

**"The Sinister Chinese:" an Orientalist Analysis of the Development of  
Chinese Stereotypes in Late 19th and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Literature  
Reflected through the Yellow Peril**

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## **1. The Call of the East - Introduction**

The Chinese have been portrayed as harmless fools, devious drug dealers and finally nefarious villains in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century popular literature. What has remained constant is that they have been more often than not depicted as criminals and inscrutable creatures from the Far East. Political events have shaped the portrayal of ethnic characters and Chinese character stereotypes in particular. The sudden shift from the passive, foolish portrayal that is common in late 19<sup>th</sup> century characters to the active, aggressive and intimidating portrayal typical in early 20<sup>th</sup> century characters was caused by the outbreak of the Boxer Uprising in China. The rebellion affected Western colonial efforts as well as the internal political situation in China. The Yellow Peril, namely the anxiety toward Far Eastern immigration to the West and later, the rising military prowess of the Far East, significantly affected the portrayal of the Chinese and caused a widespread sense of fear and distrust to be about the Chinese. Politics played a part in influencing the depiction of the Chinese in the United States and in Great Britain, because in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the public image of the Chinese was used to influence public opinion concerning colonial ambitions in the Far East. Popular literature featuring the Chinese was even used as a source of propaganda to point public opinion in a more favourable direction concerning the colonial ambitions of both Great Britain and the United States. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century a new stereotype replaced the old to accommodate the changed needs of the White West, this time representing the Chinese as an antagonist and as a source of both fear and anxiety.

My intention is to show through a series of close readings of late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century popular literature, how the image of the Chinese as an ethnic group changed from a passive lazy sexual deviant into an intelligent, sinister, violent villain in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and how the violent political upheavals in colonial China, such as the Boxer Uprising, brought about this shift in perspective, both in fiction and reality. First I will define and discuss 19<sup>th</sup> century representation of the Chinese and show how they were used in political propaganda and popular literature alike to direct public opinion, reflecting the dissatisfaction the white majority felt toward Chinese immigration. The texts dealing with the late 19<sup>th</sup> century will focus solely on the United States, although such stereotypes and propaganda existed in Great Britain as well. The second part of my thesis deals with the new stereotype and how

international politics affected the shift from the old stereotype to the new. Both stereotypes dealt with the fears the White West felt toward the inscrutable East, but the new stereotype included a fear of counter colonialism. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century stereotype is a distinct change from the 19<sup>th</sup> century stereotype, and the second section of my thesis attempts to discover how the new stereotype gained popularity and why the old stereotype was replaced. The second section will also discuss the effect of the “Yellow Peril” the Western fear of threat from the East on the development of the new stereotype and the qualities that the old and the new stereotype have in common.

The texts, I have chosen come from of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century popular literature, and feature two characters; John Chinaman, who represents the old stereotype and Fu-Manchu, who becomes the personification of the new stereotype. The John Chinaman texts include, poems, songs and short stories, which all feature John Chinaman, or a character that has another name, but is an example of the same stereotype in another guise. They are all from mid 19<sup>th</sup> to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and are all American texts. The texts dealing with the new stereotype deal solely with Fu-Manchu, who is perhaps the most famous and most iconic representation of the new Chinese stereotype in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

How John Chinaman evolved into Fu-Manchu and what brought about this change is the focal point of my thesis. The similarities and differences between the two characters show how Fu-Manchu still remains a submissive to the dominant white West despite the radical change in both the portrayal of the Chinese as a minority and the attitudes and the effect of the Yellow Peril. I intend to discuss and analyze the two characters through textual material and also include discussion of the historical events and political issues that affected the development of both the public image and the literary portrayal of the Chinese. The textual material I have selected for my thesis has been divided into two groups. The first deals with John Chinaman in several different forms; poetry, short stories, illustrations and songs. All the John Chinaman texts used in my thesis are by different authors, because John Chinaman was not a single author’s creation, but rather a popular stock caricature used by many different authors and artists. The best-known author to feature John Chinaman in his work is the American novelist Mark Twain. His short sketch: “John Chinaman in New York ” was influenced by Bret Harte’s poem “Plain Language from Truthful James”, which became very influential in both the anti-

Chinese movement and late nineteenth century popular literature. For this reason Harte's poem is discussed in my thesis and Twain's sketch is not. I have divided the John Chinaman material into three themes, the Gold Rush theme, the cheap Chinese labour theme and the seducer / corrupter theme. The Fu-Manchu section consists of analysis and discussion of Fu-Manchu as a character. The textual material used in the analysis consists of Sax Rohmer's first three novels in the Fu-Manchu series: *The Mystery of Dr. Fu-Manchu* (1913), *The Devil Doctor* (1916) and *The Si-Fan Mysteries* (1917). They are all set in London and follow a loosely continuous plot focussed on Fu-Manchu's relentless attempts to conquer the world.

I have chosen Edward Said's *Orientalism* as my main theoretical source, because all the texts discussed in my thesis are written by Orientalist authors and are connected to colonialism and controlling the "subject races". Said's *Orientalism* as a method of study is necessary to understand the way 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Western whites saw China, namely as fantasy and source of what can be called an exotic and secretive Other. The John Chinaman texts deal with colonialism through the United States colonial ambitions and domestic disappointment and dissatisfaction with sudden widespread Chinese immigration. Sax Rohmer was an Orientalist author whose interests towards the East were coloured by Western fantasies of Oriental mystique and the Fu-Manchu novels are filled with visions of this mystique. Said concentrates on the near East and especially Egypt in his text and has been critiqued by such commentators as Zhang Lonxi and Arif Dirlik that his theory does not include the Far East as a part of Orientalism. Orientalism has also been criticized for focussing on the male aspect of Orientalism to the exclusion of women. Some critics believe that Said's theories can be applied to the Far East as well as the Near East, because Orientalist attitudes, studies and books were equally Eurocentric and based on fantasies rather than reality when dealing with the Far East. In Orientalist texts and studies China became a mystical and exotic place that was impenetrable and inscrutable to the West. The general dislike and condescension the colonizing West felt toward an "effeminate" and "asexual" China was very similar to their attitudes toward the Near East. Using Said, my thesis analyses stereotypes of the Chinese, why they were constructed in the way they were and what purpose these portrayals served.

There aren't many academic studies dealing with either John Chinaman or Fu-Manchu.

Gary Scharnhorst and Margaret Duckett have studied Bret Harte and his literary works but neither has focussed their attention purely on “Plain Language from Truthful James”, although both have discussed how it relates to the anti-Chinese movement. Scharnhorst is one of the few scholars who have made an extensive study of Harte. Otherwise there is very little research on John Chinaman or Chinese caricature characters, except yellow face performances. Many scholars mention the term John Chinaman as a reference to the Chinese as an ethnic group, such as John Kuo Wei Tchen and Rober G. Lee; Lee has done some work on popular songs and poems featuring Chinese characters; but on a more general level not much further research has been done on John Chinaman or the way the character became widely known in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The connection between how John Chinaman was used in propaganda and popular literature alike has not garnered much interest or been studied almost at all. The situation is very similar in the case of Fu-Manchu. Sax Rohmer’s yellow villain’s reputation as a racist pulp character has left him in very low esteem and there has been little interest or inclination for academic study on the Fu-Manchu thrillers or the character himself. The Fu-Manchu thrillers have been often associated with racism and disposable pulp entertainment. This is enough to distance most researchers from them. Despite the negative reputation there are some academic studies that discuss Fu-Manchu. Urmilla Seshagiri, James L. Hevia and David Shih have all researched either the Fu-Manchu thrillers or the character itself to some extent, but they mostly show more interest toward Denis Nayland Smith, Fu-Manchu’s British nemesis and the hero of the series than the nefarious devil doctor himself. Seshagiri deals with the Yellow Peril phenomena itself and Fu-Manchu as its personification but she doesn’t delve very deeply into the thrillers themselves or Fu-Manchu as a character. Somewhat the same can be said of David Shih, although he does give more emphasis to Rohmer’s villain than any of the others. None of them have researched Fu-Manchu’s relation to previous depictions of Chinese characters, although David Shih does mention the Boxer uprising and the effect it had on how the West began to see the East.

In this sense my thesis deals with a subject that has not been discussed in much detail in the field. The way Chinese stereotypes and caricatures have been used in the popular media, especially literature, to help guide public opinion in a more positive direction towards both political and colonial goals is something that has not been researched extensively. My thesis discusses the development and change of Chinese stereotypes

and caricatures from the Orientalist subdued Other to the threatening yellow villain, and bring a new perspective and new information into the field of Chinese caricatures. Both 19<sup>th</sup> century Chinese characters and 20<sup>th</sup> century characters have been studied individually and as a part of a larger phenomenon, such as the anti-Chinese Movement, but they have not been studied as individual topics in their own right. My thesis discusses the development and depiction of both stock Chinese caricatures and the first and most iconic Chinese villain, which is what the caricature becomes. My thesis thus analyzes the evolution of a literary stereotype and how historical events affected that evolution and drove it to the form it did

## **2. I Welcomed You From Canton John But I Wish I Hadn't Though**

### **2.1 Ways That Are Dark; General Background and History**

John Chinaman is the name of a stock character, which was used to depict the Chinese as an ethnic group in Anglo-American and British literature and popular songs during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. John Chinaman was used as a means of propaganda aimed to manoeuvre people into supporting the United States' colonial ambitions abroad, at first mainly in China. Later these interests were expanded into including other areas in Asia as well, such as the Philippines. The colonial assumption was, as Edward Said (34) states, that the colonized wanted to be colonized. John Chinaman proved useful for other purposes of propaganda as well. The anti-Chinese movement in the United States used John Chinaman effectively to both pander to people's frustrations and direct their anger towards the Chinese as low-wage labourers. It succeeded in its goal to prevent the Chinese from immigrating to the United States and restricting both their civil rights, working opportunities, naturalization and possibilities of entrepreneurship, in part thanks to their clever use of the John Chinaman character. The propaganda in which John Chinaman appeared included, but was not limited to, popular songs, literature, poems and caricatures.

Because of the variety of purposes that John Chinaman fulfilled, the stories, songs and poems he appears in can be divided into three themes; the gold rush theme, the coolie / cheap Chinese labour theme and finally the seducer / corrupter theme. Most, if not all of the material that he appeared in was closely linked to the political situation of the time, whether it concerned Chinese cooliesm, or wage slavery, immigration or interracial marriage. During the course of this section my aim is to describe the defining characteristics of John Chinaman as a representation of the racist attitudes of the dominant white Anglo-American Protestant culture. In addition, I will analyze textual material representing each of the three themes during this section. Though the image of John Chinaman was used in both Britain and the United States, both the historical background and the textual material used in this section concern the character's incarnation in the United States.

The John Chinaman character gained notoriety and popularity especially in the United

States after a sudden peak in Chinese immigration triggered by the discovery of gold at Sutters Mill in California in 1848. According to John Kuo Wei Tchen, many immigrants came to the United States with the hopes of getting rich and then returning home with their newfound wealth, the Chinese among them (170). By 1849 the California Gold Rush had begun in earnest and California was soon flooded with hopeful miners-to-be. They all had the same dream; to strike it big. California was seen as an idyllic white haven without slavery or the Chinese (Lee 19). The general dislike of the Chinese as an ethnic group and the idea that Californian gold was “our gold,” or rather “white gold,” led to the Chinese being excluded either by law or violence from mining active claims. They often moved to already abandoned ones and managed to make a small profit by sheer tenacity (Tchen 170 and Lee 48). This caused envy and disgruntlement in those white miners who had not succeeded in their own attempts to work more profitable claims. Chinese immigration in the United States was not a smooth process; it was riddled with conflicts and problems. The Chinese performed low wage-labour at businesses such as laundries and restaurants.

The Chinese had a habit of isolating themselves into closed-off enclaves in cities such as San Francisco. These enclaves were small neighbourhoods that later came to be called Chinatowns. This behaviour and a perceived refusal to integrate led to an increasing disdain for the Chinese. In the 1860's the Chinese were used as members of labour gangs and strike breakers of the Central Pacific railroad. The Chinese were seen as a growing problem and in 1877, a Californian labour leader Dennis Kearney from the Workingman's Party, a radical anti-Chinese and anti-monopoly party, began its anti-Chinese agenda and used popular songs as a means of anti-Chinese propaganda (Lee 62 and 70). The anti-Chinese movement started as an issue of contract labor but in the 1870's it became a national movement that opposed Chinese immigration, labour, entrepreneurship and naturalization (Tchen 170). The Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 is one of the most significant laws that restricted Chinese immigration. It banned Chinese laborers and miners from immigrating into the United States for the next ten years (Tchen 278). Chinese non-laborers had to have a certification from the Chinese government that qualified them for immigration. Chinese people already living in the United States needed a certification for re-entry to continue their stay in the country and Chinese immigrants were excluded from citizenship. The Exclusion Act had several incarnations over the decades right until 1943, when the Chinese Exclusion Act was

repeated. Only after the Immigration Act of 1965 did legislation shift towards a less restrictive form of Chinese immigration.

John Chinaman was not only the name of a fictional character; because of a naming phenomenon that the Chinese adopted in the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it became linked to the Chinese as an ethnic group as well. Cheng-Tsu Wu states that every Chinese person was commonly referred to as John in California (2). Furthermore Tchen mentions that when the Chinese decided to take English names, they usually chose the name John (Tchen 230). Between the years 1855 and 1870 the number of Chinese men named John went up from half the population to two thirds (Tchen 230). Tchen proposes several explanations for such a naming tradition, such as the popularity of John as an Anglo-American name, an attempt to integrate into the dominant society and missionaries selecting John as a name in baptisms (Tchen 230). Against this background the development of John Chinaman is both interesting and significant.

The Chinese were not the only group that was referred to in such a way. As Tchen puts it “John Chinaman was probably named in the same manner as John Bull or Jack Tar”<sup>1</sup> (Tchen 231). The name was in use as early as 1845, when it appeared for the first time in a New York newspaper headline, and by 1869 it was in common use (Tchen 231). “A stereotypic term like *Celestial* and the earlier *Mandarin*, *John* was used both in ordinary references to any Chinese man and in patronizing or humorous contexts” (Tchen 231). It is difficult to determine when the name became associated with a caricature character and who was the first author to make that transition, but during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century songs, poems and caricatures began to circulate widely, not only in California, but in other parts of the United States as well. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century political unrest and violence in China forced both the United States and Britain to re-evaluate their existing attitudes and stereotypes of the Chinese. The passive, foolish but relatively harmless John Chinaman no longer fit into the changing worldview at the time or the context of the Yellow Peril. He was soon to be replaced by a more modern stereotype, a fiendish Devil Doctor. One of the last appearances of the name John Chinaman was in 1913 in Dickinson G. Lowes’s *Letters from John Chinaman*.

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<sup>1</sup> John Bull was a national stereotype of Great Britain in general and England especially. Jack Tar was a stereotype of sailors in the merchant marine or Royal navy.

John Chinaman is a representation of all the stereotypes that both British and American whites associated with the Chinese. The majority of the stereotypes were highly negative and their purpose was to direct public opinion towards the Chinese concerning current political issues such as colonialism, labour, immigration and interracial relationships. Racial theory and racial hierarchies became widely researched and popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the agenda of permanently establishing the supremacy of the white race. They also contributed heavily to what qualities became associated with Chinese stereotypes. At this point it is important to define whom 19<sup>th</sup> century Americans considered to be white, because this definition was not as clear-cut as it would seem to a casual observer. The United States defined its social structure by using a hierarchy of race or ethnic groups, which basically meant being against people of colour and pro-white. The Roman Catholic Irish, who were despised by Protestant whites, managed to rank higher than non-whites but were still not quite white. They were able to elevate themselves in the social hierarchy simply by placing another ethnic group below their own (Tchen 221).

Questions of racial hierarchy and rank gave birth to several race theories during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which were determined to erase any perceived ambiguity. The writings of French aristocrat Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau, which dealt with hierarchies and abilities assigned according to race and the Victorian science of phrenology, were two of the most popular. The general idea of phrenology was that hierarchies could be established among races based on the shapes of their skulls and facial features (Tchen 148).

Physically, John Chinaman was defined as a representative of the yellow race. He was a short, thin, effeminate and both physically and mentally weak man. He had a long queue or braid, buck teeth and slanted eyes. The yellow race is defined as follows;

The yellow race he [Gobineau] cast as an antithesis of the black – that is, as physically lethargic and tending to obesity, emotionally apathetic, generally mediocre, and lacking in imagination but having a dogged practical sense geared to the simple fulfilment of narrow material desires.

(Blue 100)

It is needless to say that the mental and physical characteristics that Gobineau associated with the white race were far superior to those of the yellow race. According to Said, Anglo-Americans saw Orientals as their opposite in every respect (38). Because

of his physical otherness John Chinaman is seen as a threat on several levels. He is sexually ambiguous, poses a threat to the livelihood of the white working class, and corrupts society in general with drug usage, and interracial sexual activity.

Intellectually, John Chinaman is described as an uneducated, foolish and often childlike but inscrutable, and through his inscrutability he does everything in his power to separate good white Christians from their hard-earned wealth by use of deception. As a whole, however, he is not openly threatening or physically violent. John Chinaman is instead passive and non-violent; he is not aggressive, nor does he take open action against whites who, nevertheless, feel threatened by him.

John Chinaman is a character filled with contradictions, the most significant of which is the way he is seen as a sexual threat by the dominant white society. Asexuality and sexual corruption are two qualities which have been associated closely with John Chinaman. Despite the fact that he is not seen as a proper man, but rather as a womanish weakling, this image became associated with John Chinaman as a result of both the Chinese assuming “women’s work”, such as cooking and doing the laundry on the frontiers, which no white man would voluntarily do. In addition, the Chinese population in the United States was primarily male because the emperor of China had forbidden Chinese women from immigrating (Metzger 632). This had an irredeemable effect on the image of Chinese masculinity. They became deviants that existed outside the conventional definition of masculinity. Many poems and stories deal with John Chinaman tempting decent, chaste, white women into prostitution by addicting them to opium.

When media images of young white women lured into opium dens began to saturate public discourse throughout the 1870’s, two independent lines of thought - that Chinese men’s labour forced white women into brothels and that Chinese men frequented prostitutes - converged.

(Metzger 634)

In other words John Chinaman was not only a threat to the income of the dominant white working force but also to the virtue of their women as well. Robert G. Lee describes the stereotype of the Chinese as sexual deviants, who were seen as an object of forbidden desire during a time when “middle class gender roles and sexual behaviour were being codified and naturalized into a rigid heterosexual cult of domesticity” (Lee

9). Lee goes on to state that Orientals were represented in a dualistic manner. On the one hand they were seen as endearingly childlike, and on the other as dangerously sexual (Lee 10).

## **2.2. The Heathen Chinees Is Peculiar in the Works of Bret Harte**

In American author and playwright Bret Harte's work the Chinese are widely featured. They are constantly present as coolies, laundry workers and servants in his writings dealing with the West. This section is concerned with two of his works, namely his essay "John Chinaman" (1869) and his poem, which rose to overnight success "Plain Language from Truthful James" (1870). The poem is also known by the name "Ways that are Dark" and "The Heathen Chinese" or "The Heathen Chinees", but to avoid any confusion I will refer to it as "Plain Language from Truthful James". The poem was also illustrated several times and the illustrations are interesting examples of ethnic caricature of the time. In addition to analysing Harte's poem it is important to look at the illustrations as well, because they are good example of how powerful anti-Chinese propaganda was in its most potent form, in pictures. Because of its huge popularity "Plain Language from Truthful James" has been illustrated numerous times and has also pirated. Therefore I have decided to narrow the discussion to the illustrations of Sol Eytinge and Joseph Hull.

"Plain Language from Truthful James" is Harte's most famous work and it is what he is remembered for. In Gary Scharnhorst's words "it is one of the most popular poems ever published" (377). Although it would be simple to define both Harte and his poem as anti-Chinese, contemporary sources and historians alike agree that this was not the case. Bret Harte was in fact keenly aware of the ethnic tensions in California and had written several articles, letters and essays in defence of the Chinese, for example to the *Springfield Republican*, where he described the Chinese thus: "As servants they are quick-witted, patient, obedient and faithful" [...] (Lee 69 and Duckett 379). In addition to this he considered the success of "Plain Language from Truthful James" to be cheap and refused to perform it very often during his lectures (Scharnhorst 377 and Scharnhorst "*I Do Not Write This in Anger*": *Bret Harte's Letters to His Sister, 1871-93* 206-207). According to Scharnhorst, Harte intended "Plain Language from Truthful James" to "satirize anti-Chinese prejudices pervasive in northern California among Irish

day-laborers, with whom Chinese immigrants competed for jobs” (Scharnhorst 378). Tchen (196) and Margaret Duckett agree with this observation. Duckett goes on to explain how Harte’s pro-Chinese intentions were easily misinterpreted to suit the racist needs of the Irish day-labourers because, as Duckett puts it, Harte’s plain language was in fact far from plain and was used to support the racist cause he had set out to criticise (242). A good example of Harte’s less than plain language is the whole first stanza of “Plain Language from Truthful James”:

Which I wish to remark,  
And my language is plain,  
That for ways that are dark  
And for tricks that are vain,  
The Heathen Chinee is peculiar,  
Which the same I would rise to explain.

(Harte I, 1-6)

Already the opening of the poem sends a rather negative message of the Chinese, their ways are dark and they use trickery and dishonesty, while the narrator, Truthful James uses plain language. While Harte used irony to satirize both the stereotypes of the Irish and the Chinese, his attempt at presenting the Chinese in a more positive light than the Irish failed, possibly because of the poem’s indirectness.

Though critics such as Scharnhorst and Duckett have not reached a consensus on what “Plain Language From Truthful James” means, they do agree that Harte intended it to be read as an attack against the anti-Chinese attitudes that were surfacing in 1870. He sought to present the Chinese as a viable and sober labour option to the Irish. By juxtaposing the Chinese with another negatively treated group, the Irish, Harte sought to promote the Chinese as a preferable option to a group that was traditionally marginalized by Protestant Americans not only for their ethnic background as lesser whites, but their religious background as well, Roman Catholicism. Duckett observes that Harte often ridiculed the idea of manifest destiny “by which ‘Anglo-Saxons’ attempted self-justification for mistreatment of other ethnic groups” (247). This perspective is apparent in “Plain Language from Truthful James” as well and supports the pro-Chinese reading.

The Irish were widely compared both to free Blacks and the Chinese in the media

because they performed similar labour. The Chinese and the Irish had an antagonistic relationship and the Irish protested against being grouped with non-whites. During the course of the 1870's in California as well as the East Coast, Chinese workers began to replace the Irish as a new labour force, mostly because they were willing to work for lower wages. This was not the only factor in their favour however; the Chinese were considered preferable to the Irish, who were thought of as undisciplined and ill tempered. The fact that the cultural and ethnic position of the Irish was unstable only added to the antagonism they felt towards the Chinese, who seemed to gradually be replacing them as a labour force. Therefore it is not surprising that it was Irish labour leaders who were the most adamant supporters of the anti-Chinese movement (Lee 61).

The Chinese and the Irish were also portrayed similarly in the media. They were represented as animal-like, the Chinese with Chimpanzee-like faces and the Irish with Gorilla-like noses (Tchen 217), low brows and jutting jaws (Lee 68). It is especially significant that the general population did not consider the Irish to be as white as other Europeans (Lee 68). The general opinion of the Irish at the time when "Plain Language from Truthful James" was published was more favourable to the Chinese than it was to the Irish, who were considered to be loutish, drunken, uncontrollable and unreliable, yet as Scharnhorst points out

Too often rather than an indictment of an anti-Chinese sentiment, Harte's poem seemed to licence that sentiment. The predominantly white, middle-class readers of the *Overland*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and the papers that reprinted the poem identified not with the "heathen" Ah Sin but with his presumed racial superior, Bill Nye, the ostensible victim of his trickery.

(Scharnhorst 380)

Despite their unpopularity in the dominant society the Irish had one thing in their favour which the Chinese, for all their sobriety and industriousness could never compete with: as Lee puts it they had the status of "free white persons" (70). Another factor that affected the negative interpretation of the poem was the view that the Chinese had no interest in investing in the future of the then young country. They only wished to gather wealth and return with it to China; because of this, they also had no desire to integrate with the dominant culture and made the conscious choice to remain alien, which made them even less desirable than the unpopular Irish (Lee 44). Stuart Creighton Miller disagrees with this argument by making the observation that many Americans found it

preferable that the Chinese did not stay but returned to China like birds of passage (Miller 193). Miller extends this argument that the Chinese were incapable of integrating into American society, and sometimes they were even seen as an undesirable addition to the “American melting pot” (169). They were thought to prefer creating a miniature China in the form of Chinatowns, voluntarily ostracising themselves there rather than integrating with either the dominant culture or society. Therefore for all of Harte’s good intentions, it is easy to see how “Plain Language from Truthful James” could be used against the ethnic group it was meant to support.

“Plain Language from Truthful James” tells the story of two Irish card sharks, William Nye, who is also called Bill, and Truthful James and their attempt to swindle Ah Sin, a Chinaman, in a game of cards. The poem opens with the declaration “That for ways that are dark / And for tricks that are vain, the heathen Chinee is peculiar” (Harte 3-5). Darkness was an adjective commonly associated with China and the Chinese. Many contemporary writers, such as missionaries, would refer to China as the “Kingdom of Darkness” as often as they called it the “Middle Kingdom” (Miller 72). Phrases such as “sitting in darkness” and “dwelling in the land of the Shadow of Death” were used, though they were purposefully vague (Miller 72). One missionary went as far as to describe them as “children of darkness, condemned souls who could not muster sufficient determination to save themselves” (Miller 61). Because the phrase “That for ways that are dark,” is repeated twice, in both the first and the last stanza, it is obvious that Harte was aware of the association of Chinese with darkness and his use of the adjective was deliberate. This phrase already sets the Chinese apart as alien and inscrutable; his culture and religion are not only different but also dark, or even evil. The general stereotype of Chinese culture and religion at the time was that it was contrary and essentially non-Christian. Elaine H. Kim describes the situation as one where these “aliens to whom the English language and the culture it represents can never really belong” (93). They will always remain in the clearly defined area of the ways that are dark.

The John Chinaman of the poem, Ah Sin, is a prime example of an Orientalist stereotype, even though Bret Harte intended him to be a positive example of the Chinese, breaking all the stereotypes associated with the Chinese, while the Irishmen in the poem reinforce all the stereotypes associated with them. In the poem Ah Sin is

constantly positioned in contrast to the Irish. Compared to him, he is meant to be a lesser evil, a smaller danger and a better option as a labour force. Harte's readers, however, did not see Ah Sin in this light, all they saw was the inscrutable Oriental. Anti-Chinese activists recited the poem in public, one congressman even sending a letter to Harte, in which he thanked him for supporting the anti-Chinese cause (Scharnhorst 380). The poem was quoted on the floor of the US Congress in January 1871 in association with the immigration debate in a way that, according to Scharnhorst, Harte would not have approved (386). In other words, as Said puts it, in the Orientalist imagination "the Oriental is irrational, depraved, (fallen), 'childlike', different" (40). Other qualities that Said mentions are backward, degenerate, uncivilized and retarded (207). During the course of the poem Ah Sin will be revealed to be most if not all of these things, but for the first stanza he is merely among the religiously fallen, he is a heathen, and plainly different. In addition to being the Kingdom of Darkness, Westerners referred to China as "Satan's Empire", mostly because of the stubborn refusal of the Chinese to convert to Christianity (Miller 62). Paradoxically some Americans believed that the Chinese were incapable of even becoming Christians or, as Miller writes, "not reliable ones anyway" (134). Kim states that Asians have commonly been depicted in American popular culture as "always undeniably alien - as helpless heathens, comical servants, loyal allies" [...] (89).

Ah Sin was his name;  
And I shall not deny  
In regard to the same  
What his name might imply! [...]

(Harte 7-10)

His name is a play with words, Ah Sin or "a sin", which both defines him negatively and casts him as a sinner. Truthful James directly refers to him as if he was sinful purely on the basis of his name, as if he was an affront to God merely by existing. By naming his Chinaman "Ah Sin" and calling him "that heathen Chineese", Harte again subtly addresses contemporary attitudes towards the Chinese, which this time concern religion. Their refusal to convert to Christianity, both in China and in the United States, was abundant proof of their inherently corrupt nature. According to Miller, one missionary was reported as being appalled by the Chinese lacking the understanding of the concept of sin, as well as having no word for it in their language (Miller 70). For the Chinese, sin and crime were interchangeable concepts, but what upset Americans more was that

fornication, drunkenness and opium smoking were not crimes and thus not considered sins by the Chinese. Living in sin and without God was direct proof that the Chinese were in fact agents of Satan (Miller 69). Voluntarily remaining a heathen was a serious offence and no heathen could be considered civilized. This essentially meant that the Chinese were pagans, which made them undesirable immigrants to the religiously conservative United States (Miller 73 and 169). Harte manages to introduce a wealth of meaning into the first stanza of the poem by simply using this one name.

Ah Sin is also defined by his trickery and peculiarity, both Oriental characteristics, and he cannot be seen as an individual that exists beyond them. Said points out that Westerners saw Orientals first as Orientals and only secondly as men (231). Oriental characteristics had nothing to do with reality but were more connected to the romantic and fantastical conception of the “Orient” that Orientalists developed. Both Said (41) and Tchen (105) agree that Whites had a very clearly defined idea of what Orientals, in this case Chinese, were like. Said restricts his argument to include only Orientalists, while Tchen includes the Victorian white general public. In the United States this manifested itself in freak shows that displayed deformed Asians, such as Chang and Eng, the “Siamese Twins”, and Chinese museums where not only Chinese objects but living people were displayed. What defined these museums, however, was that they had little to do with life, but rather with what Americans considered Chineseness should be (Tchen 101 and 106). The influx of stereotypes and expectations was so great that most people could not tell the real apart from the stereotype (129). But so far in the beginning of the poem Ah Sin has remained passive and has merely fulfilled the assumptions of the Whites concerning what Orientals should be.

A quality very often associated with John Chinaman is foolishness or childishness, and Ah Sin is no different: “But his smile it was pensive and childlike,” (Harte 11-12). An adult smiling like a child is commonly associated with being either stupid or mentally retarded. Being deformed, stupid or childish were qualities that whites often associated with the Chinese (Wu 105 and Tchen 100). Later Truthful James refers to Ah Sin’s childlike smile again; “But he smiled as he sat by the table, with the smile that was childlike and bland” (Harte 24-25). The Chinese are not even capable of discernible human emotion, which strengthens the interpretation that Truthful James sees him as a mentally retarded, childlike or degenerate person. Miller points out that Chinese were

believed to be almost subhuman in their lack of emotion and it was doubtful whether they even had souls (71). Said continues this argument that according to Orientalists, mental inferiority is inherent in all Orientals and thus they need strong westerners with their inherent forceful qualities to lead and dominate them (36). Thus colonization is considered to be for the good of the colonized (36). Truthful James continues to describe Ah Sin's appearance: "And quite soft was the skies; / Which it might be inferred / That Ah Sin was likewise" (Harte 14-16). Not only is Ah Sin stupid or even retarded but he is also physically inferior, another characteristic commonly associated with the Chinese. His physical inferiority also emasculates him in the company of strong dominant white men, who despite their condescension towards him seem to have no problem with playing cards with him, or rather with fleecing him for all he is worth.

The next stanza sets up the hustle of Truthful James and Bill Nye but as stated above Harte's language is far from plain, for as Tchen puts it "the tables are turned on Western cleverness" (196). Bill Nye and Truthful James both end up being conned by Ah Sin. The fact that the two Irishmen were the ones cheating in the first place becomes irrelevant when the assumed Orientalist ethnic hierarchy is threatened. Harte parallels Ah Sin's victory over the two Irishmen with the turmoil over the Chinese Question;

Then I looked up at Nye,  
And he gazed upon me;  
And he rose with a sigh,  
And said, 'Can this be?

We are ruined by Chinese cheap labor'-  
And he went for that heathen Chinese

(Harte 37-42)

Just as Ah Sin bests Bill Nye and Truthful James at cards, the Chinese were beating the Irish to jobs in California and other areas of the United States. The Chinese were willing to work for lower wages than whites and they were taking over the labour market, which led to widespread unemployment among white labourers (Wu 168). They were also used as strike breakers, but were excluded from the working class and later workers unions (Lee 9 and Isabella Black 61). Because of Nye's declaration, "Plain Language from Truthful James" became widely used to promote the anti-Chinese movement. As Tchen points out, the fact that Ah Sin is even able to best his racial superior proves that

the Irish are “ruined by cheap Chinese labor” (196). Bill Nye cannot see beyond the ways that are dark and his declaration is fuelled by the frustration and weakness he feels when faced with his defeat. As Duckett observes "Nye reached his conclusion only *after* he realized that in his own little private enterprise he could not compete with the Oriental" (255).

The phrase "cheap Chinese labour" refers to coolieism<sup>2</sup>, which was associated with undercutting white workers wages (Lee 50). "Plain Language from Truthful James" was published in 1870, the same year that the anti-Chinese movement was at its peak. Though Harte does not mention coolieism directly, it is a testimony to his subtlety that with a single phrase he is able to address one of the central issues of the Chinese Question. The overnight success and popularity made "Plain Language from Truthful James" both a culture-text and a much recited propagandist text of the campaign against Chinese immigration (Scharnhorst 382). On the surface the poem describes a card hustle gone awry, on a deeper level it addresses the anxieties and fears of the white working force facing an alien challenger to their position. The deeper level of Harte's poem also has a Yellow Peril quality to it, just like the Chinese Question itself. This phrase also defines "Plain Language from Truthful James" as a coolie-themed poem.

A "coolie identity" was forced on the Chinese by white society, which essentially meant that they were considered subservient and unfree (Lee 9). Coolieism was associated with the Chinese long before wide-scale Chinese immigration. Miller observes that British and American abolitionists were afraid that it was a new form of slavery and by 1852 coolieism was directly linked to Chinese immigration (150). The coolie identity was permanent for the Chinese and they were not allowed to exist outside it, just as Ah Sin is not allowed to exist outside "ways that are dark and tricks that are vain". The Orient is represented as something essentially static, distant, exotic and self-contained, not something that affects westerners. However the boundaries of imaginative geography (Said 54) are breached when the boundaries that are assigned to surround a nation are broken, and there is a sudden loss of control. More Yellow Peril undertones emerged in the coolie issue when Americans became afraid of a massive wave of Chinese immigration, which it was felt would overrun the United States. This fear was

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<sup>2</sup> Coolieism refers to the exploitation of Asian unskilled immigrant labours who received substandard wages.

ignited by a famine in 1878, which *The New York World* was afraid would create “the inevitable tide of an illimitable sea, of which the first billow has as yet not broken upon our shores” (Miller 189). Fear of the “Asiatic hordes” was so intense that Chinese immigration and naturalization were stopped by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and other acts in order to protect white Christian society and of course white workers, which felt threatened by these “semi-barbaric” heathens.

During the next two stanzas the threatening stereotypes concerning the Chinese that are central to the way of thinking of both Bill Nye and Truthful James become completely unhinged, and both find themselves at a loss in the new situation. According to Said, Orientalist stereotypes and beliefs were so deep rooted that “any deviation from what were considered the norms of Oriental behaviour was believed to be unnatural” (Said 39). This is exactly the situation that Nye and Truthful James find themselves in. When they find out that Ah Sin has bested them with “tricks that are vain”, they are unable to integrate Ah Sin's behaviour into their Orientalist worldview. Orientals were known to be wily and inscrutable, but they were not supposed to be able to best their betters, but always be bested by their betters. He has after all changed the power structure between the races: passive has become active; yellow has become dominant over white, which cannot be allowed to become the norm. Truthful James remarks that “And the points that he made, / Were quite frightful to see -” (Harte 37-38), when Ah Sin breaks the racial stereotype and plays cunningly against Nye and himself. The alien has thus made himself even more inscrutable in his “ways that are dark”.

Lee makes an interesting statement in pointing out the change of balance between the Irishmen and Ah Sin. Lee writes; “only when the foreign is present does it become alien. The alien is always out of place, therefore disturbing and dangerous” (Lee 3). In Harte's poem before encountering Ah Sin, Bill Nye and Truthful James have been able to deal with the Chinese through safe Orientalist stereotypes, but when they encounter reality, their stereotypes are not affirmed but broken and the Chinaman becomes dangerous. The wounded white man must take his retribution in the way he has always taken it, by violence. The seventh stanza ends with the line "And he [Nye] went for that heathen Chinee," (Harte VII, 42). Despite there being no direct reference to aggression in the whole poem, violent undertones are present in the text. In the eighth stanza Truthful James is not plain in his language about how Bill Nye "went for that heathen

Chinee," but violence is implied: "In the scene that ensued I did not take a hand". While Truthful James does not take part it is clearly implied that Nye, who for Harte is a stereotype of an Irish card shark (Scharnhorst 379) and day-labourer, does violence to Ah Sin. As Scharnhorst pointed out above, this is not how he was seen by Harte's audience. For them, the violence Ah Sin is subjected to is deserved retribution for rebelling against the established order of society, where whites rule and other races follow.

Whereas Ah Sin represents the negative image of the Chinese, Bill Nye and Truthful James represent an equally negative picture of the Irish. Lee argues that the general stereotype of the Irish was that they behaved in an unruly manner and they were often referred to as "the wild Irish". Lee continues that they were known as a hard drinking and fighting people (68), and this description certainly fits Bill Nye. He is a gambler who hustles unsuspecting victims with the aid of a partner, as the fifth stanza clearly shows:

Yet the cards they were stocked  
In a way that I grieve,  
And my feelings were shocked  
At the state of Nye's sleeve,  
Which was stuffed full of aces and bowers<sup>3</sup>,  
And the same with intent to deceive.

(Harte V, 25-30)

What confirms violence is the fact that Truthful James uses the words "did not take a hand", which implies that he did not participate in some form of physical brutality against Ah Sin. Although Truthful James does not take an active role in harming the Heathen Chinee, he does nothing to prevent the violence either, and thus essentially condones it. For both Nye and Truthful James violence would be a completely acceptable form of retribution because, on the lines indicated by Said: "behind the White Man's mask of amiable leadership there is always the express willingness to use force, to kill and be killed" (227). Truthful James may be more docile than Bill Nye when it comes to violence, but his other qualities show that he is equally wild. He is called truthful, yet during the course of the poem he repeatedly proves himself to be

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<sup>3</sup> The left and right bower refer to the two highest ranking cards in *euchre*, which is the game Truthful James, Bill Nye and Ah Sin are playing in the poem.

Untruthful James. He claims that his “language is plain”, yet he is Bill Nye’s accomplice in at least one scam.

When Bill Nye goes for Ah Sin, the truth concerning the card game is revealed to the shock of the two Irishmen:

But the floor it was strewed  
Like leaves on the strand  
With the cards that Ah Sin had been hiding,  
In the game ‘he did not understand’.

(Harte VIII, 45-48)

Bill Nye must have grabbed and shook Ah Sin for the cards to be “ [...] strewed / Like leaves on the strand” (Harte 45-46). Through this indirect reference both Nye’s violence and Ah Sin’s deception are confirmed. To the added humiliation of Bill Nye and Truthful James it turns out that Ah Sin did not best them simply by being a superior card player, but rather a superior conman. It can be argued that the emasculation that occurred before when Truthful James described Ah Sin as “soft” has now been reversed, when the two Irishmen have lost both the card game and their dignity. Westerners are meant to dominate and Orientals are meant to be dominated, and Ah Sin has rebelled against this Orientalist order with his deceptive Chinese ways (Said 36). According to Miller the general opinion of Chinese honesty amounted to “they *will* cheat you if they can” [...] (31). Where Bill Nye only hid “aces and bowers” up his sleeve, Ah Sin hid 24 3xtra packs of cards (Harte IX 49-50). Ah Sin shows superior cleverness also by being able to hustle two experienced hustlers on his own, where it took two Irishmen to unsuccessfully hustle him.

In his sleeves, which were long.  
He had twenty-four packs--<sup>4</sup>  
Which was coming it strong,  
But we state but the facts;  
And we found on his nails,  
which were taper,  
What is frequent in taper<sup>5</sup> — that’s wax.

(Harte 49-54)

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<sup>4</sup> Eucre is a card game played with a deck of 24 cards. It is the card game that introduced the Joker as the highest card, which was higher than the bower Harte makes a pun of the basic 24 card deck in Eucre and has Ah Sin stuff 24 extra packs of cards up his massive sleeves instead of one 24 card deck.

<sup>5</sup> A candle is also called a taper

Scharnhorst explains the ways that are dark that occur on the lines “And we found on his nails, which were taper, / What is frequent in paper - that's wax.” (Harte 52-54). Ah Sin hides cards in his long sleeves and marks them with wax (Scharnhorst 379).

Chinese clothing was considered barbaric and improper at best. Chinese long sleeved, high collared coats were thought to look like under-shirts and were considered improper for daily use. Another factor also contributed to why Chinese traditional clothing was seen as offensive and alien. Many westerners thought they looked both ridiculous and feminine, which was partly due to the perceived sexual ambiguity of the Chinese and partly because of the pure alienness of the Chinese. By not adopting a Western mode of dress the Chinese showed a reluctance to integrate into American society. It was a common belief among western traders that Chinese had long sleeves, so that they could hide stolen goods in them, or in Ah Sin's case the means to steal (Miller 30). Harte even depicts the deceptive nature of Ah Sin's clothing, and by doing so he refers to a common fear of the foreign. Ah Sin not only beat Bill Nye at his own card hustle, but also he does so by using a culturally coded object, his shirt.

Harte's audience assigned negative qualities to Ah Sin and effectively made him the villain of the poem; thus his triumph over Bill Nye did not threaten the established Orientalist racial hierarchy. Harte's intention of a pro-Chinese and anti-Irish agenda was overrun by a staunch anti-Chinese interpretation. The parallel between Nye's con and Ah Sin's is noteworthy. Both perform their con by sticking cards up their sleeves, but where the Irishman only has “aces and bowers<sup>6</sup>” (Harte 30) the heathen Chinese outdoes him with his “twenty-four packs” (Harte 46-47). While both perform their con similarly Ah Sin is the cleverer of the two and he has a more sophisticated con. The significant difference between them is that Bill Nye's dishonesty ends up being more socially acceptable than Ah Sin's. The last stanza is almost a repetition of the first but its purpose for Truthful James is to affirm his statement of “ways that are dark and tricks that are vain”:

Which is why I remark,  
And my language is plain,

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<sup>6</sup> Bowers are jacks of the same colour and they function as trump cards in Eucre.

That for ways that are dark  
And for tricks that are vain,  
The heathen Chinese is peculiar –  
Which the same I am free to maintain.

(Harte 55-60)

Whereas in the first stanza Truthful James only expresses his intention of showing the devious nature of the Chinese, the last stanza of the poem expresses the same idea as a fact. There is a considerable difference between “Which I wish to remark”, and ”Which is why I remark”, the opening lines of the first and last stanzas. In the final stanza Truthful James expresses both his disappointment at his defeat and his outrage at the deceptiveness of the Chinese. The last line seals both Truthful James’s and through him the general public’s already negative opinion of the Chinese. Truthful James is free to maintain his negative point of view and it is implied that this negative view can be applied to all Chinese as a group.

### **2.3 “What has Ah Sin up his sleeve?” – The Illustrations**

The huge popularity of “Plain Language from Truthful James” spawned a number of by-products, such as musical albums and illustrated books. What is noteworthy about the illustrated books is that they directly introduce the issue that Harte only referred to indirectly, namely violence. All the illustrated versions that were produced of “Plain Language from Truthful James” go into detail on Bill Nye’s attack, each more gruesome than the next. What Harte leaves to the imagination of the reader, illustrators wallowed in. The first of these illustrated books appeared as early as the end of 1870. It was an unauthorized version with illustrations by Joseph Hull. Though Harte strongly disapproved of the pirated Hull edition, he supported the Sol Eytinge edition, which first appeared in *Every Saturday* on 29 of April 1872 (Scharnhorst 388). “Plain Language from Truthful James” was re-illustrated and reprinted several times over the years but the Eytinge edition of the poem remains the only authorized version ever published (Scharnhorst 388). The reason why Harte approved Eytinge’s edition despite its racist content had to do with his poor financial situation at the time of its publication (Scharnhorst 388). During his later career Harte had a very critical and contemptuous opinion of “Plain Language from Truthful James” even though he expressed it in private (Scharnhorst 377). Though Scharnhorst argues that the Hull edition had little artistic

merit (381), nevertheless the impact it made on the general public was significant because it utilized the new lithographic medium (Tchen 197). Tchen continues that lithography was soon used to serve the purposes of both sides of the Chinese Question, but it was ultimately the general public that chose which images they supported. The popularity of the racist illustrated versions of “Plain Language from Truthful James” is proof that the general public accepted and approved of the image of the Chinese that the illustrations presented.

Joseph Hull’s illustrations despite their crude nature create a stark contrast between the characters. This contrast is not limited to the racial difference between the Irishmen and Chinaman. In Figure 1, Truthful James is depicted wearing a top hat and a tailed coat. His clothing appears worn, he has, for example, patches on his trousers, which indicates that he is not a gentleman but is instead shabby genteel.<sup>7</sup> He is nevertheless more sophisticated than Bill Nye. Hull’s version of Truthful James does not follow the typical tropes that were used in depicting the Irish. He does not look apelike or animalistic in the way that the Irish were typically depicted (Tchen 217). Although he does have a large protruding jaw and nose, he does not look like a gorilla, and is rather thin and elongated. Truthful James’s shabby gentility suggests a certain degree of class ambiguity, but Hull has clearly drawn Bill Nye as a member of the working class (Figure 3). He wears an undershirt and pants and holds a pickaxe, which in the Californian context of the poem identifies him as a gold miner. He is also more unkempt than Truthful James, though like Truthful James he has a protruding jaw and nose and does not resemble an ape or any other animal. Truthful James and Bill Nye seem to be hybrids of both the old stereotypes associated with the Irish and the newly emerging image of them as established members of the dominant white community.

One reason for the Irish being depicted more like men than before the rise of the anti-Chinese movement is that they were the characters that the readers would identify with. The hero of the piece could not be depicted in a degrading or insulting manner, especially in a poem where a sinister Chinese deceives a white man. Another reason for this change could have been the way in which both the image of the Irish and their position in society was changing during the 1870’s. Visual artists of the late 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Shabby genteel here refers to a working class person who is trying to appear more genteel than he really is.

Century United States were highly concerned with classification. Different races and ethnic groups could thus be easily recognized in lithography simply by the features associated with them. According to Tchen, the truth of a person or a group of people was believed to be in their faces, head shapes and bodies (210). Facial features, such as the shapes of eyes and noses were minutely studied, and a distinction was made between character and type. Charles A. Knight's theory of national satire supports this because graphic satire presents stereotypes in "their most conventional form" (494). Thus the way a character was drawn in lithography included a wealth of meaning for the 19<sup>th</sup> century audience that extended far beyond the short text that was usually included with it. For the Irish to be able to break away from the traditional visual representation is meaningful, because they were no longer seen as outsiders of the white ethnic group. They were establishing themselves as part of the legitimate white population instead of existing on its fringes as an ethnic group, which was not considered to be much better than the blacks or the Chinese. Though both Truthful James and Bill Nye are drawn as caricatures, they cannot be as much the source of ridicule as the Chinaman, because a certain ethnic order has to be maintained. As Michael Pickering observes bigotry, hostility and aggression are ways to rationalize social or economic inequalities (48).

While old visual stereotypes of the Irish have been altered, the stereotypes concerning the Chinese are only reinforced. In Ah Sin the simian features often associated with the Chinese are highlighted (Figure 2). His face has a flat apelike quality to it with a large mouth and a squat nose. His ears are large and his eyes are small and beady. In addition to looking like an animal he looks rather simple and foolish, as the Chinese were commonly thought to be (Miller 148). Ah Sin is physically small in size and he looks like a child. Like any Orientalist, Hull has drawn Ah Sin in the way he interprets the Chinese should be, small, apelike but essentially non threatening. Ah Sin's clothing and long queue are indicators of the difference between him and the Irish, East and West and as Pickering points out, the way difference is assigned creates the Other (49). Qualities that are not acceptable and are seen as alien are assigned to the Other. Ah Sin in his Chinese clothing and queue is an alien compared to even the unkempt Irishmen, who thus become more acceptable to society than the Chinaman. Knight elaborates this argument that national caricature, which the illustrations from "Plain Language from Truthful James", reinforce makes a distinction between "one's own country from others by exaggerating their negative qualities" (492).

When the difference and hierarchy concerning Ah Sin has been firmly established, it is clear that when violence occurs in Figure 4, the sympathy of the audience will not side with the violated Chinaman but with the two Irishmen. Joseph Hull took an artist's liberty to first interpret Harte's poem in a way that highlighted the general antagonism of the time towards the Chinese. Where Harte only alludes to violence but never describes it explicitly, Hull displays two abundantly violent illustrations that leave no room for alternative interpretations. Scharnhorst stresses the fact that Hull's racist interpretation of Harte's poem is literal and has no room for any kind of irony or ambiguity, like the poem itself (381). In Figure 4 Bill Nye kicks Ah Sin in the stomach while holding a table, clearly intending to hit him with it next. In Figure 5 an angry mob of scruffy and unkempt men, perhaps Irish, all being low browed, big nosed and squat faced, attack Ah Sin beating him with bottles and one of them going as far as shooting him with a gun. Tchen observes that it was common for American caricature to depict the Irish as violent mobs who craved power and influence, while many racial minorities got caught up in the tide of their greed (210). The general reception of the Hull edition was positive and contemporaries thought Hull's illustrations describe both Harte's own supposed and Bill Nye's outrage at the "depravity of the heathen Chinees" (Scharnhorst 381).

Sol Eytinge's illustrations from 1871 are of a more traditional variety than Hull's. Eytinge gives the poem the same reading as Hull does and it is of a higher artistic quality than Hull's. Eytinge draws both the Chinaman and the Irish more or less according to traditional racial images. In Figure 6 Eytinge presents us with his version of Ah Sin, who is dressed in traditional Chinese clothing. Ah Sin's sleeves and pant sleeves are overly large and pyjama like. In Eytinge's illustration, like Hull's, Ah Sin looks childish, but unlike Hull, Eytinge has given him a rather coy countenance. A common belief during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was that the Mongolian, which was the racial type of the Chinese, represented an infantile physical type (Miller 158). Eytinge has clearly adopted this notion in his illustration. He looks sillier and even feminine in the way he is positioned holding his queue like a flower, while giggling. He is poised in a flighty and girlish manner, appearing more feminine than masculine. Eytinge uses the common racial trope of femininity and ambiguous sexuality instead of animalistic features. Ah Sin's feet are extremely small. This might just be a question of the angle

which is used in the illustration, but it almost looks like Eytinge is making a reference to foot binding, a practice common in China, where women's feet were bound tightly from a young age to prevent them from growing. This practice was seen as proof of the barbarous nature of the Chinese. In all the subsequent illustrations where his feet are shown, they appear abnormally small with the exception of Figure 12, where they appear to be the same size as Truthful James's (Figures 8,9,10 and 11).

While Eytinge's Ah Sin is not as clearly stereotypical as Hull's, his version of Bill Nye and Truthful James more than reinforce visual stereotypes of the Irish. Both look unkempt and thuggish, though again there is a clear distinction between Truthful James and Bill Nye. While Hull's illustrations were unclear about what class Truthful James belonged to, there is no such ambiguity in Eytinge's version. Truthful James is clearly a working class man, based on his clothing, hair and beard. He is also drawn next to a liquor bottle (Figure 7) a clear reference to the Irish as a hard-drinking people. Eytinge has also made a clear effort to depict Truthful James as more sincere than Bill Nye and judging from his face; he looks honest. The contrast between Bill Nye and Truthful James is even more striking when they are in the same picture (Figure 8). Where Nye is dark, gloomy and low browed, with a protruding nose, Truthful James appears more open, lighter in both shading and features. Bill Nye appears to reinforce the old stereotype of the wild Irish, while Truthful James seems to represent what the Irish will become, an integrated part of white society. The childishness of Ah Sin is stressed by positioning him on a high crate. He sits on it much like a child would, with his feet dangling. His face also looks more simian in this picture with his large jaw. In Figure 9, when Ah Sin bests the two Irishmen, Eytinge exaggerates two qualities in him. He appears both more childish and more simian at the same time. His jaw is larger and his nose has become even smaller and squatter, while his body looks more childlike than it did before. Ah Sin looks more primitive and degenerated than he did in Figure 6. Eytinge has reduced him to his "primary characteristics" (Said 120), where he is more easily controllable.

There is a difference between the depictions of violence in Hull and Eytinge's versions of the poem. While Scharnhorst argues that Hull's depiction is more blatant than Eytinge's, I have to disagree. Granted, there is no mob violence scene in Eytinge's version, but his interpretation of what Bill Nye does to Ah Sin appears more vicious

than that of Hull. Hull's version is crude, a kick in the gut and an angry mob, while Eytinge has Bill Nye degrade Ah Sin in several different ways, which I will discuss in detail later. Eytinge's version of violence also has an underlying message and alludes to the political situation of the time as well as directing peoples' anger. It is more malicious than Hull's version, which did not send much more than the literal anti-Chinese message. In Eytinge's version the violence happens on a personal level, while Hull has an anonymous mob do most of the abusing.

The queue was an important signifier for the Chinese as an ethnic group; it was also their most clearly defining feature in general. To dominant white society, however, it was perverse and bizarre. In Figure 10, violence between Nye and Ah Sin is initiated. First it takes an unlikely yet politically significant form. Bill Nye attacks Ah Sin's queue, which probably refers to the Queue Ordinance from 1876. This regulation meant that whenever a man was remanded in the county jail his head was to be shaved within an inch of his scalp (Wu 67). This was an attempt to force the Chinese to give up their traditional hairstyles, which most Americans found offensive and ridiculous (Miller 29). The queue was also additional proof that the Chinese did not want to assimilate into Western culture but wished to keep their barbaric ways. The queue also served as a visual signifier for the Chinese (Metzger 635). Metzger continues that as a racial signifier the queue not only draws attention to Chineseness but to whiteness as well, and what those things meant in 19<sup>th</sup> century United States. By pulling Ah Sin's queue Bill Nye effectively emasculates him, because the queue signified a free Chinese person and, according to Scharnhorst, it also symbolises Ah Sin's masculinity (381). Though this image only conveys the threat of violence, when Bill Nye pulls Ah Sin's queue and points his fist at Ah Sin's face the atmosphere is altogether more malicious than Hill's illustrations of violence. Nye's expression is full of wrath, while Truthful James looks eager and Ah Sin's face is twisted in pain.

Eytinge's more realistic style introduces more shock value than Hull's cartoonish style in figure 11, where Ah Sin is beaten by Bill Nye. Bill Nye is pummeling Ah Sin with his fists, while Truthful James calmly looks on the scene. Although the actual violence is not directly shown, there is no blood and we do not see Bill Nye's fists connect, Eytinge's version is altogether more realistic and brutal than Hull's. Hull's version is caricature-like and the violence he depicts is so stylized that it does not have the same

effect as the violence in Eytinge's version. This is because Eytinge's illustrations are more realistic and so is the violence. Though Ah Sin's torso is obscured from view we do see his anguished face when Bill Nye mercilessly manhandles him. In Figure 12 the violent scene is already over and the Irish have subdued the obstinate racial other. Both Bill Nye and Truthful James are sitting on Ah Sin and are emptying the 24 Eucre packs from his long sleeves. While Nye still looks crumpled and aggressive, Truthful James looks rather jolly. Ah Sin's face is not shown.

#### **2.4 “See what the Chinaman in America really is before you condemn those who think they have had enough of him”**

After the publication and overnight success of Bret Harte's "Plain Language from Truthful James" many authors were influenced by Harte's poem, imitating the poem's title, style and subject matter. None of the works influenced by Harte's original retained its ambiguity, but replaced it instead with a rigid anti-Chinese message. One author who took this reading to heart and went as far as titling her own short story "Ways That Are Dark" was Adeline Knapp, who published her story in *The San Francisco Sunday Call* 18 August 1895.<sup>8</sup> Though they have the same title, this is where the similarity between Harte's poem and Knapp's short story ends. Though her story was written over nearly three decades after the founding of the anti-Chinese movement, the racist sentiment conveyed by it is still strong. Unlike Harte, Knapp did not have a pro-Chinese agenda or any ambiguity in the message she conveyed through her short story. "Ways That Are Dark" is a cautionary yellow peril tale of the dangers of Oriental sexuality and the devious attempts by the Chinese to scale the racial ladder.

Knapp tells the tale of reverend Milton Grober and his rigorous yet ultimately futile battle for both the souls of the villainous Chinese and their rights in the United States. His pious and selfless endeavour can only end one way, in betrayal by the very people he has sought to aid. The naïve reverend sets up Sunday schools especially for the Chinese in Bethany, where his congregation can engage in native missionary work. While his flock perform God's work he takes it upon himself to venture out to California and argue the Chinese Question on behalf of the very downtrodden group

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<sup>8</sup> From here on the abbreviation SFSC will be used to refer to *The San Francisco Sunday Call*

which it concerns. The Chinese are seemingly grateful and go as far as aiding the reverend in his journey to California. Despite the warnings of a local police chief, Grober continues to put his faith and trust in the Chinese, who in turn cheat him, steal all his savings and abuse his trust at every turn, even going so far as attempting to seduce his daughter and other young women in his congregation in order to gain white wives. The honest police chief saves the day in the end, foiling the plans of the sinister Chinese and exposing them for what they are. He also manages to preserve the reverend's daughter's virtue and reputation.

The ambiguous nature of Oriental male sexuality simultaneously repulsed and threatened white westerners. Chinese men began to be commonly employed as domestic servants in middle class American homes. Lee observes that by entering occupations traditionally held by females, the Chinese got to see white women in more intimate circumstances than men of other races were traditionally allowed (10). As Metzger points out, Chinese men were not seen as true men mostly because they performed "women's" work on the railroads and frontier (632). They supposedly lacked masculinity, which resulted in them being seen more as feminine, a traditional Orientalist interpretation of the oriental male who did not conform to Western sexual roles and stereotypes. Metzger points out that the Chinese were initially not seen as a threat, but when they infiltrated the white middle class household, their ambiguous sexuality and indirect challenge to normative sexuality became a problem (632). Lee disagrees to some extent with Metzger, arguing that middle class whites had an ambiguous relationship with the Chinese: on one hand they needed the Chinese as house servants, but on the other they were wary of the threat of racial mixing (10). Knapp deals with this development in her short story by showing the corrupted motivations of John and his ilk in seeking out private Sunday school lessons taught by pretty white teachers. She implies that their motivations for doing so are not innocent or spiritual but rather sinister in design. The Chinese students are allowed a level of intimacy with the young ladies of reverend Grober's congregation which is not granted to white men. In fact the Chinese go as far as to visit the young ladies unchaperoned. Knapp criticises such intimacy by having the Californian police chief express his disbelief at Grober allowing such behaviour to occur.

It seems her pet Chinese pupil was calling upon her at the time.

I understand visits of this sort are quite the correct thing in the East – we woolly Westerners aren't quite so cultivated as that yet [...]

(SFSC 18.8.1895)

The offence according to popular belief and the media against white women was twofold. First, they stole employment from good hard working middle class women, forcing them to turn to prostitution in order to survive (Metzger 633, 634). Secondly, they were accused of seducing white women with their Oriental perversions and sinful opium. These became very popular and scandalous images in the 1870's (Metzger 634). According to Metzger, because of these images the public opinion was that Chinese labour thrust white women into prostitution and that Chinese men frequently visited brothels (634). Mary Yi Ting Lui also discusses the widespread fear of white slavery and racial mixing through prostitution. Immigrant labour became the source of a sexual yellow peril, which was enhanced by a fear of sexual danger presented by the Chinese (Lui 396). Knapp makes a short reference to this fear as well when she describes the hopeless efforts of white young men competing with feminine male Orientals for the favour of the pretty young ladies of Grober's congregation.

As for the young men of the congregation who were not spiritually minded they urged and pleaded with the girls for a time, until at last unable to compete with the triple alliance of opium-smelling heathenism, fascinating silk handkerchiefs presented at frequent intervals to fair teachers and precious jewels to be won for prospective crowns, they retired to other churches where the girls were less fully consecrated and had an occasional smile for non-heathen and American men.

(SFSC 18.8.1895)

Knapp's description conveys the common fear of racial mixing, which results when Oriental males are considered preferable to white young men. It also included the added threat of inferior races being able to climb the social ladder and achieve a higher position for themselves through marriage. Knapp touches on the fact that white society felt Chinese sexuality threatened white female purity and even the stability of the white family as a whole (Martha Mable Gardner 2). It was even suggested that the Oriental obsession with pure white women went as far as kidnapping them and forcing them into white slavery. None of these accusations were actually proven, but despite the lack of evidence the rumour spread (Lui 402). Knapp plays on these fears in "Ways that Are Dark" and seeks to direct the opinion of the reading public towards clearly anti-Chinese

sentiments.

Knapp portrays the Chinese in a merciless manner. All the Chinese that appear in her short story attempt to either seduce the naïve women of the congregation who teach their Bible class or swindle the kind-hearted reverend. Knapp's Chinamen are one-dimensional caricatures. They are capable of only Pidgin English, their native language is shrill and animalistic and even when they ponder spiritual matters their mind strays to thoughts of the fleshpots.<sup>9</sup> Though reverend Grober is a staunch believer in Chinese rights even he would not use their laundry services for "despite his enthusiasm, [he] would have shrunk with true Eastern reluctance, from wearing as much as a collar that had passed through John's cleansing methods" (SFSC 18.8.1895). Though Knapp calls Gruber's knowledge of the Chinese intimate rather than commercial, it is clear that his sympathy towards them is more superficial than genuine. Two Chinamen are described in further detail, but they are not fleshed out any better than the faceless masses of Chinamen reverend Grober attempts to save. Unlike the white characters, who err on account of naïveté, the Chinamen have no redeeming qualities. One of these Chinamen is Charlie, who attends reverend Grober's congregation and who the reverend describes as "one of his most promising Sunday school boys" (SFSC 18.8.1895). The other is Charlie's cousin Ah Hung, who according to the honest police chief; "is one of the biggest rascals in Chinatown. It takes two men to watch him and keep track of all the devilry he gets up to" (18.8.1895).

Both Charlie and Ah Hung are depicted as devious and conniving with a singular purpose, the former seducing reverend Gruber's daughter and making her his white wife, the latter cashing in during the process. Charlie deceives the gullible reverend without conscience and abuses his trust without remorse. He even goes as far as to send the unsuspecting reverend into the open arms of Ah Hung, who in turn hustles him out of all his money. In the end, however, the reverend and his daughter are miraculously spared from their potentially disastrous fate by the white police chief, who sees the sinister Chinamen for what they really are. Knapp criticises the more tolerant east coast via the police chief, who has no love for John and his kin and often refers to them as

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<sup>9</sup> Fleshpots here refer to the grubby bars and strip clubs where watered down alcohol is served and people can be tricked into paying for bad service and sometimes receive none at all. The fact that John would be distracted by such thoughts only serves as further proof of his deep-seated moral corruption that even prayer cannot correct.

“vermin”, even asking reverend Grober “do you trust vermin like that in the East?” (SFSC 18.8. 1895).

## 2.5 “And of course, that riles the miners, John”

The fourth common theme in John Chinaman fiction is the Gold Rush. This section will briefly discuss the common themes of Gold Rush fiction, which consists primarily of songs. The two sample texts used in this section are the songs. “The National Miner” by John A. Stone from *Put’s Original California Songster* published in 1854, and “John Chinaman, My Jo” by J.W. Conner from his *Irish Songbook*. Most of the Gold Rush-themed songs refer to the California Gold Rush. They usually convey a nostalgic and sometimes idyllic memory of the Gold Rush itself and a sense of jealousy or bitterness toward the Chinese. The Chinese often appear as almost a side note in Gold Rush fiction, but their appearance marks the end of Paradise and the beginning of a bitter life. In the 1860’s, when the Gold Rush was at its height, the debate over slavery was also at its most heated. The Chinese, Lee argues, were associated with the moral chaos of the Gold Rush and were seen as bringers of wage slavery (9). White Americans had an image of California as a new racially pure paradise and the Chinese did not fit this image (Lee 9). Thus they were ostracised and eventually removed from California with the aid of legal and social exclusion.

John A. Stone used the pseudonym Put when he wrote *Put’s California Songster* (Lee 16). His songs depict an idealised version of a miner’s life in California and the arrival of the Chinese signalled an end to this idyllic life (Lee 16). His song “The National Miner”, which according to Lee was sung to the tune of the blackface minstrel song “Massa’s in de Cold Cold Ground” (Lee 43), describes the imagined history of the Californian Gold Rush from its fortuitous beginning to its bitter end. The opening of the first stanza already signals the end of the imagined pastoral era of small, independent farms, miners and producers, which was a popular image in Gold Rush-themed songs (Lee 15). The idea of turning California into a new white utopia where non-whites did not exist was quickly shattered when gold was discovered in California and Stone touches upon this change in the first stanza of the “National Miner”.

When gold was first discovered,  
At Colona near the mill,  
All the world at first endeavoured,  
To get here and they keep a coming still;

(Stone 1-4)

Outsiders began to swarm the Californian gold fields bringing with them industrialised mining and the much-dreaded non-white migrant workers. The fourth line implies that despite the Gold Rush being at an end, the flow of outsiders did not come to a close. Stone depicts the Californian miner in an equally idealised manner as he does the state itself. He paints a picture of “the hardworking American miner in the California gold fields as a victim of alien interlopers” (Lee 43). One example of such victimization is “Those who had fought at Palo Alto<sup>10</sup> / Were driven off by nations they had tanned” (Stone 1:7-8). It is implied here that Mexicans, before the Chinese, were robbing the Americans of their deserved wealth. Stone’s lamentation for the unlucky fate of the white miner continues in the second stanza, when the villainous Chinese enter the scene.

When our glorious Yankee nation  
Sent her war-ships to the coast  
They left their mines for all creation –  
Now, tell me who benefitted the most?

(Stone 13-16)

While the patriotic miner was doing his duty to his fledgling nation, as any good citizen should, the goldfields were left unguarded and were soon overtaken by devious villains. Though the identity of the villains is not revealed at first, their identity becomes clear soon enough.

Here we’re working like a swarm of bees,  
Scarcely making enough to live,  
And two hundred thousand Chinese  
Are taking home the gold we ought to have.

(Stone 17-20)

Stone uses the second stanza to paint the white miner as a victim of all-consuming Chinese greed. The honest whites are compared to industrious bees in their labour, even

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<sup>10</sup> The Battle of Palo Alto was fought in 1846, and it was the first major battle in the Mexican – American war and it resulted in the United states victory.

when they balance on the edge of poverty, only to have the fruits of their labour stolen away by an infinite amount of Chinese greed. The Chinese are not given any attributes here, they are only a shocking yellow wave that has no end. The general consensus among the white Californians was that gold belonged to them by right and this in turn meant that any non-whites mining for gold must in fact be stealing it from its rightful owners. Stone supports this notion and uses the words “are taking the gold we ought to have” (2:20) to voice the miner’s outrage at Chinese devilry. Stone also greatly exaggerates the numbers of Chinese immigrants, doubling or even tripling the actual population in order to make the Chinese threat seem more ominous. Lee argues that Stone made the population of the Chinese down in the mines equal to the total population of the state of California (43).

Although Stone’s song is skewed in its retelling of the Gold Rush, it does touch on one of the controversial issues of the period, namely whether the Chinese should be allowed to mine for gold or not. The lines “And the two hundred thousand Chinese / Are taking the gold we ought to have” (Stone 19-20) refers to the bitterness white Californians felt when Chinese immigrants saved up all their wages and returned to China with them. The implication is that the Chinese exploited California’s resources without giving anything back (Lee 44), and because of this behaviour the idea of Chinese mining for gold felt even more like thievery. Eventually the resentment towards Chinese profiting from the Gold Rush resulted in their exclusion from the gold fields via legislation, namely the Foreign Miner’s Tax in 1853 (Wu 21). But even after the banishment of the Chinese from the gold mines the resentment did not diminish. When the white independent miner was struggling to survive in the era of industrialized mining, the Chinese managed not only to survive, but also almost to thrive on the meagre offerings from tailings.<sup>11</sup>

John Chinaman is at the receiving end of J.W. Conner’s scorn just as he was of Put’s. In “John Chinaman, My Jo” John and his ilk invade California’s shores like an unstoppable tidal wave. The song reads almost as if the anonymous narrator is chastising John for his questionable behaviour in California and is reminding him that if he abuses the good fortune he enjoys in California he will end up being punished. The

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<sup>11</sup> While the Chinese were banned from active claims, they were allowed to mine tailings, which were claims that were considered empty and thus abandoned. (Lee 48)

song opens with an ominous description of the arrival of the Chinese.

You're coming precious fast  
Each ship that sails from Shanghai brings  
An increase on the last.  
And when you'll stop invading us  
I'm blest, now, if I know.  
You'll outnumber us poor Yankees

(Conner 1-5)

For Conner, like Stone, the arrival of John and his kin meant the end of Paradise and California as a completely white state. Conner conveys a feeling of almost drowning in the wave of Chinese immigrants. The Yellow Peril tone of the stanza is quite clear, especially in the last three lines of the first stanza, where Conner refers to Chinese immigration as an invasion to which he cannot see an end, even fearing that the yellow minority would inevitably become a majority. This fear was a stark contrast to the previous attempts to preserve California as a purely white state, where other races had no presence. The shocking wave of John and his kind shattered the utopian society Californian whites had attempted to build.

Conner makes a reference to the confusing and often dubious role John assumed on the frontier, as dishwasher and laundryman.

But you often shake the washing stuff  
And spoil the water holes.  
And of course that riles the miners, John  
And enrages them, you know  
They drive you frequently away

(Conner 11-15)

Although John performs an important role on the frontier, one no self-respecting white man would voluntarily perform, his endeavours are not welcomed. Instead they awaken confusion and mistrust concerning John's gender identity, because he does not fit into any clearly defined gender role. Although John has been banished from the mines themselves, he still manages to come into conflict with the white miners. Conner alludes to the constant conflicts between John and the local miners on lines thirteen and fourteen. Though Conner claims that these conflicts stem from John's folly, in reality

they had more to do with envy than anything else. The Chinese were not thwarted by legislative exclusion but managed against all odds to thrive. Though banished from the mines John's mere presence on the frontier angers the white miners, but when his blundering attempts at entrepreneurship result in spoiled water holes, the anger of the whites rises to fever pitch. This anger would turn into widespread violence ten years later during the anti-Chinese movement, but the seeds for that violence were planted in the California goldfields.

Envy and disapproval are evident in the third stanza, where Conner describes how John's living standards have risen to new heights; "You used to live on rice, but now you purchase flour, plums and other things that's nice" (Conner 18-20). Conner observes how John has risen almost to the living standards of whites, if not their social class. Although Conner began his song with Yellow Peril fear mongering he ends it on a milder note. John is allowed to keep his good fortune and Conner does not resent him for it, though he does state that this might not be the case for everyone; "though folks may at you rail, here's blessings on your head" (Conner 26-27). Despite his seemingly positive attitude towards John's success, he ends his song with a warning; "don't abuse the freedom you enjoy John Chinaman, my Jo" (Conner 31-32). Conner exhibits what Said calls reflexive superiority, which here means that the relationships Orientalists have with the Orient are so complex they never quite lose the upper hand in any situation (7). This is what Conner's warning inevitably refers to: if John breaks too many conventions he will end up suffering for it.

In the end John Chinaman is a figure that begins as a faceless mass but ends up becoming a stereotyped figure that stood for all that whites saw as wrong with the Chinese. Though John Chinaman was a name used to refer to the ethnic group as a whole, it also became a fictional character that ended up being at the receiving end of the frustration and bigotry of the white majority. The Orientalist antagonistic attitude of us versus them is evident in all John Chinaman fiction. Bret Harte attempted to give John Chinaman a face and make him acceptable, but the ambiguity of his poem resulted in an unintended anti-Chinese anthem. The faceless, unstoppable and all-consuming wave of Yellow Peril was a common image of the Chinese during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it was used to great effect by John A. Stone, whose work under the name Put generated nostalgia for the imagined California of the past and anger towards

John Chinaman, who brought this nostalgia to an end. Adeline Knapp and J.W. Conner spin cautionary tales of the dangers of trusting a Chinaman and the evils they inevitably bring with them. Of all the sample texts used Bret Harte's was the only one that attempted to create a more positive description of John Chinaman, but in the socio-political atmosphere of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century United States it was not possible to change an image that the majority did not want to be changed.

## **2.6 “I thought you'd cut your queue off, John, and don a Yankee coat”**

The song “John Chinaman” was written by an anonymous author and published in the *California Songster* in 1855. The song spins a tale of disappointment and regret in the behaviour and lack of conformity of the Chinese that the Californians felt after Chinese immigration became commonplace in the state of California. “John Chinaman” does not fall into any of the three thematic categories of John Chinaman that have been defined above. Instead it is a combination of them all. It is included in my thesis as an expression of the attitudes and prejudices that contemporary Californians had towards the Chinese. Of all the texts featured in my thesis it has the most direct commentary on the attitudes toward widescale Chinese immigration in the United States at the time. Though all the texts featuring John Chinaman in this work have a political agenda, they all focus on only one specific aspect of the wide array of problems and conflicts connected to the Chinese, all of them domestic. “John Chinaman” on the other hand mentions, though not in great detail, many of the major political issues and prejudices centred on the Chinese. Most of the issues that the song presents are more fiction than fact and have more to do with Orientalist condescension than actual offences.

The song epitomises stereotypes and racist images with the purpose of proving the sinister and treacherous nature of John Chinaman and his people. Though “John Chinaman” was clearly written mainly with the concerns of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Californian in mind, it nevertheless has undertones that deal not only with domestic and local issues but includes international concerns as well. The merciless nature in which John Chinaman's offences are laid out for the audience to scrutinize is an example of the way in which the Chinese were often portrayed in the popular media (Wu 107). Wu points out that the popular press often “presented them as objects of ridicule, accusation and vulgar conjecture” (107). “John Chinaman” is no different in its approach, doing its best

to reaffirm the negative attitudes that its audience already have towards the Chinese.

“John Chinaman” is written as an account of the ways in which John Chinaman and his people have wronged the narrator over the course of five years since his arrival in the United States. Although I agree overall with Lee’s assessment that the song deals with the disappointment that white Californians felt about their experiences with the Chinese and how they felt victimized by their greed (Lee 44), the song is more than this. It not only shows the conflicts that occurred between the Chinese and white Californians, it also shows the reactions the White Californians had to these events. Even though the song is a satire, the emotions it conveys are not satirical or exaggerated, like the events it describes are. The inner timeline of the song; “but five short years ago,” (1:2) anchors the narrative in place and gives it a historical context. All the events and prejudices described are those that existed or took place during those five years from 1850 to 1855. The first two stanzas are a mixture of hope and bitter disappointment. Hope for a certain pre-determined coexistence between white society and Chinese immigrants and disappointment when the Chinese did not submit to the Orientalist way of life which was appointed to them. The white narrator alone describes his experiences from an inflexible point of view, while John Chinaman, like Ah Sin, remains silent. The Oriental is never given a voice and thus his experiences and motives are unknown. The author clearly feels that his point of view is irrelevant and thus does not need to be included. The white narrator is more than capable of speaking for him and relating the events.

John himself is not given a voice in the song because he does not need one. The white narrator is perfectly capable of running his life without consulting him for the simple reason that as a member of the dominant white society, he does not need to. He automatically knows what is best for the subject race (Said 34). The conflict he experiences after all his dealings with John arises from John’s refusal to submit to his way of life and this inevitably leads to bitter disappointment but also confusion, because John’s refusal to follow the narrator’s lead is something unknown to him and is thus threatening. “John Chinaman” was written five years after the beginning of widespread Chinese immigration to the United States and is a reaction to the events that followed. All the issues discussed in the song were ones that were politically problematic during those five years. Though the song opens on a relatively positive manner, with the narrator’s warm welcome, “I welcomed you from Canton John” (1:3), it is quickly

replaced with regret, which soon becomes the central emotion expressed in the song as the end of the first stanza clearly illustrates; “But I wish I hadn’t though;” (1:4).

But then I thought you honest John,  
Not dreaming but you’d make  
A citizen as useful John  
As any in the state.

(2:5-8)

The second stanza has a strong Orientalist quality to it. When the narrator describes his impression of John as “but then I thought you honest John” (2:5), it indicates that honest here would mean submissive and silent. According to Orientalist rationalization an Oriental is incapable of deciding his own fate and he needs a westerner’s guidance to be able to function in modern society. By “useful citizen” the narrator means that John would be useful in ways that white Californians allowed him to be just like all other minorities, who like John needed the whites to do their decision-making for them. John like the other minorities would be appointed duties in which he could show his usefulness and that would probably entail manual labour, which whites would usually consider to be beneath them. John would inevitably disappoint the narrator with his refusal to conform to a social role that contemporary Californians would force on him. Despite the hopes and expectations of the white Californians the Chinese remained as mysterious and inscrutable as ever, while separating themselves from the rest of the society in their own neighbourhoods. They also stubbornly held on to their Oriental culture and ways, which the Californians found thoroughly offensive.

“John Chinaman” focuses on domestic and local issues concerning the Chinese. Despite this the third stanza has two levels of interpretation, which include international concerns as well.

I thought you’d open wide your ports  
And let our merchants in  
To banter for their crapes<sup>12</sup> and teas,  
Their wares of wood and tin.

(3:9-12)

On the surface the third stanza deals with the self-imposed isolation of the Chinese and

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<sup>12</sup> Crape is a type of fabric. Here it refers to Chinese silk crape.

their denial of the most valuable thing they had to offer the white Californians, trade. This kind of obstinate and even rebellious behaviour is thoroughly insulting to white Californians and their assumed social and economic dominance is threatened when a weak minority refuses to abide by their rules. On another level the stanza deals with the national disappointment the United States felt during its colonial bid in China. Trade with the Qing Empire was by no means a simple and straightforward matter. There were only a handful of coastal ports and small insignificant cities, such as Shanghai and Guangzhou<sup>13</sup> that were open to Western trade in the empire during the first half of the nineteenth century. Even in the trade ports western merchants found it difficult to sell their wares. The reason for this was that though they had the right to practise their trade in those places few Chinese wanted to do business with them. Important cities such as Beijing, Nanjing and Xi'an were completely closed off to Western merchants. The Chinese were reluctant to give Western merchants any leeway in their domestic market, which was something that Western Orientalist-minded colonizers had never experienced before. The idea of an outright refusal to comply with their demands of free trade was both alien and repulsive. For a subject race to deny something as significant as trade was only proof of their treacherous and devious nature.

Refusal to participate in trade was not the only offence John and other immigrant Chinese committed. A greater insult to the Orientalist sensibilities of the white Californian narrator is the fact that the Chinese did not assimilate into western culture and society but stubbornly held on to their own. For Orientalist white society it was difficult to understand why a minority would refuse to assimilate, because all the cultures where western whites ruled understood the need for it and even welcomed it (Said 33).

I thought you'd cut your queue off, John  
and don a Yankee coat,  
and a collar high you'd raise, John,  
Around your dusky throat.

(4:13-16)

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<sup>13</sup> Shanghai and Guangzhou, though later very important, were not large or wealthy at the time they were opened up as treaty ports to the West. They were also geographically situated far from the capital city of Beijing.

Both clothes and hair are important cultural codifiers that can define a person or a group of people. The narrator assumes that when John arrives in the United States he would abandon his barbaric culture and embrace the dominant and clearly superior western culture. A clear way of proving his assimilation into the United States would be to dress like a westerner and forget his effeminate Chinese wardrobe. “I thought you’d cut your queue off” (4:13) holds considerable weight both historically and culturally. The queue was John’s most defining physical feature, it was seen by white Americans as both provocative and feminine. The queue influenced John’s image as a weak, feminine sexual deviant and corrupter of western society. It was both erotic and abhorrent at the same time. By removing his queue, John would be removing his Oriental identity and would thus become socially more acceptable. The Chinese however refused to cut their queues, despite the immense social pressures to do so. It was that refusal to conform, to change for their own benefit, that disappoints the narrator and eventually leads him to feel resentment and even betrayal.

Although the narrator of “John Chinaman” expresses disappointment and later resentment about his experiences with the Chinese he never takes action to release his frustration in any way. While the narrator remains passive, the white majority of California did not, the actions they took against the Chinese were varied and manifold, and stretched from legislation to the anti-Chinese movement. Though it did not yet exist at the time “John Chinaman” was published, later the Queue Ordinance of 1876 enabled officials to cut the hair of any prisoners incarcerated in a county jail within an inch of the scalp (Wu 66). By forcing the Chinese to cut their queues, which were a sign of a free man in China, the white majority effectively both removed their freedom and emasculated them. When the narrator describes John’s “dusky throat” he is clearly defining John as non-white. Though this observation seems obvious, it is nevertheless meaningful. The Chinese did not see themselves as a coloured minority, but as equals with the western whites (Wu 2). In the light of racial theories of Aryan superiority by Arthur de Gobineau and others that were held in high esteem at the time, ideas of racial equality were outrageous and unthinkable. The Orientalist doctrine could not include such an idea either. Orientals were meant to be governed and directed, not rise to be equals with whites.

The feeling of disappointment and even betrayal is not alleviated during the course of

the song, but rather gains more strength the further the narrator goes with his catalogue of John's continued dishonesty and disregard. John is indifferent to even the most highly valued aspect of American society, its justice system.

I imagined that the truth, John,  
You'd speak when under oath,  
But I find that you'll lie and steal too –  
Yes, John you're up to both.

(5:17-20)

Lying and cheating are qualities that were often associated with the Chinese. The narrator is making a reference to both the prejudices associated with the Chinese as well as the law forbidding them from testifying in a court of law. In 1854 the Chinese were stripped of their right to testify in court, due to the fact that no non-white could testify in court against a white person (Wu 37). At this time it was also determined that the Chinese though not black or Indian, which were the two races specifically mentioned in the 394<sup>th</sup> Act Concerning Civil Cases, would be categorised as Indian for the enforcement purposes of the Act (Wu 38). The idea that a Chinaman could wield such power over the fate of a white man was preposterous. Subject races could not be given equal civil rights, because that would inevitably lead to the destabilization of the Orientalist power structure. As Knight points out, it is simple to associate negative qualities that one does not wish to see in one's own culture with another foreign nation. In the song the narrator describes his surprise and disappointment when he finds that John would commit perjury and thus prove himself unworthy of the right to testify in court. Thus for the narrator it is only natural that white Californians protect themselves from the dishonesty of John and his countrymen by forbidding them by law from giving testimony. Further proof of John's dishonesty comes from the statement that he not only gives false witness, a sin in itself, but also steals.

Stealing can refer to a number of things in the song. John does not restrict himself to stealing the usual commodities but stretches his criminality further. As in "Plain Language from Truthful James", where the Irish are ruined by cheap Chinese labour, the narrator of "John Chinaman" implies the same. He steals the very livelihood of the honest and hard working white men and even women. As Martha Mabel Gardner (4)

points out, Chinese immigrants blurred the lines of both the racial conventions of work and the gender divisions associated with it. They performed both manual labour and light domestic labour at lower wages than whites, effectively challenging their position in the work market. While more and more whites were facing unemployment and the uncertainty in life that that entailed, the Chinese were prospering. Bitterness and disappointment led to talk of Chinese wage slavery, which referred to “degraded work performed by degraded Chinese workers” (Gardner 1), and greedy inscrutable Chinese stealing work from honest white folk. According to Gardner, Chinese wage slavery was widely paralleled with more and more white women having to turn to prostitution in order to support themselves and their families (5). Though the widespread usage of the sexualized and sensationalized image of white women as victims of competing male Chinese workers came in the 1870’s (Gardner 1), the implications were present already in the 1850’s when the Chinese began to affect the labour market on the west coast. Thus the narrator’s outrage at John’s ‘dishonest’ ways referred to both his criminal behaviour and his callous abuse of the labour market, where no white worker, irrespective of gender was left unaffected by his otherness.

John’s otherness and alien behaviour becomes even more apparent in the sixth stanza of the song. The narrator reveals his knowledge of the barbarous eating habits of the Chinese and expresses his utter repulsion regarding this discovery.

I thought of rats and puppies, John  
You’d eaten your last fill;  
But on such slimy pot-pies, John,  
I’m told you dinner still.

(6: 21-24)

The first two lines of the sixth stanza give the impression that the narrator believes that the Chinese eat rats and dogs, though evidence suggests that they gave up this habit after immigrating to the United States. The rest of the stanza reveals that the narrator has discovered that they continue to eat them even now that they live in the civilized West. The narrator’s attitude towards John Chinaman is shown in the use of puppy instead of dog, bringing with it the association of the Chinese consuming something small, vulnerable and endearing, and making the act more perverse. “Slimy pot-pies” is a significant choice of words as well. It gives the impression of something vile and

disgusting. The idea that the Chinese eat their fill of something slimy and vile implies that they are willing to eat anything without thought and do so regularly. By eating filth they debase themselves even further. Their barbarous habits while living in China come naturally to them; they are a lesser subject race after all and cannot help their inferior habits. However, the shock that the narrator feels when he discovers that they did not give up their barbarism after immigrating is a repulsive discovery and further proof of their innately inferior nature.

The media began to commonly associate the Chinese with filth. Although according to Tchen, the image of Chinese eating rats became widespread in the 1860's, it existed decades earlier in children's books and rhymes in the United States (265). The image of Chinese eating rats can be traced as far back as the 1840's, when it was first used in Samuel Griswold Goodrich's book *The Child's Second Book of History*. Tchen concludes that it was a widely read book, which left many generations of American school children affected by its imagery of the Chinese both selling rats and eating them (265):

Many parts of China is so thickly settled, that nothing which will support life is thrown away. Puppies, mice and rats are constantly hawked about the streets for sale. The favourite dish of the great is made of a birds' nests of a particular kind, composed of glutinous substances.

(Tchen 265)

Tchen argues that in the 1850's American school children had very defined ideas on the eating habits of the Chinese. These same children would be adults with unchanged ideas in the 1870's when the Chinese Question became widely discussed (265). Though used only in children's books at the time the image was certainly not restricted to them but existed in commercial media in the form of trade cards, the stage and newspapers (Tchen 265). During the anti-Chinese, late 1860's to mid 1890's movement the idea of the Chinese as a bottomless pit of insatiable hunger was expanded into a fear reminiscent of the Yellow Peril including the idea that they would eventually consume the whole United States (Tchen 273-274).

In "John Chinaman" the weight of John's treachery against American values becomes heavier as the narrator describes John's final betrayal. John has insulted the narrator's

hospitality in every way and at every turn, turning the narrator's compassion and welcome into disappointment. But the last stanza is where disappointment finally turns into resentment.

Oh John, I've been deceived in you,  
And all your thieving clan,  
For our gold is all you're after, John,  
To get it as you can.

(7:25-28)

When the narrator says that he was deceived by John, he is referring to believing that John came to the United States to do honest work, just like any other immigrant, but his true nature soon becomes apparent. John's greed is as insatiable and all-consuming as his hunger, and the Chinese lack of identification with America is shown by the fact that unlike other immigrants most of them did not intend to stay. They saved up their wages and returned with them to China.

The California gold rush saw many men get rich quick and even more men lose everything in their gold fever. The Chinese were banned by law from staking a claim. What they were allowed to do was mine claims that had been abandoned by impatient white miners. The discontent and envy arose when the Chinese managed to make a profit, no matter how meagre. The narrator refers to John again as a thief, but this time he is not stealing the livelihood of the working class, but the riches of the white society. The lines "For our gold is all you're after, John, to get it as you can", reveals the way the narrator's attitude towards the Chinese has altered during the course of the song. They are no longer a welcome addition to the American melting pot nor are they honest, but thieves and liars. The lines also reveal the way the narrator sees the gold rush. It is not something neutral or abstract, but it is automatically owned. He refers to the gold as "our gold", which implies that the riches of the land belong to the whites and they cannot be claimed by any other race. If a member of another race were to take any they would be labelled a thief, like John and his people were.

The difference between the first two stanzas and the rest of the song is marked. The song begins in a positive fashion, but the atmosphere quickly deflates ending in a hostile conclusion where the narrator accuses John Chinaman of being consumed with

greed. The emotions the narrator goes through are ones that most white Californians could relate to. They were offended by Chinese aloofness and their self imposed separation. While all of the offences John was guilty of caused conflict between the Chinese and the white Californians the most dire offense was their refusal to conform to the western way of life. This refusal to assimilate is present in all seven stanzas in one way or another. It is the central cause for all the disappointment and bitterness the narrator feels. The white Californians did not know how to deal with this kind of alien behaviour. Their Orientalist sensibilities could not cope with an Oriental that did not behave in a manner they expected. Like Ah Sin, John Chinaman also suffers the consequences for his deviant behaviour, although for him they are less violent, but no less serious. John ends up being a deviant outcast with a reputation for repulsive eating habits and a dishonest nature. The narrator in turn does not have to adjust his worldview to include the Chinese as anything other than a subject race.

### **3. The Devil Doctor**

#### **3.1 What Fiend is This?**

The turn of the century signalled an end of an era of sorts, John Chinaman's time as the ruling Chinese stereotype was coming to a close. The Boxer Uprising of 1899-1901 changed the image of China and the Chinese forever in the mind of the West. The 20<sup>th</sup> century with its tumultuous political upheavals in the Far East would require a new stereotype, one that was more in keeping with the new reality that white society both American and British would have to face. A stereotype that was essentially more believable in the new political context it would inevitably be reflected against. A stereotype that despite all the changes that occurred in the political landscape of China could replace John Chinaman who had quickly become outdated. The new Chinaman needed to be something that would still remain Orientalist in nature. A Chinese figure that would include the changing fears and insecurities of the West, instead of portraying a more realistic Chinese character. The Boxer Uprising shook the foundations of European supremacy in China and forced the West to face the possibility that the Chinese were not a lethargic and harmless mass that could be managed without much effort (Said 86). The time of passivity was coming to a close and the portrayal of the Chinese began to include active danger. The Boxer Uprising is not the only widespread civil conflict in China, there have been many, but one has been especially devastating on a national scale. In fact in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Taiping uprising ravaged China; which, according to Paul A. Cohen, was one of the most destructive civil wars to date (14). The Taiping uprising lasted from 1850 to 1864, when it was finally suppressed. It had an ideology that was strongly based on Christianity (Cohen 15). Although the Taiping uprising is a significant and a well-known phenomenon in Chinese history, it is quite obscure and constantly overshadowed by the Boxer Uprising in the West. The Taiping Uprising is seen as more harmless and less threatening than the Boxer Uprising, although the death toll of the Taiping Uprising is in the millions. Reasons for this are the Boxers brutality toward foreigners, their fanaticism and their rejection of technology, which gives them a more threatening image in the West (Cohen 15). The Boxer Uprising began almost four decades after the Taiping Uprising had been suppressed. In the late 1890's, finally exploding into violence in 1900. There were several catalysts that in combination contributed to the rise of the Boxer Uprising, such as the flood of the Yellow River in 1898 and the famine, which followed it (Diana

Preston 24). Continuous concessions to the Western powers, the development of railroads and the telegraph and Western missionaries spreading Christianity all heightened anxieties and resentment in the poorer provinces of China (Preston xvi).

In June of 1900 the Boxer Uprising erupted in earnest and a widespread spree of violence followed that was primarily directed towards foreigners, missionaries and Chinese Christians. The Boxers were not taken seriously at first, mostly because of their poor rural background and the general opinion of the Chinese was that they were too lazy and disorganized to keep the Boxer movement, or anything else going on for long. Most Westerners assumed that the Boxer Uprising would be a short-lived and life in the Chinese colony would return back to normal before long (Preston 47). The uprising continued and grew momentum and the Western Powers were unprepared to defend themselves when widespread violence and riots directed toward westerners began. At first the Boxers targeted mostly foreign missionaries, claiming their first victim in 1899 (Preston 32), but soon they began attacking other westerners and Chinese converts as well. According to Preston (25); violence towards missionaries was nothing new, but what shocked the West was the systematic targeting and killing of civilians, which escalated very quickly into a volatile situation, where white Westerners had to either leave China or gather into the Diplomatic Quarter, or other enclaves and defend themselves, for example in Beijing in the summer of 1900. By August 1900, 200 foreigners had died in the skirmishes around the Diplomatic Quarter (Preston xix). The siege in Beijing lasted for 55 days and was finally broken on August 14<sup>th</sup>, when international troops occupied the city. The British contingent of the international forces ended the siege of the Diplomatic Quarter on the same day as the international forces entered Beijing. The Boxer Uprising caused uproar in the Western press and the Western Powers were shocked and surprised by the brutality of the Boxers towards white Westerners. The crumbling Qing government supported the Boxers, because they were seen as a tool to lessen Western influence in China. The Qing government supported and aided the Boxers indirectly and also assimilated them into their own army, but when it became clear during the summer of 1900 that Western troops would suppress the rebellion, the Qing government withdrew its' support and aided in the suppression of the Uprising. By September 1900 the rebellion had been almost completely suppressed. The Boxers, their phobic attitudes towards technology and their hate of Christianity took the West by surprise and helped spread the slowly growing

idea of the Yellow Peril (Preston 367). It had become manifest and real and was no longer paranoid speculation of Sino-Japanese conspiracies and European Powers harnessing yellow hordes as their armies. China had become volatile and uncontrollable within a short time. The Boxer Uprising changed China's image in the West and as Preston argues (367); "Boxers, indeed all Chinese, seemed the personification of alien superstition, xenophobia and cruelty".

Although the Boxers failed to achieve their goal of driving all "foreign devils" out they had initiated certain changes in China. The soon to be outdated stereotype that John Chinaman represented had in part affected the West's reaction and attitude towards the Boxer Uprising. The Western powers did not consider the Boxers a serious threat, because they thought the Chinese were too lazy and passive to keep the rebellion going on for long. It was assumed that it would blow over and life would go back to how it was and had always been under foreign rule. The threat the Boxers posed was considered minimal until the violence and the loss of foreign lives altered Western attitudes. The change that the Boxers began was not only socio-political but cultural as well. The Chinese no longer saw white Westerners as an indomitable force and white Westerners saw the Chinese in a new threatening light. China and Chinamen could no longer be akin to the foolish, lazy and controllable John Chinaman for they had transformed into something altogether more sinister. Joep Leerssen points out that this kind of change does not mean that the old image was automatically replaced by the new. Instead of replacing a current stereotype, which has become unsuitable, a new stereotype also arises which is usually the very opposite of the old stereotype (278). This is why the new Chinaman still had similar qualities as the old stereotype, but the new qualities were more dominant. The harmless apish fool had become the villainous devil doctor who schemed to take over the world.

The term Yellow Peril is usually attributed to Kaiser Wilhelm, who coined the phrase (Preston xxv-xxvi). Gobineau was also obsessed with the fear of Chinese armies led by European masters, either Russian or German conquering Europe during the last years of his life, according to Gregory Blue, these fears "of an epoch-changing Chinese invasion", would later become what is known as the Yellow Peril (115). It was used for the first time in the British press on 1 July 1898 in the *Spectator* (Michael Diamond 12) and was used to describe the perceived Sino-Japanese danger (Diamond 12). The phrase

was thus used for the first time in Britain two years before the Boxer Uprising, which popularized the term at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The fear of the Chinese began to grow during the last years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Britain and raised widespread fear and mistrust until around 1940. So, although Kaiser William is the official inventor of the term the fear of the yellow wave and its consequences was brewing in Europe even before unrest in China had ignited. According to Diamond both fictional and historical events affected the attitudes of the public. Yellow Peril stories, novels, radio plays, and films combined with actual historical events and became an influential amalgam (Diamond 19). Leerssen (268), like Edward Said, points out that literature is significant in shaping the opinions of people in regards to culture as well as national and ethnic identity. Literature can mould and shape the consciousness of even whole nations. As Diamond points out, the Chinese minority living in Britain during this period was relatively small, yet their influence as an ethnic group was great (12). Diamond argues that the miniscule Chinese population in Britain inspired more interest in the Yellow Peril than its size should account for. John Seed corroborates that there were much less Chinese immigrants in London than European immigrants and that the Chinese population remained extremely small up to the 1930's (64). According to Diamond one reason that attributed to the impact that the Yellow Peril had was the sudden political change that occurred in China. China was at its weakest both politically and economically and by contrast Britain was at its strongest but the Boxer Uprising changed irreversibly how China was viewed by the world (Diamond 12).

Freelance reporter and author Arthur Henry Sarsfield Ward, who used the pseudonym Sax Rohmer may not have been the first to write novels centring on the Yellow Peril, but he was the first to truly capitalize on it. As David Shih puts it, Rohmer gave the Yellow Peril a convincing face (305). Rohmer was a freelance journalist who was not really making a living in journalism, so according to his biographers Cay Van Ash and Elizabeth Sax Rohmer (63) he turned to unconventional and occult means to devise with a means to support himself. He asked an Ouija board advice on how he could make a living and according to his biographers received the answer; C-H-I-N-A-M-A-N. Thus according to Van Ash and Rohmer Dr Fu-Manchu the evil yellow genius was born and he would torment the Western world for the next fifty years. According to Lee (114), Fu-Manchu was the first internationally known Oriental and was the embodiment of villainy. Fu-Manchu used the dreaded and sinister Chinatowns as his base and in

London this base was the menacing Limehouse. Seed observes (79) that Limehouse was transformed into a mysterious and hidden den of sex, drugs and violence and that Rohmer used this image to create a clearly defined but uncontrollable nest for all things Chinese and sinister. According to Doodo Shim, tales of Chinese villains who used Chinatowns as their headquarters became a popular genre in the 1920's first in magazines and then films (388).

Fu-Manchu was the most memorable of these Chinese villains, popular in the 1910's and 1920's, the devil doctor appeared for the first time in serialized form in the magazine *The Story-Teller* during 1911 and 1912. Later the stories were collected in novel form beginning in 1913 (Seshagiri 264). Because of their originally serialized form, the three novels can seem episodic and repetitive at times. As Seshagiri puts it (165), Rohmer constructed the episodes to include a new cast of characters that would react to Fu-Manchu's schemes, which would then be systematically foiled at the end of every episode, only to be repeated again in the next. Rohmer had a 15-year break between the Fu-Manchu novels and their backdrop eventually shifted from London and Europe to the United States. This had nothing to do with the shift in international politics, and had more to do with Rohmer's own dwindling finances and his personal move to the United States to better profit from his success over seas. Only the last Fu-Manchu novel; *Emperor Fu-Manchu* (1959) is actually set in China. Although Rohmer taps into the Yellow Peril and the fear it incited in the West, his novels are not truly political. He does mention historical events, which were politically significant to Britain, such as the Boxer Uprising; in fact he even gives it a fictionalized spin in *The Devil Doctor* for how Pastor Dan actually started it:

[...] In appearance he was indeed a typical English churchman; but in China he had been known as 'the fighting missionary' and had fully deserved the title. In fact this powerful looking gentleman had directly brought about the Boxer Risings!

(*The Devil Doctor* 225)

However Rohmer leaves out great international political events, such as the First World War. There is no mention of the Great War in any of the novels discussed in this work, or the novels, which came after them. Due to this the Fu-Manchu thrillers appear to exist nearly outside of time. Rohmer's London is still the heart of the vibrant British

Empire, which the ravages of war have not touched. Rohmer's novels do, nevertheless, integrate the uncertainty and distrust the West felt towards the Chinese and enhance it.

This section will discuss the character of Fu-Manchu and how he became the most iconic Chinaman during the height of the Yellow Peril in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The textual material examined will contain the first three Fu-Manchu novels; *The Mystery of Dr Fu-Manchu*, *The Devil Doctor* and *The Si-Fan Mysteries*. All three novels have alternative titles in the United States, so to avoid any confusion the British titles stated above are the ones this work will use. The following abbreviations will be used from now on to differentiate between the three. *The Mystery of Dr Fu-Manchu* will be referred to as *Mystery*, *The Devil Doctor* as *Devil* and *The Si-Fan Mysteries* as *Si-Fan*. All three novels can be found in *The Fu-Manchu Omnibus*. The reason for including three novels is that despite being constantly discussed in an almost obsessive manner by the main protagonists, Fu-Manchu himself appears in person only a handful of times in all three novels. Another reason for including the three first novels here is that they demonstrate the atmosphere of fear and mistrust of the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century towards the Chinese. They are also a coherent whole, because after *Si-Fan* Rohmer did not write more Fu-Manchu stories for over fifteen years, and while his later Fu-Manchu stories are filled with the villainy of Fu-Manchu, the uncertainty and fear associated with the Yellow Peril is all but gone. In addition to this Dr Petrie, the Dr. Watson-like narrator, is not featured in a prominent role in any of them. To avoid any confusion or inconsistency the name Fu-Manchu will be written with a hyphen as it is in the three novels discussed here. Rohmer dropped the hyphen in his latter work featuring the devil doctor without explanation.

Rohmer did not initially have any special interest in the Chinese. His main literary ambitions were focussed on writing novels with occult themes (Cay Van Ash and Elizabeth Sax Rohmer 29-30<sup>14</sup>). When Rohmer was working as a journalist in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, he became fascinated with Limehouse, a neighbourhood in London where most of its Chinese population lived in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Rohmer was investigating a rumoured Chinese "master criminal" when he became fascinated with the rundown neighbourhood, which is

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<sup>14</sup> The biography of Sax Rohmer, was written his widow and a close friend, and provides a subjective picture of this English novelist.

featured prominently in *Devil*. The winding streets and dark shops of Limehouse were an inspiration and the mysterious master criminal that he never managed to locate became the model for Fu-Manchu, Limehouse serves as a backdrop for not only his Fu-Manchu stories but also other novels like *The Yellow Claw* (1915) and *Dope* (1919). There has also been speculation of another role model for Fu-Manchu, namely the stage magician “Chung Ling”, or rather a certain William Robinson from New York (Barnes 2006).

Rohmer created his iconic villain when the Yellow Peril fear was at its height. He thought that the time for a Chinese villain was at hand though he was the first to admit that he did not know the first thing about the Chinese although he did say that he knew a little bit about Chinatown (Van Ash and Rohmer 72). Rohmer’s observation that the time was right for a Chinese villain was well placed, the Yellow Peril created paranoia and widespread distrust of the Chinese as an ethnic group. Leerssen (282) observes that national stereotyping requires the audience to willingly suspend disbelief, and ethnic authenticity was rarely a concern in early twentieth century British popular writing. When Rohmer was in his late twenties, he was already establishing himself as a writer of “Oriental” mysteries, but his stories had little or nothing to do with the Chinese, instead he was writing about Egypt and the Middle East (Van Ash and Rohmer 4). Though his interest and knowledge of the Chinese was minimal at best at that time, the fact that he wrote about “Orientals”, which according to Van Ash and Rohmer (4) meant anything east of Istanbul at that time, qualified him also to write about the Chinese. According to Said, the idea that all Orientals were almost always nearly the same was typical of the Orientalist mindset; non-Western cultures were represented as having little or no individual variation (38).

The Fu-Manchu stories reached huge popularity almost immediately and propelled Rohmer to fame and success (Van Ash and Rohmer 3). His initial success was in Europe but it quickly spread to the United States and there both his and Fu-Manchu’s fame would peak (Barnes 2006). Though the popularity of his novels eventually dwindled, Rohmer wrote 13 Fu-Manchu novels over the course of almost fifty years, beginning with *The Devil Doctor* (1913) and ending with *Emperor Fu-Manchu* (1959), which described the insidious devil doctor’s attempts at world domination. The first novels describe Fu-Manchu’s attempts to conquer first Britain and then the West and

then in Rohmer's later novels, the United States. Van Ash, Rohmer's biographer, claims that during the height of his fame the sales of the Fu-Manchu stories were in the millions (Van Ash and Rohmer authors note). Urmila Seshagiri corroborates this, stating that the Fu-Manchu novels sold over 20 million copies during Rohmer's life (Seshagiri 163). Though over time when the most urgent fear of the Yellow Peril was replaced by the equally urgent fear of communism, the Fu-Manchu stories managed to retain their popularity, thanks mostly to Rohmer's bestselling formula around which all the Fu-Manchu stories were centred, Fu-Manchu's attempts to conquer the Western world and found his Yellow Empire (Seshagiri 162-163)

[...] for decades the imperial propaganda machine, the burgeoning horror-movie industry, and British and American publishing houses reaped material (and ideological) profits by selling Rohmer's Chinese villain to white middle class audiences.

(Seshagiri 163)

Fu-Manchu was popular in fiction but was not restricted to this genre. Rohmer's super villain branched out into films, radio plays and comic books, which all enjoyed varying degrees of success in different media.

Although the threat of Yellow Peril slowly subsided over the first half of the twentieth century the Fu-Manchu stories managed to hold on to their success. Rohmer managed to achieve this despite the political changes that were occurring in the United States, where the Fu-Manchu thrillers retained their popularity after it had waned in Europe. Anti-Imperialism, which had been one of Fu-Manchu's strong motivators was losing its meaning just as imperialism was losing its significance in Great Britain. Rohmer compensated for the changes in real life politics by making Fu-Manchu's political agenda more complex and by distancing him from his original anti-Imperialistic roots. According to James L. Hevia (235), Rohmer played on the common fears of the early 1910's and 1920's of Chinese drug lords seducing upper class women and effeminate men into corruption and ruin.

The Fu-Manchu series extended these anxieties [the fear of Chinese seducing whites with drugs] well into the 1950s and 1960s, recycling fantasies of the many threats to white masculinity and femininity posed by an awakened Asia.

(Hevia 235)

Seshagiri and Barnes disagree on the durability of Fu-Manchu's popularity. Seshagiri claims that the Fu-Manchu stories remained popular throughout Rohmer's writing career and that the franchise remained profitable until the very last book. Barnes, however, argues that the changing political climate after the war ate away at Fu-Manchu's popularity and that the devil doctor was seen as too offensive a figure. This eventually led to the character's as well as Rohmer's fortune's decline. Barnes continues that by 1950 Fu-Manchu's time was finally over when the BBC rejected a proposed Fu-Manchu pilot as it was thought that the Fu-Manchu subject matter was inappropriate.

There has been some debate over the racist nature of Fu-Manchu and even the racist intentions of his creator. According to Rohmer's biographers he never intended Fu-Manchu to be racist in nature, but rather that the devil doctor was a creation of his time and the Yellow Peril atmosphere that existed then. According to Barnes, Rohmer's Imperialist fantasies were no different than others written at the time, such as the Bulldog Drummond stories<sup>15</sup> (2006). Rohmer does have his detractors though, according to Barnes, such as Jenny Clegg and Clive Bloom, who claim Rohmer profited off Fu-Manchu by selling hate, though, in fact Rohmer died impoverished and in obscurity. Barnes argues that Fu-Manchu tells much more about the time he was created and the attitudes of the people at that time than anything else.

[...] evil incarnate or evil stereotype? [...] Fu-Manchu is a product of the British mindset of nearly a century past; of British paranoia and prejudice: but also a British ingenuity and invention for good *and* ill, the insidious Dr Fu-Manchu tells far more about the British than he ever told us about the Chinese.

(Barnes)

Shih agrees with this view (305) and states that Fu-Manchu is a product of his age not so much a deliberate racist attack. Shih expands on this view by commenting on the durability of Fu-Manchu's character, which is not only iconic but also a manifestation of the imagined divide between East and West. Diamond agrees with Barnes, arguing that Britain was no more racist in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century than any other Western country

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<sup>15</sup> Bulldog Drummond, created by Sapper, (H.C. Mc Neile) is a British private detective and adventurer in a series of books that spanned several decades, like Rohmer's Fu-Manchu

(6).

The racist or non-racist intentions of Rohmer are ultimately a question of interpretation. According to Van ash and Rohmer, Sax Rohmer commented on the usage of the term “Chinaman” in his Fu-Manchu novels. It was a term used to refer to an ethnic group during the time when he wrote his first Fu-Manchu stories and in his stories and he did not mean anything more with it than that, although later it came to have a derogatory meaning (Van Ash and Rohmer 73). Names such as “Chink” and “Chinky” were commonly used in popular literature to refer to the Chinese and they were not intended to be offensive. Diminutives such as these, however, do underline the power the West had over the East. In Orientalist fiction the West dominates and the East submits (Said 36). Although Rohmer’s motives can be seen as either debatable or deplorable, the Orientalist nature of his novels is quite clear, whether intentional or not. As, according to his biographers, the atmosphere of the early decades of the twentieth century was anti-Chinese it should come as no surprise that so are the Fu-Manchu stories. When all Orientals were considered the same, with no deviation between ethnic groups, the inaccuracies of his novels concerning culture and habits should not be considered all that astonishing. Most of Fu-Manchu’s minions are faceless Orientals that blend together and the methods and weapons he uses are inspired by an Orientalist imagination. Fu-Manchu is in fact a hybrid form of combined fears; linking the Yellow Peril with an educated Oriental creates a disturbing otherness which goes against existing stereotypes of Oriental passivity and single-mindedness.

The devil doctor is a dramatic change from the harmless and foolish John Chinaman. It is almost as if the stereotype shifts from one extreme to the other. John Chinaman embodies non-threatening and almost comic qualities, whereas Fu-Manchu cuts a menacing and sinister figure wrapped in mystery that is actively threatening. He makes his den in the ominous Limehouse, a dangerous and exotic place (Seed 58). Whereas John Chinaman never truly presented a real threat to the stability of White society, Fu-Manchu threatens to conquer the West and enslave it under yellow sovereignty. Fu-Manchu reverses the hierarchy of power between East and West. Where traditionally, in an Orientalist view, the West has controlled, governed and even contained the weak Other (Said 48), now the Other seeks to overpower the West. Although John Chinaman attempted to dominate the labour force and even skewed sexual and gender roles, he

would never be able to fundamentally change white Christian society in a permanent way. The threat he posed was real but also passive, and thus easily thwarted and ultimately overcome by his 'betters'. Thus enforcing the traditional consensus that the West had of the Orient. It was infinitely decadent and alien, but ultimately incapable of action and in constant need of guidance that only the West could provide. It was an extension of Western power (Said 86).

A new century with all its political and cultural changes and upheavals required a new kind of Chinaman to be the envoy of the rising threat of the East. Thus an Oriental that ruthlessly seeks power by using any method available to him replaces the easily controllable and meek Oriental. Fu-Manchu was a representative of the ruling mandarin<sup>16</sup> class in China and unlike any Chinese figure before he had received a Western education. John Chinaman is always a member of the lower working class. He is an immigrant without education or understanding, and speaks broken English. The devil doctor by contrast is referred to as "the most stupendous genius that ever worked for evil" (*Devil* 241). The English language poses no obstacle for him and he uses it as deftly as any other tool he wields in his impressive arsenal. "He is a linguist who speaks with almost equal facility in any of the civilized languages, and in most of the barbaric" (*Mystery* 14). He uses Western resources and science against their creators without a second thought.

What made Fu-Manchu remarkable as an oriental villain was that he had no qualms about stooping to violence and even murder to reach his ultimate goal of world domination. No matter what the heroes believe or how desperate their situation seems, Fu-Manchu is by no means invincible and both Nayland Smith and Dr. Petrie thwart his attempts at world domination at every turn. His status as a terrifying master criminal is in a way compromised by the fact that he can never win. Though the white audiences wanted to read Yellow Peril thrillers and especially ones featuring Fu-Manchu, they did not want to see Orientals triumph over the West. Thus Fu-Manchu is inevitably stuck in a narrative where the nefarious machinations he engages in are inevitably fruitless and the threat of world domination becomes impotent.

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<sup>16</sup> Mandarins were bureaucrats in imperial China. They were highly educated and held high positions in the government. They made a good living and were usually wealthy.

### 3.2. The Sinister Genius of the Yellow Movement

Fu-Manchu was one of the first supervillains in more recent popular literature. Sherlock Holmes' arch nemesis Doctor Moriarty predates Fu-Manchu, however, and Rohmer's Yellow Peril thrillers were clearly influenced by Holmes adventures in many ways, Fu-Manchu's ruthless villainy being only one aspect. Locked room mysteries also link the two writers, both being indebted here to Poe. Shih argues (313) that the Fu-Manchu thrillers have a two-levelled discourse that includes the detective novel and the Yellow Peril. However, the Fu-Manchu thrillers cannot answer the usual questions in a detective novel that is who and why, as this is self-evident, so Rohmer instead posed the questions who else did it and how? In Rohmer's novels the vital clue is usually given by Nayland Smith, who somehow always seems to have the needed Oriental information on which the solution depends (Shih 313). Shih comments:

Again following Doyle and Poe before him, Rohmer has Smith explicate the designs of Fu-Manchu to an often-incredulous Petrie and reader at the same time, thus initiating the reader into the process of observation, deduction and most important, passing judgement. How one is led to observe and deduce, however, proves to have no scientific rationale at all.

(Shih 313)

As Fu-Manchu is a fearsome and terrible villain he needs an equally powerful hero to thwart his sinister machinations. This is the role reserved for the Holmesesque Denis Nayland Smith the ex-Burmese Commissioner now detective, who gallantly defends the British Empire against the fiendish devil doctor and his yellow hordes.

No man was better equipped than this gaunt British Commissioner to stand between society and the menace of the Yellow Doctor; I [Petrie] respected his mediations, for, unlike my own they were informed by an intimate knowledge of the dark and secret things of the East, of that mysterious East out of which Fu-Manchu came, of that jungle of noxious things whose miasma had been wafted Westward with the impeccable Chinaman.

(*Devil* 321)

Just as Sherlock Holmes has aid in the form of Dr Watson Nayland Smith has Dr Petrie; a Watson-inspired candid narrator, who like his role model Watson is always one step behind Smith (Barnes). Seshagiri points out (168) that Rohmer duplicates the idea of the

ingenious detective and his sidekick almost to the letter, and this parallel is almost comically obvious. The two British heroes pitted against the evil Chinese doctor reflect Orientalist attitudes in both their characterization and opposition. As Orrin E. Klapp (57) pointed out Nayland Smith, a British official, and the criminal, traitor and rebel Fu-Manchu fulfil all the criteria of standard hero and villain.

Fu-Manchu deviates slightly from the typical Oriental character by being civilized by Western standards, he is educated in a Western university and wields power provided by science. Otherwise he embodies the typical sensual, corrupt and infinitely devious Oriental. Despite creating a new kind of Chinaman and the quintessential Chinese villain, Rohmer still attributed many qualities to Fu-Manchu that were common in Orientalist imagery. Smith and Petrie reflect the Victorian ideal of a Christian, honest upstanding hero, their nemesis a terrifying combination of Western education and Oriental inscrutability. Dr Petrie comments on his friend Smith: "I was almost certain by this time, that had he not been an Englishman; I was almost certain that some catastrophe had befallen Smith" (*Si-Fan* 476). The fact that Smith is English imbues him with qualities that set him above other men. Though Fu-Manchu makes only a few appearances in the three novels discussed in this work, Dr Petrie constantly and Nayland Smith almost obsessively, discuss him and his scheming.

All three of Rohmer's thrillers follow the same basic plot that consist of separate scenes, adventures and a series of locked room mysteries.<sup>17</sup> Shih also discusses the context of the Fu-Manchu thrillers, which makes them more than just a racist caricature;

Moreover the Fu Manchu novels are notable for the consistency with which they manage contemporary understandings of the "Oriental" and the conventions of the late Victorian and Edwardian adventure/detective genre toward satisfying specific cultural needs, particularly those related to notions of empire and masculinity.

(Shih 305-306)

Masculinity, how the East and West manifest it, and how they battle each other in every

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<sup>17</sup> A locked room mystery is a sub-genre of detective fiction. It consists of a crime that happens in circumstances that seem impossible. The crime is usually a murder. This type of mystery usually involves a crime scene that nobody could have left or entered. Another typical quality is that the reader is aware of all the clues and sees the mystery as a sort of puzzle, which the reader is then encouraged to solve before the great revelation. Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841) is an early example.

chapter with the West emerging as victor every time, is repeated in all three books. They also tap into the Orientalist idea that the subject races from the Orient can be ultimately controlled (Said 36). This is a central theme in all three Fu-Manchu thrillers discussed here. What sets the Fu-Manchu thrillers apart from other Victorian and Edwardian action/detective novels, such as those by rider Haggard, is that they are set in London and not some exotic locale such as Africa or India. Arthur Conan Doyle also did this with his Sherlock Holmes stories and there are other similarities between their works (Shih 306). All Fu-Manchu's murder victims have some sort of intimate knowledge of China, which could help the West battle China and because of this they must be eliminated by Fu-Manchu. Thus Rohmer turns the traditional position of power around. Fu-Manchu seeks to erase any and all vital knowledge the British Empire has concerning China and thus depriving it of any weapons it would have of battling the oncoming yellow invasion. Rohmer instils Yellow Peril fear at the very beginning of *Mystery*. He does this by describing a rising eastern Power (14). This is significant because only Western colonizing nations were referred to as Powers. Another Orientalist value that is questioned in the new century that the Fu-Manchu thrillers depict is the idea that the West exists in, as Said calls it, a "flexible *positional* superiority" (7). This, according to Said, means that the West can be in several different relationships with the Orient without ever really losing the position of power (7).

In the 1920's, however, the West was gradually losing its position of power over the Orient, or to put it in other words, was losing ground to the natives. This political change is present in Rohmer's Fu-Manchu thrillers, but he adds an additional layer of terror, the Oriental threat is no longer restricted to only an area that is geographically separate. Rohmer made the threat domestic; corruption is already present within. The sinister yellow hand of Fu-Manchu is gradually seizing power and influence in the safe haven of Britain as well as in his native China. Rohmer illustrates the metamorphosis that London has undergone in the Fu-Manchu thrillers by describing it as an increasingly sinister place. Seshagiri corroborates this (171) by pointing out that London has been infiltrated by the non-white Other who is destabilizing the heart of the British Empire. Shadows are longer at night, the streets are no longer safe and they are populated by foreigners, even wealthy lords fill their houses with Oriental servants, as Nayland Smith exclaims when he describes the crime scene in Sir Lionel Barton's home Rowan House, "[...] there isn't an Englishman in sight [...]" (*Mystery* 77). London is

becoming more and more foreign and less white. Dr. Petrie describes his anxiety towards the changing atmosphere of the British Isles; “I felt as though that murderous yellow cloud still cast its shadow upon England” (*Devil* 228). Fu-Manchu even turns the Thames into his vehicle of corruption as Seshagiri observes;

The great English river that has transported white English colonizers and their instruments of power now becomes a conduit for Chinese villainy as Fu-Manchu smuggles dead bodies, scientific equipment and foreign henchmen on the boats and barges that cruise the Thames.

(Seshagiri 172)

*Mystery*, which opens the series, introduces the recurring cast of Denis Nayland Smith, Dr Petrie, Inspector Weymouth, the sultry yet innocent seductress Karamaneh and the devil doctor himself: Fu-Manchu. The evil yellow devil has come to Europe to pave the way for the unstoppable yellow hordes, which threaten the very way of life of the white race. What follows is a series of crimes, ranging from theft to murder, which are executed by Fu-Manchu’s minions and all kinds of exotic animals and insects. The purpose of the crimes is to hinder the servants of the British Empire from realizing what Fu-Manchu is scheming, as well as silencing Orientalists and China-connoisseurs. Every time Fu-Manchu or one of his minions strikes, Smith and Petrie are ready to thwart them and they are repeatedly close to catching Fu-Manchu only to fail at the last moment. Fu-Manchu also abducts them both on several occasions; only to either let them go or see them narrowly escape. At the end of *Mystery* Fu is first presumed dead, “pray God the river has that yellow Satan”( *Mystery* 196), only to be revealed to have escaped his watery grave (*Mystery* 216). Until finally comes to a fiery end (*Mystery* 218-219).

*Devil* follows the same formula as *Mystery*. Fu-Manchu returns to London with his nefarious lackeys and continues his mission as the envoy of the nefarious yellow masses. This time, however, it is revealed that he is by no means dead (*Devil* 338), or even the leader of the yellow movement, but a subordinate of a most influential and nefarious mandarin who has travelled from China to have Fu-Manchu answer for his mistakes. As in *Mystery* the plot is formed of a series of locked room mysteries, chases, near-captures, and murders. *Devil* also has a scene where the thus far rational and intellectually superior Fu-Manchu is revealed to be as superstitious and pagan as his

simian minions (*Devil* 308-310). The sultry Karamaneh has been brainwashed back into the poisonous Fu-Manchu's service. It also contains a climactic scene where Fu-Manchu is torturing Nayland Smith but is then shot in the head by Karamaneh (419) and then again presumed dead (450) until he is revealed to have survived his grievous head wound in *The Si-Fan Mysteries*.

Although *Si-Fan* follows the same basic plot pattern as the two previous books, it differs slightly from them. *Si-Fan* still has the now familiar locked room mysteries and repeatedly changing supporting cast as its predecessors, however it also introduces a new villain, in the form of a secret society, the Si-Fan. Although *Devil* introduced the insidious mandarin Ki-Ming the Si-Fan is a much more ancient and powerful foe than even Fu-Manchu, because he is only one man. Shih argues (308) that Rohmer modelled the Si-Fan after the Boxers who were themselves very much a secret society. According to Preston (xvi) the Boxers were an ill organized obscure secret society that practised ritualistic martial arts. Shih continues (308) that the similarities between the Si-Fan and the Boxers went even further; for the Boxer claims to mysticism and being able to ignore bullets made the Si-Fan appear even more formidable. Fu-Manchu has in fact employed the secret society to further his ambitions in Europe. At the beginning of *Si-Fan* Fu-Manchu is yet again thought to be dead, only to be revealed to have survived the gunshot wound to the head he suffered at the hands of the enticing Karamaneh (*Si-Fan* 515) and has the sure-handed Dr Petrie perform surgery under duress to remove the bullet that is still lodged in his brain.

*Si-Fan* is also the novel where Fu-Manchu's loyalties to the Chinese as an empire change. It is revealed he used to be a member of the Si-Fan, but due to several failures on his part in his missions to the British Empire, the Si-Fan no longer consider him an asset and he considers them a hindrance. Where his motivation was driven by world domination for the benefit of the ancient Chinese Empire, as he begins to be driven by his personal megalomania instead. This is a theme that would continue through the rest of the Fu-Manchu series almost unchanged. In *Si-Fan*, as well as in both its predecessors, Fu-Manchu must perish in the end, but in *Si-Fan* his fate is revealed only on the very last lines of the novel. Until then the reader is almost certain that he has survived. Dr Petrie finds debris from Fu-Manchu's escape vehicle; the ship *Chanak Kampa* which has been destroyed during a violent storm at sea and Fu-Manchu has

drowned (*Si-Fan* 647). As Fu-Manchu's body is never found this keeps the door open for Fu-Manchu's eventual return 15 years later.

The Chinese are often described as a faceless yellow horde in the Fu-Manchu thrillers. This was a trope that was already present in the John Chinaman era, but then it signified the growing immigrant labour force. In the Fu-Manchu thrillers the yellow horde has a much more malignant purpose, namely to conquer the white Western world and turn it into a new China. In *Mystery* Rohmer describes a China that has radically changed from the China that most of his readers have come to know and through Orientalism to understand. That China no longer exists, as Nayland Smith vehemently declares; "China today is not the China of '98.<sup>18</sup> It is a huge secret machine" [...] (*Mystery* 53). The Orient is no longer empty as in the idea of imaginary geography,<sup>19</sup> but has become populated by vicious Orientals, who attempt to invade the peaceful West. The Orient is not empty or passive; it has adopted the West's strategy of advancement and is turning it against Europe. The Chinese of today are not the same either, like their country they too have morphed into a deceptive murderous people, who unlike the John Chinamen of the past are quite capable of great harm. Petrie even points out that if the newspapers ever related the happenings which Fu-Manchu caused: " [...] my account of the Chinaman's deeds will meet in many quarters, with an incredulous reception" (*Mystery* 70). The term Yellow Peril appears on several occasions during the novels, and is usually personified in Fu-Manchu. Rohmer has his upstanding British hero Nayland Smith define the term itself;

[...] Dr Fu-Manchu was for some time in England, engaged in 'paving the way' (I believe those words were my own) for nothing less than a giant Yellow Empire. That dream is what millions of Europeans and Americans term "the Yellow Peril!"

(*Si-Fan* 464)

Rohmer's white heroes battle against the inevitable yellow tide and often feel that if they fail to stop the malignant Chinese doctor the price of their failure will be the loss of

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<sup>18</sup> This refers to China before the Boxer Rebellion. In other words, the China that was under European influence.

<sup>19</sup> Said introduces the idea of imaginary geography, which means that the Orient or any new area that the West wishes to colonize is essentially empty. That all the peoples and cultures that exist there are irrelevant because they gain meaning only through how the West views them (Said 54).

not only the British Empire but the whole civilized Western world. Petrie's desperate musing in *Si-Fan* are a clear indication of this: "the swamping of the white world by Yellow hordes may well be the price of our failure" (*Si-Fan* 560). Smith and Petrie are only two men, but they stand in the way of Fu-Manchu and his grotesque minions. Seshagiri also mentions the way Rohmer "transforms the discourses of science, technology and history into the stuff of racial jeopardy" (172). The yellow empire that Fu-Manchu is attempting to build is the culmination of Western anxieties and the Yellow Peril itself.

In his novels Rohmer depicts an England that is gradually being infiltrated by Fu-Manchu's yellow agents, who attempt to execute Fu-Manchu's nefarious plans from the corrupt neighbourhood of Limehouse. During the course of the three novels London gradually becomes more and more alien to the British heroes who inhabit it and more familiar to the Orientals who intrude upon it. Shih (306) compares Rohmer's Fu-Manchu thrillers to Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes adventures. Both Rohmer and Doyle had their heroes encounter a foreign presence infiltrating London, which had gradually become more and more hostile toward its native inhabitants (306). The fear of the unknown, of the foreign, the Yellow Peril is the carrying theme of the Fu-Manchu novels. Britain is not prepared for the scourge of China, and Fu-Manchu is the emissary of that scourge.

Dr Petrie begins to see the yellow menace behind every corner and on one occasion when he realizes that Fu-Manchu is not only capable but also willing to use torture and other unseemly methods to get what he wants, Petrie exclaims: " 'Oh my God!' I groaned, 'Can this be England?'" (*Mystery* 101). The Chinese also stoop to a practice that is most heinous and Dr Petrie expresses repulsion but not surprise when he reads an article that discusses the Chinese practice of infanticide, with which they rid themselves of unwanted girl children (*Mystery* 71). Petrie comments: "Is it any matter of wonder that such people had produced a Fu-Manchu?" (*Mystery* 71), Rohmer's Chinese differ radically from the passive and silly John Chinamen of the past. Only a people so corrupt and degenerated as the Chinese could commit murder and torture. These are crimes that do not belong in England but are brought there by an outside force (Knight 493). Rohmer uses other references and description to emphasize how London is changing from the pure haven of the British Empire into something foreign and sinister. It is as if

Fu-Manchu's green eyes can see everywhere in London and are able to predict Dr Petrie's and Nayland Smith's every move. Rohmer even states that the China of today is not the same China that Petrie knows, previous to the Boxer Rebellion, this new China is more sinister and dangerous and beyond Western understanding.

Rohmer in effect repeats Kipling's line that East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." Thus, what is happening in London is the result of what happens when the two do mix. Oriental corruption spreads uncontrollably into the pure and civilized West. Rohmer also elaborates on Fu-Manchu's origins and at the same time creates a mythic and savage China to explain how it is possible that such a devilish creature has come into being. The China and the Chinese he describes differ like night from day from the old stereotypes of John Chinaman and China in general. While John did have his more grotesque features, like eating rats, he was never described as having committed genocide, or murdering babies (*Mystery* 71); Rohmer also uses terms like Chinese "uniform cruelty" (*Mystery* 70). Rohmer's books do feature some less intimidating Orientals who have an almost John Chinamanesque quality to them, but even they evoke suspicion from the main characters because their seeming passivity and simple mindedness is only on the surface and hides behind it something more sinister and violent.

Although the subject of constant speculation and fear, in fact Dr Petrie exhibits fear towards him even before he has met the fiendish Devil Doctor; "— Fu-Manchu, whom I had never seen, but whose name stood for horrors indefinable" (*Mystery* 33), very little is in fact revealed of Fu-Manchu. Throughout the three novels he remains shrouded in mystery, which as a device only adds to his villainous mystique. Fu-Manchu is referred to as a doctor, though it is never quite revealed what he is a doctor of. Even when Nayland Smith and Dr Petrie discuss Fu-Manchu's origins and his history the only thing that is actually revealed to the reader is that he is some sort of third party in the current events of China (*Mystery* 71). Rohmer does not reveal anything else of his past at that time and adds very little in the two following novels. Physically he does not much resemble the yellow race, which he is a part of, because he is physically as alien as he is intellectually. He is attributed to having a near superhuman intellect and at times it is even speculated whether he is human at all "[...] this enemy of the white race, of this inhuman being who himself knew no mercy, of this man whose very genius was

inspired by the cool calculated cruelty of his race [...]” (*Devil* 412). Speculation about an Oriental’s humanity is nothing new. It is in fact fairly common in Orientalist descriptions and in this sense the Fu-Manchu thrillers are no exception. Fu-Manchu’s humanity is frequently either questioned or deemed impossible, but this is not the only manner in which the inhuman nature of Orientals exists in the Fu-Manchu thrillers.

Orientalists, be they the enticing Karamaneh, Fu-Manchu’s swarming minions, or the yellow Satan himself are all in turn compared to animals. Dr Petrie makes a horrified comparison when chased by Fu-Manchu’s dacoits in *Mystery*; “More like dreadful animals they looked than human beings [...]” (132). An Oriental’s humanity is the subject of speculation because his physical appearance and culture are seen as polar opposites of the West. As a contrast to his British adversaries, both of whom are physically able, Fu-Manchu is wraithlike with an almost inhumanly proportioned head that houses his sinister genius; “He wore a little cap perched upon the dome of his amazing skull” (*Devil* 411). His hands are skeletal and Rohmer describes his fingers as “clawish” (*Mystery* 194). At one point they are even described as the claws of the vampire; “the hand that held my arm was bony and clawish [...] the presence of incredibly long fingernails — nails as long as those of some long buried vampire of the black ages” (*Si-Fan* 586). His body has also changed from opium use, especially his eyes, which evoke such fear in his adversaries, are alien and strange because of drug abuse, which is another sign of his deadly and Oriental hedonism.

He displayed his teeth, small and evenly separated but discoloured in a way that was familiar to me. I studied his eyes with a new professional interest, which even the extremity of our danger could not fully banish. Their greenness seemed to be of the iris; the pupil was oddly contracted — a pinpoint. [...] Opium will soon do the same to you! I rapped at him savagely.<sup>20</sup>

(*Mystery* 98)

He evokes an equal amount of repulsion and fear from his adversaries and Nayland Smith often confesses that he is no match for Fu-Manchu’s inhuman intelligence.

The eerily sinister description of the doctor in the beginning of *Mystery* makes his actual appearance even more shocking to the reader as he turns out to be every bit as devilish as Smith has described him to be. As Rohmer describes him, he is the Yellow

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<sup>20</sup> Dr Petrie reacts to Fu-Manchu’s death threat, revealing what he deduced Fu-Manchu’s condition to be by assessing the symptoms he was exhibiting.

Peril incarnate in one man, and a new inscrutable threat, that is beyond any conventional Oriental threat;

[...] the danger Fu-Manchu posed was more disturbing than the classic European fantasy of barbarian invasions from the East and more profound than an inundation of cheap Chinese labour into Europe and North America. His fusion of Eastern and Western knowledge had the potential to undermine the structure of Empire and of global white supremacy, and could conceivably topple the British and other European empires like a row of dominoes.

(Hevia 251)

Fu-Manchu could never achieve his goal of world domination but the popularity of the character ensured that he could never die either. The same goes for the English heroes who untiringly battle against him. Even though most of the chapters in the novels end with Nayland Smith and Petrie either being in a perilous situation or in the clutches of Fu-Manchu, they are as immortal as Fu-Manchu himself, because the heroes of serialized fiction are as immune to death as their enemies. Seshagiri discusses (175) the way Rohmer made killing Fu-Manchu the centre of every plot in his thrillers, but because the Devil Doctor's death would end the whole series, Rohmer's plots always went forward without it ever succeeding. Fu-Manchu makes a series of narrow escapes during the course of all three novels and manages to survive even being shot in the head; "I saw a little red streak appear, up by the neutral coloured hair under the black cap" (*Devil* 419). He is presumed dead at the end of each story, only to be revealed to be alive at the beginning of the next. In *Si-Fan* the revelation of his fate comes fairly late in the novel, seemingly replacing Fu-Manchu with a new equally nefarious yellow villain in the form of the ancient secret society of the Si-Fan. Though Fu-Manchu cannot die, his dark skinned armies are by no means immortal and the English heroes dispatch dozens of Oriental minions as if to compensate for never being able to destroy the yellow fiend himself.

### **3.3 That Yellow Satan**

Sax Rohmer's devil doctor is the type of villain that leaves a memorable impression on both the reader and the characters that encounter him. Rohmer made Fu-Manchu an archetype of villainy in behaviour and appearance. He is an archetypal figure of evil

who has an inherently malicious will, as Klapp puts it (58). Klapp continues that this kind of villain is essentially a monster, who is hated and shunned and is an enemy of society (58). His name is the first thing that makes an impression on a reader. Fu-Manchu's name makes a reference to the ruling Manchu class,<sup>21</sup> unlike John Chinaman, whose name is generic in every respect and deliberately so. Fu-Manchu makes an instant impression with his individuality and uniqueness. China was no longer an empire at the time Rohmer was writing his thrillers, yet as Hevia (251) points out Fu-Manchu is not a new Chinaman in the sense that he would be a part of the new modern republican China, but he is instead a relic from the imperial era, yearning for revenge for the loss of the Chinese Empire. Although Rohmer made Fu-Manchu the quintessential Chinese villain, he bound the Devil Doctor tightly into Victorian stereotypes of the Chinese. Rohmer describes Fu-Manchu's agenda to be to form a global Yellow Empire (*Devil* 249) and in doing so to recreate the old Chinese Empire anew (Hevia 251). Shih makes the observation that there is an interesting link between history and Fu-Manchu's name. The last emperor of China, the then three-year-old Puyi was forced to abdicate the Qing throne only seven months before Rohmer introduced his Fu-Manchu character to the British readership (308). Whether this was purposeful or a coincidence is hard to say, because according to Rohmer's biographers, the author himself said on several occasions that he didn't know a thing about China. John Chinaman is also an everyman, an uneducated coolie, a part of the yellow mass that threatens the West, but Fu-Manchu is different. He is a leader, educated in the West, he rises above the John Chinamen and leads them to imminent victory over the colonizers.

Fu-Manchu strikes a physical presence that all the characters that encounter him react to. Their reaction is always the same, a mixture of revulsion and fear, as Petrie makes clear: "I cannot believe that any man could ever grow used to his presence, could ever cease to fear him" (*Devil* 344), and Dr Petrie feels only disgust when he has to touch Fu-Manchu: "And never have I experienced a similar sense of revulsion from any human being" (*Mystery* 131). Although John Chinaman could incite many negative emotions he was never feared. He could be described in a repulsive manner, but that had more to do with his sexual ambiguity and perceived moral corruption than anything else. John Chinaman's masculinity could not be determined by traditional Western

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<sup>21</sup> Manchu is an ethnic group from Manchuria which replaced the Ming Dynasty and founded the Qing Dynasty. They were in power from 1644 until the formation of the Republic of China in 1912

standards and that made him a threat if only a passive one. He was always more ridiculous and even pathetic than repulsive, and he did not evoke the same degree of emotional reaction that Fu-Manchu produced.

A quality that Fu-Manchu and John Chinaman share, however, is that they are both sexual deviants. In John's case this meant that he seduced white women into sexual corruption that overstepped racial boundaries. John is a sexually confusing figure for white males because he did not conform to traditional Western masculinity, but projected an odd mixture of femininity and asexuality, which enabled him to get into more intimate situations with white women than white men ever could. Fu-Manchu's sexual identity is more complex than John's, who is not connected to any one sexual orientation. There is always the implication that John corrupted virtuous white women and thus compromised the integrity of the white race. Rohmer followed Orientalist principles very thoroughly when he created his yellow villain. Orientalists feminised the East and placed it in a submissive and weakened position in relation to the dominant and strong West. Shih argues that Rohmer was an exemplary Orientalist because he views the Orient through a lens of eroticism (310). According to Said (188), in Orientalist writing "there is a uniform association between the Orient and sex". It is an unchanging trope in almost all Orientalist writing, and even today the Orient is associated with fertility, sexual promise and also sexual threat. He expands this to include limitless sensuality and sexual desire. (188). This imagery is also present in the Fu-Manchu thrillers and even Fu-Manchu himself, because he uses the slinky Karamaneh as his sensual weapon against Nayland Smith and Dr Petrie.

Fu-Manchu's sexual ambiguity is not similar to John Chinaman's and he is not a seducer in the same sense. Although Fu-Manchu does use drugs as one of his methods of corruption, he does not seduce his victims sexually. Fu-Manchu prefers coercion, blackmail and even bribery rather than seduction. He, like Nayland Smith is above and beyond sexual temptation and his physical grotesquery makes seduction almost impossible, due to the uniform revulsion people feel towards him. Thus, Fu-Manchu appears to be even more asexual than John Chinaman, and he does not have any liaisons or dalliances in any of the three novels discussed in my thesis. Fu-Manchu's ambiguity is more perverse than John Chinaman's because it does not manifest itself openly or in any discernible way. Rohmer presents him in feminine and submissive

situations, makes him a passive villain, and represents his aggression in a way that is not active and physical.

Fu-Manchu is not moved sexually by the sultry Karamaneh or any other woman in the series, be she Western or Oriental. The only person he has any passion for in the novels is Nayland Smith. Shih argues that their relationship, which is highly antagonistic and adversarial, also has an erotic undertone. Smith's ongoing obsession with the Chinese doctor is significant because he does not express such devotion or inverted passion towards any other character in the novels. The one and only priority Nayland Smith has is to capture Fu-Manchu and protect the British Empire. He has eliminated all romantic distractions from his life in order to pursue this goal. Yet his masculinity is not called into question, like Fu-Manchu's continually is Fu-Manchu, despite his weak feminine demeanour, however, is the only part of the Orient that Nayland Smith continually fails to dominate and conquer, and is a continuous cause of frustration. Nevertheless Shih observes that Nayland Smith's manhood is not questioned as long as his goal is to conquer Fu-Manchu (311).

The very first time Fu-Manchu appears in *Mystery* the impression he creates is that of a submissive, passive and effeminate Oriental, who does not live up to the massive build up he has received in advance from both Nayland Smith and Dr Petrie;

He wore a plain yellow robe, of a hue almost identical with that of his smooth hairless countenance. His hands were large, long and bony, he held them knuckles upward and rested his pointed chin upon their thinness. He had a great high brow, crowned with sparse, neutral-coloured hair.

(*Mystery* 42)

Rohmer portrays Fu-Manchu in a traditionally Oriental way in the sense that he is as passive physically as John Chinaman. He is not physically active and is not a physically dominating presence in any way. Although Rohmer modernized his Chinese villain, he nevertheless incorporated traditional Chinese stereotypes into the figure of Fu-Manchu. Shih observes (311) that Rohmer often represents Fu-Manchu erotically almost always depicting him as lying down among luxurious carpets and cushions, surrounded by exotic Oriental furniture, either lounging with incense or helpless in an opium haze. Fu-Manchu shares other typical traits associated with Orientals than just his apparent submissivity. Hevia (250) observes that he is "clever, cunning, insensitive to his own

pain and that of others, cruel industrious and pragmatic”. Hevia’s observations of Fu-Manchu’s Chineseness are very similar to those of Samuel R. Brown, who discusses the peculiarities of the Chinese. Such peculiarities include their monotonous voices and lack of inflection, their inability to orally express themselves (177) and their stoicism and insensitivity (176). Fu-Manchu is all of these things and even though he appears almost set apart from the yellow masses because of his physique, education and intellect, he is still an Oriental albeit a bizarre one. Fu-Manchu is also well educated, sophisticated, aloof, arrogant and is sure of China’s invincibility, despite its military defects. He is, as Hevia points out, a perfect mandarin, who were the opposers of British officials in China (250). He is decadent, addicted to opium, is eerily charming when he wants to be, is effeminate, although he keeps his word of honour he is as childish and superstitious as any other stereotyped Oriental (Hevia 251). Fu-Manchu’s attitude towards his enemies, Nayland Smith and Dr Petrie, reflects his contradictory qualities. He despises Smith in his attempts to foil the devil doctor’s plans, yet he has at first pity later on respect for Dr Petrie, who he considers to be an able scientist. “Mr Smith you are an incompetent meddler – I despise you! Dr Petrie you are a fool – I am sorry for you!” (*Mystery* 98). In *Devil* Fu-Manchu shows an appreciation for Dr. Petrie:

‘I have decided,’ he said deliberately, ‘that you are more worthy of attention than I had formerly supposed. A man who can solve the secret of the Golden Elixir’(I had not solved it; I had merely stolen some) should be a valuable acquisition to my council.

(*Mystery* 187)

John Chinaman was a clear subordinate to the dominant white society, but Fu-Manchu is not as easily definable. Fu-Manchu’s representation is more complex. He embodies many physical qualities that are both exaggerated and distorted, in a way he is a physical manifestation of everything that makes Orientals lesser creatures and subject races. Another difference between John Chinaman and Fu-Manchu is that John’s physical appearance never causes fear, whereas Fu-Manchu causes fear whenever he appears. Dr Petrie’s fear of Fu-Machu is so intense that he compares it to the fear one feels towards scorpions;

I would forgive any man who, knowing Dr. Fu-Manchu, feared him; I feared him myself– feared him as one fears a scorpion.

Fu-Manchu's physique is often described as alien and even though he is a member of the "yellow race" he is not described as looking particularly Chinese. He is described more as something inhuman, something beyond the alienness of an Oriental. He is a new kind of creature, one that the West has never encountered before. He is in fact, an outsider even among the Orientals, never quite fitting within his own race. Fu-Manchu embodies a host of different perversions. Hevia (252) argues that Fu-Manchu has been mutated because of opium abuse; he has managed to harness the drug in some unknown way and his superhuman intellect and grotesque body are the result of this kind of experimentation rather than his ethnicity. Mutation also explains why a member of the subject races could even stand against superior whites, let alone best them. An ordinary Oriental would not be able to achieve this, only a mutant could. The effects that opium has had on Fu-Manchu and the suspected mutation that Hevia discusses are apparent in *Mystery* (99), where Fu-Manchu hints to discovering something about opium that the West does not know and cannot understand. In *Devil*, Petrie describes Fu-Manchu as inhuman (412) and "a great and malign being" (366). Fu-Manchu is a drug addict and murderer; he is physically distorted, his head grotesquely large, his body, weak and elongated, and his eyes a filmy green colour:

In spite of, or because of, the high intellect written upon it, the face of Fu-Machu was utterly more repellent than any I have ever known, and the green eyes, eyes green as those of a cat in the darkness, which sometimes burnt like witch lamps and sometimes were horribly filmed like nothing human or imaginable, might have mirrored not a soul but an emanation of Hell, incarnate in his gaunt, high-shouldered body

(413 *Devil*).

Intelligence is something that separates him from the earlier stereotype. Nayland Smith refers to Fu-Manchu on several occasions as being more intelligent than even any white man he has known. John Chinaman has all the cunning and inscrutability of the Chinese but he was seldom if ever described as being more intelligent than whites or in anyway superhuman; Fu-Manchu is often described as being both. Fu-Manchu's intelligence is a malignant variety, which like his other qualities has become twisted by his Oriental nature. Seshagiri (178-179) observes that Fu-Manchu's intelligence balances on the thin line between genius and evil insanity. He bears little or no resemblance to the "yellow race" and his superhuman intellect clearly sets him apart from them even if his physique

alone did not.

Fu-Manchu is introduced by his nemesis Nayland Smith in a memorable and iconic way in the beginning of *Mystery*, though he himself does not appear in the flesh until much later. Smith describes him in a manner that establishes him as something new and alien, a dangerous and frightening Chinaman;

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

(*Mystery* 15)

This famous quote appears in all the subsequent Fu-Manchu thrillers in one form or another and is present in all three novels discussed in this thesis. Fu-Manchu's exaggerated qualities, such as his bulbous head, his long claw-like fingers, his exceptional height for a Chinaman and his green inhuman eyes painted a figure who was not just an Oriental but a villain to his very core, an outsider and an enemy. Fu-Manchu is described differently from most Chinamen in Rohmer's novels and discounting a few exceptions, such as mandarin Ki-Ming, they are as stereotypical and generic as in any other Orientalist text. They are squat, flat-faced and animalistic, are incapable of proper speech, and can only handle simplistic pidgin. Rohmer often describes Asian languages as guttural and strange, which gives an animalistic impression as well: "No shavee — no shavee", he [the Chinaman] chattered in simian fashion" (*Mystery* 37). Fu-Manchu himself speaks in a sibilant hiss, even when he speaks "civilized" western languages (*Devil* 306). The Chinese are also superstitious, uncivilized and inscrutable, even animalistic and childlike. The only thing that makes them slightly different from classic Orientalist descriptions is that they are murderous and violent, a quality that was not typical in fictional Chinamen before the Boxer Rebellion. The Orient has never been a threat before, except in moral corruption. Rohmer's yellow villain and his murderous minions threaten the West in traditional ways, but he has added the capability of violence into the mix – violence without remorse. The Yellow Peril, which Rohmer describes as incarnate in Fu-Manchu

(*Mystery* 15) has become a physical threat to any white person it touches.

Fu-Manchu is set apart from other Orientals on account of his near superhuman intellect and his physical alienness and his Western education. However, he is not spared from traditional Orientalist tropes and can never escape being a member of the subject races, no matter how invincible or superior he seems. One feature that he has in common with John Chinaman is his penchant for gambling, a quality that is represented as both degenerate and negative. In *Si-Fan* Fu-Manchu refers to the innate gambling habit of all Chinese and which he cannot avoid or deny. He has a card decide his fate: “shall we then determine your immediate future upon the turning of a card, as the gamester within me, within every one of my race, suggests?” (*Si-Fan* 530). There is here an interesting connection to the conflict between Sam Nye and Ah Sin. According to Van Ash and Rohmer (19), Rohmer read Harte’s writing, and Fu-Manchu’s declaration thus draws a direct link between the old Chinese stereotype and the new. However, Fu-Manchu never succeeds in his schemes, despite Dr Petrie’s paranoia about his omnipresence; “Fu-Manchu is omnipresent: his tentacles embrace everything” (*Mystery* 75). His British adversaries always rise as the victors at the end of every book. Fu-Manchu, despite his Western education, sometimes degenerates to the level of an animal: “By slow degrees, and with a reptilian agility horrible to watch Fu-Manchu was neutralizing the advantage gained by Weymouth” (194 *Mystery*). Rohmer also at times directly compares him to an animal: “Dr Fu-Manchu, his top lip drawn up above his teeth in the manner of an angry jackal” (*Devil* 310). Fu-Manchu is also as childish and superstitious as any other stereotypical Oriental.

“Oh, god of Cathay!” he cried sibilantly, “in what have I sinned that this catastrophe had been visited upon my head! Learn my two dear friends, that the sacred white peacock brought to these misty shores for my undying glory has been lost to me! Death is the penalty of such sacrilege; death shall be my lot, since death I deserve.”

(*Devil* 312)

This superstitiousness almost costs him his position within the Si-Fan and also allows Dr Petrie to blackmail him with a white peacock, which is the symbol of the organization (*Devil* 312-313). Thus an Englishman, who is by no means his mental superior but is not held back by archaic beliefs, outsmarts the “yellow mastermind”. It

could be argued that despite Fu-Manchu being a new breed of Chinaman, the new breed can never really rid itself of the old.

Torture plays a prominent role in the Fu-Manchu thrillers. It is an underhanded method that the Chinese use to extract information out of their victims. The British heroes never stoop to such repulsive and craven acts, preferring to brandish their weapons and intimidate their lessers with either weapons in hand or their invincible Englishness. Fu-Manchu's methods of torture are extremely cruel and revolting. He uses elaborate machines, with rats and wire jackets,<sup>22</sup> as well as drugs and emotional torture. In each of the three novels he captures and tortures the heroes or at least threatens to do so. According to Diamond (52), it was a fairly common trope that the Chinese were closely connected to torture. After the Yellow Peril became a prominent influence in literature, repulsive and sinister practices to became associated with a people represented as repulsive and sinister. Fu-Manchu, for example, even tortures his own minions as punishment of their failures to execute his sinister plans.

Rohmer made Fu-Manchu even more clearly into a supervillain by having him conduct all kinds of mysterious experiments:

My scorpions — have you met my scorpions? No? My pythons  
and hamadryads? Then there are my collection of fungi and my  
tiny allies, the bacilli. I have a collection in my laboratory quite unique.

(*Mystery* 99)

Although most of his inventions and experiments turn out to be exotic animals and plants, sophisticated germ warfare is also implied, the very height of science that the West cannot hope to compete with. As Nayland Smith remarks; ” ‘Fu-Manchu employs weapons of both the future and of the past’ ” (*Si-Fan* 637). What all these outlandish things have in common is that they are almost completely unknown to the West. They are shrouded in mystery and mystique, even the more modern and futuristic devices. Petrie remarks in *Mystery* that “*Cannabis Indica* is a treacherous narcotic, as every medical man knows full well; but Fu-Manchu’s knowledge of the drug was far in

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<sup>22</sup> A wire jacket is a type of torture device. The victim is dressed in a jacket made of iron wires. The wires were connected to wheels on either side and they were slowly tightened around the victim’s torso until they cut into the victim’s flesh.

advance of our own slow science” (156). His scientific advances and experiments also serve as a source of fear and intimidation. They are revealed to be as inscrutable as the doctor himself and distinctly Oriental:

[...] a huge table with dragon’s legs stood solitary amid the luxuriance of the carpet. It bore scintillating globes and tubes that held living organisms, and books of a size and such bindings as I never had imagined, with instruments of a type unknown to Western science [...]

(*Mystery* 94)

Fu-Manchu does not seem to actually invent anything himself but rather collects a menagerie of freaks and exotics, which he then uses cleverly against his enemies. The *Zayat’s Kiss* and the *Call of Siva*, for example, have near mythical reputations for their association with murder and carnage but turn out to involve rather mundane insects and fakirs with choking wires, which Fu-Manchu uses as his vehicles of murder. Any actual inventions that he uses are those that he steals from his white enemies and uses them against their creators, such as an American scientist’s rocket plans. Somehow Nayland Smith always seems to recognize all the fantastical creations and exotic weapons that Fu-Manchu uses to murder British Orientalists and China connoisseurs. Thanks to his convenient knowledge he and Dr Petrie are always able to thwart Fu-Manchu’s devilish plans; even though he might manage to murder or abduct someone, his final agenda never succeeds. According to Rohmer’s biographers, Rohmer paid great attention to factual accuracy;

A good portion of the “thrills” obtained by reading Sax Rohmer comes from being brought face to face with the unknown, perhaps the unknowable. Yet he did not stoop to create this effect by sheer invention. [...] But when Sax Rohmer wrote familiarly of exotic curiosities such as “the Well of Zem-zem” or “*Tsang Ihang*, sweet perfume of Tibet,” readers could take for gospel that these things existed.

(Van Ash and Rohmer 292)

According to their self-admitted bias it is unclear whether this is actually the case but this is the image that his biographers wished to convey of Rohmer’s methods.

Fu-Manchu proves his craven nature and deceptiveness by almost never facing his enemies himself, but always keeping a minion or two between himself and his adversaries. Fu-Manchu does not use Oriental murderers and fanatics to do his dirty

deeds, but instead uses his repulsive poisonous creatures as murder weapons;

Even at that very moment some venomous centipede might  
be wriggling toward us over the slime of the stones, some  
poisonous spider preparing to drop from the roof! Fu-Manchu  
might have released a serpent in the cellar, or the air be alive  
with microbes of a loathsome disease!

(*Mystery* 101)

Fu-Manchu's perversion does not end in his fascination with repulsive creepy crawlies. He is similar to John Chinaman in one thing, he also seduces white people into corruption, though his manner of seduction is not the same as John's. Rather than using sex, Fu-Manchu seduces his victims with the promise of power or he blackmails them. Abel Slattin is a white private investigator whom Nayland Smith despises. Smith even says that he has a rotten reputation and is not much better than a blackmailer (*Devil* 268). Petrie is revolted and incredulous as he realizes that Slattin has become a minion of Fu-Manchu: 'you think he may have sunk so low as to become a creature of Fu-Manchu?' I asked aghast." (*Devil* 269). As it turns out Fu-Manchu has bribed this morally corrupted ex-policeman into his service and he has no problem being subservient to an Oriental as long as the price is right. It is further proof of his irredeemable Oriental devilishness, which seeks to corrupt as well as conquer. As a villain Fu-Manchu is devious, conniving and dangerous, but he is never himself a physical threat. He uses proxies, in the form of his Oriental minions, science or exotic animals to perform most of his evil deeds. Rohmer does have one scene at the end of *Mystery* where Fu-Manchu struggles with an English policeman, but usually he does not endanger himself. John Chinaman never posed an actual physical threat to the White majority either. Neither he nor Fu-Manchu are in any way physically openly violent, unlike Nayland Smith and Dr. Petrie who deal with all the problems they face themselves head on and physically. Fu-Manchu uses his superior mind to reach his goals instead of physical prowess.

### **3.4. No Man Was Better Equipped than this Gaunt British Commissioner**

Fu-Manchu's nemesis and the hero of the thrillers, Denis Nayland Smith is the complete opposite of Fu-Manchu in every possible way. He represents the post-Victorian hero

and masculine ideal. Smith is a prime example of Klapp's definition of heroism (57). He has qualities such as devotion, courage and prowess and he acts, as Klapp puts it, "beyond the call of duty" (57). Rohmer depicts Smith very clearly as a hero and his singular devotion to the British Empire as well as the destruction of Fu-Manchu is evident and central (Klapp 57). Heroes symbolize success, perfection and the conquest of evil; and the evil Smith conquers time and time again is Fu-Manchu and the yellow movement (57). He protects Europe and the white race from the menace of the yellow hordes, having a secret knowledge and understanding of the Orient that gives him an edge against the sinister yellow doctor and his Oriental hordes (Lee 115). Lee describes Smith as an Orientalist, a general area studies expert, who has an

ability to recognize the evidence of a myriad of different Asian criminal elements and to track them back to Fu-Manchu, the fount of Oriental evil. Smith's ability to reveal and explain this hidden spectacle to the reader through Petrie establishes his bona fides as an Asia expert and is ultimately the source of Smith's power to thwart Fu-Manchu's stratagems.

(Lee 116)

The narrator, Smith's sidekick Dr. James Petrie, although equally British, cannot measure up to Smith's level of masculinity. Smith is tanned due to working outdoors in Burma and demonstrates his masculinity to Petrie almost as soon as he appears in the beginning of *Mystery* as he brandishes a scar on his forearm which he got in a knife fight in the line of duty (*Mystery* 2). Shih argues that when compared to Smith, the masculinity of Dr. Petrie's profession is called into question. Petrie works primarily with his mind, whilst Smith works with his body, something which is more straightforward and clearly more openly masculine. Shih argues that Rohmer feminizes Dr. Petrie when he compares his subdued indoor profession to Smith's dangerous and at times violent activities (307). Shih also sees Smith as an unambiguous representative of the state (307), in his role as a colonial commissioner.

Smith represents Orientalist colonial ideals as he is the state in action. The colonies need men like him to function properly and he believes in his work and in the colonial ideology of dominating the subject races, who need to be governed. According to Orientalist doctrine the subject races understand the need for governance and they also welcome it, because they are incapable of governing themselves and require the white

race to do it for them (Said 33, 34). Smith represents the Orientalist belief that the Orient must be saved from its own barbarism (Said 86). The only way to do this is to colonize it. In Smith Rohmer has created the perfect Edwardian hero, the ideal colonizer, who is the only one who can stand against Dr. Fu-Manchu and have any hope of prevailing. He is in peak physical condition, faces all obstacles head on and tackles them like a straight-edged Westerner would, with his revolver in hand. Nayland Smith and Fu-Manchu are even paralleled, like East and West;

It was a breath of the East – that stretched out a yellow hand to the West. It was symbolic of the subtle intangible power manifested in Dr Fu-Manchu, as Nayland Smith — lean, agile, bronzed with the suns of Burma — was symbolic of the clean British efficiency which sought to combat the insidious enemy.

*(Mystery 80)*

Said describes a similar comparison in Orientalist thought. Nayland Smith is the perfect representative of Orientalist philosophy concerning the strength of the West and the weakness of the East, as seen by the West. Rohmer incorporated classic qualities of the superior white man into Smith. These qualities are, according to Gobineau; a natural energy, intelligence, physical capability, perseverance, an instinct for order and a sense of liberty (Blue 101). According to Said (45), such strength and weakness are natural to Orientalism just like they are to anything that “divides the world into large general divisions, entities that coexist in a state of tension produced by what is believed to be racial difference”. Shih points out (308) that Smith persecutes the Chinese, whether they are Fu-Manchu’s minions or not. In an interesting parallel to the Boxer rebellion of 1900 and the reversal of roles, London was now under attack and Smith with Petrie by his side is its defender.

Rohmer imbues Smith with a highly developed sense of honour. Fu-Manchu, at times exhibits a type of Oriental honour, because he does keep his end of the bargain with Dr. Petrie, but he remains a true Oriental treachery and inscrutability. Smith’s unwavering honour provides a stark contrast and is clear proof of the superiority of the white race, of which he is a paragon:

Nayland Smith vigorously pursues Fu-Manchu, muscularly dispatching “Oriental” henchmen with no remorse, he also quite carefully abides by the rules of fair play, lest he precipitate a moral decline in his own character.

Thus on more than one occasion, he allows Fu-Manchu or one of his underlings to escape out of an ingrained sense of obligation or duty.

(Shih 309)

Sometimes Smith is even given the chance to kill Fu-Manchu and in this way end the yellow threat permanently. Yet he refuses to do so, because he has given his word. “‘I curse myself for an honourable fool,’ he said. ‘No one could dispute my right to shoot you where you stand’” (*Mystery* 131).

With the Watson-like Petrie, terror of Fu-Manchu leaves him almost a weakling. Shih argues (307) that during his association with Nayland Smith, Dr Petrie matures into a fully masculine British Edwardian male, but is never quite equal with Nayland Smith in this regard. He does get over his initial crippling terror of Fu-Manchu, but retains an ongoing creeping fear of him that he never quite manages to shake. He and Fu-Manchu manage to form a sort of relationship over the course of the three novels and Fu-Manchu even comes to respect Dr Petrie, says in *Devil*: “‘Dr. Petrie,’ he said softly, ‘I shall always listen to you with respect’” (312). Fu-Manchu respects Petrie to the extent that he begins to believe that Petrie is some sort of scientific genius and Fu-Manchu wants to take him with him back to China (*Devil* 349). He also wants Dr Petrie to be present and assist when Fu-Manchu has the most prominent brain surgeon in Britain, Sir Baldwin Frazer kidnapped and brought into his lair to remove the bullet lodged in his brain (*Si-Fan* 530-531). He wants Dr. Petrie to assist in the surgery (*Si-Fan* 528), because he has respect for him in his own twisted and disturbed way, threatening to harm Karamaneh if Dr Petrie does not help.

Dr. Petrie is perhaps the only person to whom the yellow devil actually keeps his promises. Although Dr. Petrie can never reach the peak of masculinity that Nayland Smith represents, it is Petrie who provides the romantic interest in the novel with the enticing Karamaneh, the ideal submissive and mysterious Oriental woman who is at the same time both incomprehensible to a Western man and sexually desirable. She is attracted to him from the very beginning of *Mystery*, whereas Nayland Smith has no time for such distractions as women, even calling them a two-edged sword in *Mystery* (13). For Smith the Empire and protecting it from the yellow threat takes precedence over everything. Shih points out that there are only a few occasions when Smith and

Petrie come into conflict and all of them have to do with Petrie putting Karamaneh before their common goal, that is to thwart Fu-Manchu (Shih 309). Smith even expresses his distaste for Petrie's weakness for Karamaneh in *Devil*:

“You *know* that she is utterly false, yet a glance or two from those dark eyes of her can make a fool of you! A woman made a fool of me once, but I learned my lesson; you have failed to learn yours. If you are determined to go to pieces on the rock that broke up Adam do so! But don't involve me in the wreck, Petrie, for that might mean a yellow emperor of the world, and you know it!”

(*Devil* 260-261)

Rohmer intended Petrie's love interests to satisfy readers' need for romance, whereas Smith's complete lack of romantic connections is in line with the rationalist model masculinity provided by Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and Poe's Dupin

Dr Petrie however struggles with his attraction, because he understands that it is inherently wrong, due to the devious and treacherous nature of Orientals. Smith remarks on several occasions to Petrie that Karamaneh is attracted to him [Petrie] and “she has formed a sudden predilection, characteristically Oriental, for yourself. Oh, you may scoff, but it is evident” (*Mystery* 13). This predilection is the main reason that Karamaneh assists Petrie and Smith in *Mystery* and *Devil*. In *Si-Fan*, she has managed to escape the clutches of Fu-Manchu into the loving, strong arms of Dr. Petrie and has become an ally to the British heroes, but still remains an Oriental no matter how much she attempts to escape her dubious heritage as Petrie's love interest. Although, even Petrie has an ambiguous attitude towards Karamaneh, because he refers to her as; “that lure of men” (*Mystery* 27), he falls in love with her and becomes her savior. Karamaneh becomes an Oriental who is assimilated and tamed through love, in a similar way as Pocahontas was. His attitude towards her, however, is no different than that of any white colonizer towards a colonized Oriental. Said argues that Oriental women are described in Orientalist fiction in a certain fashion and Rohmer uses the same tropes with Karamaneh;

Women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express an unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid and above all they are willing.

(Said 207)

Karamaneh is all of these things and Rohmer has her at times throw herself at Petrie and at others, behaving as Fu-Manchu's most devious weapon, and utilizing her sexuality to do so. Petrie is spellbound by her Oriental exoticism, though he never forgets that she is beneath him due to her race.

Sax Rohmer's Fu-Manchu became a new Chinaman for a new century and ended up not only replacing John Chinaman as the typical Chinese stereotype, but also becoming the most famous Chinese villain. He is the result of a shift from harmless fool to a sinister villain. The reason for the transformation of the public image of the Chinese lies in the Boxer rebellion and the political consequences it had both domestically in China and internationally. The violence, brutality and hatred the Chinese directed towards was unheard of and it strengthened the spreading ideas and fears of the Yellow Peril. Fu-Manchu is a product of the Yellow Peril as much as he is of the new century. Even though Fu-Manchu represented a new image of the Chinese, he was not separate of the old Orientalist stereotype, Fu-Manchu could never best his British adversaries, nor could he succeed in his plan to conquer the world. Fu-Manchu was a real threat to the sovereignty and freedom of the white race, but he could never win. Fu-Manchu, like John Chinaman submits to Orientalist rules of superiority and submissivity. Fu-Manchu provided a sense of thrill and fear for audiences of the Yellow Peril Era, but it is a safe thrill, because it will never be realized. John Chinaman evolved and changed due to political events and race paranoia and the result is Fu-Manchu.

#### **4. "But a Piece of Good Advice, John I'll Give You, Ere I Go" - Conclusion**

John Chinaman and Fu-Manchu are two halves of the same stereotype. John Chinaman embodies the fears, disappointments and expectations of 19<sup>th</sup> century readers and Fu-Manchu continues this in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century but in a more active fashion, providing both thrills and entertainment for the white West and a Yellow Peril-fuelled villain to direct discontent and fear toward. My thesis has sought to show how John Chinaman

was used as a propaganda vehicle to affect domestic politics, such as Chinese immigration and labour issues, in the United States west coast. In addition to this, as I have shown in the section dealing with John Chinaman, songs and poems that featured the character were used to affect public opinion regarding United States colonial interests in China as well as domestic issues, such as widespread Chinese immigration and coolieism. Fu-Manchu emerged at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a reaction to political upheavals in China and the changing attitudes and prejudices towards the Chinese. The Devil Doctor is previously unseen Chinese stereotype; an intelligent, active and violent villain with megalomaniac ambitions. Fu-Manchu was not used for political purposes in the same manner as John Chinaman was, but the Fu-Manchu thrillers were a means to deal with the changing world and reinforce the traditional Orientalist world order in a time when fear of counter colonialism and the Yellow Peril began to rise in the West. Where John Chinaman is a strongly Orientalist character in his passive and asexual submissivity, Fu-Manchu is less so. As my analysis of Fu-Manchu's character has shown, this does not mean that Fu-Manchu is not an Orientalist character. He is, however, a more subtle creation than John Chinaman and serves a different political purpose than his predecessor.

My thesis shows that Chinese stereotypes have served a specific purpose in popular fiction which goes beyond entertainment. John Chinaman performed a dual role of entertainment and propaganda, gaining huge popularity as the figurehead and symbol for the anti-Chinese Movement. John Chinaman was a term used for the Chinese as an ethnic group, but as I have argued in my thesis it also became the name of a stock Chinese caricature, which gained widespread popularity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in the United States and Britain. John Chinaman is a primarily negative character, and is not meant to be a positive characterization of the Chinese as an ethnic group. Even when attempts were made to present the Chinese in a more positive light, it very rarely succeeded. Once even leading to the opposite effect as in the case of Bret Harte's "Plain Language from Truthful James". There is much popular fiction featuring Chinese characters that are not called John Chinaman, such as Ah Sin from "Plain Language from Truthful James" and Ah Hung from Adeline Knapp's "Ways that Are Dark", nevertheless they still embody the same stereotype and character concept. I have shown through close readings and through analysis of popular songs, poems and short stories how John Chinaman fiction both influenced current affairs and reflected the general

atmosphere and discontent of the time.

I divided the fiction featuring John Chinaman into three different groups: the Gold Rush theme, the cheap labour theme and the seducer / moral corrupter theme. I have provided textual examples of all three themes and how they represented the political and social attitudes towards the Chinese at the time. The fiction featuring John Chinaman also serves as a means to define the characteristics of John Chinaman the character, which mirror the prejudices the white majority felt towards the Chinese minority. I have also provided examples of John Chinaman as a means of propaganda, such as Bret Harte's "Plain Language from Truthful James" and the anonymously authored "John Chinaman". John Chinaman, no matter what incarnation he took, is a strongly Orientalist character, who despite posing economic and sexual threats towards the white majority, was never taken seriously but rather thought of as a nuisance and an embarrassing miscreant. He remained passive and inferior, while the white majority remained superior in comparison. John Chinaman posed threats to the dominant white society and while they caused anxiety, none of them was truly threatening. John Chinaman is a character that in the end, could always be controlled, either by a superior white individual, as in the case of Ah Sin and Bill Nye, although Bill Nye's superiority beyond his race is debatable. Society, in the form of the police came to Reverend Grober's aid and spared him from the shame of a daughter trapped in an interracial marriage. Legislation battled John Chinaman's greed in the mining industry and thwarted his attempts to become rich. "John Chinaman" was the only text used in my thesis, where there was no clear retribution for John Chinaman's attempted abuses, although his treacherous nature is known to the narrator. John Chinaman, despite all his troublemaking, could always be subdued by either a white individual, or white society as a whole. John Chinaman is an essentially Orientalist and controllable character and represented 19<sup>th</sup> century prejudices towards the Chinese, who were essentially seen as passive, inferior and asexual.

My thesis has sought to determine how John Chinaman became an obsolete and outdated character and where the need for a new, different Chinese stereotype arose. I have presented the historical events that led to the change in perception and image of the Chinese as an ethnic group and in fiction. The Boxer Uprising changed the way the Western world saw China and the Chinese. This also meant that John Chinaman the

controllable, safe stereotype was no longer found satisfactory. The Boxer Uprising caught the West by surprise and nobody was prepared for the widespread violence that was directed towards Western whites in China. Even though the conflict itself was short lived, the way the Chinese people banded together to drive Western influence out of China caught Western colonialists by surprise. The notion of the Yellow Peril brought about a heightened fear and mistrust towards the Chinese, which the events and violence of the Boxer Uprising only enhanced. The Chinese were seen as a threat to the West and even the Western way of life. There was even anxiety over a possible counter colonialism, where faceless yellow hordes would flow uncontrollably into Europe. The way the West saw China was permanently shaken up and this meant that old stereotypes needed reinventing. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century brought with it a slew of new different Chinese characters, primarily introducing the Chinese villain, the most famous and iconic of these villains being Sax Rohmer's Fu-Manchu. In the Fu-Manchu section I have shown how John Chinaman gave way to Fu-Manchu and why this change occurred.

The section dealing with Fu-Manchu analyzes his character and determines the differences and the similarities between him and John Chinaman. It also discusses the Fu-Manchu thrillers and how they fit into the reality of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain. Fu-Manchu embodied the fears and prejudices of the new century, with its changing political climate. He became the sinister embodiment of fear, something John Chinaman had not been. The Fu-Manchu thrillers enjoyed worldwide success and their Yellow Peril allure appealed to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century readership. As the close readings of the first three Fu-Manchu thrillers show, Fu-Manchu is an actively violent and threatening character in a way that John Chinaman is not. Fu-Manchu is also an intelligent villain, who at times seems almost invincible to the West. Rohmer created a villain that could match the growing fear of the East that traditional Orientalism could not quell. Although Fu-Manchu is a new Chinese stereotype, he is as much an Orientalist character as John Chinaman, except he is not as easily controllable as John. The greatest difference between John Chinaman and Fu-Manchu is intelligence. Intelligence is the central quality of the new stereotype, because only an intelligent Chinaman could be truly threatening to white Western identity. A stupid killer is only an animal, but an intelligent murderer is a dangerous enemy who threatens not only physically, but also intellectually and culturally as well. But like John Fu-Manchu will not ultimately

triumph. Fu-Manchu's schemes to conquer England and Europe will fail because no matter how big a threat, the West would always prevail.

I have analyzed the characters of John Chinaman and Fu-Manchu through the popular fiction they appeared in and I have compared them and found that they differ significantly from each other but they have some things in common as they are both Orientalist creations. I have discussed the historical events that attributed to their creation and popularity. In addition to this I have examined the differences and similarities of John Chinaman and Fu-Manchu to determine how much Fu-Manchu differs from the old submissive stereotype. The evolution of the Chinese stereotype from John Chinaman to Fu-Manchu is dynamic and fuelled by the Yellow Peril but one thing that never changes is that the East can never win. The West is threatened by the East but always prevails over it in the end. Just as Fu-Manchu always fails in his endeavours to conquer the world, because his audience enjoy the thrill of fear but would not allow a Chinaman to succeed in his dangerous schemes. The demands of the audience are the reason for the virtual immortality of Fu-Manchu; he cannot win, but he cannot die either. Fu-Manchu represents the new image of the Chinese, as he is more violent and actively malicious than John Chinaman was. He brings with him the threat of death in a way that John Chinaman never did, and unlike John Chinaman he is intelligent and educated. Fu-Manchu is so intelligent that whites even at times feel a sense of inferiority when compared to him. Nevertheless Fu-Manchu's mental superiority, though a real and tangible threat, is always thwarted by whites, so that in the end the Yellow Peril is always just a threat that is never realized.

During the course of my thesis I argued that Chinese stereotypes in popular literature have reflected the attitudes and prejudices of the public in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and that historical events and the Yellow Peril initiated a change in image and characterization. My thesis has shown through textual analysis and examples from the source texts that historical events and politics have affected the image of the Chinese as an ethnic group and the literary depiction of Chinese characters. This has been done through a study of source texts from both the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as well as discussion of the pivotal historical events in China that shocked and terrified Western colonialists and caused a shift in both the way they viewed China and the way Chinese characters were portrayed in literature. The development of Chinese fictional characters

is closely connected to Orientalist attitudes and cultural perceptions. The simple childlike fools and Devil Doctors are the makings of the exotic and inscrutable Other, who will always remain just outside of Western Orientalist understanding.

Appendix:

Figure 2

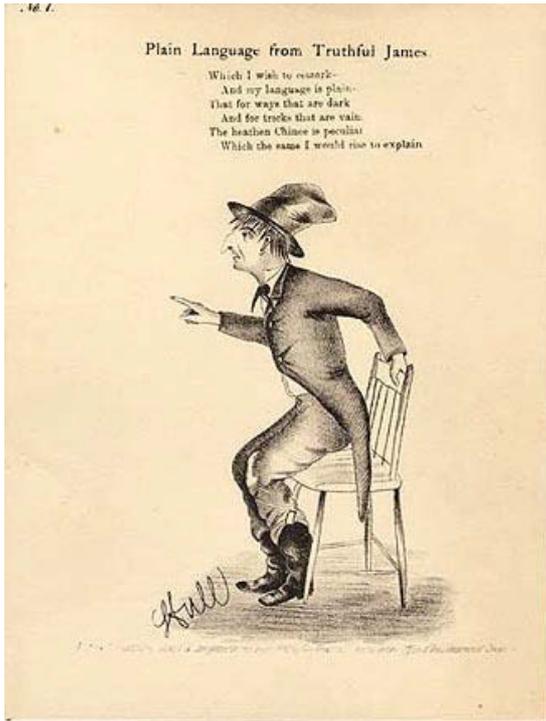


Figure 1

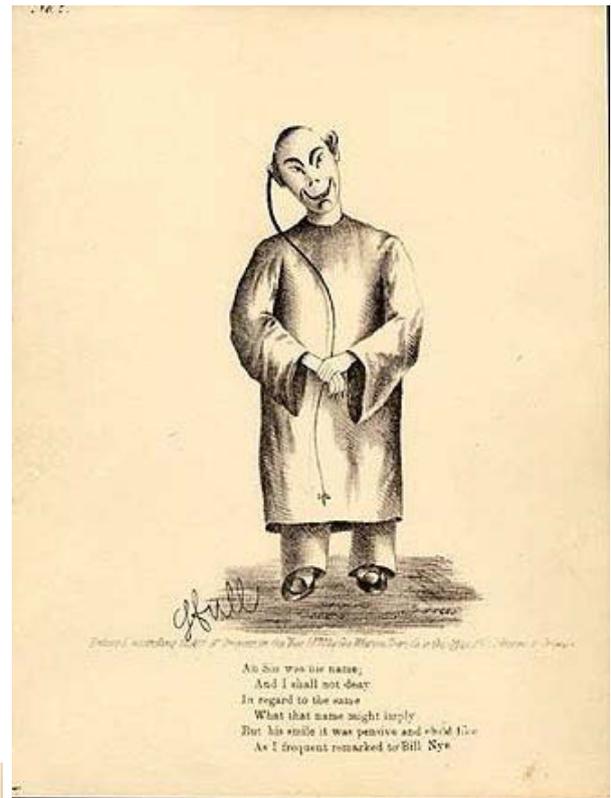


Figure 3



Figure 4

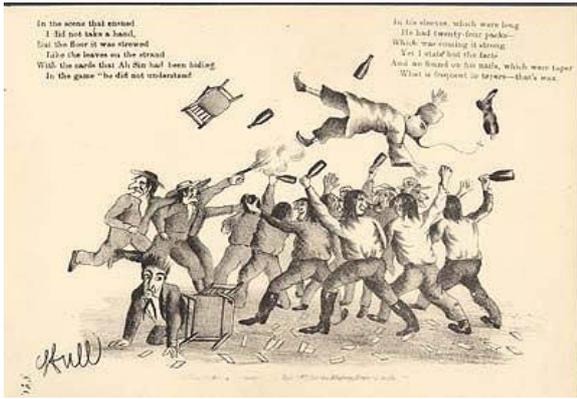


Figure 5

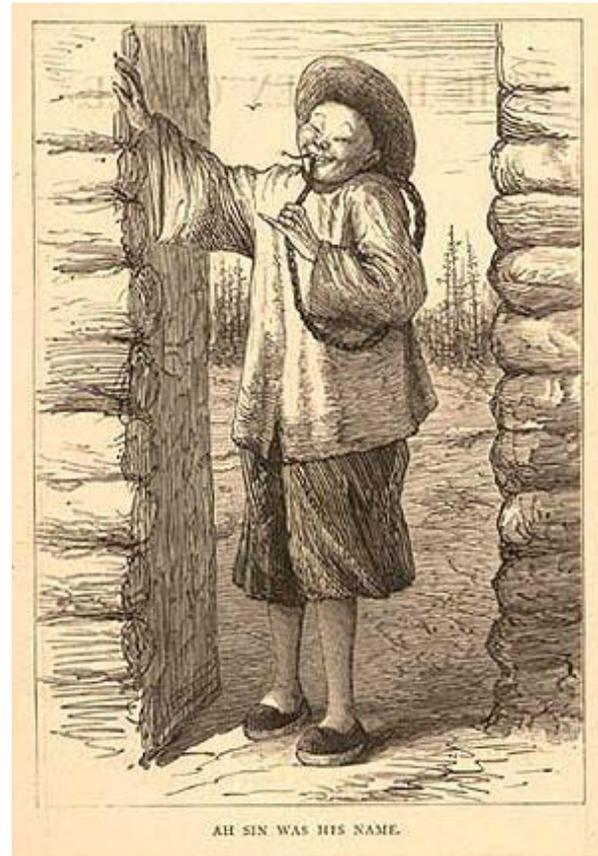


Figure 6

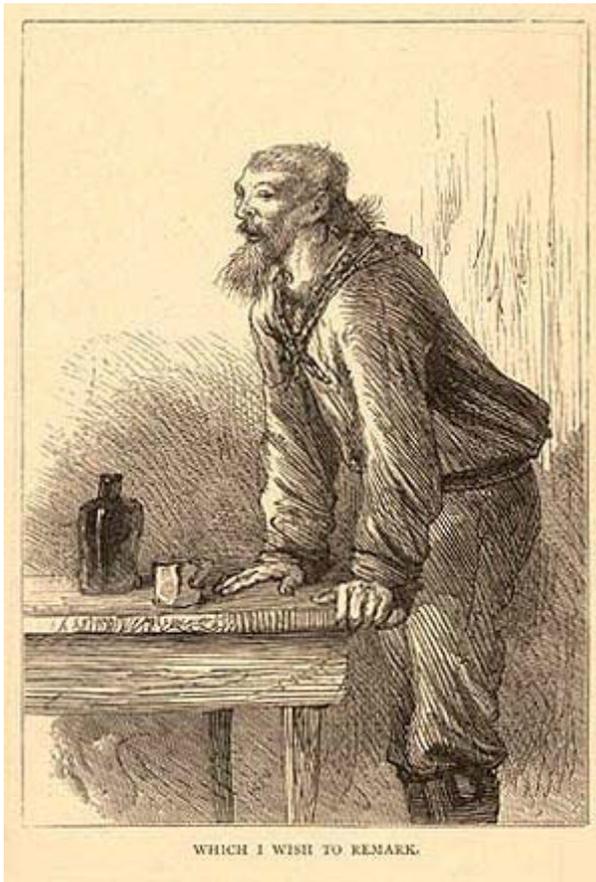


Figure 7

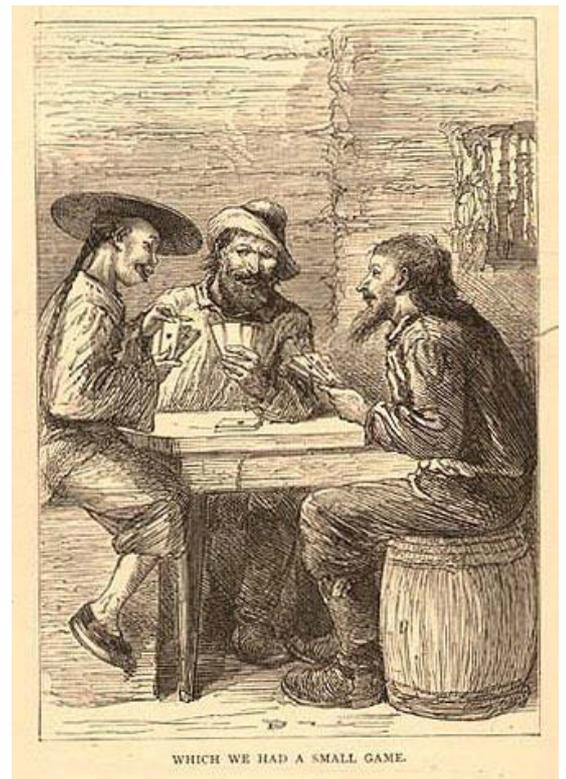


Figure 8

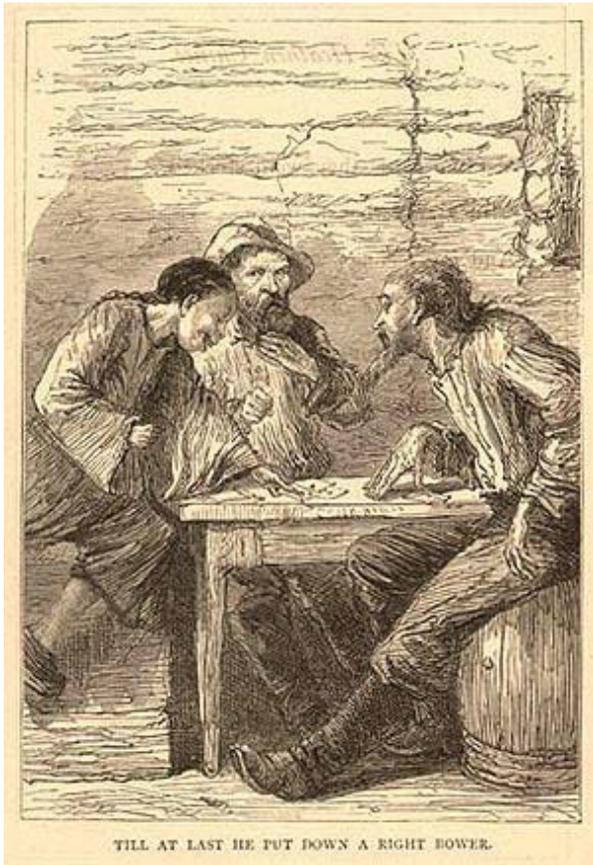


Figure 9

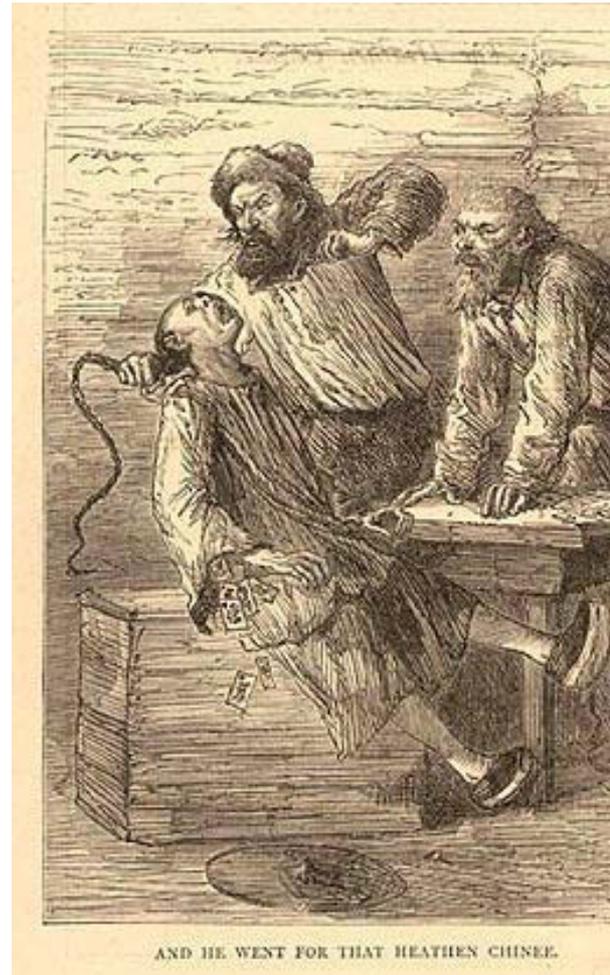


Figure 10

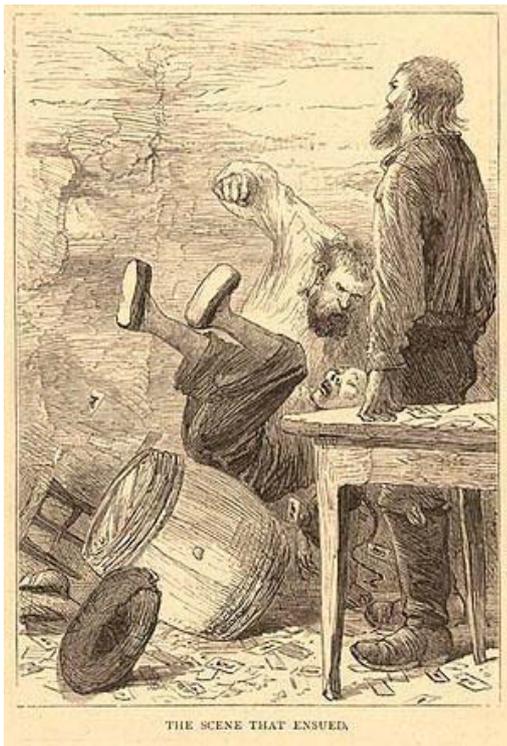


Figure 11

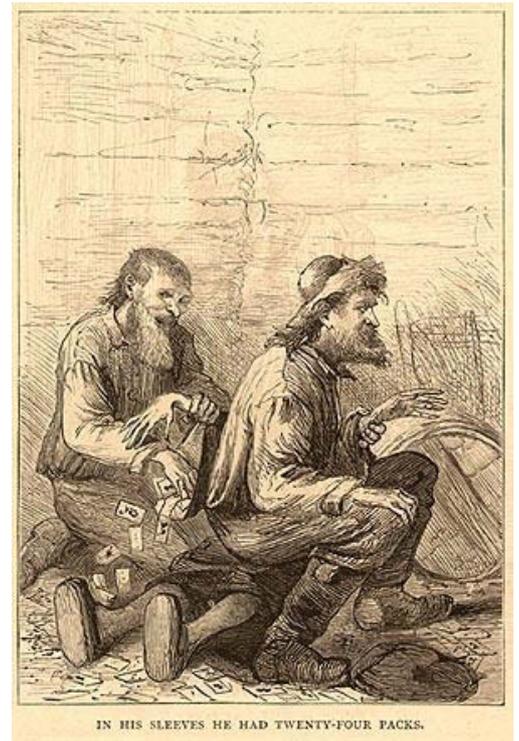


Figure 12

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