturalization Service in Washington) says. . . . "I consider this an international sex ring," says Grace Lyu-Volckhuasen, a women's rights activist and a member of the New York City Commission on the Status of Women. "The men who apply, basically they're losers. They cannot make it in this country so they go out and look for women who can be their total slaves."

Belkin, *supra* note 84, at 30.

To some women's groups, the practice of peddling potential mates through the mail or computer is a form of slavery. Women are "bought" they argue, and then brought to the United States in a situation in which the law requires them to stay with their new husband for at least two years before they can gain citizenship. If they are beaten by their husbands they are reluctant to report it, the critics say, because that could lead to their deportation.

Timothy Egan, *Mail-Order Marriage, Immigrant Dreams and Death*, N.Y. TIMES, May 26, 1996, § 1, at 10.

89. See Belkin, *supra* note 84, at 30 ("[Grace Lyu-Volckhuasen] tells of late-night phone calls from mail-order brides who were beaten by their husbands and who fear they will be deported if they seek help."). The problem of battering and the abuse of mail-order brides came to national attention in 1995 with the chilling case of Timothy C. Blackwell. Through a mail-order bride catalogue called "Asian Encounters," Blackwell met and married a Filipina beauty queen by the name of Susan Remerata. After more than a year of corresponding, Blackwell flew to the Philippines and they were married on March 6, 1993. According to Remerata, Blackwell tried to choke her the day after they were married. After two weeks of more violence, she commenced divorce proceedings. Blackwell accused Remerata of being "nonattentive" and that he had been "duped." He demanded \$10,000 from her. At the closing arguments in the divorce trial two years later, Remerata was eight months pregnant by another man. At that trial, and at point blank range, Blackwell shot and killed Remerata and her two Filipina friends. The fetus later died. See Egan, *supra* note 88, at 10. See also Antonio C. Campo, *Piece of Cake: An Apology to US Hubbies*, 25:15 FILIPINO REPORTER, Apr. 10, 1997, at 21. With regard to Filipina mail-order brides in Australia, Meng cites to a 1991 report of "eleven officially acknowledged cases in the last few years in which Filipina women have gone to Australia to marry and have been murdered by their Australian husbands." Meng, *supra* note 82, at 198.

90. The men involved often say they prefer what they see as the old-fashioned submissiveness of Asian women to the aggressive independence of their Western counterparts. . . . "Many American men have fantasies about what a Filipino woman is likely to be"

place is often a result of their frustrated expectations. Surprisingly, in *Priscilla*, Bob is presented as the victim of Asian female deceit. Through this inversion, the audience is made to pity Bob and to despise Cynthia. Bob is shown to be generous in spirit ("She was me wife") in contrast to Cynthia's deviousness.

Cynthia therefore can be regarded as a differently configured Oriental Woman. Yet, she is still objectified and created by the author in ways that serve white interests. The characterization of Cynthia in no way portrays her as possessing the depth and multidimensionality as Bob or any of the other drag queens. Instead, Cynthia's characterization is flat and almost cartoon-like. Her subjectivity is subsumed in service of projecting and developing Bob's character. The audience is made not only to laugh at Cynthia (in contrast to the way the audience is constantly made to laugh with the drag queens), but we are made to despise her. Indeed Adam's question to Bob ("couldn't you sell her off?") is ambiguous. It could either mean "couldn't you pay her off to get a divorce?" or it could mean "couldn't you sell her off to another white man who might want an Asian mail-order bride?"⁹¹ In either case, Bob does not answer the question because of Bernadette's intervention. He does not need to. The audience is not really made to care about Cynthia either as an Asian woman or as a piece of tradeable human commodity. In other words, consistent with the Oriental Woman trope, Cynthia's characterization is one in which the service of the Asian woman to the interests of the white male character is uncritically assumed and presented as morally justified.

As a character in a film centering on the lives of three white drag queens rather than a straight white male, *Priscilla's* deployment of Cynthia as the Oriental Woman must, as a result, go through some form of trans-

says Alma Dell Smith, an assistant professor of psychology at the Boston University Medical Center who specializes in the study of cross-cultural marriages.

Belkin, *supra* note 84, at 27-28.

"The men see the women's liberation movement as the cause of their problems," Dr. Jedlicka (a professor of sociology at the University of Texas at Tyler, who studies American patterns of mate selection) says. "They start with certain negative stereotypes of the American woman as aggressive, selfish, not family oriented. Then they add positive stereotypes of Asian women - family centered, undemanding, untouched by women's liberation."

Id. at 29. See also Meng, *supra* note 82, at 205-09, 229-30.

[T]he currently booming mail-order bride business thrives on, perpetuates, and reinforces these [harmful] stereotypes of Asian femininity. . . . [T]hese very myths, constructing Asian women as what all women should be, are responsible in part for bringing immigrant Asian women to this country as brides of white men seeking ultra-femininity in contrast to the comparative lack of femininity of white American women. Thus, mail-order brochures and catalogs play up such stereotypes, praising Asian women as "devoted," "raised to be servants of men," "feminine," "submissive doll-like," and "docile, exotic, and available as bed partners and domestic help at the same time." These immigrant brides are particularly vulnerable to abuse because of immigration law requirements and are thus the very women whose battering is among the most difficult to address.

Wang, *supra* note 77, at 175-76 (citations omitted).

91. For analogies between the mail-order bride industry and slavery, see Egan, *supra* note 88. See also Meng, *supra* note 82, at 219.

formation from its usual Orientalist grounding. Cynthia is used not only to magnify Bob, but also to normalize the film's central characters. As transsexuals and homosexuals, *Priscilla's* drag queens operate against a social background that regards drag queen, transsexuals and homosexuals as sexual deviants as well as objects of irrational hate and derision. The film's more serious moments involve hate crimes committed against the trio when Adam is gay bashed and their bus is painted over with anti-gay hate messages by the homophobic community of a desert mining town. No doubt one of the reasons why the film is popular with the gay community relates to the positive image the film projects of gay men and transsexuals. This is achieved through the portrayal of gay and transsexual characters in more than stereotypical ways - as persons with strength of character, talent, humor, and compassion. Yet it is troubling that this message is partly achieved through contrasting the white drag queens with a devious Oriental Woman possessing insane sexual perversities. Laughing at and despising Cynthia permits the audience more easily to laugh and despise with the white drag queens and thereby to develop empathy with them. Therefore it can be seen that at this level, Cynthia as the straight Oriental Woman is utilized to elevate the three white gay and transsexual drag queens in addition to displacing hostility against them. Indeed, the pleasure of *Priscilla* is accountable at least partly through that displacement.

Moreover, it is not simply Cynthia's racialization that achieved these effects; rather it is the cosynthesis between her race, her sexuality, her sexual deviance and her class status as a sex worker that, in combination, made her character one to laugh at rather than to pity. It is this cosynthesis rather than her race or her class alone that eventually made normatively acceptable to the viewer the growing intimate relationship between Bob and the transgendered white character, Bernadette. Indeed, Bernadette makes the false assumption that Cynthia was a mail-order bride precisely because of the cosynthesis between Cynthia's perceived race, sexuality and class.⁹²

92. Writing about Asian mail-order brides, Eddy Meng notes that the industry serves Asian customers from Japan as well as white customers. See Meng, *supra* note 82, at 227. Meng goes on to state that "racism may be less of a factor than sex and class, but this only amplifies the point that racism alone cannot explain the web of subordination." *Id.* at 228. This leads Meng to conclude that "ethnicity, together with gender, class, and variations in their habitus, compose interlocking and intersection explanations for the root causes of the mail-order bride industry." *Id.* While I agree with his rejection of race as an adequate single-axis explanatory basis for the existence of the mail-order bride industry, I am not altogether convinced that "interlocking and intersecting explanations" is a very "thick" explanation simply because it fails to provide the theoretical mechanism by which they "interlock." I submit that a cosynthetic analysis, one that provides the model under which race, gender, sexuality and class are shown to provide each other with support in the fabrication of the Oriental Woman fantasy, begins to provide a model of that theoretical mechanism.

III.

INTERSECTIONALITY AND POST-INTERSECTIONALITY THEORIES

The language of multiculturalism and alliance politics has encouraged us to recognize such strains and differences, as in the slogan "race, class, and gender." The slogan, however, often implies not allegiance, or intersection - much less structural relations of incommensurability - but rather a fantasized space where all embodied identities could be visibly represented as parallel forms of identity.⁹³

It is analytically impossible to fully describe and understand the category Oriental Woman without simultaneously recognizing not just the conflation⁹⁴ of race and gender but the profound way in which notions of race, sexuality, gender and colonialism (among other things) operationally and mutually support each other in order to maintain a subordinating effect. Thus, for example, as my discussion of *M. Butterfly* suggests, Hwang has woven a tale that meshes together notions of race, sexuality, sexual orientation and colonialism so tightly that it is impossible to say that the film either is or is principally "about" any one of them. A recognition of this architecture of categories is the cosynthetic insight.⁹⁵ This insight is a precondition to a full understanding of the fantasy of the Oriental Woman and the way in which her deployment works to justify racist views and action. Cosynthesis makes explicit the dynamic nature of categorical structures in contrast to a static model of multiple or intersecting oppressive modalities.

Critical race theorists, notably women of color, have written extensively and powerfully on the notion of intersectionality. For example, according to Cheryl Harris, intersectionality "captures the way in which the particular location of black women in dominant American social relations is unique and in some senses unassimilable into the discursive paradigms of gender and race domination."⁹⁶ When intersectionality is ignored in legal adjudication, the failure to appreciate this uniqueness can distort the application of law in a way that unfairly impacts intersectional classes of people. Kimberlé Crenshaw's important work in this area has influenced many critical race theorists and beyond.⁹⁷ Intersectionality has alerted legal

93. Michael Warner, *Introduction*, in *FEAR OF A QUEER PLANET, QUEER POLITICS AND SOCIAL THEORY* vii, xix (Michael Warner ed., 1993).

94. See Francisco Valdes, *Queers, Sissies, Dykes, and Tomboys: Deconstructing the Conflation of "Sex," "Gender," and "Sexual Orientation" in Euro-American Law and Society*, 83 CAL. L. REV. 1 (1995). For a discussion on the doctrinal and theoretical importance of maintaining the distinction between gender, sex and sexual orientation especially in Title VII cases, see Mary Anne C. Case, *Disaggregating Gender from Sex and Sexual Orientation: The Effeminate Man in the Law and Feminist Jurisprudence*, 105 YALE L.J. 1 (1995). See also Katherine M. Franke, *The Central Mistake of Sex Discrimination Law: The Disaggregation of Sex from Gender*, 144 U. PA. L. REV. 1 (1995).

95. See Kwan, *supra* note 22.

96. Cheryl Harris, *Whiteness as Property*, 106 HARV. L. REV. 1707, 1720 (1993).

97. Kimberlé Crenshaw, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*, 1989 U. CHI. LEGAL F. 139; Kimberlé Crenshaw, *Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence*

scholars to the dangers of gendering race as male, and racing gender as white.

Thus, as this Article's discussion of the Oriental Woman demonstrates, the Oriental Woman cannot fully be described simply in terms of a racial construction, nor can an account of the Oriental Woman fantasy be fully explained strictly within feminist parameters. To do so would ignore at great theoretical cost the interaction and mutual dependency between the Oriental Woman's racial and gender constructs, not to mention the sexuality and colonialist dimensions that are also intimately embedded in the very structure of the Oriental Woman. Indeed, arguably, to remove any one of those categorical elements would so seriously impair the efficacy of the Oriental Woman that the hegemonic and subordinating fantasies she creates for the western imagination would rapidly disintegrate and dissipate.

Yet intersectionality does not capture and explain how these different forms of oppressive ideologies dynamically interact with each other to generate a fantasy powerful enough to make a virgin from a prostitute, or a man from a woman. Moreover, as a static and reductive theoretical model, intersectionality constantly threatens to proliferate boundaries as the polysynthetic nature of categories is recognized.⁹⁸ To give a phenomenological account of the Oriental Woman, cultural and legal theories need to move beyond intersectionality with its reductive, overlapping account of multiple regimes of oppression.

Certain legal scholars have already begun this post-intersectionality work. This work does not aim to replace intersectionality with alternative theories of categories. Rather, it aims to develop theories that are compatible with intersectionality, but yet are capable of accommodating the problems and complexities that occur when identity categories multiply. As some of the scholars I mention in this section observe, when one begins to recognize and locate the proliferation of identity categories beyond the two or three, intersectionality as an analytical tool has a potentially alienating effect that presents the danger of ideological balkanization. What

Against Women of Color, 43 STAN. L. REV. 1241 (1991). For legal scholarship on intersectionality and intersectional themes, see generally, Judy Scales Trent, *Black Women and the Constitution: Finding Our Place, Asserting Our Rights*, 24 HARV. C.R.-C.L. L. REV. 9 (1989); Paulette Cauldwell, *A Hair Piece: Perspectives on the Intersection of Race and Gender*, 1991 DUKE L.J. 365; Madelyn C. Squire, *Discovering Our Connections: Reflections on Race, Gender and the Other Tales of Difference*, 23 GOLDEN GATE U. L. REV. 795 (1993); Kathryn Abrams, *Title VII and the Complex Female Subject*, 92 MICH. L. REV. 2479 (1994); Isabelle Gunning, *Stories from Home: Tales from the Intersection of Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation*, 5 S. CAL. REV. L. & WOMEN'S STUD. 143 (1995); Leslie Pearlman, Comment, *Transsexualism as Metaphor: The Collision of Sex and Gender*, 43 BUFF. L. REV. 835 (1995); Virginia Wei, Note, *Asian Women and Employment Discrimination: Using Intersectionality Theory to Address Title VII Claims Based on Combined Factors of Race, Gender and National Origin*, 37 B.C. L. REV. 771 (1996); Symposium, *Intersections: Sexuality, Cultural Tradition, and the Law*, 8 YALE J.L. & HUMAN. 93 (1996).

98. See Kwan, *supra* note 22, at 1278.

theories allow one to form discourses between and among differently intersecting modalities? Post-intersectionality theories try to address these issues. Thus, Darren Rosenblum, for example, has chosen to posit “queerness” as a new identity and political category that allows the opening up of a discourse that embraces multiple oppressed positionalities. Even as he holds on to the insights of intersectionality, Rosenblum introduces an expanded notion of “queerness” to include all multiple forms of disempowerment and oppression:

Queer identity is intersectional, since most queers face multiple aspects of discrimination, as women, as people of color, as poor people, as cross-gendered people, and as sexual subversives. The multiplicity of the discrimination that queers face is thus greater than anti-lesbian and anti-gay discrimination. Queer identity implicates opposition to these discriminations: “Being queer means everyday fighting oppression; homophobia, racism, misogyny, the bigotry of religious hypocrites and our own self-hatred.”⁹⁹

Borrowing Adrienne Rich’s notion of the “lesbian continuum,” Rosenblum then constructs a theoretical “queer continuum,” one that includes all forms and varieties of sexual minorities including “dykes, fags, bisexuals, radical feminists and other subversive heterosexuals, transvestites, transsexuals, poor queers, Black queers, Asian-American queers, Latino queers, homos, drag queens, leather queens and dykes, muscle queens, lipstick lesbians, bull dykes, gay women, etc.”¹⁰⁰ This queer continuum thus embraces all non-traditional and intersectional sexual identities and “unites a broad range of disempowered communities” around the political imperative to resist compulsory heterosexuality.¹⁰¹

Francisco Valdes has also adopted the notion of “Queerness” as a category for political unification.¹⁰² Together with other “anti-subordinating tools”¹⁰³ such as his notion of “inter-connectivity,”¹⁰⁴ Valdes makes an articulate call to form an inclusive political emancipatory movement. In one of his more succinct descriptions of inter-connectivity, Valdes states that inter-connectivity:

[D]onates a proactive and personal linkage of consciousness that operates on multiple levels at once. It is a personal awakening to the commonalities that situate, and have situated, lesbians, gay men and other sexual minorities in similar riptides of hetero-patriarchal discrimination and oppression. Inter-connectivity is about understanding, in both expansive

99. Darren Rosenblum, *Queer Intersectionality and the Failure of Recent Lesbian and Gay “Victories,”* 4 *LAW & SEX.* 83, 89 (1994).

100. *Id.* at 90.

101. *Id.* at 93.

102. Francisco Valdes, *Sex and Race in Queer Legal Culture: Ruminations on Identities & Inter-Connectivities,* *S. CAL. REV. L. & WOMEN’S STUD.* 25, 66-70 (1995).

103. *Id.* at 57.

104. *Id.* at 57-66.

and inclusive ways, how each of our lives and communities are prodded by dominant social and legal forces to follow common scripts of denial and denigration.¹⁰⁵

Like Rosenblum's queer continuum, Valdes nominates Queerness as a political category that has the potential to unite and include all minority groups.¹⁰⁶

As I have elsewhere discussed,¹⁰⁷ Valdes's (and Rosenblum's) post-intersectionality work essentially relies on a new and explicitly politically constructed notion of queerness to address the fissures threatened by the voices of sexual minorities within people of color communities, voices that are neither satisfied by the label of "multiple consciousness"¹⁰⁸ nor willing to accept the fracturing condescension of being further marginalized by a separate intersectional identity. Yet, arguably neither inter-connectivity nor these notions of queerness do the theoretical work that is needed to sustain a recognition of common interests over and above the general need to confront oppressive yet abstract regimes of power.

Darren Hutchinson has recently recognized and undertaken this theoretical project.¹⁰⁹ Hutchinson's notion of "multidimensionality"¹¹⁰ directly challenges intersectionality as a theory that suggests "a separability of the host of identities and forces that define social groups and social power."¹¹¹ In contrast, multidimensionality:

[D]emands that we make explicit the racial and class (and other) assumptions that undergird our theories, realize these assumptions might (and likely do) limit the application of our theories, strive to discover the vast differences among individuals in oppressed social groups, and learn how these differences should (and do) affect theory and politics.¹¹²

Unfortunately, while recognizing both that "dimensions are inextricably and forever intertwined,"¹¹³ and the complexity and "multilayered

105. *Id.* at 65-66.

106. For Valdes:

[Queerness is] calculated more to project a particular sense of consciousness and commitment rather than to signify a particular sexual orientation. Regardless of one's sex, race, class or sexual orientation, Queer is the term that signifies a conscious commitment to inclusive and egalitarian sensibilities in the dismantlement of Euro-centric hetero-patriarchy. . . . Indeed, Queerness is a rich and still malleable construct that coincides both with the broader need for an inter-group ethic of inclusiveness, and with the larger gathering movement toward a post-identity politics of consciousness.

Id. at 68-69.

107. Kwan, *supra* note 22, at 1280.

108. See Mari Matsuda, *When the First Quail Calls: Multiple Consciousness as Jurisprudential Method*, 14 WOMEN'S RTS. L. REP. 297 (1992) (calling us to "consider women of color as a paradigm group for utilization of multiple consciousness as jurisprudential method").

109. Darren Lenard Hutchinson, *Out Yet Unseen: A Radical Critique of Gay and Lesbian Legal Theory and Political Discourse*, 29 CONN. L. REV. 561 (1997).

110. *Id.* at 640-41.

111. *Id.* at 641.

112. *Id.* at 640.

113. *Id.*

nature of everyone's identities and of oppression,"¹¹⁴ Hutchinson's notion of multidimensionality still lacks a description and an analysis of this complexity, or how and why "dimensions" are "forever intertwined." Hutchinson's goal, it seems, was modestly to "initiate a dialogue regarding the diversity of gay and lesbian experience, from which a theory more reflective of our social reality might emerge."¹¹⁵ He ultimately viewed multidimensionality "as a discursive project aimed at unveiling the complexity of subordination and identity and reshaping legal theory to reflect and respond to this complexity."¹¹⁶ To observe the multidimensionality of categories is a definite advance in contemporary legal theory, but it does not explain the complexity Hutchinson has identified.

Cosynthesis, I submit, begins to do this theoretical work. It does so because at a theoretical level, cosynthesis articulates the way in which the constructedness of certain categories of oppression depends upon the operational presence of other similar categories. As I have elsewhere stated: "Cosynthesis offers a dynamic model of the conditions of categorical formations whose ultimate message is that since the multiple categories through which we understand ourselves are sometimes implicated in complex ways with the formation of categories through which others are constituted, a fully deconstructed understanding of categories must include this insight and go beyond static and autonomous notions of categories that stand alone or next to or within others thereby multiplying the boundaries between categories."¹¹⁷

The Oriental Woman is a type that relies on and is synthesized out of particular categories of race, gender, sexual orientation, social class, colonial subjectivity as well as other possible personal identity categories. The Oriental Woman is cosynthesized out of these various categories in such an intimate way that her efficacy in constructing and maintaining the western fantasy is sustained by the presence of all these categories. For example, the fantasy of her sexual availability and the fantasy of her desire for violence at the hands of her western lovers are cosynthetically sustained by, amongst other things, the effeminacy construction of the Orient, her status as colonial subject as well as the psychologically based disempowerment of the Orient as embodying a phallic lack. Take away any one of these, and the Oriental Woman fantasy begins to break apart and collapse. Cosynthesis recognizes the inter-dependence of categorical constructs, exposes the common interests at stake within and between boundaries, (however they are constituted) and thus ultimately makes evident and necessary the commonality of political struggles.

114. *Id.*

115. *Id.* at 644.

116. *Id.* at 640.

117. Kwan, *supra* note 22, at 1280.

