

The Takarazuka Concise *Madame Butterfly*

Translated by **Kyoko Selden** and **Lili Selden**

Introduced by **Arthur Groos**



Original Puccini, *Madama Butterfly* Poster, Adolfo Hohenstein, 1904. [Wiki Commons](#)

series of revisions and discussions with Kyoko about the intricate relationships between source and target languages. We spent stimulating afternoons over coffee interrogating texts in Italian, Japanese, and English, ultimately working through several complete revisions. Lamentably, that kind of collaboration was less fully realized in the following translation, which we discussed only once. I have edited it here with the generous help of Lili Selden, and revised or added footnotes, in one case deliberately juxtaposing two viewpoints. I believe I also speak for Kyoko in hoping that readers will find it an invitation to continue and refine our dialogue on the transpositions of Italian and Japanese music-dramas into widely different cultural contexts.

Introduction

For more than two decades I had the pleasure and the privilege of working with Kyoko Selden on Japanese texts relating to the history of Italian opera in Japan. We started with translations involving the reception of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* and then began working on Takarazuka musical adaptations of the opera.¹ Although administrative duties made it difficult to realize a book project, Kyoko's translation of the 1953 Takarazuka *Chōchō-san sandaiki* (Three-Generation Chōchō-san) furnished me with the basis for a conference presentation,² and we eventually collaborated on an English edition of its libretto.³ That edition was the result of an extensive and—for me—instructive



Photographs from the Takarazuka revue August 1931 performance of *Concise Madame Butterfly*. Pamphlet produced by Takarazuka revue. No photographer credits listed.

In his preface to the Takarazuka Kageki Revue's production booklet of *Concise Madame Butterfly* (Shukusatsu Chōchō-san),⁴ first performed by the Snow Troupe at the Takarazuka Grand Theater in August 1931, Tsubouchi Shikō (1887-1986) states that he wrote the play like "a concise dictionary" so that it could be performed in less than an hour.⁵ Tsubouchi, a playwright, critic, and professor at Waseda University, excuses the brevity by suggesting that he had only a vague memory of the opera from a performance seen abroad twenty years before, and—with no copy of the score available—was forced to fill in the plot

outline using his own imagination and Nagasaki dialect.⁶ It therefore comes as something of a surprise to find that several numbers of Puccini's opera are also rendered with unusual fidelity, in particular "Un bel dì" (One Fine Day), Pinkerton's "Addio, fiorito asil" (Farewell to the House), and the conclusion of Butterfly's final aria "O a me, sceso dal trono" (Parting with This Life). Given the increasing Japanese access to performances of the opera by foreign opera companies, concerts, and adaptations in the 1920s and early 1930s, not to mention a full production by the Japan Opera Association at the Tokyo Theater from May 26-29, 1931,⁷ which used a translation by Horiuchi Keizō, the asserted lack of sources suggests that the humility formula is disingenuous at the very least.

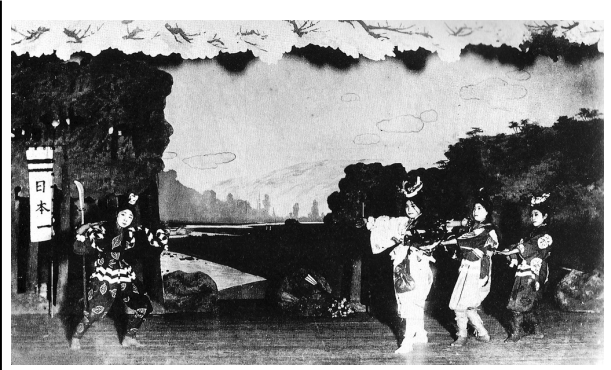
Indeed, it seems probable that in imagining a version to "fit the character of the Takarazuka troupe," Tsubouchi invites readers to consider his libretto not only as an accommodation to genre conventions of the musical but also to the tastes of the company's largely female audience, changing the boy Trouble (Dolore) to an unnamed and sickly little girl (undoing the bias of the original story by deleting the child's blonde hair and blue eyes), and having Kate apologize for Pinkerton's sin: "As a member of the same gender, I sympathize with you deeply." More interestingly, though, as Kate's apology suggests, Tsubouchi also repatriates the opera's East-West conflict by emphasizing the impact of domestic politics in the 1930s on Japanese women, caught between the extremes of ideological reaction, represented by Bōjō and his retinue's xenophobic rejection of marriage to a Christian, and a corrosive free-reign capitalism, represented by Gorō's reduction of all human values to money ("Money, it's money, all money / be it social obligation, fidelity, or compassion").

Moreover, Tsubouchi's reconceptualization of the opera's heroine may have been both reassuring and shocking to its 1931 audience.

Kate’s instinctive assessment of Chōchō as a “pure, loyal heart” has both Japanese and universal resonances. Her entrance is calculated to appeal to traditional and even conservative cultural values, not only through her appearance in a white dress, “symbolizing a woman’s honor” and the fact that “once wedded, a woman will never return to her native home alive,” but also through her acknowledgement (in “elevated language”) that she carries the burden of honor from her samurai father’s suicide into her marriage, wearing his dagger on her body. Nonetheless, these traditional Japanese values co-exist with a—for the time—surprisingly idealistic belief in the universality of loving commitment:

Still, Uncle, as I have said many times, I believe that, regardless of the country in which one is born, one’s thought, one’s affection is all the same. Pinkerton is American. But he is a fine naval officer of his country, a military man who serves his country. And he loves me deeply. Likewise, I intend to lead my life with integrity as his wife.

One can only wonder what echoes this imagined voice, adhering to traditional values and yet yearning for the lasting integrity of transcultural relationships, might have found amidst the growing cacophony of nationalist discourse in August of 1931.



First Takarazuka Performance, *Donburako* (Based on the folktale of Momotaro, a baby who was found inside a peach who grew up to be a hero), 1914. [Wiki Commons](#)

***Concise Chōchō-san* (Shukusatsu Chōchō-san, August 1931)**

**Tsubouchi Shikō, libretto
Takeuchi Heikichi, music
Tsubouchi Shikō, choreography**

Scene 1

Chōchō’s residence in Nagasaki. A modest house toward stage right. A garden at center. An entrance, stage left. A distant view of Nagasaki Harbor. Many children playing with kites.⁸

Chorus:

na-a-nka Nagasaki, mishikaka Misaki
Long Nagasaki, a short peninsula⁹

na-a-nka Nagasaki, mishikaka Misaki
long Nagasaki, a short peninsula

tokopintoko, Oda-no-hara
tokopintoko a field of small rice paddies

koyashitango no okidokoro
a place to set down manure buckets

aji ya yokaro, saba kusare

bluefish will be good, mackerel should rot

nakibesu ya kobesu

cry baby tears, little one's tears

rō no mae no karekusa

withered grass before a prison

tengu yama e nobotta¹⁰

the tengu has gone up the mountain!

CHILD 1:

C'mon, let's fly our kites, let's fly our kites.

CHILD 2:

Okay, I'm ready.

CHILD 3:

Whose is the biggest?

CHILD 4:

My big brother's is number one!

CHILD 5:

You numbskull, what are you talking about?

How can such a small kite be any good? My

hemp kite's the best.

CHILD 6:

Stop fighting like that. Let's just hurry up and fly them, all right?

CHILD 7:

C'mon, hurry up and take them over there.

We'll take them over there.

(Music begins. Several children take their kites to stage left and gesture as if flying them.)

Gorō enters at stage left, looking up at the sky.)

Gorō:

Hey look. They're up, they're up. Just splendid.

Well flown, indeed! They're as brave as Dharma kites.¹¹ Well now, let me fly one, just for a

second. Step aside, there. Good, good. If any of these kite strings is glass-coated, I'll show you

how I can disable the others.¹²

GORŌ, *solo*:

tonba utaso ka

Shall I strike at those dim-witted kites?

tsurubakashi¹³

Just give them a tug

chō-bata, ago-bata

butterfly kite, flying fish kite

mukade-bata

centipede kite.

Chorus:

Atago no yama kara kaze moraō

Let's get some wind from Mt. Atago

i-i-nma kaze modosō

now let's send it back.

Inari no yama kara kaze moraō

Let's get some wind from Mt. Inari

i-i-nma modosō

now let's send it back.

(All dance.)

CHILD 1:

Oh, take a look at this. A foreigner's coming our way.¹⁴

CHILD 2:

Yes, yes, it's a foreigner. He'll give us some coins!

GORŌ:

Why, you're right. That's Mr. Pinkerton. Now, now, boys, he's come here to be Chōchō's bridegroom. Don't make so much noise. Move along now. Move along.

CHILD 3:

Chōchō's a *geiko*.¹⁵ How can she become a wife?

GORŌ:

A *geiko* can have a bridegroom, too.

CHILD 4:

I see. You're thinking of making money by acting as a go-between.

GORŌ:

Don't talk nonsense, rascal.

CHILD 5:

Oh, he's here. He's here. Let's go meet him.

(Introduced by music, Pinkerton and Sharpless appear on the hanamichi.¹⁶ The children go over to the hanamichi and call out, "Strange sirs, please give us money.")

Gorō:

Come, boys. That's enough.

Pinkerton:

It's all right, Gorō. Today is my happy, happy wedding day. I'll celebrate the occasion with them. Come. Let me give this to you. Share it like good children and have fun.

(He hands out money. The children cheer excitedly.)

Pinkerton:

Come, come. Share it like good children and have fun. Like good children, now.

(The children exit carrying their kites, each cheering individually.)

Pinkerton:

Japanese children. Lovely children. Merry and light as swallows, they fly away under the May sky. Ah, Gorō, where is my Chōchō?

Gorō:

Yes, sir, Chōchō is inside, preparing for the wedding.

Pinkerton:

I see. I wish very much to see her. I can imagine how beautiful she looks. Please go quickly and call her over.

Gorō:

Yes, sir. At your command.

Pinkerton:

Gorō, this is some pocket money, though it's not much.

Gorō:

Oh no, sir, you've been so generous every time, so...

Pinkerton:

But I will thank you more fully later. This is just a little pocket money.

Gorō

Is that so? Well, thank you as always. I'll go get her right away, then. Oh what a happy event. A very happy event!

GORŌ, *solo*:

chon kina, chon kina¹⁷

Come on, come on

chonchon kina kina

come on over this way

ochon ga nanoha de

butterfly at the *nanoha* field

ochon ga choi

butterfly, here! (*Gorō leaves.*)

Sharpless:

Pinkerton, Pinkerton!

Pinkerton:

What is it, Sharpless?

Sharpless:

Do you really intend to marry Chōchō?

Pinkerton:

Naturally. It's precisely why I've asked to use your place for a wedding ceremony.

Sharpless:

Of course it's a simple matter to let you use my house, but somehow I feel anxious about this marriage.

Pinkerton:

Why?

Sharpless:

She's a *geisha* now, but you know her father was a fine samurai.

Pinkerton:

I am aware of that.

Sharpless:

What's more, he even performed *harakiri* for the sake of his honor. I wonder if you aren't taking her too lightly.

Pinkerton:

Samurai, samurai. (*laughs*) *Harakiri* and samurai are things of the past. Times change.

(Picking up one of the kites left on stage.) Look

at this kite. If the string breaks, it will float off and find a nice pine branch around which it can

entwine itself. Likewise, Chōchō is still young and beautiful. If, against all odds, she is parted

from me, she'll try to find a better man and live happily in mirth. She's a lovely, innocent girl.

No woman today will fixate on such things as *harakiri* and samurai (*laughs*). Don't worry so

needlessly about another person. You know how the Japanese song goes:

Pinkerton,

Butterfly, Butterfly¹⁸

solo:

alight on the *nanoha*

if you tire of the *nanoha*

alight on the cherries.

SHARPLESS, *solo*:

Tying this uneasy knot of marriage—

PINKERTON, *solo*:

Tying this delightful knot of marriage—

SHARPLESS, *solo*:

May no future disaster come.

PINKERTON, *solo*:

Always light-hearted, a Japanese girl.

SHARPLESS, *solo*:

Uncertain, uncertain, how this will end.

PINKERTON, *solo*:

Delightful, delightful, how this is now.

(A commotion inside. Enter Bōjō,¹⁹ followed by Yamano and Ōsaki, and then by Gorō and Chōchō's wet nurse Osuzu,²⁰ and finally by Ochō. Pinkerton and Sharpless conceal themselves, away from the others.)

Gorō:

Master Bōjō, please, and Mr. Yamano and Ōsaki, too, I beg you not to be so angry...

Bōjō, *solo*:

Unpleasant even to mention you, unpardonable one

this shall be the last day of our ties as uncle and niece

In place of my deceased older brother

I disinherit you forever unto the next world.

Suzu:

Master Bōjō, please don't say that.

Bōjō:

Osuzu, you're the one most at fault. It may be that Gorō was blinded by money, and thus he acted as a go-between. But even so, how dare you think yourself blameless when you—no matter how low your fortunes have sunk—marry off the daughter of your present master to a foreigner. You, who are reputed for your loyalty as a wet nurse who has served since my older brother's time. So unprincipled!

Chō:

Uncle, please don't scold my sweet nurse. My

mindset alone is to blame. Still, Uncle, as I have said many times, I believe that, regardless of the country where one is born, one's thoughts, one's affection is all the same. Pinkerton is American. But he is a fine naval officer of his country, a military man who serves his country. And he loves me deeply. Likewise, I intend to lead my life with integrity as his wife.

Yamano:

Wait a minute, Ochō. American means Christian. Christianity is a dreadful faith, banned until recently. I wouldn't even consider becoming a relative of such a person. Wouldn't you agree, Ōsaki?

Ōsaki:

Indeed, indeed. It's just as Yamano says. I tremble at the mere mention of it. Away, thunder, away!

Bōjō:

Now, Ochō. You are dressed in ceremonial white. Do you know what it means?

Chō:

Yes, I do. I understand it to be a shroud of death symbolizing a woman's honor.²¹ Once wedded, a woman will never return to her native home alive.

Gorō:

Of course, yes.

Chō:

As you can see, I wear on me the dagger I inherited from my dearest mother.

Suzu:

My dear child!

Bōjō, *(laughs)*:

Even if your language is elevated, it's of no use if your soul is rotten. One of these days when you give birth to a blue-eyed child—that will surely please our forefathers.²² Everyone, let's take our leave.

Chō:

Uncle!

Bōjō:

Now that I have severed our ties, we are complete strangers. I would not like you to call me uncle.

Suzu:

Master, please don't say that...

Gorō:

Please do calm yourself.

Bōjō:

What nonsense! Yamano, Ōsaki, let's make off.

(A march. The three men exit by the hanamichi, passing a crowd of sailors who happen to appear from the rear. On stage, Ochō, Osuzu, Gorō, and Pinkerton and Sharpless who reappear, see them off, each with his or her own thoughts. The sailors arrive onstage, salute Pinkerton, then stand at ease.)

Pinkerton:

Gorō, who were those people just now?

Gorō:

Well, no one really.

Sharpless:

Chōchō's relatives. They're opposed to her marriage to you, and they've left in a rage.

Pinkerton:

My poor, poor Chōchō, you needn't cry. Be at ease. Be at ease.

Suzu:

Master, please never abandon my mistress but care for her forever. This is my greatest desire in life.

Pinkerton:

Of course. Of course. My friend Sharpless and all my sailors will serve as witnesses. I will never, ever forget Chōchō. I will never abandon her. My sweet, sweet Chōchō. Here now, dance for us, please, in your lovely dress. I request a joyous, joyous dance.

Chō:

But...

Pinkerton:

No need to be shy. Wipe away your tears and dance merrily.

Sharpless:

Favor us with a dance, please—I'd love to see you dance.

Chō:

Let me accept your invitation, then.

All:

Brava, brava.

Solo:

Ripples rising,²³

the wind blowing at every port,

the stormy wind from the Hiei mountaintops

begins to seep into my heart.

Chorus:

An arrow, I thought with a start—²⁴

the bird perches on a tree by the pond

the fish lies in the waves under the moon

this autumn night is already passing;

the temple bell is heard at dawn

about to descend the moon lingers loath to part

with the moon the bell tolls.

Pinkerton, Sharpless:

Brava, brava. Excellent, excellent.

Sailor:

Should I open the champagne?

Pinkerton:

Go right ahead! Everyone, please drink to me and to my bride. Come here, Chōchō. We will be a couple for eternity. I drink to your maiden heart, as unstained as your pure white robe, as white as Mount Fuji.

All:

Prosit! *(All dance to festive music. The children also return. A church bell tolls.)*

Pinkerton:

Now let's have a party at Sharpless's place.

Sailor 1:

Formation—attention!

Pinkerton:

Is Chōchō's carriage ready?

Gorō:

Carriage! *(A rickshaw man appears.)*

Rickshaw man:

Here, sir!

Pinkerton:

Oh, a rickshaw, a rickshaw. Let's get you

settled into it, Chōchō. But what's that you're wearing?

Suzu:

It's a floss silk hat.

Pinkerton:

A hat? A deep hat like that simply won't do. It hides your beautiful face. In my country, everything's open and cheerful. Please take it off.

Chō:

All right.

Pinkerton:

Oh, you're so obliging. Wonderful, wonderful. My bride, my sweetheart. Children, let's have you all sing and form a line. Here's your reward (*hands out coins*). Come on. Sing now. Sing!

Chorus:

Atsukato bai, kanakin bai

It's thick and it's muslin

Oranda-san kara

a gift

morotato bai

from a Dutchman.

ano beni na, taga beni yo

Tell me, whose is that lipstick?

Okassan no shūgi no beni

It's the lipstick for madam's celebration.

tsube tsuketara, attakaro

Worn on her lips, it'll keep her warm.

With Ochō on the rickshaw, all exit through the hanamichi. Osuzu sees them off. Black curtain.

The following sentences appear on the curtain: "Pinkerton was called back to the States. Chōchō, who now has a beloved child, is longing for her husband's return. Three years have already gone by."

A solo between the scenes to the accompaniment of shamisen: "Kuru ka kuru ka to hama e dete mireba no" (Eagerly expecting my love, I go out to the seashore...)

Scene 2

Ochō's living room. Sliding paper doors, tokonoma,²⁵ and a screen in front. Stage left, a family Buddhist altar, a Bon shelf,²⁶ and the next room. This next room supposedly leads to the second floor. Stage right, a garden. Flowers everywhere. Osuzu is praying before the altar. Gorō enters from stage right.

Gorō:

Osuzu, are you alone? Where's madam?

Suzu:

Oh, it's you, Gorō. Madam has gone to get some medicine.

Gorō:

That suits me well. I want you to put in a word for me about that matter.

Suzu:

What do you mean by "that matter"?

Gorō:

Don't pretend you don't know. We are talking about arranging a new patron for Chōchō. She hasn't heard from Pinkerton, and the money he left for her is disappearing. It's no use for her to be loyal all by herself. This time, there's Yamashiro, a shipping parvenu who's come from Ōsaka and is much taken with Chōchō. He's extremely eager to care for her. This is a case of gains with no pains. In this world, what counts is

GORŌ, *solo*:

Money, it's money, all money.

Be it social obligation, fidelity, or compassion

before glittering gold

limp, limp, limp

it goes.

Suzu:

Well, it's not that I don't worry about it, but the thing is she simply won't hear of it.

Gorō:

There's never going to be another opportunity like this, so...

(Singing is heard. Ochō returns from stage right with many little girls.)

Chorus:

Chōchin ya, baibaibai

Lanterns, oh baibaibai

ishi nageta mon na

if you throw stones

te no kusaruru, baibaibai

your hands will rot, baibaibai.

Suzu, Gorō:

Oh, you're back.

Chō:

Yes, I am. Hello, Gorō. Nurse, the girls have come to wish my little one well. Where is she?

Suzu:

She's resting upstairs.

Chō:

Let her take this medicine, and give some sweets to the girls.

Suzu:

Yes, ma'am. Girls, come this way.

(Osuzu exits with the children. Ochō hangs a lantern under the eaves.)

Chō:

Gorō, Osuzu told me something a few days ago. Was that a fact?

Gorō:

Well, Miss Chōchō. I'm glad you bring up the topic. The fact is that...

Chō:

I decline the offer unequivocally.

Gorō:

Hold on, hold on—you shouldn't jump to conclusions. If Pinkerton had kept his promise and regularly tended to his duty, I agree you would have to remain loyal. And his being a foreigner doesn't make any difference to preserving your virtue. But since he was called home three years ago, there has been no way of writing him because no one knows where he is. Sharpless, the person we need, hasn't returned since being transferred to Kōbe. In the first place, how are you going to raise your child? I have good advice for you. I think you had better say yes to Yamashiro's offer.

Chō:

No, really. No matter what anyone says, I have every faith he will come back. He promised firmly that, though he had to leave temporarily, he would surely come back by the time swallows nested near the eaves.²⁷

GORŌ, *(laughter)*:

How can you trust your swallows? The real swallows have returned to your eaves, once, twice, thrice—already three years. By now he may have married a pale-skinned bride, having forgotten all about Japan.

Chō:

Say no more. He will come back. I am sure he will.

Gorō:

But...

Chō:

Nurse, bring my child and everyone else.

(Osuzu answers "Yes, ma'am," and appears with the children.)

Chō:

Now, girls, I want all of you to dance gaily for me once more before you go off to the lantern floating.

All:

Let's dance, let's dance.

Chorus:

Until the master's a hundred years old

until the master's a hundred years old

yoiyasa yoiyasa

eeiyō, until I'm ninety-nine years old

yoiyasa yoiyasa

until white hair, until white hair

yoiyasa yoiyasa

eeiyō, covers both our heads

yoiyasa yoiyasa. *(Sharpless enters during the dance.)*

Suzu:

Oh, Ma'am, Mr. Sharpless is here.

Chō:

What, Mr. Sharpless? My goodness, you're here.

(Cries, holding on to him. Osuzu gives sweets to the children and has them leave.)

Sharpless:

It's been a long while, Chōchō. I was in Kōbe all this time and have just arrived here today. Have you been well?

Chō:

Thank you, I've been fine. Come, Nurse, offer him some tea...

Sharpless:

No need to go to any trouble for me.

Gorō:

Hello, Mr. Sharpless. It's Gorō at your service.

Sharpless:

Why, Gorō, how are you doing?

Chō:

As I expected, Gorō, I was right. There's no better proof than Mr. Sharpless coming here.

Sharpless:

What can you be referring to?

Chō:

Well, Gorō thinks Pinkerton won't return, so he was just now trying to persuade me to marry someone else.

SHARPLESS *(laughs)*:

That's just like Gorō.

Chō:

Mr. Sharpless, if I may ask—you've heard from America, yes?

Sharpless:

I have. And I am to let you know that Pinkerton is coming to Nagasaki.

Chō:

To Nagasaki, to this harbor? When, when?

Sharpless:

He's expected to arrive today or so. I've come to meet him.

Chō:

Pinkerton will be in Nagasaki today!

Sharpless:

But, Chōchō...

Chō:

Yes?

Sharpless:

It's been three years since he left, Chōchō. I'm sure he has changed considerably.

Chō:

Yes, of course he must have changed. He must have put on weight and become healthier.

Sharpless:

Well, physically, too, but also his circumstances.

Chō:

Yes, he must have risen in rank and become a fine officer. For these three years, I have stayed away from the world, ties with my relatives severed. His return has been the only light in my life. At last, at last, the day has come! I am happy. I am so happy! Nurse, bring me my sweet girl.

Sharpless:

Your sweet girl? *(Osuzu reappears holding the child in her arms.)*

Chō:

Look at this lovely child, Mr. Sharpless. How very pleased Pinkerton will be to see her.

Sharpless:

Oh!

Chō:

Pinkerton doesn't know about her, does he?

Sharpless:

Of course, he doesn't. There's such a lovely child, and yet that man...

Chō:

See? Your father is coming home knowing nothing. He'll be surprised. And he'll kiss you again and again. How good that'll be!

Sharpless:

Chōchō, Pinkerton's ship will be in soon, so I'm taking leave of you for now.

Chō:

Thank you, thank you. Please do bring him over right away.

Sharpless:

Yes, as soon as possible.

Chō:

Thank you, thank you.

Gorō:

I'm off, too.

Chō:

Good-bye, good-bye. (*Sharpless and Gorō leave.*)

CHŌCHŌ,

One fine day

solo:

Beyond the distant sea

Smoke will rise and soon a ship will come in sight.

The pure-white ship will enter the harbor

And fire its cannons.

Look, it's he,

But I'll not go to welcome him.

I'll go to a nearby cape,

and that's where I'll wait for him.

Forever, a way from the harbor town.

Someone comes climbing up the hill.

Who might that be?

What will he say when he climbs to the peak?

From a distance, he'll call out, "Butterfly!"

I'll hide instead of answering,

Either that

or I may die of joy.

Then he will call me,

"My darling bride, Orange Blossom,"

just as he used to call me long ago.

That's how it will one day be,

so don't say that.

He will come back to me.

Truly he will.

(The sound of cannons from the harbor.)

Chō:

Oh, a ship has come in! (*She opens the sliding doors to reveal a panoramic view of the harbor.*) Nurse, bring me the telescope quickly now! (*Osuzu brings it. Chōchō grabs it from her to take a look.*) Oh, I can see it. That ship, that same ship. Even I can recognize the lettering: *Abraham Lincoln*. It's the ship Pinkerton was on. Just as I expected, he has come back. Nurse, change my sweet girl's clothes—no, I'll do it myself. Hurry, tidy up the room! Hurry and decorate it with flowers! Hurry, hurry! Oh, dear God.²⁸

Chō:

Now, come here, Nurse, and my sweet girl. Let's wait for your dear father's return. Look, the Bon lantern floating has started. How beautiful the flow of those lights is! *Calm music. It has already become dark, and lights from the hills overlooking the harbor stream toward the sea. A dreamlike mist descends.*

Scene 3

Music continues. The same scene as before, now light. Chōchō is standing, leaning against a pillar. Osuzu has sunk into disheveled slumber, still holding the child.

SUZU (*waking*):

Oh my, the day has dawned completely. I fell so comfortably asleep. Ma'am! Goodness, have you stayed there like that all night?

CHŌ (*exhausted, sadly*): Nurse.

Suzu:

Oh my, how pale you look! Please rest, ma'am. If the master appears with you looking like that, he'll be shocked, thinking you're ill.

Chō:

Am I that pale?

Suzu:

Yes, you look as frightening as a corpse. Come

now, hurry and get some rest. Then freshen up with some makeup and wait for him.

Chō:

Maybe I'll do that.

Suzu:

Yes, take a good rest now. Oh dear, you poor thing, you stood there all night, didn't you...

Desolate music. Ochō leaves. Osuzu tidies the parlor and puts the child to sleep.

Sharpless and Pinkerton appear. Kate follows.

Sharpless:

Osuzu, Osuzu.

Suzu:

Oh, Mr. Sharpless. And Master, you're finally here too!

Sharpless:

Sshh! No loud voices, please. Where's Chōchō?

Suzu:

She's resting upstairs.

Pinkerton:

I'm the luckier for that. Osuzu, I heard the story from Sharpless and realize I have behaved very, very badly. I have no excuse before Chōchō.

Suzu:

Then after all—I feared that by some chance...

Sharpless:

You're right. While he was in America, Pinkerton married a woman named Kate.

Pinkerton:

Osuzu, I am so remorseful and ashamed I don't know how to apologize, learning that a Japanese girl—and an ex-geisha at that—is so loyal to her husband. It was extremely painful for me to come to this house.

Kate:

One can't do anything about what has been done, no matter how many times one talks about it. More importantly, Nurse, I heard that Chōchō has a child. May I see it?

Suzu:

Yes, this is the child.

Kate:

My, what a lovely, beautiful girl!

Pinkerton:

A daughter! Sharpless, I feel so choked up I don't know what to say. I truly did wrong. In

compensation, I will provide for Chōchō so she will never face hardship for the rest of her life. Please convey my heartfelt apologies to that fine, loyal woman. I must make confessions before God and ask for His forgiveness. I request your good offices.

PINKERTON,

Farewell

solo:

To the house where we wove our dreams,

I will agonize to eternity,

cherishing your memory.

SHARPLESS,

But

solo:

she must have already

realized the fact.

PINKERTON,

Sweet abode

solo:

I will part

with ceaseless pain in my heart.

Farewell, I will be gone

forever, forever.

CHŌ (*unseen*): Nurse, Nurse!

Hearing her call out, Pinkerton quickly leaves.

Kate and Sharpless stand in the garden.

CHŌ (*appearing*): Nurse, I thought Pinkerton had just come back—was I wrong?

(Comes to the center of the living room, sees the two figures in the garden, and stops. A fairly long silence.)

Chō:

Mr. Sharpless, who is with you? (*Sharpless is unable to answer.*)

Kate:

Are you Chōchō?

Chō:

I am.

Kate:

Lovely, lovely Chōchō. Please forgive Pinkerton

for the sin he has committed. He apologizes from the heart. He is ashamed of himself before your absolutely pure, loyal heart. As a member of the same gender, I sympathize with you deeply.

Chō:

And who might you be?

Sharpless:

Chōchō, this is Pinkerton's wife, Kate.

Chō:

Kate, Pinkerton's wife!

Suzu:

Ma'am!

Chō:

I see. How very kind of you to stop by. Please have a seat.

Kate:

Chōchō, I am filled with pity for you. You must hate me.

Chō:

Not at all. I sincerely pray for your happiness.

Kate:

You do!?!

Chō:

I pray that you will live long and happily with Pinkerton.

Kate:

Oh, Chōchō, thank you. I am truly grateful to you for being so obliging. And if I may, I would like to raise your child with Pinkerton as lovingly as if she were my own. Would you grant me that wish?

Sharpless:

That's an excellent idea. Without the little one, Chōchō will be freer to plan her future.

Kate:

What do you say, Chōchō?

Chō:

Yes, I'd like to accept your offer.

Kate:

Oh, this makes me so happy!

Suzu:

Ma'am! This child?

Chō:

It's all right, Nurse. (To Kate:) However, this is Pinkerton's child, so please ask him, if you would, to come and get her himself. I will be

pleased to hand her to him.

Sharpless:

That's reasonable. Let's go fetch Pinkerton then, shall we, Kate?

Kate:

Yes, let's do that. We'll see you in a while, Chōchō.

Chō:

I'll be waiting for you.

(Music. Sharpless and Kate leave.)

Suzu:

Ma'am, do you really intend to hand over this child?

Chō:

It's all right. It's going to be all right.

Suzu:

Poor thing!

Chō:

When Pinkerton comes, I wish to offer him some of that wine he likes. Would you go out and pick up a few things to go with the wine?

Suzu:

Yes, Ma'am.

Chō:

You remember his favorite things, don't you?

SUZU (laughs):

Of course, I do, though not as well as you do (laughs). All right, then, I'll be back soon (leaves).



Photograph of a July 31, 1930 Takarazuka performance of *Parisette*. [Wiki Commons](#).

CHŌCHŌ,

Parting with this life

solo:

it's the final moment.

So you will not forget,

have a good look at your mother's face.

Good-bye

my lovely girl,

now, go play.

(The music continues. Ochō puts the child down to sleep, puts up a photograph of Pinkerton, arranges the flowers, and pays her respects to the family altar.)

Chō:

Father, I will join you in death to keep my name pure rather than live while disgracing it.

(Pulls out a dagger and draws the screen around her. After a while, Pinkerton enters alone.)

Pinkerton:

Chōchō, Chōchō.

(Hearing no response, he moves closer, peers in, and is shocked.)

Pinkerton:

Chōchō, forgive me! Chōchō! *(Rises to his feet and shouts:)* Kate, Sharpless, come here; it's a disaster!

(Kate and Sharpless rush in. Soon Osuzu, too, enters.)

PINKERTON, *solo:*

Chōchō-san

KATE, SHARPLESS, OSUZU, *trio:* **Chōchō-san**

ALL, CHORUS:

Chōchō-san

Curtain, slowly.



Takarazuka, 2013 Performance of *Rose of Versailles: Oscar and Andre* (Based on the manga *Berusaiyu no bara*). [Japan Times](#).

This translation is based on Tsubouchi Shikō, *Shukusatsu Chōchō-san* (Concise Madame Butterfly), Takarazuka Production Booklet (August 1931).

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Japan in Translation I

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Edited by Alisa Freedman

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Kyoko Selden (1936-2013) taught Japanese language and literature as a senior lecturer at Cornell University until her retirement in 2008. Author, translator, artist and calligrapher, she was the translation coordinator of the Asia-Pacific Journal. Her major works as translator centered on Japanese women writers, the atomic bomb, the Ainu and the Okinawans. Her major translations included [Japanese Women Writers: Twentieth Century Short Fiction](#), [More Stories By Japanese Women Writers, An Anthology](#), Kayano Shigeru's [Our Land Was a Forest](#), Honda Katsuichi's [Harukor: Ainu Woman's Tale](#), [The Atomic Bomb: Voices From Hiroshima and Nagasaki](#), Shin'ichi Suzuki's [Nurtured by Love](#), and Cho Kyo's [The Search for the Beautiful Woman, A Cultural History of Japanese and Chinese Beauty](#).

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Notes

¹ Arthur Groos, "Return of the Native: Japan in *Madama Butterfly* / *Madama Butterfly* in Japan," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1 (1989): 167-94.

² "Madama Butterfly and the Atom Bomb: The Takarazuka Three Generation Chōchō-san," unpublished conference paper, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2001.

³ The "Three-Generation Chōchō-san" was published in *Studi pucciniani* 4, ed. Arthur Groos and Virgilio Bernardoni (Florence: Olschki, 2010), 143-78.

⁴ For more information on the Takarazuka Revue, see Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Maria Gräjdian-Mengel, "Die Takarazuka Revue oder die Überwindung der Tradition," *Studien zur traditionellen Musik Japans* 11 (Wilhelmshaven: Noetzel, 2005); Leonie R. Stickland, *Gender Gymnastics: Performing and Consuming Japan's Takarazuka Revue* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific, 2008).

⁵ It was followed by a performance-filling second part, “From Meiji to Shōwa,” consisting of eleven choreographed songs from that period: “Miyasan, Miyasan” (early Meiji), “Suteteko” (1880), “Oppekepe” (1890), “En kai na” (1881), “Michi wa 680 ri”(1894), “Sanosa-bushi” (1899), “Strike-bushi” (1900), “Rappa-bushi” (1904), “Koko wa okuni o nanbyakuri” (1905), “Kachūsa no uta” (1914), “Doko made mo” (1916).

⁶ Romanized Japanese text has been provided in the translation for songs in the Nagasaki dialect. In addition, the children speak Nagasaki dialect and Gorō sometimes switches to Nagasaki dialect when addressing them.

⁷ Groos, “Return of the Native,” 180-82. On the opera production, see the advertisement in the *Asahi Shinbun*, 25 May 1931, and the review by Mitsuru Ushiyama on May 28 that year.

⁸ The kite flying competition that takes place in Nagasaki every April is said to be one of the three most famous events in the port city. The other two are the Bon lantern floating held on July 15 in the old lunar calendar (now August) and the Okunchi festival of Suwa Shrine on September 9, 10, and 11 (now October 9, 10, and 11).

⁹ Nagasaki means “Long Peninsula.”

¹⁰ *Tengu* are goblins with long noses that usually live in mountains. Americans and Europeans were demonized in Japanese cartoons and art as *tengu*.

¹¹ A Dharma kite is decorated with a picture of the Indian priest Bodhidharma, and, in Nagasaki, it is a humming kite.

¹² In kite battles, strings coated with powdered glass and glue were used to slice through the strings of opponents’ kites.

¹³ Kite-flying term in Nagasaki dialect.

¹⁴ The Meiji expression used for “foreigner” here is “*ijin-san*” (literally, Mr. Stranger).

¹⁵ Synonymous with *geisha* here.

¹⁶ *Hanamichi* is an elevated passageway that leads from the rear of the theater through the audience to the stage.

¹⁷ An adaptation from rhythmic phrases used for a game similar to “rock, paper, scissors.” Some nineteenth-century illustrations and musical examples are collected online at Kotechai, *Dodoitsu*, December 3, 2012, available at <http://kotechai.blog69.fc2.com/blog-category-15.html> (accessed February 5, 2014). Here “*chon*” puns on *Chō* and “*ochon*” on *Ochō* with the female prefix. “*Nanoha*” (leaves of rape or similar greens) stands for “*nanohana*” (small, yellow flowers of rape or similar greens), which is traditionally associated with white cabbage butterflies. *Chonkina* was also the name of a striptease dance associated with prostitutes in treaty-port pleasure quarters, widely known in the West. For a description, see the chapter “*Chonkina*” in the John Paris novel, *Kimono* (London: W. Collins, 1921), 57-65. Westerners in the know may have winked at the allusions in the Harry Greenbank / Sidney Jones operetta, *The Geisha: A Story of a Tea House* (London: Hopwood, 1896), where in “*Chon kina*” (Nr. 13, 77-84), Molly sings how for “extra-special prices” she can “dance for you in *quite* another way.” Some version of *Chonkina* was apparently performed at the end of the first Japanese performance of *Madama Butterfly* at the Imperial Theater in Tokyo in January 1914, scandalizing members of the audience who knew of its treaty-port associations. See “Return of the Native,” 179-80. This first Takarazuka adaptation may be attempting to repatriate the song’s more ingenuous origins on the wedding-day of a “lovely, innocent girl” (Pinkerton), although the fact that Gorō sings it could

have less elevated resonances.

¹⁸ A Japanese version of “Lightly Row” / “Alles Mai, macht der Mai.”

¹⁹ The operatic Bonzo (Italian for bonze, Buddhist monk) has been replaced by Bōjō, a more convincingly Japanese name without religious connotations. In fact, all the opera’s garbled references to Japanese religious practice have been eliminated.

²⁰ The family name Suzuki, one element of the opera that bothered Japanese audiences because of the awkward and distancing usage of a last name, has been replaced by the more personal Osuzu (Suzu from Suzuki, plus the preface O used at the time in familiar versions of names for people who are inferior or younger). Relatedly, Chōchō is called Ochō by the people who are close to her. She is alternatively called Chōchō and the abbreviated Chō.

²¹ White is a color associated with death and mourning in Japan and China and used in funeral rituals.

²² What has been rendered as “our forefathers” more literally means “our ancestral tablets,” as in tablets with postmortem Buddhist names, in a miniature family shrine.

²³ An autumn song in literary Japanese in two lines comprised of 5/7/5/7/5 syllables.

²⁴ Chōchō’s dance continues in 7/5 syllables in literary Japanese.

²⁵ In a Japanese-style room, the *tokonoma* is a built-in recessed space where a scroll is hung and a flower arrangement is placed.

²⁶ Shelf with a small altar for offering prayers and oranges, sake, and other foods to the memory of deceased family members.

²⁷ The robins nesting in spring in the opera have been replaced by swallows—the latter would be more familiar to a Japanese audience and can also be a harbinger of summer as well as spring (as in Scene 1), coinciding with the production of the musical in August and its references to the Bon festival.

²⁸ The source text’s “*Ō, kamisama*” is a reference to the Judeo-Christian God, suggesting that Chōchō has converted to Christianity. This is contrasted to Ōsaki’s incantatory exclamation “Away, thunder, away!” (*kuwabara kuwabara*) in Scene 1.