

The Perils of Home: Race, Gender, and Labor on the Pacific Frontier

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Abstract

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In the early twentieth century, Chinese men and white women often worked in close proximity to each other in various intimate settings in the North American West— from the kitchens of upper class homes to the noisy cafés of the city. However, little has been said in the scholarship on the social and political significance of these encounters. Instead, this study centers on the different and connected ways in which intimacy shaped the North American West in the early twentieth century. As such, this work makes central and transparent the connections between the expansion of white women’s political and economic rights and efforts to exclude the Chinese in British Columbia and California. Thus, this study asks: How were changes in the status of white women and shifting notions of domesticity related to debates about Chinese labor and migration? Conversely, to what extent was the anti-Oriental movement and its calls for exclusionary measures informed and shaped by debates about gender roles? Last, how might a transnational analysis of these intersecting debates deepen our understanding of how such controversies shaped Vancouver and San Francisco as frontiers and gateways for Chinese labor migration and white settlement? If both Western Canada and the United States were primary sites for Asian labor migration and white settlement, did intimacy and affective labor play out differently in these two contexts?

By using primary source documents to analyze two murder cases involving Chinese servants and two legislative efforts regarding affective labor in the distinct but connected contexts of Western Canada and the United States, this study shows how white women and Chinese men working together in intimate settings became increasingly scrutinized and subject to rampant social commentary and governmental intervention as racial, sexual, and class tensions flared.

For my parents and *balmoni*

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## The Perils of Home, Sluttish Women, and Chinese Houseboys: An Introduction to a Framework

Servants policed the borders of the private, mediated between the “street” and the home, and occupied the inner recesses of bourgeois life; they were, in short, the subaltern gatekeepers of gender, class, and racial distinctions that by their very presence transgressed.

Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*<sup>1</sup>

This study centers on the different and connected ways in which intimacy shaped the North American West in the early twentieth century. Inspired by the long intellectual tradition of thinking about intimacy in the broader sense, I call these twisted yet connected meanings “intimate vectors” or the “perils of home.” This chapter endeavors to sketch out what these intimate vectors or perils of home are by putting forward intimacy as an analytical framework and as an historical object in its own right. In many ways, this dissertation traces the historical legacy of two historical protagonists: the sluttish woman (the indolent/immoral “girl” as domestic worker) and the Chinese “houseboy.” These two figures were often pitted against each other, and yet both threatened, and at times, transgressed, the boundaries of race, gender, and class in early twentieth century Canada and the United States.

When I invoke the “sluttish woman,” I do not do so only to provoke. Rather, I am calling to attention all of the meanings of “slut” in its current and historical usages:

slut, *n.*

1)

- a. A woman of dirty, slovenly, or untidy habits or appearance; a foul slattern.
- b. A kitchen-maid; a drudge.
- c. A troublesome or awkward creature.

2)

- a. A woman of a low or loose character; a bold or impudent girl; a hussy, jade.



b. In playful use, or without serious imputation of bad qualities.

3) A female dog; a bitch.

*Special uses:*

Slut's corner, *n.*, a corner left uncleaned by a sluttish person.

Slut's-pennies, *n.*, hard pieces in a loaf due to imperfect kneading of the dough.

Slut's wool *n.*, the fluff or dust left on the floor, etc., by a sluttish servant or person.<sup>2</sup>

Anne McClintock independently arrived at the same set of connected meanings when she remarks that it is no “small wonder that female servants in Victorian households came to be figured by images of disorder, contagion, disease, conflict, rage, and guilt.”<sup>3</sup> It is in all of these senses— lazy, caretaker, troublesome, loose, disruptive, filthy, bitch— in a word, *woman*, that is a key protagonist in this work. The other protagonist is the houseboy— effeminate, drug addict, asexual, infantile, inscrutable, drudge, foreign, and indelibly Oriental. If as Stoler says servants are the “subaltern gatekeeper[s] of gender, class, and race,” the linked histories of the sluttish woman and the Chinese houseboy have much to say about everyday work and life on the Pacific frontier. What might centering on these two figures— whose labor and very presence were systematically unseen and denigrated— reveal about the contexts and period in question? It is the purpose of this study to constantly ask this question and to reveal the connections that were hidden in plain sight all along.

In the early twentieth century, Chinese men and white women often worked in close proximity to each other in various intimate settings in the North American West— from the kitchens of upper class homes to the noisy cafés of the city. However, little has been said in the scholarship on the social and political significance of these encounters. As such, this work makes central and transparent the connections between the expansion of white women's political and economic rights and efforts to exclude the Chinese in British Columbia and California.

Thus, this study asks: How were changes in the status of white women and shifting notions of domesticity related to debates about Chinese labor and migration? Conversely, to what extent was the anti-Oriental movement and its calls for exclusionary measures informed and shaped by debates about gender roles? Last, how might a transnational analysis of these intersecting debates deepen our understanding of how such controversies shaped Vancouver and San Francisco as frontiers and gateways for Chinese labor migration and white settlement? If both Western Canada and the United States were primary sites for Asian labor migration and white settlement, did intimacy and affective labor play out differently in these two contexts?

In order to answer these questions, this dissertation is divided into two parts, with each part containing two chapters, one on the Canadian context and the other on the United States. Part One describes, compares, and contrasts two major murder trials that took place between 1924 and 1930— one in Vancouver and the other in San Francisco. In both cases, a Chinese houseboy was accused of murdering a white woman at his place of employment. Taken together, these two chapters examine the racial, gender, and class tensions that informed and shaped the media coverage and outcome of the two cases. Part One argues that the murder cases evolved into a public discussion of the socially transgressive threat that having Chinese men so close to white working women posed.

Part Two examines political attempts to ban white working women from working with or near Chinese men. Those in favor of such laws argued that they protected white women from the depravity of Chinese men, while there were debates about whether such laws would instead have

the effect of restricting white women's right to work. This kind of legislation was pursued and enacted in British Columbia largely due to what I call the settler feminism of a pioneering woman politician named Mary Ellen Smith. In the United States, however, it was the American Federation of Labor under Samuel Gompers that sought to incorporate white women into the labor movement while continuing to exclude Chinese and other Asian workers, and so its proposal to prohibit interracial labor must be understood within the broader context of these organizational goals. Therefore, Part Two argues that such laws sought to buttress both patriarchal gender norms and white supremacy at the expense of both working class white women and Chinese men.

By using primary source documents to analyze two murder cases involving Chinese servants and two legislative efforts regarding affective labor in the distinct but connected contexts of Western Canada and the United States, this study shows how white women and Chinese men working together in intimate settings became increasingly scrutinized and subject to rampant social commentary and governmental intervention as racial, sexual, and class tensions flared.

Due to the scope of the dissertation, my scholarship draws from and engages with a wide variety of fields, including race and gender studies, labor and immigration history, the history of domesticity, transnational American and Canadian Studies, and Chinese and Asian diaspora studies. Like many intersectionality scholars, my work argues that social categories like race, gender, and class have meanings only in relation to each other, and that such meanings create and maintain structures of inequality.<sup>4</sup> However, I take intersectionality as a framework a step further by historicizing how such overlapping meanings were actually created and troubled in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with the influx of Chinese male workers. In short, this dissertation demonstrates how the Oriental Question was not just a racial or class issue, but a gendered one, and that the changing role of working women was not just a question of gender and economics, but a deeply racial problem.

As such, this study is in conversation with the scholarly work in labor history and gender studies. Little has been written in these fields on the social changes that so profoundly altered late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century domestic life, and the racialized men who were so intimately connected to it. By incorporating the labor of Chinese men under the purview of the history of domesticity, I demonstrate how the particular position of these men was central to defining notions of domesticity and white womanhood. Such an intervention is necessary because feminist historians often compellingly illustrate how the gendering of labor and the discourse of domesticity involves both men and women, and struggles over defining the masculine and feminine, the home and family, and the public and the private. Despite this, many scholars have not been attentive to how the intimate labor of men of color historically shaped these debates. In other words, my study suggests that scholars doing work on domesticity should not treat change in the domestic sphere as having little to do with the color line, especially when Chinese male migrants were doing much of that work.

On the comparative front, my work is a response to calls for the redefinition of what is normally considered to be the purview of Canadian and American history, as well as scholarly debates over transnationalism and the global dimensions of racism, patriarchy, and labor. While the histories of the Chinese in Canada and the United States have been written about quite capably, these histories remain mostly separated from each other despite major congruencies in how Chinese and other Asian migrants were racialized and gendered in these two settler colonial contexts with histories of Asian labor migration and white settlement. Instead, my work brings together what Lisa Lowe has usefully termed the uneasy "intimacies"<sup>5</sup> between these histories and colonial contexts to the fore, in order to bring the histories of racism and patriarchy in the Canadian and American contexts into a comparative conversation that respects the specificities of each context while rendering the "American West" as a highly fraught object of historical study.<sup>6</sup>

## Historicizing Intersectionality & Intimacy in North America

Many historians of race in Canada and the United States are primarily interested in describing the primacy of race in organizing both contexts and as a result, do not end up seeing the intersecting lines I draw between the slutty woman and the houseboy as subaltern gatekeepers. For instance, Tomas Almaguer in his seminal comparative study of race in California, is rather glib in his dismissal of the relevance of intersectionality for historians of frontier contexts:

Although it has become fashionable from our late-twentieth-century vantage point to speak of race, class, and gender as “interrelated” or “interlocking” systems, such a move conspicuously avoids the issues of primacy or determinacy. While this stance may ring true in this postmodern period, the same cannot be said for the period under investigation in the study.<sup>7</sup>

My work argues that such a view not only demonstrates a rather limited understanding of intersectionality as a framework for historical analysis, but also that an intersectionality framework is absolutely key to understanding historical processes of social stratification in the United States and Canada. By dismissing intersectionality as a “postmodern” preoccupation, Almaguer fails to realize that racial difference in the historical period in question was always articulated alongside gender and class lines, and the challenge is to be attentive to the specificities of how race/gender/class operated together. Let me be even more explicit: the usage of intersectionality in my study does not do away with matters of primacy or determinacy, nor is it the result of being fashionable, postmodern, presentist, or anachronistic. Rather, the situating of race in relation to gender and class is an attempt to accurately describe a complex social process of differentiation and stratification that was occurring precisely during the historical period in question— the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Rather than being “conspicuously avoidant” of issues of determinacy, the main theoretical contribution of intersectionality as a framework for understanding inequality and oppression is precisely in its conscious critique of primacy arguments by demonstrating how they neglect issues of specificity.

In discussing the history of race in the Canadian context, Sunera Thobani argues the invention of the Canadian national subject is tied to what she calls the “exaltation” of certain peoples over others in constituting the Canadian subject.<sup>8</sup> Using postcolonial theory and a settler colonialism framework, her work examines “how the governance of these subjects/objects has been organized through state policies and popular practices, producing certain subjects as exalted (nationals), others as marked for physical and cultural extinction or utter marginalization (indigenous peoples), and yet others for perpetual estrangement or conditional inclusion as supplicants (immigrants, migrants, and refugees).”<sup>9</sup> Although I do think Thobani’s connecting together of British settler colonialism, the systematic genocide of indigenous peoples, and differential experiences of racial oppression is useful for thinking about race in Anglo North America as a whole, I am more interested in plotting where gender and class fit into this process of defining the Canadian nation.

In many ways, I concur with most race historians that it is useful to think about what Audrey Smedley has identified as “an Anglo racial worldview,” and this study does indeed demonstrate how this worldview shifted to suit the specific needs and conditions of both national contexts.<sup>10</sup> Where my study diverges from Almaguer, Thobani, and others is my emphasis on how the intimacies of race, gender, and class shaped both settler societies. By shining a light on the figures of the slutty woman and the Chinese houseboy, my work describes the historical process by which the invention

of racial difference became a part of what Patricia Hill Collins has called a “matrix of domination.”<sup>11</sup> As Collins usefully notes about Kimberle Crenshaw’s foundational work on intersectionality, “Intersectionality refers to particular forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation. Intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type, and that oppressions work together in producing injustice.”<sup>12</sup> Collins’ concept of the matrix of domination takes the critique of single-variable approaches to the academic study of inequality even further than Crenshaw, where her matrix of domination concept refers to “how these intersecting oppressions are actually organized.”<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Evelyn Nakano Glenn uses an intersectional framework in an integrated fashion that locates intersectionality in the realm of everyday social interactions as well as at the level of the superstructure and the state itself.<sup>14</sup>

In sum, the preoccupation with establishing the primacy of racial oppression in shaping American and Canadian society is limited in its explanatory power because race in the nineteenth and twentieth century was always articulated and deployed in relation to other social markers of difference and inferiority, and so one was never just a “Mexican” or “Oriental” or even a “white woman” even if that was the way in which the state acted upon and organized these groups. The wealthy *ranchero*, the Chinese *houseboy*, the sluttish *maid*, and all of the specific racial, gender, and class meanings attached to all persons who worked both within and against the seemingly rigid racial hierarchies of the societies under discussion.

Here, both Blauner’s internal colonialism thesis and Omi and Winant’s theory of racial formation are particularly instructive in linking race, gender, and class to mechanisms of state control. Race, gender, and class are not only social markers that are used to produce legible subjects and create social meaning, but the invention of difference along intersectional lines allows for the state to produce, shape, and remake social realities in finely-tuned and sophisticated ways.

Thus, I am in agreement with the spirit of Crenshaw’s argument when she writes, “My focus on the intersections of race and gender only highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed.”<sup>15</sup> This does not mean that my usage of intersectionality argues that the state and its proxies always functions intentionally in its production of these highly specific and fine-tuned realities of oppression and inequality. As Crenshaw writes, “Intersectional subordination need not be intentionally produced; in fact, it is frequently the consequence of the imposition of one burden that interacts with preexisting vulnerabilities to create yet another dimension of disempowerment.” The figure of the sluttish woman and the Chinese houseboy together show how white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and citizenship worked hand in hand to police these two groups that historically confounded and sometimes transgressed the state’s imposed hierarchies.

Let me now speak more about what I mean by intimacy, and why my usage of the intimate in conjunction with the sluttish woman and the houseboy is a refinement of the concept of intersectionality. Thinking about the different and connected meanings of the intimate in Western thought began in Antiquity. Aristotle was the first to systematically theorize about the public/private dichotomy, domesticity, gender roles, and affective labor, and he devotes the entirety of Book One of *Politics* to this purpose. He does this by distinguishing between *oikos* or the household and *polis* or the city. According to Aristotle, since a city is made up of many different households, and households are made up of “master, slave, husband, wife, father, and children,” household management (or *oikonomia*, the Greek root for “economy”) is a matter of political interest, but distinct from political rule.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, he writes that expertise in household management has three facets: mastery over slaves, paternal rule, and marital rule. Tellingly, Aristotle devoted nearly all of his discussion of *oikonomia* to the first skill, that of ruling over the slaves of a household.

Thus, a great deal of Aristotle's understanding of the intimate was greatly shaped by this close relationship between slavery and the ancient Greek household and the dichotomy of master and slave as he argued that "Ruling and being ruled belong not only among things necessary but also among things advantageous."<sup>17</sup> Aristotle then likens the master's rule over his slaves to man's rule over the animals. These dyadic relations between master and slave and man and beast are then extended to men and women as a justification of household slavery makes a defense of patriarchy possible. He continues, "the relation of male to female is by nature a relation of superior to inferior and ruler to ruled. The same must of necessity hold in the case of human beings generally."<sup>18</sup>

From Chapter Seven onward, Aristotle transitions into discussing the nature of household management itself. Here, it is reiterated that household management is understood to be the rule of one master over unequal beings, in contrast to political rule, which is the act of governing over "free and equal persons." *Oikonomia* is also distinct from expertise in business and commercial exchange, the meaning of economy that is in common usage today.<sup>19</sup>

Aristotle much more briefly considers the other two facets of household management for the remainder of Book One, that of parental and marital rule. Though earlier he indicated that women were subordinate to men, this did not mean he thought wives and children should be treated like slaves, as "[one ought] to rule wife and children as free persons" though these subjects are to be ruled differently as "the male, unless constituted in some respect contrary to nature, is by nature more expert at leading than the female, and the elder and complete than the younger and incomplete."<sup>20</sup> In other words, wives and children are free (in the sense they are not slaves) and unequal, while slaves are unfree and unequal, and both are subject to the authority of free men.

Aristotle further elaborates that this means women should be treated more equitably (and not equally) as lesser political partners, while children should be ruled in a "kingly fashion" as the king is both distinct from and of the same stock as his offspring. His discussion of household management ends with this succinct summary of his theory of *oikonomia*: "Thus by nature most things are ruling and ruled. For the free person rules the slave, the male the female, and the man the child in different ways. The parts of the soul are present in all, but they are present in a different way. The slave is wholly lacking the deliberative element; the female has it but it lacks authority; the child has it but it is incomplete."<sup>21</sup>

Thus, we see that the intimate in Western culture was from the beginning thought about as being subordinate but necessary to the proper functioning of the *polis*. This patriarchal logic would later be reflected in the subordinated yet indispensable roles women, children, and bonded labor such as slaves and indentured servants would play in the household in modern times. Intimacy understood in this comprehensive way would not be discussed in any systematic fashion in Western political philosophy for centuries after Aristotle, when feminist historians would take up the issue.

Barbara Welter's foundational essay on "The Cult of True Womanhood," first published in 1966, marked the first major work on domesticity and a revival of scholarly interest in *oikonomia*. In her essay, Welter argues that the nineteenth century gave rise to a specific set of ideological elements and normative standards of womanhood that she calls the "Cult of True Womanhood." In defining True Womanhood, she writes:

The attributes of True Womanhood by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife—woman.<sup>22</sup>

Of these four attributes, Welter identifies domesticity as the most important, as evidenced in how one women's magazine of that era put it: "As society is constituted, the true dignity and beauty of

the female character seem to consist in a right understanding and faithful and cheerful performance of social and family duties,” with the home and unpaid domestic labor being the woman’s proper sphere.<sup>23</sup>

Linda Kerber’s excellent review of the literature on the work on separate spheres points out that Welter’s analysis of domesticity and True Womanhood represented the beginnings of a new kind of feminist historical discourse, one where historians like Welter came to identify the notion of a separate, woman’s world as an object of historical analysis. Kerber explains that this naming of the historical object as a separate sphere, and the historian’s perception of what exactly it named was reciprocal, that “the widespread usage in the nineteenth century [of the notion of a separate woman’s sphere] directed the choices made by twentieth-century historians about what to study and how to tell the stories that they reconstructed.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, Kerber points out that Welter’s choice of the pejorative “cult” revealed that her view of the separate sphere was a negative one, and that for Welter, “[s]eparation denigrated women, kept them subordinate,” and it was in this way that her concept of the cult of True Womanhood and domesticity became a part of the analytical toolbox for feminist historians.<sup>25</sup>

However, for my work, the most interesting point Kerber makes is in her critique of the early feminist historical work’s analysis of domesticity— from the early work of Welter to the Marxist-feminist works of the 1980s— namely, their tendency to use the concept to refer to different, specific aspects of domesticity, and in its erasure of race and class difference:

When [historians from Welter to the feminists of the 1980s] used the metaphor of separate spheres, historians referred, often interchangeably, to an ideology *imposed on* women, a culture *created by* women, a set of boundaries *expected to be observed by* women. Moreover, the metaphor helped historians avoid thinking about race; virtually all discussion of the subject until very recently has focused on the experience of white women, mostly of the middle class.<sup>26</sup>

With Kerber’s fine distinctions of what feminist historians mean by domesticity in mind, I will now return to how I began this introduction, that is, the task of describing what is at stake in historicizing intimacy in settler colonial contexts like that of Canada and the United States through the protagonists of the slutty woman and Chinese houseboy. Feminist scholars in the contemporary period are less interested in describing “separate spheres,” but in problematizing domesticity by revealing its possibilities and limits. This kind of analysis of *oikonomia* was brought into prominence by Amy Kaplan and her concept of “Manifest Domesticity.” Kaplan’s take on domesticity represents a fresh reinterpretation of the metaphor of separate spheres and an analysis of *oikonomia*, as she expands its analytical possibilities by looking at “how international struggles for domination abroad profoundly shape representations of American national identity at home, and how, in turn, cultural phenomena we think of as domestic or particularly national are forged in a crucible of foreign relations.”<sup>27</sup> Elaborating on this conceptualization of domesticity, she continues, “Domestic’ and ‘foreign’ are, of course, not neutral legal and spatial descriptions, but heavily weighted metaphors imbued with racialized and gendered associations of home and family, outsiders and insiders, subjects and citizens.”<sup>28</sup>

Kaplan links U.S. imperialism to the discourse of domesticity and nineteenth-century ideologies of separate gendered spheres, where she argues that “the female realm of domesticity and the male arena of Manifest Destiny were not separate spheres at all but were intimately linked,” and that “the rhetoric of empire both suffused and unsettled the representation of the home to produce a domestic sphere of empire...”<sup>29</sup> In other words, what interests me about Kaplan’s analysis of

domesticity is in her linking together of the double meanings of the *domestic* that “links the space of the familial household to that of the nation, by imagining both in opposition to the notion of the foreign.”<sup>30</sup> It is my contention that transnational Asian labor was central to this process, and that Manifest Domesticity was key in defining both the American and Canadian national subject.

Similarly, McClintock’s study of race, gender, and class in the British colonial system argues that white women served as “the boundary markers of imperialism, the ambiguous mediators of what appeared to be— at least superficially— the predominantly male agon of empire.”<sup>31</sup> She further demonstrates how particularly in Victorian Britain how the “cult of domesticity” (echoing Welter’s “cult of ‘True Womanhood’” and also used by Ava Baron in her discussion of protective legislation for women<sup>32</sup>) began to shape race, gender, and class ideologies in the metropole and the colonial periphery, which led to the gendering and racialization of domestic labor and spaces in both contexts.

Adele Perry’s work on British Columbia during roughly the same period covered by Kaplan’s U.S. study similarly centers on how intimacy defined the remote western colony, as “struggles to assert the whiteness were articulated not only in response to the Aboriginal population, but in relation to non-white and more especially non-British settlers” like Asian migrant laborers.<sup>33</sup> However, like Kaplan, Perry also shows how gender played a crucial role to the making and taming of British Columbia, as “Notions and practices of manhood and womanhood were central to the twinned businesses of marginalizing Aboriginal people and designing and building a white society.” She continues, that understanding and historicizing the role of gender in settling the frontier is “to reckon with the very process that put British Columbia on the edge of someone’s empire.”<sup>34</sup>

Other feminist writing on gendered labor and domesticity concerned itself with addressing a major gap in Marxist theories of capitalist production and labor systems, specifically that of the different position women occupied in the capitalist order, largely on account of the unpaid domestic labor women engaged in. Scholars that have used the traditional Marxist framework, Jeanne Boydston explains, have concluded that “unpaid domestic labor exists outside the capitalist mode of production” since it is an unwaged form of labor, and to the extent that housework is a part of industrial capitalism, the traditional view holds that it has been only relevant in its “...*reproduction* of the conditions necessary for the creation of capital— primarily, in keeping the paid labor force alive and tractable from day to day, year to year, and generation to generation.”<sup>35</sup>

Boydston makes an extremely important contribution to theorizing gendered labor by reading certain elements of traditional Marxist theory using a feminist lens, particularly Marx’s theory of price-form which argues that in capitalist systems, price does not express an objective economic value, but whatever the capitalist class values, that is, “the minimum that a capitalist can pay without endangering the survival of his labor force.”<sup>36</sup> Boydston argues that according to this theory of price-form, the reverse could also be true— that the unpaid domestic labor that women perform has tremendous (social) value, though no wage. Thus, Boydston concludes that since gender shaped the capitalist wage system, the “evaluation of the role of unpaid domestic labor under conditions of industrial capitalism must begin, then, with this distinction between the socially created relations of gender and the objective characteristics of labor.”<sup>37</sup>

One example of how Boydston demonstrates this is through her discussion of what she calls the “pastoralization of housework” in the United States during the antebellum period through working men’s calls for a family wage that would allow him to become the sole breadwinner so that his wife and children could not challenge his masculinity by engaging in wage-labor outside of the home. Thus, the pastoralization of housework essentially involved the devaluing of domestic tasks performed by white women as something inherent to their nature, and not as true work, which according to Boydston, “signaled the *gendering* of the emerging class system, and, in this, the gendering of early industrial culture.”<sup>38</sup> It is here that the limitations of Boydston’s analysis of

unpaid domestic work are glaringly obvious, and how the pastoralization of housework not only involved the gendering of the class structure and the creation of a sexual division of labor, but also its racialization. Boydston's framework does not consider other kinds of paid and unpaid domestic labor performed by both men and women of color before, during, and immediately after the Civil War, nor does she explicitly connect the pastoralization of housework to a larger project of American imperialism and the ideology of white supremacy that was so prevalent during America's westward expansion.

Indeed, implicit in the westward expansion of the Canadian and American settler state was the domestication of the continent's original inhabitants who possessed gender norms and ideas of home life—a kind of anti-*oikonomia*—that were seen as completely antithetical to civilization and stood in the way of white settlement of the North American West. On domesticity and the forced assimilation of Native Americans, Jane Simonsen writes:

More than just a metaphor, domestic imperialism was mediated not only by gender and race hierarchies but by economics, material conditions, and class divisions.... The centrality of work to the process of cohering American identity in the contact zones of the West required domesticity to be more than a symbolic ideal embedded in texts. As scholars of Native American history have shown, images of assimilated Indians also record histories of labor relations.<sup>39</sup>

Elaborating on the connections between domesticity and the colonization of Native America, she continues:

...Native American women might be regarded as domestic, for they were regarded as outside the wage economy and subservient within the home. Yet defined as uncivilized persons, they seemed to provide a potent foil against which the white woman could consolidate a middle-class identity as a worker within a *civilized* home.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, like Kaplan, Simonsen identifies Manifest Domesticity or what she calls “domestic imperialism” at work in denigrating Native American women as domestic savages as opposed to white middle-class women's identity as a civilized domestic worker.

In the Canadian context, Thobani notes how the “racial gendering of the Indian Act” dispossessed Native women and their children of their Indian status, which legally decreased the Native population and thus their political leverage when negotiating with the federal government.<sup>41</sup> The overwhelmingly male homosocial order of colonial British Columbia also meant that white women would play a significant role in civilizing the frontier and in better supporting the settlement process. With the scarcity of white women in the colony, colonists used Native labor to carry out domestic tasks. By the late 1860s and 1870s, however, Chinese men would fulfill this role as the gold rush ran dry. Therefore, “racial as well as gendered divisions of labour were unsettled by this colonial context” and so white women were gradually brought in to the colony through a process of government-assisted migration and recruitment.<sup>42</sup>

Evelyn Nakano Glenn further notes that Marxist-feminist frameworks like Boydston's ignores differences among women based on race and leaves the particular experiences of women of color and their labor out.<sup>43</sup> In a much later work, building on this critique, Glenn further argues for an integrated framework of racialized and gendered labor and citizenship. Thus, she writes:



There are important points of congruence between the concept of racial formation and the concept of socially constructed gender. These convergences point the way toward a framework in which race and gender are defined as mutually constituted systems of relationships—including norms, symbols, and practices—organized around perceived differences.<sup>44</sup>

Using this framework, Glenn argues that just as how American citizenship has been shaped by race and gender and how it in turn created and maintained racial and gender inequality, scholars need to study citizenship in relation to other connected structures of power such as the labor system.<sup>45</sup>

My work further elaborates on Glenn's use of an intersectionality framework and my reading of feminist labor history in order to understand the history of labor in the United States and Canada by incorporating men of color into the framework through the figure of the Chinese houseboy. By incorporating the labor of men of color under the purview of the work on domesticity and gendered labor, I demonstrate how the particular position of men of color workers is crucial to understanding both. In other words, this dissertation argues you cannot speak about white working women (as signified in the sluttish maid) without also invoking the domestic labor of Chinese men (as signified in the houseboy). Here, I am not implying that the history of women's work is not both politically and historically important, or that feminists should stop being feminists. Rather, by highlighting the gender and racial dynamics of the work of men of color, I further the feminist analysis by shifting the analysis of domesticity as the sphere of women to one that looks at domesticity as part of a system of racialized and gendered labor that targeted the major sources of anxiety for white men in the labor market: white women, women of color, and men of color.

Thus, the intimate vectors framework that animates this study argues that nationhood and matters of citizenship are deeply connected to the intimate through the contested terrain between the domestic and foreign, which includes legacies of settler colonialism and the global search for cheap labor and markets. However, it is also shown that debates over national belonging are also strongly tied to who is of what race, gender, and class; geopolitical interests, domestic policies, and laws; the racialized and gendered division of labor; and a white supremacist, heteropatriarchal cultural milieu. Furthermore, it is argued that the boundaries between the domestic and foreign are inherently connected to struggles over the separation between the private and public spheres; debates over marriage, sexuality, and the family; white womanhood and the deviant domesticity of the Chinese; and the affective labor of Chinese men and white women in intimate settings. In short, it is through intimacy that the twisted strands of the different oppressive logics, contexts, cases, and sources examined in this study come together and apart in their complexity and reality.

### **Asian Labor Redefining Race, Gender, Class, and Nation**

Beyond the theoretical and historiographical stakes that are at the core of this dissertation's insistence on historicizing intimacy in Canada and the United States, the history of Asian labor in these two contexts strongly suggests that such a framework is necessary. Therefore, for the remainder of this introductory chapter, I wish to develop a framework of intimacy that permits me to analyze intersectionality across national lines. In short, this section argues that the history of transnational Asian labor is uniquely capable of linking both contexts together through the lens of intimacy. While often careful in its attention to the intersections of race, gender, and class, recent work on transnational Asian labor does not often transparently theorize about how intersectionality traverses borders. Furthermore, much of the important work on intersectionality tends to focus on a singular national context, talking about race, gender, labor, and capital without much regard to the

transnational movements and histories of these things, or how these configurations play out differently or similarly in more than one context. To address the limitations of both frameworks, I use the concept of intimacy to argue that processes of social stratification in the United States and Canada are unevenly and asymmetrically connected to each other.

In terms of the transnationalist scholarship on Asian labor, the most important work by far on the American context is Edna Bonacich and Lucie Cheng's massive and foundational tome, *Labor Immigration Under Capitalism*. Taking seriously the connections between race and class, Bonacich and Cheng argue that too many works on Asian immigrant labor provide only thick descriptions of exploitation and little theoretical focus. They continue, "In particular, it fails for the most part to place Asian immigration in the larger political and economic context in which it arose, namely, the development of capitalism in Europe and the United States and the emergence of imperialism, especially in relation to Asia."<sup>46</sup> Bonacich and Cheng attempt to correct this theoretical gap in the scholarship by connecting the histories of Asian immigrant workers to the broader contours of a grand economic theory of international labor migration, a theory which explicitly ties Asian migration to imperialist expansion and the internal pressures created by rising costs for domestic white labor. Unable to increase absolute surplus value by lengthening the work day and unable to increase relative surplus value by increasing the intensity of labor in the face of the mobilization of the white working-class in the nineteenth century, imperialist expansionism becomes the strategy to deal with falling rates of profit caused by the rising cost of free white labor. Thus, for Bonacich and Cheng, Asian immigrant workers are also colonial workers:

In sum, imperialism helps create in the colonies a reserve army of labor that is available for emigration to and wage labor in the metropolitan territories or capitalist sector of other colonies. But the conditions of labor emigration often retain features of a colonial mode of production; that is, they are not fully capitalistic and often have a coercive element.<sup>47</sup>

My work then is a continuation and elaboration of Bonacich and Cheng's work by using the history of Asian immigrant labor in both the United States and Canada— two settler societies with divergent but similar histories— as a way to talk about intersectionality across borders and intimacy. However, my work is critical of the directionality of the transnationalist turn in Asian American history, where like in Bonacich and Cheng's foundational work, the transnational analysis is for the most part limited to an East-West analysis (i.e. Asia and the United States), and rather slow to develop a North-South or hemispheric approach to understanding Asian labor migration.

Transnational histories at their core question and disrupt the privileging of a singular national perspective, experience, historiography, ideology, context and narrative— and this disruption is not simply about a change in subject matter or utilizing a different unit of analysis to replace the nation. On the contrary, what all transnational scholarship including this study emphatically stresses is a fundamental change in the *attitude towards* and the *way in which we write history* that acknowledges the limitations of the nation as a "container" for history, social processes, and people's lives, movements, sentiments, and ideas. My work then is quintessentially a work of reimagination and redefinition, of tracing continuities and divergences.

Apart from the well-established and arguably separate body of work in the history of American slavery, the vast majority of histories of labor in the United States and Canada center around the white working man as the main protagonist. This is not without reason; indeed, historically speaking, the labor movement in both nations was essentially the preserve of working-class white men. Furthermore, when Marxist labor historians did talk about people of color and labor, many were

preoccupied with demonstrating the primacy of class over race. Many scholars have critiqued this perspective, but I find David Roediger's statement on the matter to be the most succinct and instructive, "...The most pressing task for historians of race and class is not to draw precise lines separating race and class but to draw lines connecting race and class."<sup>48</sup> What is also important for Roediger is connecting the figure of the white working man to notions of national belonging and white racial superiority. In other words, the history of the white working man is also the history of working-class racism and working-class articulations of whiteness.

Combining these two valuable arguments, Roediger in *The Wages of Whiteness* argues "...working class formation and the systematic development of a sense of whiteness went hand in hand for the US white working class... The privileging of class over race is not always productive or meaningful. To set race within social formations is absolutely necessary, but to reduce race to class is damaging."<sup>49</sup> He would go on to elaborate that the ideology of whiteness "was a way in which white workers responded to a fear of dependency on wage labor and to the necessities of capitalist work discipline,"<sup>50</sup> and that as a result, white workers often used the language of (masculine, white supremacist) republicanism in order to differentiate themselves from the Black Other, despite also occupying the lower end of the industrial capitalist order.<sup>51</sup>

In the Canadian context, Perry shows how the homosocial culture of colonial British Columbia was crucial to shaping racial and gender dynamics, and indeed the process of colonization itself. Indeed, many of the white men that rushed to the Fraser Valley for gold were lured to the frontier as they were "disillusioned with industrial capitalism and the visions of masculinity it offered." These men wanted "manly self-sufficiency and respect" and celebrated rugged individualism, and British Columbia, much like other frontier contexts, provided them the opportunity to move towards this rough-and-tumble ideal rather than toil away in factories under an overseer.<sup>52</sup> This is also why the colony was preoccupied with the regulation of interracial intimacy and the importation of white wives to tame both these wild men and the Aboriginal people that outnumbered the white settlers.

Similarly, Sunera Thobani argues that the Canadian nation was founded by and continues to function under a process of "exaltation", that is, "how certain human beings have come to be constituted as Canadian nationals... distinct from the strangers to the community," namely British and French whites as distinct from Aboriginals, immigrants, and refugees.<sup>53</sup> Like Perry, she is attentive to how patriarchy and capitalism shaped labor recruitment to support white settlement on the Canadian frontier, though in contrast Thobani believes these conflicting gender and class interests were suppressed as women and working-class settlers became integrated into the nation as (white) Canadian subjects since "claiming and preserving their racial identity brought tangible rewards" in the new social order.<sup>54</sup>

Alexander Saxton's work is also crucial in this effort to draw the lines between race and class, by examining the history of the white labor movement and the politics of its anti-Chinese racism. Like Roediger's discussion of how white workers asserted their whiteness through identifying with free labor ideology and American republicanism as opposed to the bonded labor and degraded status of Blacks, Saxton highlights the crucial yet ambivalent role white workers played in the exploitation of non-white labor:

They have been both exploited and exploiters. On the one hand, thrown into competition with nonwhites as enslaved or "cheap" labor, they suffered economically; on the other hand, being white, they benefited by that very exploitation which was compelling the nonwhites to work for low wages or for nothing. Ideologically they were drawn in opposite directions. Racial identification cut at right angles to class consciousness.<sup>55</sup>

Eiichiro Azuma's *Between Two Empires* carries on much the same kind of analysis that is found in Bonacich and Cheng's colonial thesis, though he contributes an intellectually bold intervention through his interfacing of the concept of the borderlands with that of transnationalism, which highlights "the interconnectedness of the colonialism, migration, and racial struggle that unfolded in the complex social space of the American West," much like this dissertation. Following this conceptualization, the American West is analyzed as a borderland "where America's westward expansion met Japanese imperialism around the question of immigration from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries."<sup>56</sup> Here, I would add that we can understand the borderlands between Canada, the United States, and the Pacific in ways that are congruent with Azuma's discussion of the overlapping of Japanese and U.S. imperialism.

Ironically, however, for all the talk of colonialism and imperialism, the borderlands, global capitalist development, transnational Asian labor migration, the intersectional boundaries of citizenship, and so on, there has been shockingly little done in ethnic studies, gender studies, and labor history in connecting the history of Asian labor in the United States to the history of Asian labor in Canada. If we are to take the transnationalist framework seriously in the history of Asian labor, there needs to be an account of the intimate connections between what happened to the Chinese in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the United States and to what happened to the Chinese during the same period in Canada—that the borderlands is more than just the southern border and the Pacific, but also the northern border. In short, why does the transnationality of Asian American history begin and end with Asia and the United States? What is at stake in the "American" in Asian American history or the "transnational" in transnational American Studies? How does the history of Asian labor in Canada and the United States push us to challenge our understanding of intimacy, intersectionality, and transnationalism? These questions will be answered throughout the dissertation, though for now, I would like to provide some justification for making these provocations.

Consider for example that after the California gold rush dried up, a mother lode was discovered in British Columbia's Fraser River valley in 1858, triggering Chinese miners to emigrate from California as well as China to Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Consider too that by 1880, with the start of a railway that would literally unite the newly confederated Dominion of Canada, Canada would experience a large spike in Chinese migration while the United States passed its Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. Further consider that this mass migration of Chinese was largely due to the recruiting efforts of a single American labor contractor, Andrew Onderdonk, who brought with him not only a large amount of Chinese labor from San Francisco and Portland, but also directly from China itself. It should be noted here that Onderdonk had previous experience in recruiting Chinese for railway construction in the United States for its own transcontinental railway. In other words, the ribbons of steel that made the project of Anglo settler colonialism possible in both Canada and the United States inextricably connects the histories of these two nations together that are at once strikingly similar and starkly different. Finally, consider that anti-Oriental racism was less able to find expression in discriminatory laws unlike the United States context due to Canada's status as a colony of the British Crown, even though politicians were as virulently anti-Chinese as the ones found in California. Thus, the Aliens Act of 1861 permitted aliens having resided in the colony of British Columbia for three years to have all the rights of British subjects, and that when in 1860, the Colony of Vancouver Island's House of Assembly attempted to levy a \$10 poll tax on all Chinese in an attempt to exclude them, several prominent citizens were successful in opposing the idea since the Chinese were seen as crucial to the economic prosperity of the remote colony.<sup>57</sup> There is still much work to do before Asian American history can truly live up to its transnational aspirations, and this dissertation is a start.

In summary, my dissertation proposes to make four broad theoretical contributions: i) Historically speaking, race in Canada and the United States has operated in relation to and in concert with gender and class ideologies since the turn of the twentieth century, ii) Discursive shifts in domesticity have as much to do with shifting racial dynamics as they do with changing gender roles and class tensions, and locating the labor of racialized men within the domestic is crucial to understanding how these intersections played out, iii) Intersectionality travels through global circuits of labor and capital in uneven ways, necessitating an “intersectionality across borders” framework when discussing Canada and the United States, and iv) All of the above together requires historians of either and both contexts to redefine of the boundaries of American and Canadian history and to do the difficult work of drawing lines not only between these two settler colonial contexts, but also between the ways race, gender, and class shaped the histories of both.

### **Some Notes on Methodology**

This study is a work of labor history with strong interdisciplinary leanings that draws heavily from archival research and theories of intersectionality and racial formation. Archival research was used for this project because it permits me to argue for the relevance of intersectionality for historical work, challenging critiques of intersectionality levied by those who focus on single variables (race, gender, class) in their analysis. My methodology centered on answering the following questions: in what ways do the racial and gender ideologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries inform the archival material under study, whether these sources be ephemera, scholarly works, newspaper articles, or municipal ordinances? And how did these ideologies shape, and were in turn shaped by, social change?

This study has been a difficult undertaking from a methodological perspective for a number of reasons, some of which stem from the limitations of conducting archival research in two different national contexts, while others stem from the limitations of the analytical framework and research questions guiding this work. First, there is the question of commensurability. The history of Asians in Canada and the United States— though remarkably similar, are not the same. The archival material I found in both contexts reflected some of this asymmetry. For instance, the primary source material shows that much of the anti-Asian policies and rhetoric in Canada was directly influenced by the anti-Asian movement in the United States, while archival evidence of the reverse remains elusive. However, I do not consider this to be a major blind spot or even surprising because such gaps demonstrate the broader structural unevenness that exists between these two contexts. It would be stranger if the archive and evidence used did not reflect this reality.

However, in order to find the evidence to support my thesis, I needed to gather as many sources as I could that mentioned both white women and Chinese men using a process of open-ended and meticulous “deep diving” in archival collections. Rather than using inductive reasoning, that is, peering into the archive and making arguments based on what I found, I used deductive reasoning. I developed my theory of intimacy largely before I entered the archives, and went into them in search of evidence to connect the fraught histories of white working women and Chinese men together. I had enough confidence in my initial thesis to assume that I would be able to find sources to bear my arguments out, though I knew I needed to narrow the field of possible sources somehow since I had only a finite amount of resources and time to conduct the research. It was in this way that I decided narrow (mentions of white women and Chinese men only) and deep (the more sources, the better) was the optimal search strategy, and so I only considered and wrote about those sources that matched this narrow and deep criteria, even though I encountered sources that were just as fascinating that had to do with other groups or had a shallower pool of sources to draw

from. For example, though the third chapter discusses how the expansion of the United States' borders during the early twentieth century with the acquisitions of the Philippines and Hawaii impacted how the American Federation of Labor thought about labor migration, I intentionally left out the American Federation of Labor's debates regarding Puerto Rico, as fascinating and plentiful as they were, since they did not fulfill the narrow criterion I imposed on my research.

In another major instance, I originally had much bigger ambitions for this project, which at this late stage of writing, I am thankful that I was dissuaded from further pursuing for this dissertation. I had originally planned on examining intimacy in both the Canadian and American contexts by comparing multiple Asian ethnic groups, namely South Asians and Japanese, since both groups, much like the Chinese that are the focus of this study, were present in significant numbers in *both* British Columbia and California. Similarly, I had also planned on addressing the issue of white and Chinese women in the sex trade, since one cannot talk about intimacy and affective labor without also talking about sex. Unfortunately, I leave this crucial work undone.

Related to the question of commensurability, there is the practical problem of not being able to find the same kind of primary source documents across different national sites, leading to shallow pools of evidence. For example, initially I had proposed a pair of chapters based on how newly emerging domestic technologies in both contexts redefined the boundaries of race, gender, and class in the early twentieth century. I could not find many examples of ephemeral advertising for these appliances in Canada, while these are fairly easy to find in the U.S., especially at the Smithsonian Institution. This led me to plan to write a daunting set of chapters on comparing the women's periodicals of the two contexts in the pre-World War II period, namely *Chatelaine* in Canada and the *Ladies' Home Journal* in the United States. As I was writing these chapters, however, I realized these chapters needed be relegated to a book manuscript since they fulfilled the deep reservoir of sources criteria, but not my narrow focus on white women and Chinese men.

In order to find overwhelming amounts of material evidence to support my thesis while narrowly focusing on my two chosen protagonists, I not only needed to spend the better part of three years traveling to different archival sites meticulously scanning their documents for any mention of Chinese men and/or white women, I ordered entire collections of microfilm by date range and had to manually search through them since these two groups are not the protagonists of history even if they are the protagonists of this study. I completed roughly three years of archival research primarily in Vancouver, Canada at the Vancouver Public Library and the Vancouver City Archives, and around the Bay Area at the Bancroft and Doe Library, and to a lesser extent in Seattle at the University of Washington Labor Archives and the National Museum of American History and National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C.

I used a DSLR camera, a specialized tripod for document photography, and microfilm scanners to rapidly digitize all the sources used (and not used) in this study because extended stays and return trips were not feasible. Furthermore, because the historical narrative I constructed mostly depended on the contextualization of highly specific, often invisible, and usually obscure phenomena, I needed to collect a massive amount of documents to precisely understand in what context these events or phenomena occurred. To help with this task, I used Zotero to catalog and organize the thousands of documents I sifted through manually to construct my historical narrative. Using these digitized documents and cataloging software, I in effect created a personal database or digital archive I could search through using keywords and dates, allowing me to relatively quickly find all the needles in the different haystacks I required. Using the above method combined with my narrow and deep criteria for the collection of sources, it turned out that newspaper accounts, magazine articles, and the minutes and annual reports of the American Federation of Labor were the most frequently used sources in this study. Government documents proved less germane to this study and so are not well represented, though I did use police records and legislative documents.

I have tried my best to make connections between white womanhood and the Oriental Question only where an overwhelming amount of material evidence was found, being wary of making or seeing spurious connections, while also remembering the old statistics adage, “correlation is not causation.” Indeed, although I began my research thinking I would try to do my best to construct a history of these two contexts and two groups that is conceptually “clean,” perfectly commensurate, and causal, I quickly realized that these ideals were not only red herrings and false, but unsuitable for the work at hand. Concepts, causal relationships, frameworks, and historical narratives are clean and perfect only because they were made to seem that way. Such methodological order, much like the interlocking system of oppression described by intersectionality theory itself, does the work of ideology; it is a form of violence and obscures the messy truth of how the intimate vectors shaped these encounters.

Last, I also developed parts of my historical narrative and theory of intimacy through a decidedly unhistorical method. While I was writing this dissertation, I often took breaks by writing fictionalized accounts of whatever non-fictive people or events I discussed. I most often resorted to these breaks when the narrative or analysis was stuck, unclear, or both. Though at first these exercises were diversions and unplanned, I soon realized they helped to move the dissertation along and even generated new ideas, interpretations, and arguments I later incorporated into the dissertation.

Thus, both stylistically and methodologically, my work intentionally resists the usual business of constructing perfect mirages. Rather than drawing clean and solid lines between the cases, groups, people, narratives, and contexts examined throughout this dissertation, I have instead decided to describe the diffusive texture of these lines in as many ways as I can. As Julie Chinitz so perceptively observed recently, “The history of the border is also a history of imagination. It’s a matter of who has the power to impose their imagination on the other.”<sup>58</sup> More than anything else, it is the shifting truth of this imposed imagination, with intimacy at its center, this study works to uncover.

## Part One

### Intimate Proximities Between Sluttish Women & Chinese Houseboys

*Commoner:* Just think. Which one of these stories do you believe?

*Woodcutter:* None makes any sense.

*Commoner:* Don't worry about it. It isn't as if men were reasonable.

—Akira Kurosawa, *Rashomon* (1950)

**O**n July 26, 1924, a young Scottish nursemaid named Janet Smith was found dead in front of an ironing board in the basement of her master's residence in the affluent neighborhood of Shaughnessy Heights, Vancouver. Six years later, matronly socialite and amateur actress Rosetta Baker was found dead in her luxurious downtown San Francisco apartment on December 8, 1930. In both cases, a Chinese "houseboy" stood trial as the primary suspect with Wong Foon Sing accused of murdering Smith and Liu Fook for the death of Baker.

Drawing upon these cases, I ask: in what ways are transformations to the domestic sphere and the Oriental Question connected? And as frontier and gateway societies, how were Vancouver and San Francisco troubled and shaped by the emergence of the bold femininity of the Jazz Age and the continued presence of Chinese men after the passage of exclusion laws in both Canada and the United States? By analyzing these two cases, Part One plays on, traces, and connects the double meanings of "domestic"—that which pertains to the household and the family, and that which pertains to the nation as imagined as local as opposed to foreign.<sup>59</sup> In doing so, I make three arguments.



First, my analysis of these two cases reveals that the Oriental Question did not become any less significant after the passage of exclusion laws in Canada and the United States in the 1880s and 1920s. On the contrary, it is argued that questions around (male) Oriental labor became recast as white women secured new political and economic rights after World War I. Thus, the two cases illustrate how race and gender have meanings only in relation to each other, and that such meanings create and maintain structures of inequality. Second, by incorporating the labor of Chinese men under the purview of the history of domesticity, I demonstrate how it was central to defining citizenship and white womanhood on the Pacific Frontier. Last, by linking together the historical experiences of Chinese workers in California and British Columbia— two major gateways and frontiers for Asian labor migration and white settlement— this study contributes to a growing body of scholarship that focuses on the global dimensions of racism, patriarchy, and labor migration. Rather than focusing on the minutiae of these two very complex and lengthy cases, instead I will focus on two distinct discursive threads that dominated the media coverage of the two trials: the policing of racial and sexual transgressions, and the role racial and gender ideologies played in shaping the outcome of the two cases.

The Oriental Question and the influx of Chinese immigrant workers, though often thought about as a racial problem, posed significant challenges to prevailing notions of white womanhood and domesticity in the North American West by the beginning of the twentieth century. With only trickles of gold being found in the rivers of British Columbia and California by the 1860s, the completion of transcontinental railways in the United States (1869) and in Canada (1885), and the growing militancy of the white labor movement during the late nineteenth century, many Gold Mountain men found themselves being pushed into domestic work and the service sector of the labor market. By the 1880s, the federal governments of Canada and the United States passed exclusionary laws designed to stem the tide of Chinese migration, laws which were later renewed and expanded upon in the 1920s. At the same time, the passage of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Amendments in the United States and similar provisions in Canada defined the Roaring Twenties that was to come for both nations.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, as a result of the watershed of World War I, white women were increasingly being freed from unpaid domestic labor as middle and working class white women were beginning to work in factories, offices, schools, hospitals, and retail stores. These factors led to a context where there was a perpetual shortage of white female domestics, a disproportionately high number of male Chinese cooks and houseboys, a high demand for domestic labor by affluent white families, and a general anxiety over morality, changing gender norms, and postwar exuberance.<sup>61</sup>

## The Wong Foon Sing Trial: A Timeline

July 26, 1924	Janet Smith is found dead by Wong Foon Sing
	First coroner's inquest is held and officially rules Smith's death "accidental," an apparent euphemism for suicide. Smith's body is quickly embalmed and buried.
August 12, 1924	Wong is abducted by white assailants who were later identified as Oscar B.V. Robinson, a private investigator, and members of the police. Wong was detained, interrogated, and beaten for 8 hours, and was forced to sign a document before he was released.
August 28, 1924	Smith's body is exhumed and the second inquest begins. It reaches a verdict of murder. A long lull begins in the case as police cannot find any strong leads.
March 20, 1925	Wong is abducted again, but this time by men in white robes, and is subjected to torture and held in captivity for the next forty-two days.
May 1, 1925	Wong is found wandering the streets and immediately put under arrest and charged with murder.
May 8, 1925	Preliminary hearing begins.
June 18, 1925	Twelve people, including members of the police, are charged for Wong's March abduction. It turns out the August 12 and March 20 abductions were carried out by the same people.
June 24, 1925	Wong is released on bail.
October 9, 1925	Grand Jury returns no bill against Wong, and the case is thrown out of Assize Court.
November 8, 1925	Robinson, his associates, and members of the Point Grey and Provincial Police are found guilty on abduction charges. Judge grants leniency.
December 2, 1925	The Bakers win their libel case against editor J.S. Cowper who had printed an article claiming that Smith was murdered at an orgy at the Baker residence.

## The Liu Fook Trial: A Timeline

December 07, 1930	Middleton, Beale, and Baker meet at Graves' apartment at 5:30 pm and go to dinner and a show. At the end of the night, Graves is dropped off at her apartment and the remaining three arrive at Baker's apartment around 12:00 am. Middleton and Beale leave the apartment fifteen minutes later. Graves calls Baker to wish her goodnight.
December 08, 1930	Liu Fook discovers Baker's body at 8:00 am while doing his morning routine and the police are called. Liu Fook as well as Middleton, Beale and his brother, and Harold Depler (all roommates) are taken in for questioning. Liu Fook is arrested and kept in police custody.
December 10, 1930	Baker's will is read with most of her estate going to her niece Christ. Her other nieces Root and Cox were reportedly purposely left out of the will and it is intimated that they will file a suit.
December 15, 1930	Liu Fook is brought before a Grand Jury, and Dix, Grant, Graves, Middleton, Beale, and Dets. McGinn, Engler, and Husted are subpoenaed.  Coroner's inquest begins.
December 16, 1930	Grand Jury indicts Liu Fook for the murder of Rosetta Baker. Inquest returns a verdict of "murder by strangulation by person(s) unknown."
December 18, 1930	Grand Jury overturns its indictment after reviewing the inquest's verdict. Having failed to secure a true bill, police take Liu Fook to Municipal Court anyway.
December 21, 1930	It is reported that Root and Cox, Baker's allegedly disinherited nieces, have filed a will contest.
December 22, 1930	Preliminary hearing begins in Municipal Court.
January 07, 1931	Preliminary hearing ends and Liu Fook is held without bail for trial in the Superior

	Court.
January 19, 1931	Liu Fook is arraigned and pleads not guilty.
February 24, 1931	Trial begins in Superior Court with jury selection.
March 18, 1931	After two ballots and twenty minutes of deliberation, Liu Fook is declared not guilty. Police reopen search for Baker's killer.
March 26, 1931	Root and Cox drop the will contest and settle out of court. Both receive \$5,000.
May 22, 1931	Liu Fook departs San Francisco for Shanghai.



Fig. 1. *Liu Fook*<sup>62</sup>

## Chapter One:

### The Pseudo-Lynching of Wong Foon Sing

The person who must suffer for the crime is the person who is guilty. Anyone will not do. There is only one question— is Wong Foon Sing that man? And is British Columbia going to try to answer that question with open-minded deliberation or with hot mob vengeance in its heart? It is all the difference between civilization and savagery.

—Editorial, *Vancouver Sun*

When calls for Oriental exclusion began to gain political traction, it was upper class white women who were one of the few groups that were in favor of permitting Oriental migration. For instance, in 1907, prominent Victoria and Vancouver women passed a resolution calling for Chinese domestics to be exempted from the onerous head tax implemented with the passing of the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885. In the resolution, the group notes that the young women coming to British Columbia to settle “much prefer occupations in offices, stores and factories to domestic service,” and that as a result, white domestic labor was in very short supply. Moreover, when white servants could be procured, they commanded wages that were far too high for their tastes. Thus, their calls for the relaxing of exclusionary measures directed against the Chinese were not the result of an enlightened cosmopolitanism, but driven totally by utilitarian considerations and the desire for these affluent white women to free themselves from the drudgery of housework and having to pay more for white help. As a Vancouver woman who organized the petition further explained:

Half a dozen years ago, housekeeping was a pleasure in Vancouver. ‘China boys,’ [sic] who could look after the heavier work around a house could be hired from \$10 to \$20, or \$22 per month. But now you are very lucky to get one at all, and your Oriental lad gets from \$35 to \$45 and \$50 per month. Girls for housekeeping work cannot be secured. There are so very few available that they cannot be depended upon as a source of supply to fill the demand.

Thus, in the aftermath of the head tax law, there were not only less Chinese available in the labor market to hire as domestics, but whatever Chinese were available for domestic labor commanded

dramatically higher wages as a result of their low supply and the high demand for the relatively inexpensive domestic labor of the “China boys.” Interestingly, a kind of racial and gender slippage is also suggested by the women behind these petitions. It is implied that for the purposes of domestic labor, the “Oriental lad” and white serving girl were more or less interchangeable, and yet at the same time, it is remarked that Chinese domestics could be assigned to do the more strenuous duties, the implication being that this kind of housework was more befitting of them as opposed to that of white women. Thus, it was precisely the Chinese houseboy— his degraded race and culture, his male sex and feminine gender— that made him perfectly suitable to perform domestic labor as any white woman could, while at the same time, do the heavy lifting that white women were not expected to do.

A young housewife further commented on the success of the anti-Oriental movement, and how its gains, though desirable, posed problems for the proper maintenance of family life. She anticipated a social crisis for the city of Vancouver, a disaster that in her view had already taken place in that other major hotbed of anti-Oriental sentiment, the city of San Francisco:

Why, Vancouver will simply become like San Francisco, and other large cities on the Pacific coast. The people will give up their houses and the home life of the city will be a thing of the past. We will all be living in flats and eating our meals in restaurants pretty soon, if present conditions continue.<sup>63</sup>

It is here that I am reminded of much of the recent U.S.-based scholarship on labor and migration which have been calling for analytical approaches that trace the global dimensions of race, gender, and class across different national contexts rather than privileging singular national contexts, namely that of the United States.<sup>64</sup> Accordingly, when the young housewife expresses her fears over the transformation of urban home life, she articulates what Ann Laura Stoler calls the “tense and tender ties” across the North American continent— the intimate ways in which race, gender, sex, and settler colonialism connects the histories of various New World contexts together.<sup>65</sup> However, the housewife’s fears also call attention to the fact that these tense and tender ties were mediated through the home and domestic life, and it is for this reason that we turn to the trials for the murders of Janet Smith and Rosetta Baker in Part One.

### **The Exhumation of Janet Smith**

It was in the context of Asian exclusion and changes to the labor market and the domestic sphere that Janet Smith found herself working as a nursemaid in January 1923. The Bakers were in London, England on business and had recently welcomed baby daughter Rosemary into the world. Smith’s family had left Scotland seeking better economic opportunities in the capital, and she was hired as the infant’s nanny. When the Bakers announced their plans to move back to Vancouver, Smith reluctantly agreed to relocate to Canada with them, and became part of the large influx of single female domestic servants that migrated to Canada during this period. According to Marilyn Barber, 240,000 women from Great Britain, Ireland, and continental Europe entered Canada as domestic servants between 1910 and 1930, with about 50,000 being of Scottish heritage.<sup>66</sup> Upon arriving, the Bakers moved into their posh Osler Avenue residence in the upscale neighborhood of Shaughnessy Heights, Point Grey, just west of Vancouver.<sup>67</sup> Thus, within a single year, Janet Smith went from the very center of the British Empire to its remotest outpost.

As part of the United Kingdom, Scottish immigrants to Canada were seen as very desirable and loyal national subjects, in contrast to the Irish, Southern and Eastern Europeans, and Orientals.

Reflecting this view, Dr. W. A. Carrothers of British Columbia University stated in his address to the Victoria Burns Club that Scottish immigrants had an “essential nature of thrift and economy,” a “natural business ability,” and strong democratic values which would provide Canada with the “strongest kind of support for true Canadianism” in the future.<sup>68</sup>

On July 26, 1924, the 22-year-old Smith was found dead in front of an ironing board in the basement of the Baker home with a bullet wound to her right temple. A .45 caliber revolver was found near her right hand. According to her employer Mr. F. L. Baker, he and his wife had departed from their home at 8:45 that morning. The last they saw of Smith was when she smiled and waved goodbye to the couple with baby Rosemary in her arms at the front gate as she saw them off. About three hours later, Wong Foon Sing, the Bakers’ Chinese servant, was preparing lunch in the kitchen when he heard what he thought was the sound of a backfiring car. He checked the window and saw that the street was empty. Sensing something was wrong, he then immediately rushed downstairs to the basement laundry where Smith had been working and found the gun that had made the popping sound lying next to her lifeless body. Wong then frantically called Baker at his office. Upon his arrival, the servant took his master to the body. Baker felt that there was no pulse and went upstairs to call the police. In his testimony, Baker noted that *rigor mortis* had not set in and that Smith was still warm to the touch when he had felt for a pulse. Baker recognized the weapon that lay next to the nursemaid; it was the revolver that was issued to him when he fought in Europe during the Great War.<sup>69</sup>

At the first coroner’s inquest, the death was disingenuously ruled “accidental” (probably due to the stigma of suicide), and Smith’s body was quickly embalmed and buried, destroying potentially important evidence in the process. She was not left to rest for long, however. With scathing editorials from the Vancouver press, outraged calls for justice from the United Council of Scottish Societies, and revelations of incompetence on the part of the Point Grey Police, Smith’s body was exhumed almost a month after her burial, and a second coroner’s inquest was held. In a public statement, Attorney-General A. M. Munson publicly blasted the Point Grey Police for their bungling of the investigation and the loss of evidence, and vowed to get to the bottom of the mystery.<sup>70</sup>

Expert witnesses at the second inquest remarked that the absence of blood and brain tissue on the walls suggested Smith’s body was moved and placed in the basement after her death. They also noted that the lack of powder burns on her face suggested that she was not shot at pointblank range, which meant that suicide by a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head was unlikely. The symmetrical way in which Smith’s arms laid against her body was also thought to be suspicious. Last, the responding officer had failed to notice that the back of Smith’s head had been smashed in. In the view of the coroner’s jury at the second inquest, all of these inconsistencies casted serious doubt on the initial ruling, and so it ruled that Smith died on account of “being shot through the head by a revolver, but by whom... we have no evidence to show” and reopened the investigation.<sup>71</sup> Excluding baby Rosemary, only one other person was known to be present in the Osler Avenue residence at the time of Smith’s death: the 25-year-old Chinese houseboy named Wong Foon Sing, who ironically became the primary suspect after having served as the primary witness at the two coroner’s inquests.

## **Racial and Sexual Anxieties**

Wong Foon Sing was not immediately charged after the second inquest overturned its initial verdict and ruled Smith’s death a homicide. Instead, just as the intensity of the public spotlight was at its strongest, Wong inexplicably disappeared right before everyone’s eyes, not once, but at least two times during the investigation and trial. With both municipal and provincial police unable to gather

much in the way of evidence and mounting public criticism, extralegal measures such as abduction and torture would be used by various shadowy figures to get to the truth of the matter.

Of the two verified abductions that took place, it was Wong's second disappearance on March 20, 1925 that sent Vancouver into a frenzy of speculation. Soon after his disappearance, relatives of Wong appealed to the Chinese consul in Vancouver to file a protest with provincial and city police, urging them to conduct an extensive search for the missing servant.<sup>72</sup> Friends of Wong believed that he had been taken against his will from the Baker residence since his bed had been slept in and his trunk rifled through.<sup>73</sup> On the Sunday following Wong's disappearance, a meeting of local Chinese was held to gather facts surrounding his apparent abduction. At the conclusion of the meeting, word was sent out all throughout Chinatown to keep an eye out for the missing young man. The Provincial Police were also desperately searching for the servant, though they thought that Wong was making an escape to the Orient. Messages were telegraphed to the Empress of Australia to search the liner for Wong and the Attorney-General had even authorized a seaplane to intercept the vessel. Whatever the reasons for his disappearance, the press immediately sensed that the long impasse in the case was coming to an abrupt end.

On March 22, 1925, the *Vancouver Sun* offered two explanations for the apparent abduction. First, it speculated that Wong could have been abducted by those interested in the Smith case, who "[had] taken this method of seeking to converse quietly with the young Chinese." Second, it conjectured that he had been kidnapped by sympathetic Chinese, who "simulated just such an enterprise and in this manner took him away to secure passage aboard the 'Empress of Australia' when that liner [was to sail] early Saturday morning for the Orient."<sup>74</sup> The *Province* agreed with the first theory: "Numbers of people gave expression to the feeling that the young Chinaman was concealing something [at the two inquests]. If he could be held privately and interrogated, would it be possible to wring a solution of the mystery from him?"<sup>75</sup> The historical record is quite murky on the events surrounding Wong's disappearance from March 20, 1925, when he was first reported missing, to around May 1, 1925, when Wong was finally found. For instance, it was not totally clear at the time whether Wong had been abducted prior to his long disappearance in March. A May 20, 1925 editorial in the *Vancouver Sun* suggested that Wong was abducted on two separate occasions, first by police officers who gave him "the third degree" (a term used to describe clandestine police interrogation tactics, including beating, choking, etc.), and second, by an unknown agency which held Wong captive for forty-two days.<sup>76</sup> Another account maintained that several people were put on surveillance by the police immediately after the disappearance of Wong, with speculation that police informants, former officers, or the Scottish societies were behind the kidnapping.<sup>77</sup> Yet another source reported that a private detective agency orchestrated and carried out the abduction.<sup>78</sup>

Taken on the whole, the theory that the ghostly men responsible for abducting and torturing Wong were actually members of the Point Grey and Provincial Police and prominent members of Vancouver's Scottish societies received the widest attention.<sup>79</sup> The newspapers gave very detailed accounts of a possibly police-sanctioned covert operation from several unnamed sources. These sources claimed that they saw several men who had the appearance of police officers visit the house where Wong was being kept on several occasions. "They were blindfolded before they went near the actual building in which the Chinaman was incarcerated, and held long conversations with him," a source told the *Province*. "Then they drove back to the city."<sup>80</sup> It was also stated that overtures were made to Attorney-General Manson for permission to kidnap Wong "in an effort to elucidate the mystery," but the proposal was apparently spurned. The scheme was allegedly carried out anyway since the case was going nowhere due to the lack of any leads.

Chinese Canadian author Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe* further muddies the "truth" behind the circumstances surrounding Wong's disappearance(s). *Disappearing Moon Cafe* is widely considered to be one of the most recognizable works of Asian Canadian fiction.<sup>81</sup> A work somewhere in-



between literary fiction and narrative non-fiction, Lee's novel tells the story of five generations of the Wong family primarily through its pioneering women, focusing on issues of intergenerational conflict, anti-Chinese racism, and the uncovering of family secrets. The novel is presented in a non-chronological format with titled vignettes that represent shifts in the narrative perspective and timeline. The plight of Wong Foon Sing and the death of Janet Smith play a small role in the overall plot of the novel, with the case being directly referenced in two rather obscure vignettes.

In Lee's account of the case, Wong is abducted, interrogated, and tortured, in effect, two times— first, by the community of Chinatown elders led by Wong Gwei Chang, and second, by unknown white assailants who may or may not be connected to the police. Thus, Lee's novel provides yet another set of explanatory possibilities, and fills in some of the fissures of the imperfect past that the archival evidence cannot mend. As historian Tiya Miles eloquently argues, the literary archive provides forms of knowledge that can aid in the reconstruction of the irretrievable past to reanimate the affective qualities and subjective experiences of the dead, "that fiction, as its own form of truth, can bridge the gaps in our evidence and allow us access to the marrow of human feeling."<sup>82</sup>

Furthermore, literary sources are particularly useful for teasing out thematic elements that can strengthen the analysis of the archival materials. Thus, what Lee's account of the Janet Smith case provides is a rich milieu from which the historian can pick out narrative and discursive threads that can then be corroborated in the historical record. Furthermore, as someone not fluent in Chinese and with the relative dearth of first-hand accounts given by the accused men themselves to white reporters, the literary archive can speak more freely of sentiments, explanations, and truths that are ignored, suppressed, or otherwise not voiced in the English-language historical record.

Long before the authorities and the Vancouver public were anxious about the inexplicable disappearance of Wong from their midst, Vancouver's Chinese community was preparing itself for war in Lee's account of the case. As the narrator of the novel recounts, "They were only too aware of the obscene implications of this situation. Those whites who hated yellow people never needed an excuse to spit on chinese [*sic*]. So the idea of a young, lone, yellow-skinned male standing over the inert body of a white-skinned female would send them into a bloodthirsty frenzy."<sup>83</sup> Anticipating violent reprisals for this transgression of racial and sexual boundaries, a meeting is held in the Wong Clan Association building, where the many "uncles" of the Vancouver Chinatown community gather to see if they could make sense of the situation.

After some unproductive debate over what really happened between Janet Smith ("that no-good she-ghost") and Wong Foon Sing, Wong Gwei Chang, the patriarch of the Wong clan, unceremoniously summons Foon Sing and his uncle before an informal and clandestine gathering of elders. Upon being asked about his relationship to the nursemaid, he is nervously silent, which inspires this furious tirade from one of the men present:

You dead snake! You don't even know right from wrong. You're just a troublemaker! What can you be thinking of? Buying women's intimate underwear for a white girl for a present! And then she gets a bullet hole in her stupid head! What do you think people will think of that? A no-good chinaboy sniffing after white women' asses... A rotten fish matched with a stinky shrimp!<sup>84</sup>

Returning to Wong Foon Sing's interrogation at the hands of his elder compatriots, another reading of the death of Janet Smith emerges. Wong Gwei Chang becomes tired of all the lewd speculation and refocuses the interrogation by raising the stakes. Gwei Chang does this by reading the killing of Janet Smith as a crime that the entire Chinatown community has to answer for, and not simply Wong Foon Sing as an individual:

We know that you know a lot more than you're telling us. O.K. If you don't want to tell, then you're on your own! I guess you're a real tough guy, aren't you? You don't want the help of the associations? Then you're alone! You know as well as anybody what kind of treatment you can expect from those whites. But maybe, just maybe, you've forgotten about what we do to traitors who make trouble for us...<sup>85</sup>

For elders like Gwei Chang, what was at stake in the suspicious death of Janet Smith was the defense of Chinatown against a hostile, white Vancouver. Implicit in this defense of the community was the strict observance of the boundaries of race, gender, and sexuality set by the dominant society. In short, Gwei Chang's shift in interrogation tactics reveals how the precarious sexuality of the Chinese houseboy also troubled the Chinatown community and not only the Vancouver public. For Gwei Chang, Wong Foon Sing's defiance of these boundaries represented a betrayal of his duty to his own family and his fellow Chinese. Wong Foon Sing's feigning of ignorance, which is neither an open admission to nor a denial of having been intimately involved with Janet Smith, infuriated the elders because it foreclosed the possibility of recovering some semblance of the truth in a murder investigation that was overwhelmingly characterized by dubious evidence and anxiety over racial and sexual transgressions.

The historical record itself contains many different characterizations of the relationship between Janet Smith and Wong Foon Sing, most of them corresponding to the lurid and colorful speculations of the elders in Lee's novel. For instance, Smith's diary was submitted to the courts as evidence and it contained many salacious details of Smith's love life, which was heavily scrutinized during the investigation and trial. According to these diaries, Smith was engaged to a logger named Arthur Dawson, who worked at Roberts Creek just north of Vancouver, but Smith had her doubts about the marriage and would apparently go out dancing with other men regularly while her fiancée was away from the city. "[Arthur] is good and steady, but there ought to be more than that to matrimony," an entry read in her diary.<sup>86</sup> Corroborating Sky Lee's account, Smith also wrote that Wong was apparently infatuated with her and had given her a silk nightgown as a present. Thus, Smith's sexuality and private life became a point of public interest in the case.

Demonstrative of this obsession over her sexuality, in one of the more lurid narrative threads arising out of the Janet Smith case, there was speculation that Janet Smith was killed at a high society orgy at the Baker residence. The most sensational of these claims would be published in a fringe weekly called the *Saturday Tribune*, which led to a libel case against its editor John Sedgwick Cowper, in which the Bakers were awarded \$2,000 in damages.<sup>87</sup> A spirit medium named Barbara Orford was also charged in the case. Having consulted Smith's spirit in a séance, Orford provided testimony to the *Sun*, alleging that Smith had been invited to an orgy hosted by the Bakers and other prominent members of Vancouver society, and upon discovering this trap, had fled into a bathroom and was killed when she fell and hit her head on the bathtub, whereupon she was taken to the basement and a bullet was fired into her head. Though sensationalistic, this explanation was in wide circulation as it not only accounted for the new evidence revealed through the second inquest (the suspicious positioning of the body, the blunt force wound to the rear of Smith's head, the doubts about suicide), but also because the issue of whether Smith was at a so-called "party" or not just before her death simply did not go away.

For instance, there was a persistent rumor that the dress in which Smith's body was found was a party dress and not her usual work attire.<sup>88</sup> Additionally, when Wong was abducted and held captive for forty-two days, he testified that his captors repeatedly asked about a party as they tortured him, to which he responded, "I say no party. Man swear and say I tell or they shoot me." The theory that Smith was killed by members of the upper class at a party/orgy must have endured in both the

media and even in Wong's captors because it spoke directly to the shoddy case against Wong. Imaginings of a sex scandal and cover-up of Smith's death and the subsequent framing of Wong by their wealthy patrons could only be compelling in a society wracked by racial, gender, sexual, and class anxieties and tensions, and in a case that was in desperate need of a breakthrough.

### **The Ku Klux Klan Come to the Rescue**

The Grey Point and Provincial Police were completely at a loss for a suspect as rumors continued to circulate with Wong's sudden disappearance. They had tried to question everybody even remotely connected to the case, including Janet Smith's many suitors and an itinerant Chinese gardener that had worked for the Bakers. Frustrated with the lack of any progress in the investigation, the police attempted to force a breakthrough in the case by clandestinely abducting and interrogating Wong. It is this movement in the discourse from the policing of racial and sexual transgressions to the role assumptions played in shaping the outcome of the trial that I now turn.

The police had assumed all along that Wong had not told the whole story. They also believed that he was the most viable suspect on account of his close proximity to and apparent infatuation with Smith, but there was nothing that could definitively connect the dots. To resolve this dilemma, the police hired a private investigator named Oscar B. V. Robinson and his Canadian Detective Bureau to render their assumptions into reality in order to rescue the case for them.

Wong was abducted by Robinson and his co-conspirators on two occasions. A couple of weeks after the first inquest returned a verdict of suicide, witnesses saw Wong being pushed into a car by two white assailants while he was on a street corner in Chinatown on August 12, 1924. He was then taken to Robinson's office on Hastings Street. Wong's abductors felt that he had not told everything he knew at the inquest, and when he failed to produce any new information, they attempted to force it out of him by beating him. After about eight hours of this, Wong was returned to Shaughnessy Heights where he worked. Sixteen days later, the second inquest was held, and it returned a verdict of murder. This marked the beginning of a long lull in the case as police continued to be frustrated by their conviction in what they thought they knew about Wong and the pervasive doubt that stared them in the face.

Feeling that Wong still had something to hide, Robinson and the police collaborated to covertly abduct Wong once more on March 20, 1925, but this time disguised as the Ku Klux Klan and for a lengthier duration of forty-two days. After this long period of captivity, Wong was found wandering the streets of Vancouver blindfolded and nearly dead from his injuries around 3:00 in the morning on May 1, 1925. Apparently, Wong was too frightened to uncover his blindfolded eyes, despite the fact that his captors had cut away his bindings before he was pushed out of a car and dumped onto the streets.<sup>89</sup> Newspapers carried a photograph taken of Wong during his abduction.<sup>90</sup> Perhaps the photograph was taken as a memento or trophy as was often done with lynchings in the American South. In it, a sullen Wong is shown standing on a structure resembling a hangman's scaffold, with a photograph of Janet Smith to his right, and the word "JUSTICE" painted on the wall just behind his head. During his captivity, Wong had several of his ribs broken, his skull fractured, and an eardrum ruptured.<sup>91</sup>

Accounts varied on the details of the abduction of Wong by the men in white hoods. At least two accounts maintained that Wong was held underground or in a cave-like refuge, though we know this was not the case from Wong's own personal testimony which describes a two-story house with covered windows. Another account held that Wong was led to believe that he was being driven to Mexico, and that he was "constantly under surveillance, [and] was well treated, but was continually

questioned as to his knowledge of the death of Janet Smith, and particularly as to a party alleged to have been held shortly before the girl died.”<sup>92</sup>

In a lengthy interview conducted by J. A. Macdonald,<sup>93</sup> Wong himself gave an account of his abduction. Wong was apparently working at the Baker residence at night at the time of his being unceremoniously spirited away:

I hear dog bark outside. I think maybe somebody in yard. I go outside. See two men in yard. I feel afraid and go back in house. Soon I get in house I see three more men. They get in some other way. I very frightened. Men run and grab me. One flash light in my face. I cannot see men. Their head covered with hood and they wear long cloak. They very rough. Shake me and strike me and tell me quiet.

The men restrain him, and take him to a car parked near the Baker residence. Next, Wong claimed that the car was driven some miles before it stopped at what appeared to be the Canada-U.S. border crossing, complete with a toll gate and men dressed as customs officers. In this way, Wong was made to believe he was being taken to the United States, likely in a ruse to intimidate him and disguise the true identity of his captors and their connection to the Point Grey Police. Here, I am reminded again of the connections between Western Canada and the United States as North American frontier and gateway societies. The donning of the iconic garb of the Ku Klux Klan and the imaginary border crossing orchestrated by Wong’s captors demonstrates well the flexibility and ambiguity of the boundaries between domestic and foreign, truth and fiction, and Canada and the United States. It also demonstrated that Wong’s abductors were very keen on making the abduction seem as believable as possible.

With D. W. Griffith’s infamous *The Birth of a Nation* making its debut in 1915, the Klan became revitalized in the 1920s after decades of inactivity. In this period of renewed activity, the Klan expanded its white supremacist platform and reach. Catholics, communists, and Orientals were added to their list of enemies, and the Klan began to establish branches all throughout Canada in addition to the United States. The Klan was particularly active and powerful in British Columbia as the province was already a hotbed of anti-Oriental racism. Three Oregon Klansmen had come north to help establish chapters at Vancouver, Victoria, Nanaimo, Ladysmith, and Buxton.<sup>94</sup> By 1927, the Klan in British Columbia claimed a membership of 13,000, and made their Vancouver headquarters nowhere other than Shaughnessy Heights, the same affluent neighborhood where Smith was found dead and where Wong worked as a servant.<sup>95</sup>

The Vancouver chapter of the Invisible Empire was publicly racist and anti-Oriental, whereas Vancouver’s police authorities and governmental institutions had to maintain some pretense of neutrality and fair play. If anybody would kidnap and torture Wong, their logic held that it would be the Klan and not the respectable members of the Scottish societies and the provincial and municipal police. Despite the ruse, Robinson and his associates were about as ineffective at forcing a breakthrough in the case as they were in the first abduction, as Wong recounted:

Man hold big revolver up to my head. He say you tell us all about who kill nurse or I blow your brains. You tell us everything or we kill you. I tell them I already tell everything. Man pushes revolver at my head and says you tell. I say again I don’t know anything but what I tell. I very sorry. Poor nursie. I very sorry, but I don’t know anything more but what I tell already.

Wong continued to deny any knowledge of any party or anything having to do with the death of Janet Smith. Unsatisfied with the way the interrogation was proceeding, the men made a last ditch

effort to validate what they assumed to know about Wong. He was taken upstairs, placed on a scaffold with a noose, and was hung, thereby symbolically concluding the pseudo-lynching that was very much a part of the real daily terrors experienced by Blacks in the U.S. South at the hands of whites. As the noose tightened around his esophagus and his vision blackened, Wong did not die at that moment, but momentarily lost consciousness from asphyxiation. When Wong regained consciousness, he felt what appeared to be a physician examine his pulse and wounds. His captors had immediately cut him down from the scaffold after he had blacked out. Barely conscious, Wong hears the apparent doctor tell his robed captors that he was nearly dead, and that no further pain should be inflicted upon him unless they really wanted him to die. After a few days of inactivity, Wong was driven back to Vancouver and unceremoniously dumped on the streets to wander blindfolded into the night.

Though Wong's abductors intended for their disguises to be convincing, ironically, the abduction and the interrogation tactics used were completely inconsistent with a Southern lynching, and instead had all the hallmarks of modern policing and systematic planning. As Darius Rejali notes in his seminal study on the topic, stealth torture or "sweating" became a common police practice in the United States and Great Britain after World War I, and there is no reason to believe that this did not also apply to Canada in the 1920s.<sup>96</sup> According to Rejali, police forces in Western democracies during this period developed, innovated, and utilized techniques such as marathon interrogations, sleep deprivation, "clean beating" (i.e. forms of physical violence that did not leave obvious marks), electroshock devices, positional and exhaustion-based torture, choking and drowning, and so on to extract confessions and useful information from non-compliant subjects. Wong was subjected to most of the above techniques: he was interrogated for hours on end by multiple robed men in shifts, deprived of sleep and mobility, beaten "cleanly" with fists and feet over a period of forty-two days, forced to stand by the way his bindings were set up, strung up to a noose and cut down after fainting from asphyxiation, and psychologically terrorized for weeks through his abductors' dissimulation. Taking into further account the border crossing ploy, the way in which Wong's captors prepared the secret den and the fact that the men had worn hoods, robes, and gloves the entire time to avoid identification, it ironically became clear that the abduction was not only premeditated, but that it was organized by specialists. All of these factors accounted for the early (and ultimately accurate) speculation that Wong's abductors were police officers or private detectives, and not an angry mob of nativist vigilantes.

As thirteen people were subpoenaed in connection to the conspiracy behind Wong's second abduction, the Chief Justice declared that the evidence against Wong had been "very scanty" and that a conviction was "improbable," and so after his ordeal with Robinson and his co-conspirators, Wong was released on bail.<sup>97</sup> With the credibility of the Provincial and Point Grey Police in a complete shambles as a result of the abductions, a Grand Jury eventually acquitted Wong on October 9, 1925. Thus, Wong had in effect won his innocence through two trials— one through the courts, and the other by surviving his pseudo-lynching.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed how a major murder trial and the principals involved, namely the two servants Wong Foon Sing and Janet Smith, threatened and transgressed the boundaries of race, gender, class, and sexuality in Vancouver during the Jazz Age. It was shown that both protagonists were swept up in interlocking and co-emergent struggles over white and non-white, male and female, and the interior world of domestic service and the public spectacle of the trial. Similarly, the

next chapter will examine the case of the murder of San Francisco socialite Rosetta Baker in 1930, in which a Chinese servant named Liu Fook was accused in the killing of his white female employer.

## Chapter Two:

### The Beautiful and the Damned: A San Francisco Love Triangle

*Lysistrata*: Oh, Kalonika, my heart is broken. I'm ashamed of our sex. Men have always said that we are untrustworthy and sly and trivial—

*Kalonika*: Just between ourselves, don't you think that they're right?

— from Gilbert Seldes' 1930 production of *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes<sup>98</sup>

Liu Fook, called a houseboy but much older than Wong at the age of 63 (or 65, depending on the source), also stood trial for the death of a white woman at his place of employment. In contrast to Janet Smith, who was an unknown before her death, Mrs. Rosetta Baker was an incredibly active clubwoman of some renown in San Francisco, and it is apparent that she had a particular knack for organizing and hosting dances and other amusements for the San Francisco elite.<sup>99</sup> Before her death at the age of 75, Mrs. Baker appeared in the society and clubs pages of San Francisco's newspapers on numerous occasions. The earliest reference to her club activities was reported in April 3, 1921. It was noted that Mrs. Baker was an active member of the California Club, the Cap and Bells Club, and the Players' Club, and that she was helping to organize the California Club cotillion. In the same article, it was reported that she gave a theater box party as part of the California Club, her guests including a slew of prominent members of San Francisco society.<sup>100</sup> The event featured headline acts from local theaters, a ladies' orchestra, an act from the hit Broadway operetta "The Chocolate Soldier" featuring local leading lady Pearl Ladd, and acts by talented members of the Club itself. In the winter of 1923, Mrs. Baker was responsible for organizing a huge three-part winter series of cotillions that were held at the Fairmont Hotel on behalf of the Gaiety, to which five hundred notables were invited.<sup>101</sup> She was also the vice president and chairman of entertainment for the San Francisco Women's Press Club, and held a stage benefit at the Capitol Theater on October 25, 1924.<sup>102</sup> She appeared for the last time in the society and clubs pages on May 22, 1927, when it was reported that she had hosted a famous German hero of the Great War, Count Felix von Luckner and his wife, for tea at the Palace Hotel.<sup>103</sup>

Mrs. Baker was a very glamorous woman who gave the impression that she relished in her independence as a wealthy widow and popular hostess. Reflecting this image, Don Reid, her

attorney, described her as “an exceedingly shrewd business woman.” Mrs. Baker invested heavily in real estate. She owned the California Street apartment house where she lived and was found dead. She also owned the northwest corner of Hyde and Pacific, and the southwest corner of Washington and Leavenworth. Only a few months before her death, she borrowed \$11,000 on the Hyde and Pacific property, and \$13,000 on the California Street property on August 12, 1930. Five years earlier, on April 24, 1925, she and her then alive brother jointly purchased a house and lot at 1205-1207 Sanchez Street, which they later sold on December 16 in the same year.<sup>104</sup>

She was the first wife of the late Dr. Clarence Clarke Baker, whom she divorced in 1914. After his death, Baker sued to have a share in his estate, charging that he had deceived her as to his actual wealth at the time of their divorce. The lawsuit was settled out of court and likely accounted for some of Mrs. Baker’s tremendous personal wealth.<sup>105</sup> Lincoln U. Grant, Baker’s business manager, executor, and major trial witness, estimated her personal estate to be worth \$200,000 and her inheritance from her recently deceased brother to be worth \$300,000, making Mrs. Baker’s estimated net worth \$6.9 million in today’s dollars after adjusting for inflation.<sup>106</sup> Between her real estate deals, Mrs. Baker was a patron of the theater and dabbled in minor acting roles herself. On stage, she appeared in productions of Aristophanes’ bawdy gender comedy *Lysistrata*<sup>107</sup> and Anton Chekhov’s *Uncle Vanya* at the Fairmont Hotel, and also had a part in *The Judgment of Mrs. Strothers* in San Anselmo about a year prior to her death.<sup>108</sup> In short, Rosetta Baker had an unusual amount of wealth, independence, and social prestige for a woman of the Roaring Twenties.

Rosetta Baker’s life ended on December 8, 1930. She was found dead in her apartment by Liu Fook, her Chinese servant, at around 8:30 in the morning. A horrific struggle was evident with furniture and rugs strewn about and Baker having suffered two broken ribs, her throat throttled by her assailant’s hands, her chest crushed, and a bed sheet tied around her neck like a noose. Rings that she could not remove from her fingers for years were apparently missing. A piece of torn skin, bloodied work clothes, a shirt button, and a shoe heel were all found at the scene, all of which allegedly belonged to Liu. As a result of these pieces of evidence, the police presented a “perfect case” to a Grand Jury, whereupon Liu was indicted, but not without controversy.<sup>109</sup> On the same day that the Grand Jury indicted Liu, the coroner’s inquest refused to accuse Liu with the crime, returning a verdict of “strangulation, criminal, at the hands of a person or persons unknown.”<sup>110</sup> Thus, like in the case of Janet Smith, there was early doubt of the accused’s guilt at the very onset of the investigation, though unlike the Smith case, there was no question that Baker’s cause of death was a homicide and not a suicide.

According to witness testimony, three people were with Baker on the night before her death: actor Walter F. Outler, who was more commonly known by his stage name Wallace Middleton, 28; his roommate, pianist Arthur Beale, also 28; and longtime friend and wealthy divorcée Mrs. Walter Coleman Graves, 56. The party of four had spent the night enjoying each other’s company. Middleton, Baker, and Beale met at Graves’ apartment around 5:30 in the evening and went to the Sir Francis Drake Hotel for dinner. The group then drove in Baker’s car to the Green Street Theater, where Middleton worked, to take in a show. After the show, the four had ice cream at a confectionary near Polk and Sutter. At the end of the night, the party dropped Graves off at her apartment at 12:15 in the morning, then drove to Baker’s apartment at 814 California Street, where according to Middleton, he and Beale remained for about fifteen minutes and then went back to their apartment on Stockton. After the men departed, Baker called Graves to wish her good night.<sup>111</sup> Based on this timeframe, the police determined that the murder occurred in the early hours of the morning.

*San Francisco Examiner* reporter Ethel Bogardus had no qualms about being very blunt about her suspicions when interviewing Graves. Sensing a scandal, she asked point blank, “Gigolos and dancing grandmothers, hitting the jazz trail. How much of that was in Rosetta Baker’s life?”



“None whatever,” Graves calmly replied. Unconvinced by Graves’ repeated denials, Bogardus speculated on Baker’s personal life and the state of her psyche in the twilight of her years:

Yet woven through the torn fabric of the dead woman’s life, run threads of startling hue. When the frayed ends are pieced together they reveal a strange pattern. Young men, the love of flashy jewelry, lure of the theater, a cry for youth and beauty lost—all were part of her existence.<sup>112</sup>

Piecing together the frayed ends of both the Janet Smith and Rosetta Baker cases does in fact reveal a peculiar pattern, one that is telling of the complex constellation of racial, gender, class, and sexual politics that were at the heart of the two cases. Thus, my own exhumation of Janet Smith and Rosetta Baker from the depths of the past is not an attempt to reexamine the evidence in order to reveal the true identity of these women’s killers, nor am I interested in exonerating, rehabilitating, or valorizing Wong Foon Sing and Liu Fook, the Chinese servants accused of murder, who may or may not have had anything to do with the deaths of these women. Instead, what is interesting about the two cases is what the many different threads said about the racial tensions and sexual anxieties that shaped Vancouver and San Francisco during the Jazz Age.

### **Young Gigolos and Dancing Grandmothers**

Murmurs of racial and sexual transgressions were one of defining features of the Rosetta Baker murder case, with early speculation that the case involved “gigolos and dancing grandmothers hitting the jazz trail.” Social dancing—typically associated with the youth culture of the 1920s—was seen as threatening, transgressive, and immoral.<sup>113</sup> Thus, The *Examiner’s* accusation that Mrs. Baker was a “dancing grandmother” carried strongly negative connotations and marked her as a social outlier and possible sexual deviant. But how did this impact the outcome of the murder investigation and trial?

It seemed like any other day for Liu Fook on the morning of December 8, 1930. Liu awoke at 6:30 and turned on the heat in the apartment, emptied the trash, and hosed off the front sidewalk. About two hours later, he went up to Mrs. Baker’s apartment and rang the bell. He noticed that the morning paper was still on the doorstep and found it odd that it was still there. Liu rang the bell again and when there was no answer, he opened the door with his spare key and found Mrs. Baker’s brutalized body on the floor.

A bit of skin found near the body “fitted perfectly” in an apparently fresh wound on the index finger of Liu’s right hand, and though his chin and neck bore what police thought were fingernail scratches, the servant maintained he had not killed her.<sup>114</sup> Liu explained that he had cut his finger while washing a broken window earlier in the week, and that it was only by chance that a bit of his torn skin was found in the apartment.<sup>115</sup> Further casting suspicion on Liu, Detectives Husted and Engler found what appeared to be bloodied work clothes soaking in a bucket of water in the basement, close to Liu’s quarters. The shirt was missing a button, and a matching button was found near the body. A part of a shoe heel was also found near the body, which police said belonged to Liu. When Husted and Engler showed the pair of trousers and shirt to Mrs. Rae Dix, the apartment manager, she immediately recognized them as Liu’s regular work attire. Further dooming Liu, when arrested on December 8, Liu had at first denied that the shoe heel found near the body was his, but a day later, when it was found to fit his shoe, he sheepishly admitted that it was his and explained, “I

have lost it three or four times. It wouldn't stay on."<sup>116</sup> In what appeared to be an open-and-shut case for the police, though physical evidence found at the scene seemed to conclusively point to Liu, the police had difficulty establishing a motive.

In one account, the police said that they believed Liu was possibly under the influence of narcotics and "had suddenly flown into a tantrum when taken to task by Mrs. Baker."<sup>117</sup> According to Captain Charles Dullea, chief of detectives, Liu had admitted to being a regular user of *yen shee*, the ashes of opium, and there was considerable speculation that the narcotics underworld was connected to the case. Dullea claimed that while Liu was being held in the City Prison waiting for his day with the Grand Jury, he said that "he would kill himself if someone did not supply him with a pinch of yen-shee before tonight."<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, when Liu was taken in for questioning after the discovery of the body, he told police he had taken a pinch of the drug that very morning. The drug trade would cast its shadow on the case in other ways. Captain H. S. Seager, chief of the Narcotics Division of the SFPD, revealed to the press that his department had been working on the Baker murder investigation. John G. Rafferty, a state narcotics agent, was also deployed to search the apartment house, though both he and Seager never explicitly made it clear why they were involved in the case.<sup>119</sup>

Based on this narcotics angle and Mrs. Baker's reputation for having a "crotchety disposition," the police posited that Liu had killed her in an opium-induced rage over his firing.<sup>120</sup> Engler believed this to be the most viable motive, and claimed that Liu's "Oriental calm suddenly snapped under the harsh reprimands of Mrs. Baker, and that he revenged himself for many alleged indignities by strangling her." "Strangling," Engler expertly asserted, "is a traditional Chinese method for putting an end to an enemy."<sup>121</sup>

Another popular explanation was that Liu Fook had killed his employer for her riches.<sup>122</sup> Early reports held that Mrs. Baker's body had been found without the rings she habitually wore and could not remove from her own fingers for years, and that some of her jewelry was missing from her personal collection. However, some days after the discovery of the body, police said that they had recovered two diamond rings "in a place only [Liu] could have hidden them." In actuality, it was not the police who had found the supposedly hidden jewelry, but the two executors of Baker's estate, Lincoln U. Grant, her business manager, and her attorney and nephew through marriage, Arthur L. Miller. These men supposedly found the rings underneath a pile of old telephone books on a chair in the basement next to the room used by Liu. Importantly, the police who had been stationed at Baker's apartment were not in the basement at the time Grant and Miller had gone down into it, nor did the police recover the rings when they examined the basement quarters prior to the discovery made by the two men. In what would be a case of remarkable serendipity, the two men explained that they were searching through the basement for the jewelry that had been reported missing in the hopes of finding them there. Grant said that he noticed that the dust on the stack of telephone books in the closet adjacent to Liu's room had been disturbed and so he lifted them up and found the rings hidden underneath.

Finally, the explanation that received the widest circulation was that Liu, as an old Chinese servant charged with a Confucian sense of propriety to his mistress, was "displeased with her constant association with young men, brooded over it, and worked himself into a frenzy that led him to kill her."<sup>123</sup> This displeasure is hinted at in an interview with the *Examiner*, where Liu points to Middleton as a possible suspect while at the same time rather bluntly expresses his strong dislike for the young actor. Liu said that Baker had "lain awake in despair" because Middleton had not come to the apartment for three days. "She was in love with him. And I hate him."<sup>124</sup> Liu also frequently complained to Mrs. Baker for keeping company with young men, and actively made his displeasure known. For instance, Grant told police that five months prior to Mrs. Baker's death, Liu had complained to him of the attentions Middleton was paying to her. This apparently resulted in

Liu's firing, but eventually Mrs. Baker relented and took her old servant back. Further adding to this story, Middleton claimed that he was the one to convince Baker to rehire Liu, though the sources are contradictory on the timing of his firing or whether he was fired at all. Yet another story held that Liu had once apparently quit his job in an argument with Baker over his refusal to serve Middleton, while the police claimed that Baker fired Liu for his insolence, only to rehire him a few weeks prior to her death after replacing him with three other Chinese houseboys, whom she quickly fired in rapid succession.<sup>125</sup>

In virtually all of his accounts of the relationship between Baker and Middleton, Liu casted suspicion on both the legitimacy of the relationship between Baker and Middleton *and* Middleton as a murder suspect, and so this triangle became central to understanding the murder trial and investigation. In one of his most lucid accounts, Liu alleged that Middleton came to visit Baker at her apartment "all the time" and "[sometimes] in the day and [sometimes] in the night" and that "Mrs. Baker bought him a wrist watch once and another time she bought him a \$65 suit of clothes." In case the insinuation he was making was not clear, he elaborated:

She would kiss him many times— not like a mother but like a sweetheart. I would go out of the room when I saw that. About four days before Mrs. Baker was killed, he told her he did not want to see her anymore.<sup>126</sup>

Upon the publication of these allegations, Middleton attempted to speak to Liu at the City Prison on December 12, 1930 because he "wanted him to deny those published lies that he saw me kissing Mrs. Baker," but Liu refused to see him.<sup>127</sup> Grant corroborated that there was some tension between Mrs. Baker, Middleton, and Liu in his comments to the press. According to Grant's testimony, Liu and Baker "quarreled frequently" over Middleton.<sup>128</sup> Whether Liu had been fired by his employer or not, and whether she had a romantic relationship with Middleton or not, what is clear is that Liu actively expressed his disdain for his employer's indiscretions and turned her private life into a point of public interest in doing so. Tellingly, however, the police were not interested in detaining Middleton as a suspect, and they were confident that they had their man in Liu. Indeed, police investigators did not see Liu's account of the relationship between Mrs. Baker and Middleton as being a possible lead, but as an attempt by Liu to deflect suspicion away from him.<sup>129</sup>

Further adding to the spectacle, neither Middleton nor Graves' testimony did anything to quash rumors of "gigolos and dancing grandmothers hitting the jazz trail." Middleton said he became Mrs. Baker's "protégé" a year and a half prior to her death, shortly after her brother's passing in October 1928. Middleton explained that after her beloved brother's sudden death, she was lonely and distraught, and sought his friendship. To this end, Middleton admitted that he "dined frequently" in Mrs. Baker's apartment and had escorted her to the theater and other places of amusement like ice cream parlors.

Contrary to Liu's account, he insisted that he had never been given money by her, or that she had purchased him clothing or any other such gifts, and that they had been "anything but the best of platonic friends." Middleton's<sup>130</sup> behavior after Baker's death, however, added grist to the rumor mill. Baker's longtime friend, Mrs. Walter Coleman Graves, told the press after the funeral had taken place that Middleton was too distraught to attend, and that he came to her apartment and "threw himself on the bed and cried for hours."<sup>131</sup> Despite this tragedy, or perhaps because of it, Middleton caught his solitary break the year following Baker's death and was cast as Gilbert Griffiths in the 1931 film *An American Tragedy*, based on Theodore Dreiser's best-selling novel of the same name (two decades later, the novel was adapted a second time into the six-time Oscar winning *A Place in the Sun*).<sup>132</sup>

Graves, too, would also be very defensive in her comments to the press regarding the relationship between Middleton and her old friend. After staunchly denying that anything was going on between Baker and Middleton in her interview with the *Examiner*, Graves characterizes their relationship as a “sort of mother and son friendship,” and that the two met while they both were playing parts in a play. Seemingly in an attempt to further desexualize her, Graves said that Baker neglected her hair, her hair dye “showed in streaks,” that she had a broken tooth, and that she was once “beautiful— not any longer. I guess she liked young people, yet that’s the last woman in San Francisco there could be any scandal about!” Sensing the tenuousness of her protestations, Graves further suggested that Baker did not have the audacious femininity and sexuality of the flapper women of that era, that when they saw the show at the Green Street Theater the night before her death, Baker really “didn’t care for that sort of thing— the play. She’s really quite prudish. She was shocked.” In an apparent attempt to explain why Middleton was always seen driving Baker around in her car, Graves said that Baker was a terrible driver and required his assistance. Graves also added that she chided Baker over the phone for “letting that boy spend money out of his small salary” at the dinner at the Drake the night before, which in the context of Graves’ defensiveness, was probably intended to explain the elderly woman’s dotting on Middleton as her junior and social inferior. However, this comment could also be read as evidence that Baker’s patronage of Middleton did in fact go beyond the usual expectations of friendship and had spent significant money on him. Finally, the interview ended dramatically with Graves exclaiming, “He’s just a mamma’s boy!”<sup>133</sup>

Graves’ repeated denials of a romantic relationship between Middleton and Baker probably fell on deaf ears, not only because denials tend to lose credibility with each repetition, but also because the papers were quick to air Mrs. Graves’ personal life in public with reports that Graves herself had been married to a man “many years her junior” in William H. Loller, who was “one of San Francisco’s most colorful attorneys and businessmen.”<sup>134</sup> Indeed, the article which featured the interview quoted above was keen to point out that Graves had been involved in a “sensational divorce suit” when she charged her husband with “habitual drunkenness and infidelity.” Like her deceased friend, Graves herself was accused of being a “dancing grandmother” in Loller’s cross-complaint.<sup>135</sup> The two had had a rather tumultuous marriage and finally divorced after the fourth attempt, the three prior suits being dismissed after reconciliations. True to his colorful reputation, Loller is quoted at the fourth and last divorce hearing that Graves had married him “just to have a dancing partner and escort.”<sup>136</sup> Since Graves was Baker’s close friend and had also seemingly had a penchant for associating and dancing with young men as Baker did, Graves’ insistence on the platonic nature of Middleton and Baker’s relationship was probably unconvincing to the prying eyes of the San Francisco public.

## A Fog of Doubt

As in Wong’s case in Vancouver, it was what white San Francisco thought they knew about Liu Fook that ultimately shaped the outcome of the case. Despite the police’s inability to establish a definitive motive, the physical evidence collected was such that police were confident that they had their man in Liu and brought him before a Grand Jury on December 15, 1930. The coroner’s inquest also began on the same day. For their part, the police admitted the motive of robbery was weak, but Chief Dullea persisted in feeling that they had their man:

A motive is not necessary to our case, and we are not particularly interested in finding one. Many crimes are committed without a discoverable motive. Maybe [Liu]

resented treatment accorded him by his mistress. Maybe, adopting the old family servant role, he was angry at her for associating with young men.<sup>137</sup>

At the inquest, Rae Dix, the apartment manager, testified that Liu Fook had called her when he discovered body around 8:30 that fateful morning, after which she called the police. She said that she thought Liu had “quit or been discharged by Mrs. Baker,” and was thus somewhat taken aback by his presence at the apartment building. Upon being asked whether Baker ever had any trouble with her other Chinese servants, Dix said that Baker did have a strained relationship with a few, but that they had never threatened or assaulted her.

When the subpoenaed detectives were compelled to provide testimony after Dix, they were apparently not completely forthcoming. After Det. George Engler made the statement that the police case had already been presented to the Grand Jury and that there was no reason to “reveal” it before a coroner’s inquest, the head coroner Dr. Leland ordered the detective to answer his questions. “Forget about the Grand Jury last night. There’s been enough ‘covering up’ on this case... Tell us all you know, and let’s not have any more ‘covering up.’”

After Engler came Lincoln U. Grant, Baker’s business manager and executor. Leland asked him about his whereabouts on the night of the murder, and Grant testified that he had spent the weekend at the home of a Mrs. Ward in Oakland. Mrs. Ward was reported to be the wife of Grant’s current wife’s former husband who was in hiding ever since a Grand Jury indicted him for thirty counts of grand theft totaling \$30,000 in April 1928. Mr. Ward apparently had misrepresented himself as an investment broker and had made off with a small fortune. Adding to the intrigue, Grant revealed to the inquest that he was currently engaged in a highly contentious divorce lawsuit with his estranged wife, Mrs. Margaret Grant (formerly Mrs. Margaret Ward). It did not take the public long to deduce that Mrs. Ward and Grant were probably romantically involved, and that therefore, it appeared that Mrs. Ward would “swap” husbands with Margaret Grant yet again. Likely feeling the glare of the public spotlight cast on her personal life, Mrs. Ward provided the *Examiner* with supplementary details of Grant’s weekend visit. She said that Grant had visited her home on Friday evening (December 5, 1930) and stayed until Monday morning. Probably anticipating how dubious the situation looked, she quickly added, “He occupied a separate room, as he has done on other visits. He has helped me financially, and is a true friend.” These revelations only added to the general feeling that sexual transgressions were closely connected to Baker’s murder as Mrs. Ward’s claim echoed the repeated denials of a romantic relationship between Mrs. Baker and Middleton.

After establishing his alibi, Grant was asked to describe the relationship between Mrs. Baker and Liu. He testified that Liu was a “perfect servant” up until the time that Middleton became a frequent caller at the apartment. Repeating Dullea’s early speculation that Liu had murdered Baker for her lack of propriety, Grant testified that Liu apparently resented Baker’s association with the young actor and that he had decided to leave her and go into the employ of Mrs. Dix instead. It is important to note here that Grant’s account was markedly different from the testimony provided by Dix. In her testimony, Dix did not mention anything at all about Liu wanting to work for her and more importantly, she had testified that Liu had either quit or had been discharged by Baker.

Wallace Middleton’s testimony provided a third “insider’s” perspective on the events surrounding Baker’s death and her private life. Middleton was asked to describe the relationship between Baker and Grant, and testified that she was dissatisfied with Grant for his collection of an excessive commission on a real estate deal and was threatening to make a change. He also said that Baker had confided in him that she intended to change her will without consulting Grant and had said to him that “[Grant had] better look out. The way my will is now he will have plenty for the rest of his life, and he knows it.” In other words, it appeared that Middleton was attempting to implicate Grant, suggesting that his motive would have been to secure his hold over Mrs. Baker’s financial

dealings and her estate. Upon being asked to shed light on the relationship between Baker and Liu, he revealed that during the time that Liu was out of her employ, Baker seemed annoyed at Liu's efforts to recover his job and she hinted that she might call police to get rid of him. Middleton claimed that it was none other than he himself that had convinced Baker to take Liu back on as her houseboy, though if this was the case, he probably did not recognize the irony of the situation. After all, Liu had apparently been fired or had quit over his opposition to Middleton's relationship with Baker.

Dr. A. F. Moody, the man who performed the autopsy, rounded out the inquest. Moody testified that Baker's death was due to a "terrific beating," and that she had been strangled with bare hands before the sheet was knotted around her neck. He also said that Baker was apparently a "powerfully built woman" and "put up a terrific fight." He added that no evidence of narcotics was found in her stomach, and declared that it was impossible to determine the size, weight, or apparent strength of the murderer, or to determine definitively the time of death. This last point about the build of the murderer was crucial because Liu's defense had advanced the supposition that a frail, 65-year-old houseboy could not cause the extensive damage that Baker had suffered.

Based on the above testimony and the physical evidence gathered at the scene that connected Liu to the murder, the Grand Jury voted to indict Liu after forty minutes of deliberation, or at least it did initially. On the same day that the Grand Jury decided to hold Liu for murder, the coroner's inquest returned a verdict that conflicted with the Jury's indictment, and pointed the finger in another direction. Much to the chagrin of the police, it ruled that Baker "came to her death by multiple injuries to the head and body secondary to strangling, inflicted by a person or persons unknown." Det. Allen McGinn, head of the SFPD's Homicide Division, was extremely critical of the inquest's verdict. In a statement he made to the press, McGinn lambasted coroner Leland for turning the inquest into a court trial, and said that the coroner had "exceeded his authority and used unfair tactics to get the police to disclose their whole case prematurely." He continued, "Who does he think he is? He took advantage of us and asked questions he had no right to ask. When Detective George Engler was on the stand, [Coroner] Leland followed his usual procedure and did everything he could to spoil our case." Not the type to back down, Leland shot back at McGinn and defended the role of the coroner's inquest: "There certainly was no intention to spoil the case for the police. I understand from the newspapers and from what I have heard that the public is not satisfied with the investigation as conducted by the police. I simply tried to get at the bottom of the matter and see whether the evidence against [Liu] warranted charging him with the crime." He added, "The Coroner's jury is for the protection of the public. It frequently is not well for the police to have full charge of an investigation leading up to a prosecution," not-so-subtly suggesting that the police were not always above the influence of public opinion and political interference, and that they were more interested in apprehending criminals than in establishing the objective truth.

Less than a week after the inquest and the Grand Jury returned conflicting verdicts, the Grand Jury overturned its initial decision, citing a lack of evidence and an unwillingness to test the case against Liu in court. John P. Murphy, the foreman of the Grand Jury, explained the sudden reversal:

As we thought it over, our doubts as to [Liu's] probable guilt grew stronger, I know my own did, and other members of the jury expressed the same feelings. It looks too perfect... So we decided to turn the whole case over to the incoming jury.<sup>138</sup>

This view was shared by an overwhelming majority of the twenty-three person jury, with only one dissenter. Judge Sylvain Lazarus of the Superior Court, to whom the case was assigned after the Grand Jury failed to hold Liu for murder, agreed with the Grand Jury's rationale, and went so far as

to say that the District Attorney's office and the SFPD had initially taken the case to the Grand Jury since they knew that the courts would have dismissed the case outright for a lack of evidence.<sup>139</sup>

For the Superior Court proceedings, Liu retained the services of a firebrand of an attorney in William J. Gloria, whose sarcastic quips, bold accusations, and frequent clashes with the prosecution would almost gleefully be reported in the papers all throughout Liu's ordeal. During the coroner's inquest, which would be instrumental in causing the Grand Jury to overturn its initial decision to indict Liu, Gloria was almost thrown out of the proceedings for his boisterousness. Objecting to Dix's allegation that Liu was recently fired by Baker, Gloria attempted to cross-examine her, but was abruptly stopped by Dr. Leland, who as demonstrated earlier in his willingness to confront and reprimand the SFPD, was no shrinking violet either.

"I'm conducting this inquest. Who are you?" Leland asked.

"We're here to see that Liu gets a fair trial. You'll find out who I am," Gloria said, very much on the precipice of acceptable behavior.

"I want no interference. If necessary, I'll have the police handle this. You're one of these fighting attorneys, aren't you?"

"You bet I am."

Leland added that the cross-examination of witnesses by attorneys was forbidden as this was an inquest to determine the extent of the evidence surrounding Baker's death, and not a court trial to determine the guilt or innocence of his client. Dix tried to continue her testimony, but was interrupted by Gloria a second time, after which Leland threatened to have the police forcibly remove him from the proceedings. Having been issued this warning, Gloria bit his tongue and allowed the inquest to continue, but would blaze a brilliant defense for his client at trial in the Superior Court.

Prior to and during Liu's court hearing, Gloria was quick to point out the suspect nature of the physical evidence found at the scene, and strongly emphasized the lack of a motive. On the police's "perfect case" against Liu, Gloria said that it was "Too perfect. It looks like a perfect frame-up." He added, "There is a strange mystery here. [Liu] is bound in a chain of circumstance, forged perhaps by chance, but more likely by design." For instance, on the serendipitous recovery of Baker's apparently missing jewelry near Liu Fook's servant quarters, Gloria called the sequence of events that led to their recovery "strange." He pointed out that the police first went to the basement and found nothing, returned and found a bucket of bloodstained clothes, then went upstairs and told Grant, the deceased's business manager and executor, and Miller, her attorney, that they could look in the storeroom which they had not searched, and the two men allegedly found the hidden jewels in just under four minutes, in a closet that was littered with refuse and papers. Not wanting to stop at his insinuation that the jewelry was planted at the scene, Gloria pointed attention to the fact that even if Liu had wanted to rob his employer, he had ample time to make a getaway. The police had established that Baker was killed at about four o' clock in the morning, and Liu called the police about four and a half hours later around 8:30 when he arrived at the scene. "Why would [Liu] stay in the house and why would he hide stolen articles so close to the scene of the crime?" Playing on the general sentiment that it would be totally out of character for a loyal Chinese servant to rob and kill his white employer, Gloria said that Liu was known to have returned a diamond ring his mistress had lost, to have given her a purse containing \$450 he found in the hall, and to have been entrusted

frequently with collecting rents from the tenants that lived on Baker's many properties scattered around the city.

Even before the onset of the Grand Jury and inquest, Gloria systematically discredited the physical evidence that linked Liu to the crime while at the same time suggested that the evidence was planted, or at best, purely circumstantial. On the bloodied work clothes found soaking in the basement near Liu's room, Gloria pointed out that the trousers were of good material— far better than Liu had ever worn— and that they were of a sporty cut, such as a young man would wear. On the piece of torn skin found near the body, he claimed that Liu had noticed the skin curling from a cut he received earlier in the week, and in a hurry, he tore it off and threw it down. According to him, Liu had cut himself while washing a broken window, and not in a death struggle with Baker as the police had alleged. In his visit to the scene of the crime, Gloria visited the apartment above Baker's and found the broken window where Liu had cut his thumb, and below it he said he found several small and recent bloodstains, which he would have forensically tested.<sup>140</sup> "Maybe [the piece of torn skin had] stuck to his clothing and was dropped later. Perhaps he threw it, then, in the bedroom— which adjoins the kitchen," he explained. On the fallen shoe heel found near Baker's body, Gloria said that the houseboy's shoes were four years old and that the heel could have come off at any time. He further pointed out that if he had committed the murder, Liu would have had ample time to remove such damning evidence, which was lying in plain sight and right next to the body. He added that if someone wanted to cast suspicion on Liu, the heel would be an easy way to do it. And yet even with the very convincing defense launched by Liu's charismatic and hotheaded attorney, ultimately what sealed Liu's case in his favor was a particular discourse surrounding what a Chinese houseboy was or was not capable of doing.

## **We Know the Chinese**

With the Grand Jury refusing to indict, and the coroner's jury likewise refusing to name Liu as the murderer, the District Attorney was forced to charge Liu and bring the case to the courts with its credibility heavily compromised. Thus, in a matter of days, the "perfect case" against Liu all of a sudden evaporated and led to the emergence of a public discourse of pervasive doubt, a doubt that was based on the assumed knowledge that San Franciscans had of Chinese houseboys. Just what this assumed knowledge was and how it shaped Liu's fate will now be considered.

A *Chronicle* editorial written a day after the inquest's verdict encapsulated well the assumed knowledge claimed by the San Francisco public and how this knowledge shrouded the case in a fog of doubt:

There is a very general public interest in this case and a deep-seated impression that maybe the aged Chinese house servant is not guilty at all. Chinese are not given much to murdering white people...<sup>141</sup>

On the latest hypothesis that Liu had killed Baker because of her association with young men, the article appealed yet again to this collective knowledge of the houseboy, which assumed that Chinese servants would never act out in violence against their white masters:

Everyone who has had any dealings with old Chinese house servants knows that they 'fly off the handle' sometimes, but always exhaust their feelings with loud words and wild gestures. Extremely few examples of violence can be cited.



As the trial took its course, Liu's testimony would also dramatically change. Immediately following the Grand Jury's return of no bill and the inquest's inconclusive verdict, Liu began to adamantly deny that he knew of any intrigue between Baker and Middleton, and played up his Chineseness and conformity to Confucian values with a twist that turned the police's use of the very same values as a motive for murder on its head.

In an interview with the *Chronicle* held a few days before the preliminary hearing, Liu said that young men did indeed frequently visit Mrs. Baker at her apartment, but claimed that he did not know what they talked about or what they did, which was completely inconsistent with his earlier statements to the press where he claimed he saw Baker and Middleton kissing. He went on to play on the assumed knowledge that San Franciscans had of men like him, and argued that Chinese superstition and cultural practices suggested his innocence: "I am Chinese. If I had killed Mrs. Baker I would not have been there when the body was found and the police came. I would have run far, far away. That is the way Chinese do."<sup>142</sup>

This drastic turn in Liu's denial of all knowledge related to the goings on between Middleton and Mrs. Baker and the simultaneous assertion of his Chineseness was purposeful and strategic. Liu took advantage of prevailing stereotypes of the Chinese to render himself into a non-threatening, subordinate, and totally knowable racial subject in an era where Oriental exclusion had already been achieved, and Chinese men were long regarded as effeminate, cowardly, and submissive. In other words, Liu and his counsel knew that public sentiment overwhelmingly believed that Liu, as a loyal Chinese houseboy, could not possibly have murdered his own mistress as such an act would be completely counter to how whites understood the Chinese houseboy at this time. The editors of the *Chronicle* bought into this reasoning completely, as they noted in a preamble before Liu's testimony:

Through the following statement runs a strain of Chinese loyalty to a mistress, though she be dead. All questions regarding Mrs. Baker's private life were deftly parried that not a stain be cast by a good servant on the memory of the deceased.<sup>143</sup>

Indeed, this discourse of doubt had already started to develop almost as soon as Liu was arrested. When Liu was arrested on December 8, 1930, Baker's closest friend Graves said that she "can never believe [Liu] Fook did it. It must have been someone else"<sup>144</sup> Similarly, Mrs. Margaret Grant, estranged wife of Lincoln U. Grant, told the press that it was "absurd" to accuse Liu: "[He] had every opportunity to take both jewels and money from Mrs. Baker. He could have taken a little at a time and she would scarcely have missed it. I have lived in China and know the Chinese and they are entirely trustworthy."<sup>145</sup> In fact, even the SFPD admitted to the media early on in the course of the investigation that the murder of a white person by a Chinese was "almost unheard of" and they could only speculate on the motive.<sup>146</sup>

Annie Laurie,<sup>147</sup> the famous columnist for the Hearst Press and the *San Francisco Examiner*, would make the most lengthy and colorful expression of the sentiment that Liu Fook could not have murdered his employer:

What, an old-fashioned San Francisco houseboy strangled his employer to death? Tut, tut... We've had Chinese houseboys in our homes for generations, we San Franciscans, and we know them, if we know anybody on earth.<sup>148</sup>

Recounting San Francisco's role as the preeminent hotbed of anti-Chinese sentiment before the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 and the then recently passed Immigration Act of 1924 which in effect extended exclusion to all Asians, Laurie reminded her readers that not too long ago,

“We yelled ‘The Chinese must go’ and ‘We are ruined by Chinese cheap labor,’” and that “we sent the Chinese back to China, as many as we could, and we kept the new ones out or tried to keep them out.” Having dredged up this recent past of the anti-Chinese movement in San Francisco and the anti-Oriental slogans of the Workingman’s Party of California, Laurie suggested that with the advent of the passing of exclusionary measures, popular attitudes towards the Chinese had also changed: “You ask any old San Franciscan how he feels about [the Oriental Question] today— and if you haven’t lived here very long, you may be surprised. We of San Francisco know the Chinese.”

In other words, the Oriental Question of the Roaring Twenties was quite different from the Oriental Question of the nineteenth century; the call for exclusion was answered, and the Yellow Peril, which nativists and the unions had so feared, had become the obsequious and loyal houseboy. Demonstrating this transformation, Laurie went on to tell a glowing parable about the loyalty of the Chinese houseboy. She told the story of a servant named Sing, who had faithfully kept his master’s infant son alive during the chaos of the great San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906, instead of engaging in the looting and violence that plagued the city in the wake of the disaster.

An editorial in a competing newspaper echoed much of Laurie’s sentiment. The *Chronicle* said that this new wave of doubt “came from the profound conviction that the crime is one entirely out of tune with the character of an old Chinese servant,” and it believed that “the records will support a statement that never in all the years in which California has been used to this old type of Chinese servant has there been a single case of murder with robbery or of a crime of passion against an employer.”<sup>149</sup> It further explained that “[a] Chinese may kill a white person but in insanity or ‘to save face,’ that strange Oriental requirement for reestablishing lost dignity,” but these scenarios did not apply to Liu’s particular case. Repeating Liu’s insistence that Chinese were supposedly fearful of committing robbery on account of vengeful spirits, the editorial reasoned that if Liu had indeed killed his employer for her riches, it would have been out of character for him as “[e]very one of those jewels, every dollar of the money would have been inhabited by devils to pursue and torment [him]. He would have put just as great a distance as possible between himself and his victim and her belongings...”

Thus, what was significant about the general feeling that “we San Franciscans” knew the Chinese houseboy— his servile nature and his total faithfulness to his masters— was that this imagined familiarity with these men rendered them into beings incapable of defying their masters. If “colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and visible,” as Homi Bhabha says, Liu was emblematic of the entirely knowable, all too visible, other.<sup>150</sup> Thus, the knowledge that the general public assumed to have of the Chinese houseboy worked in Liu’s favor, despite the overwhelming amount of physical evidence that gave probable cause for his arrest.

In short, so pervasive was this assumed familiarity with and knowledge of the houseboy that the Grand Jury’s decision to overturn its own indictment was likely seen as perfectly reasonable at the time and played right into the hands of the defense.<sup>151</sup> On March 18, 1931, Liu Fook was eventually found not guilty in Superior Court after two ballots and only twenty minutes of deliberation. A couple of months later, Liu waved to the throng of well-wishers that had assembled at Pier 43 to see him off. Smiling and free, Liu was leaving for Shanghai where his wife was awaiting his arrival. “Mebbe I go home to China to die, mebbe I come back again; I dunno.”<sup>152</sup> He never returned.

## Epilogue

Part One discussed the many different twists and turns in the murder cases of Janet Smith in Vancouver, British Columbia, and Rosetta Baker in San Francisco. In both cases, a Chinese houseboy was accused of killing a white woman in an intimate space, and in both cases, both men were ultimately exonerated and the two cases remain unsolved. It was also clear that both cases revealed the fragility of the boundaries between race, gender, class, and sexuality in these two frontier and gateway cities of the Pacific. The fact that Janet Smith was a young and unmarried working woman and Rosetta Baker a matronly widow and wealthy socialite did not mean they were not subject to the same kinds of public scrutiny and social commentary. For all of the differences between Smith and Baker's class background, in the case of both women, there were rumblings of their involvement in sexually perverse activities, both were expected to behave in accordance with the gender norms of the time, and both were in regular contact with Chinese houseboys. Though quite different in age and social standing, they were also both unattached and unusually independent, being without neither children nor spouses, and thus represented the newly empowered white woman of the 1920s. Both women were also very social and gravitated towards the same kinds of parties and people, and appeared to be flirtatious and enjoyed the company of men. Their place in the nation was also never questioned, in sharp contrast to that of the men who were charged with their murders.

The accused men were also quite different from each other on many counts, despite the monolithic and culturally reductionist way whites thought about and depicted the Chinese. Most notably, they were of different generations: Wong was 25 years old at the time of Smith's death and described as smart, handsome, and somewhat competent in English, while the 63-year-old Liu was depicted as feeble, childlike, frail, inarticulate, and an opium junkie. Wong had relatively recently arrived from China and started to work as a houseboy, while Liu had come to the United States in 1920 and had worked for Baker for all ten years since his arrival. However, despite these differences, because both of these men were Chinese and since both made the Pacific Frontier their home, both men perilously traversed the anti-Oriental racism of the broader societies in which they lived and the interior world of white women and domestic labor.

Thus, though the specifics of the two cases are quite different, when read together, they demonstrate how Chinese houseboys in frontier and gateway societies like that of Vancouver and San Francisco were perilously positioned in relation to the white women they were always in close contact with, and of whose gender and labor they approximated. In the two trials, it was this close proximity that came under close scrutiny.

With the passage of Oriental exclusion laws in the 1880s and once again in the 1920s, and with the expansion of white women's political and economic rights after World War I, by the 1930s, the Oriental Question was no longer about Chinese "cheap labor" taking jobs away from white men. As the cases of Wong Foon Sing and Liu Fook show, anti-Chinese racism and patriarchal attitudes worked hand in hand to turn both trials into public discussions about the threat that Chinese servants and white women posed together to the prevailing social order. Thus, from the media coverage of the two trials emerged two distinct discursive threads: the policing of racial and sexual transgressions, and the role assumptions and doubt played in determining the guilt and innocence of the accused.

Anti-Chinese racism and patriarchy worked hand in hand during the early twentieth century in other ways, however. On November 10, 1913, the American Federation of Labor under the leadership of Samuel Gompers met for its annual convention in Seattle, Washington. At this meeting, a curious resolution called for the segregation of Chinese male and white female workers. Similarly, during the spectacle of the Janet Smith murder trial in Vancouver, a proposal colloquially

called the “Janet Smith bill” attempted to forbid white women from working with or for Chinese men in British Columbia. These efforts to legislative affective labor are the subject of Part Two.

## Part Two

### Legislating Affective Labor

In both word and deed, white women were central to the anti-Chinese movement in San Francisco. In word, stories of the victimhood of white working women provided the growing labor movement a fictionalized emotional center. [These narratives] attacked Chinese labor through the guise of protecting working-class women from exploitation, thus legitimating the efforts of the white male labor movement to unionize white male workers and prohibit Asian immigration.

— Martha Mabie Gardner, “Working on White Womanhood.”<sup>153</sup>

**E**ven before the Janet Smith and Rosetta Baker murder trials took place during the interwar years, the perils of home were central to shaping legislative proposals to segregate white women and Asian men working in intimate spaces. In 1919, an amendment to the Municipal Act was proposed by British Columbia Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) George Bell of Victoria, which made it illegal for white women to reside, lodge, or work in any Chinese-owned establishment. This ban on interracial intimacy and labor was later revisited by British Columbia lawmakers on two separate occasions— once in 1924, after the death of Janet Smith, and once again in 1937, after the death of Mary Shaw. Both of these women were white and worked in close proximity to Chinese men— Smith was a nursemaid and worked alongside Chinese servants as discussed in Part One, while Shaw worked as a waitress in a Chinatown restaurant. In the first case, Wong Foon Sing was accused and ultimately acquitted for the murder of Smith, while in the second case, a Chinese laundryman named Dick Lee apparently turned the gun on himself after shooting Shaw in a fit of jealous rage when his

romantic advances were spurned.<sup>154</sup> These two highly visible and sensational cases captivated the Vancouver public and made the intimate work that white women and Chinese men performed together, the spaces in which such work occurred, and the intimacies that such arrangements made possible, targets for government intervention and public commentary.

Thus, coinciding with the controversies surrounding the murder trial of Wong Foon Sing, MLA Mary Ellen Smith led the charge for the passage of the Women's and Girls' Protection Act in 1923 and 1924, which expanded upon the earlier 1919 legislation mentioned above. The substance of the 1924 legislation would be revisited thirteen years later in 1937, when Vancouver Mayor George C. Miller and the Vancouver Police under Chief W. W. Foster used the Act in the aftermath of the Shaw murder-suicide as part of their broader urban crusade against vice, which included "cleaning up" the intimate spaces of the city, including the restaurants, brothels, and gambling dens of Chinatown.<sup>155</sup>

Such a ban on interracial labor and intimacy was also called for in the United States in the early twentieth century, not by state lawmakers or city politicians, but by the working men of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). As far as I can tell, when the AFL passed a resolution calling for a legislative ban against the employment of white women by Chinese men at their 33rd annual convention in Seattle in 1913, there is no evidence to suggest that it was in response to specific incidents involving white women and Chinese men as was the case in British Columbia. Instead, the AFL's proposal fell at the crossroads between two of its most important political objectives at the turn of the century: the incorporation of women workers under the purview of the broader labor movement on one hand and its continued push for the strengthening of exclusionary legislation directed against Oriental labor on the other.

Taken together, Part Two argues that these two efforts to legislate affective labor were emblematic of the process by which two North American settler colonial contexts negotiated changes to the role of women and the continued threat of Oriental labor in the early twentieth century. It is to the efforts of the American Federation of Labor under Samuel Gompers to organize white working women and exclude Chinese men we now turn.

## Chapter Three:

### White Womanhood and Anti-Orientalism in Samuel Gompers' Labor Movement from 1901 to 1924

Time was when little girls no older than 12 years were found in Chinese laundries under the influence of opium. What other crimes were committed in those dark and fetid places when these little innocent victims of the Chinaman's wiles were under the influence of the drug are almost too horrid to imagine.

— American Federation of Labor, *Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion, Meat vs. Rice*

The American Federation of Labor gathered for its 33rd annual meeting in Seattle, Washington, from November 10 to 22 in 1913. Hundreds of delegates descended upon the city for the convention and the city's newspapers reported on the proceedings regularly and with much interest. E. P. Marsh, president of the Washington State Federation of Labor, welcomed the attendees to the state on the first day of the meeting. Governor Ernest Lister, as well as the Mayor of Seattle, George F. Cotterill, were also in attendance and extended warm greetings to the delegates.<sup>156</sup>

What made the Seattle conference captivating, and at times, highly contentious, was that it dealt with several important challenges to Samuel Gompers' leadership and his overall vision for the AFL and the broader labor movement going forward into the twentieth century. This chapter argues that the intimate vectors shaping the AFL's anti-Chinese politics before World War II can be seen in the day-to-day activities of the AFL during the early part of the twentieth century. As early as 1905, the minutes of the annual meetings of the AFL and the work of the Executive Council show that both Asiatic exclusion and the organization of women workers were topics that were discussed in tandem, with debates over expanding anti-Asian measures often being discussed alongside measures to establish auxiliary organizations for working women.<sup>157</sup>

By examining the day-to-day activities of the AFL, it is clear that just as the organization was pushing for stronger and more expansive legislation directed against the Chinese and other Asian groups, it was also in search for ways to include yet circumscribe the roles of white working women

in the labor movement. Both of these different yet connected debates were had as the AFL, under its longtime leader Samuel Gompers, was at a political crossroads. Radical elements within the movement sought to not only oust Gompers, but to completely redefine the American labor movement in the twentieth century. These three overarching themes are key to understanding not only the reasons for the AFL's proposal to prohibit white women and Chinese men from working together at the 1913 Seattle conference, but also sheds new light on the operations and goals of the AFL in this period as a whole.

In the *American Federationist*, Gompers reported that the Executive Council of the AFL considered 176 resolutions on more than eighty different subjects during the Seattle convention. According to Gompers:

The most important decisions were the resolutions favoring the six-hour workday and the five-day week; the action in regard to the Sherman Antitrust Act; resolutions to increase the organizing force and to broaden the plans for that work; action upon the group of resolutions indicating the attitude of organized labor toward government ownership; and a special effort to organize wage-earning women.<sup>158</sup>

Five proposals in particular were seen as especially significant or controversial at the time, and taken together, provide a road map for understanding the AFL's priorities, struggles, and activities for the first half of the twentieth century:

- 1) To investigate the extent to which labor was being displaced by mechanization and to determine the proper length of the workday;
- 2) To secure more rigid enforcement of immigration laws and to secure amendments to such laws to make them more effective at controlling and restricting immigration from Asia and Southern and Eastern Europe;
- 3) To organize along industrial lines and adopt trade unionism as the official model for the AFL, rather than the national model long favored by Gompers;
- 4) To assess the entire AFL membership one cent to be used in the organization of women wage workers, as part of a formal campaign to organize women workers in various industries; and,
- 5) To establish "a new labor party to be composed of the trades unions, the socialists and the feminists for the advancement of the interests of the workers and of humanity," similar in spirit to the Labour Party in Great Britain.<sup>159</sup>

These debates can be boiled down to three broad challenges for Samuel Gompers' labor movement during this period: the effects of U.S. expansion into the Pacific and the renewed threat of Asian migration, women's rights and changing gender roles, and conflicting visions over how labor could best protect its interests— whether by organizing nationally or by trade, or by taking a seat in the halls of power, rather than lobbying politicians of the two dominant parties.

It was in the context of these overarching struggles within the AFL that the far more modest, little known, yet no less telling proposal to support measures to make it illegal for white women and Asian men to work together, otherwise known as Resolution 126, was drafted at the AFL's 1913 conference in Seattle.<sup>160</sup>

This resolution called on the AFL "to endeavor to secure the passage of the law prohibiting the employment of white women and girls in establishments owned or controlled by Chinese and Japanese. This question is one that should be considered by state legislatures and city councils, where organizations in the Pacific and intermountain states are doing their utmost to carry out the



purposes contained in this resolution.”<sup>161</sup> When the resolution went to committee, it commended and endorsed the Executive Council in its decision to pressure organizations in the Pacific and intermountain states to “be vigorous and energetic in their efforts to secure the enactment of such legislation as will do away with the abhorrent condition of the employment of white women by Asiatics under any circumstances.”

Gompers and the Executive Council discussed the resolution after the Seattle conference was over on January 24, 1914 in Washington, D.C. at AFL headquarters, and the meeting minutes tersely stated the Council’s decision: “It was decided that same be carried into effect.”<sup>162</sup> But just what place did this peculiar proposal have within the broader scope of the AFL’s political activities during the period?

## **The Problem of Oriental Labor**

Continuing to strengthen and expand upon policies to control European and Asian migration was a key concern for the AFL at the Seattle conference. Coinciding with the AFL convention, the Western Labor Immigration Conference met in Seattle with two hundred delegates on November 14, 1913. Unsurprisingly, many of the delegates of the AFL conference also participated in this smaller anti-immigration meeting.

Mayor Cotterill and Gompers both delivered opening remarks at this smaller gathering. The keynote speech argued that workers emigrating to the United States from Europe “only retards and weakens the labor movement in their own home, and endangers our movement here, and in that way played into the hands of the master class at their home as well as here.”

The conference also had W. R. Trotter, the Canadian delegate, speak at length about immigration restriction in Canada through the efforts of the Canadian Trades and Labor Congress. Trotter emphasized the fact that the workers of the United States and Canada were “equally affected by immigration” and organized labor in both countries, through the AFL, should “send men through Europe warning the workers not to come to North America.”<sup>163</sup>

Migration from Asia continued to be a topic of interest despite the successful passage, expansion, and enforcement of anti-Oriental legislation. For instance, it was feared that the impending completion of the Panama Canal would lead to an influx of European migration to the Pacific Coast (with up to “500,000 immigrants [having] reserved passage to the Pacific coast cities by one steamship line alone”), as well as Asiatic migration to the East Coast due to the significant cost savings of sea passage versus overland travel by rail.<sup>164</sup>

E. P. Marsh, president of the Washington State Federation of Labor, expressed in an editorial the importance of immigration restriction to the American working man, the closing of the western frontier, and the transition from agriculture to industrial labor. He wrote, “[W]e have grown to imagine that ours is a country of boundless resources and that this process of assimilation can go on forever. It is time to disabuse our minds of that belief. Uncle Sam has but few cheap farms left to give... [and] the bulk of the foreign immigration arriving today... [are going into] industry and is working under inhuman conditions.”<sup>165</sup>

Delegate Paul Scharrenberg of the California State Federation of Labor further expressed that there was still a need for stronger laws against Asiatic migration despite the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act since “the wage and living standards of such labor are dangerous to, and must, if granted recognition in this country, provide destructive of American standards...” and because “the racial incompatibility as between the peoples of the Orient and the United States present a problem of race preservation which it is our imperative duty to solve in our favor.”<sup>166</sup>

William F. Kavanagh of Hudson County, NJ, representing the Central Labor Union argued in a resolution that since “Chinese restaurants and Chinese laundries give no employment to American labor” and since white-owned laundries and restaurants employed “American labor,” that the AFL and its affiliated bodies to give patronage to these establishments and boycott all Chinese laundries and restaurants.<sup>167</sup>

Charles S. Child of the Laundry Workers’ International Union similarly called on the AFL to continue to support the strengthening and expansion of anti-Oriental measures: “Asiatic competition in the various walks of life has become a more and more serious menace to our people, both socially and industrially, particularly in California and other Pacific coast States [sic], and is rapidly affecting the entire American continent” and because it is “our duty to protect and assist our men and women engaged in the great struggle for subsistence in competition against the Orientals by demanding strict exclusion...” and whereas the Anti-Japanese Laundry League of San Francisco has for years fought against the undermining “of the American standard of living by Chinese, Hindoos and Japanese,” Child called on all AFL-affiliated bodies “its sympathy and co-operation” with the League and that the convention goes on record as opposing Asiatic competition.<sup>168</sup>

In conjunction with the problem of Oriental labor and the continued need to lobby for exclusionary measures, the AFL in this period also viewed women workers as a threat to the gains made by the labor movement.

### **The Problem of the Woman Worker**

Proposals to organize working women were also discussed and debated at length during the Seattle meeting, a topic that was also of local significance. An editorial in a Seattle newspaper entitled “A Problem for Labor” discussed the Young Women’s Christian Association’s recent efforts to create a listing of all servant girls in the city. “We must get these girls into the labor movement for their own protection, for our protection and for the benefit of the future human race,” it implored. It continued:

There is a spirit of organization amongst the girls working in domestic service. Their hours are so long and so irregular and the conditions of employment so downright nauseating that it is to most of them a thing to get away from, and they go into the stores, factories and brothels so fast that there is a constant 'servant problem' to the employers.<sup>169</sup>

The problem of organizing and “protecting” working women and changing notions of what constituted woman’s work was also brought to the fore by Nixola Greeley-Smith, a popular and controversial columnist for the Scripps papers, one of which the *Seattle Star* was at the time.<sup>170</sup>

Just a few days before the conference began, she posed the provocative question: “What is the sphere of women?” In her answer to this question, Greeley-Smith vividly made an analogy between caged birds and the question of women’s work and the domestic sphere. She wrote that when “an intelligent person” sees that birds sing in cages, “he is not convinced that birds were created solely that there might be something to put inside little ‘wire houses,’” but when that same man sees that most women “are engaged in the rather stupid business of sweeping carpets and washing dishes and making beds, he is apt to decide that this little round of dull, uninspiring duties WHOLLY constitutes what is called ‘woman’s sphere,’ her sole field of usefulness...”

Greeley-Smith further dismantles the idea that *oikonomia* and the home are the natural and sole province of woman throughout her column. “To tell woman today that to cook and sweep and sew,

to bear unlimited children, and in, rearing them, keep her own spirit in a perpetual kindergarten, is as futile as it would have been for the Lilliputians to tell Gulliver, after he had gotten on his feet, that being pinned to earth by the hair was his NATURAL DESTINY!”<sup>171</sup> The question of organizing women workers and determining what sort of role they will play in the nation and the economy was as important to the working men of the AFL as it was to feminists like Greeley-Smith. However, the AFL did not have Greeley-Smith’s radical feminist agenda in mind when it began to think about organizing women workers.

Instead, it was interested in securing protective legislation for working women and in incorporating them as junior partners in the movement. This can be seen in the attitudes of the leading men and women of the AFL alike, attitudes which were informed by the idea that industrial labor in particular had a negative impact on the morality of working women. “Women have become permanent factors in the industrial life of the nation and are beginning the same struggle for economic organization rather than legislation for betterment of conditions. Unless women workers are organized they will be an obstacle to the progress of the labor movement,” Gompers wrote immediately after the Seattle conference.<sup>172</sup>

Furthermore, although Gompers supported the right for women to work, he clarified his stance by saying “We do not mean that work in the home is not real work, necessary to the well-being of the nation— but we mean that the so-called protected or rather the parasitic life of women in idleness and useless luxury is usually secured at the expense of others who work.” In other words, Gompers considered it important to organize women workers and defend their right to work not only because doing so would further the AFL’s agenda and safeguard working men from labor competition, but also because domestic work was devalued as “parasitic” to the labor of the working man.<sup>173</sup> Gompers continued:

Many have tried to devise ways to protect and uplift the women workers. Men have assumed the attitude of guardians and have passed laws for the protection of women. Wealthy, humane women have given their time and money to benefit wage-earning women... These things are all good and have a value, but permanent, true betterment of the lives of the working women can be secured only when these women achieve it by their own efforts.<sup>174</sup>

While McClintock was writing about Victorian Britain, her analysis of the problematic position of the paid domestic worker applies just as easily to Gompers’ justification for securing protective legislation for working women. She observes that paid “domestic workers thus embodied a double crisis in historic value: between men’s paid labor and women’s unpaid labor and between a feudal homestead economy and an industrial wage economy.”<sup>175</sup> As a result of these tensions, the AFL resolved to levy a one cent fee on the membership, with the funds gathered this way to be used to organize women workers.

Recalling the discussion of the historical usages of the concept of “slut” in the introduction of this dissertation, by the early twentieth century, the working woman was increasingly defined against the deviant, fallen woman and the lazy housewife. In other words, the slut —indolent caretaker and whore— expressed complementary understandings of womanhood and woman’s work in the twentieth century. The factory girl always had within her the capacity to be both, yet also the possibility to work like a man, and this troubled the men of the AFL as much as it did government vice commissions.

Fred L. Boalt of the *Seattle Star* demonstrated this logic by reporting on the rather eccentric Maud Younger of San Francisco, who was extremely wealthy and was traveling in Budapest when

she suddenly remembered that the AFL conference in Seattle was being held and made her way there immediately.

Younger said she wanted to attend the conference because she wanted “the delegates to the A. F. of L. convention to realize that they cannot find anywhere in the world a more powerful ally than the unskilled working girl.” She further added that she wanted the AFL “to help these girls organize, and to help them win their battle for a living wage and a life of decent comfort.”

Younger wistfully recalled how she was inspired to do her advocacy work by seeing the way in which women garment workers picketed in New York, and when she too was detained by police for participating in the work action, “fallen women, picked up by the police because they would not or could not pay ‘protection’ money, urged us, with tears in their eyes, to fight and never give up.” She continued, “They, too, had been workers in the factories and stores. They chose the ‘easier way...’”<sup>176</sup> This upper-class vision of protecting the rights of working women from “the easier way” was very much like the same brand of gender and racial uplift espoused by Mary Ellen Smith in the British Columbia context, which is further discussed below.

The topic of “protecting” working women from immorality was broached on another occasion on account of the contentious remarks of two women members of the Industrial Welfare Commission in Everett, Washington. E. P. Marsh, who delivered addresses at the Seattle meeting and was the president of the Washington State Federation of Labor, wrote that the controversy had to do with whether “social conditions,” by which he meant standards of moral behavior, were determined by working conditions, to which he answered in the affirmative.

To support his view, Marsh cited the report of the Chicago vice commission, which found in its study that “low wages, unsanitary and exhausting conditions of labor was the greatest contributing cause of immorality.” As a result, the commission concluded that “while a small percentage of girls had drifted into lives of shame from apparent choice, the great majority were shoved into it by economic stress.”

Marsh opined that society had failed by not addressing the “industrial cause” for this “steady drift downward.” Marsh pointed his finger squarely at the capitalists, and whether by their maliciousness or as a by-product of competition, they had neglected this connection between morality and women’s work.

Marsh’s thoughts on the tensions between the right for women to work and the question of morality summarized well the overall approach the AFL would take in lobbying for protective legislation and organizing white working women. He said that the “girl in industry should be shielded as much as possible from contaminating influences,” while ensuring that working women are not barred from earning a livable wage. He continued, “I absolutely agree [that the moral girl must be protected], but I contend that there is but one way to protect her and that is by making a wage and working standard which will permit the girl or woman to follow her natural inclination to be pure.”<sup>177</sup>

In Resolution 70, which was adopted by the Seattle convention and assessed one cent on the membership of all affiliated unions to be used by the Executive Council to organize working women, further demonstrated the ambivalence of the AFL towards incorporating these women. The resolution asserted that changes to the economy and gender norms made it necessary for “women to enter many fields of industry where they work side by side with men” but that unless they were organized, “they constitute a direct menace to the improved conditions” that working men have won through organizing. It continued:

Training and customs of centuries have made most women more highly individualistic than men in their ideals and practices. Women remained in their homes long after factory production had displaced home production. They have

been later and slower in learning the lessons that teach the necessity for united actions for the protection of the workers.

The resolution went further to criticize and disparage working women. “Since women have gone into the mills, the factories, and the shops, many have not yet learned to look upon their work as a permanent trade. Their work is casual labor while they wait for what they have been taught to regard the end in life— marriage. For this reason women workers as a rule accept conditions as they find them and make little effort to bring about improvements.”<sup>178</sup>

The resolution ends with an affirmation of the working woman’s place in the labor movement and what working men have to lose if they are not properly organized by the AFL. “More and more it is realized that women do not live apart from the political, social, and economic organization of society, but that they are responsible members and should share in its burdens and contribute to its progress... Women wage-earners must be organized or they will retard the progress of all organization.”<sup>179</sup>

Not everyone at the Seattle conference agreed with the above assessment, though it did prevail in representing the AFL’s overall attitude towards working women. Men like Andrew Furuseth of the International Seamen’s Union did not feel that it was conducive either to the AFL, nor the health of the nation, to organize and accept female members. In a contentious speech delivered at the conference, Furuseth claimed that the employment of women and children in industry caused unemployment among men, and how working outside of the home was “destructive of the individual, the family, and our race.” As such, his resolution proposed to “restore individual, social and racial health by restoring the woman to the home,” which was then referred to the committee on resolutions.<sup>180</sup>

When the resolution came to committee, it recommended amending Furuseth’s contentious resolution by striking out the offending clause “...by restoring women to the home,” and replaced it with a clause of almost its complete opposite meaning: “...by making the employment of women as congenial as possible.” This amendment, which would end up being carried at the conference, is telling of the AFL’s position on the question of women’s labor on two fronts.

First, in choosing to amend only the latter half of the clause, the AFL left intact the idea that labor was inextricably connected to “individual, social and racial health,” and so on this front, the AFL and Furuseth were in agreement that the working woman posed a moral and economic threat to the working man. Where they disagreed was how this threat should be handled: men like Furuseth believed women should be prohibited from working outside of the home altogether, while the AFL believed women should have their right to work protected and their labor organized, or else the gains made by the AFL for working men would be diminished.

When the amended resolution was presented to the delegates once more, Furuseth responded to the change bluntly:

With reference to the employment of women, I want to say that the employment of women in the store and in the factory, while it may be very congenial, is extremely undesirable. I believe the woman should be restored to the home and that a man should get enough wages to take care of a woman and some children. I believe that the family is the corner-stone of society, and that the present condition is utterly and absolutely destructive to it.<sup>181</sup>

Objecting to Furuseth’s comments, a female delegate, Melinda Scott, pointed out that a large number of working women would have no homes if they could not work, and argued that there was never a time in history that women did not work. She further protested the idea that industrial labor

made women unfit wives and mothers, and that it did the opposite and made them “broader in their views and better helpmates to their husbands.” The heavily altered resolution, much to Furuseth’s chagrin, was carried, and demonstrated the AFL’s strategic shift to incorporating working women (albeit as inferiors) within the labor movement, a move that contrasted against but was fully consistent with its continuing strategy to exclude Asian workers.

### **The Problem of Internal Challenges to Gompers**

Finally, the Seattle convention marked an important juncture in the history of the AFL because of the direct challenges made to Gompers’ leadership and conflicting visions for the future of the labor movement in the United States. One Seattle newspaper said that the convention “mark[ed] a turning point in the history of organized labor” as the rank and file were calling for local autonomy rather than national control, and “no longer desire to be led” by Gompers or his Executive Council.<sup>182</sup>

In another feature column about the conference, Fred L. Boalt of the *Seattle Star* vividly described this effort to force Gompers and the Executive Council to relinquish their executive power as an “insurgency” that led to several days of verbal sparring and impassioned debate. Most charismatic and prominent among these dissident voices was Max Hayes of Ohio, to whom Boalt gave the moniker, “Gompers’ dearest enemy.” When Boalt called him such during an interview, Hayes responded by smiling and told the reporter, “I’ve scrapped with Sam [i.e. Gompers] at every Federation convention during the past 14 years.”

Boalt recalled the Albany convention where Hayes and Gompers had one of these legendary spats. When Gompers swore he would “follow [Hayes] to the gates of hell” for his temerity, Hayes sent the Albany convention into an uproar “by reminding the president that a convention of Bible students a few weeks before had adopted a resolution abolishing hell,” a quip Gompers thought “had made him [look] ridiculous before the delegates” and never forgave him for it.

The conflict this time around was over trade or industrial unionism over the national movement that Gompers had devoted his life to building. J. G. Brown of Seattle, president of the International Shingleweavers, Millworkers and Woodsmen, is quoted as saying that Gompers was opposed to trade unionism “because they would upset his ‘machine’ and bring the rule of the Gompers’ oligarchy to an abrupt end.”<sup>183</sup>

Similarly, the other major proposal that directly challenged Gompers’ agenda for the AFL was a radical proposal to turn the AFL into a political party. This effort was championed by George L. Berry, the president of the International Pressmen’s Union, who argued in favor of the proposal after having met with the British Labour Congress and having seen the gains made by the Labour Party in Great Britain. Gompers was staunchly opposed, and blankly said that only “the socialists are for political activity.”<sup>184</sup>

### **Overlapping Perils, Intersecting Fault Lines**

To further account for what took shape in Seattle in 1913 and to better evaluate its significance, it is important to understand the American Federation of Labor’s views and activities in relation to women workers and the Chinese question in the decades leading up to 1913. Even after the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the AFL under the leadership of Samuel Gompers was vociferous in its opposition to Chinese and other Asian migration all throughout the twentieth century, and remained vigilant in looking for ways to maintain and expand the scope and severity of existing anti-Asian measures. With the annexation of the Republic of Hawaii with the Newlands

Resolution in 1898 and the Treaty of Paris in the same year which transferred the Philippines and other Spanish colonies to the United States, Gompers and the AFL were concerned over the state of labor in these colonial contexts and the possibility of an influx of Chinese and other Asian groups from the colonial periphery to the U.S. mainland.

The Philippines in particular was viewed as a potential threat to the gains the AFL had made in securing exclusionary legislation, explaining in a resolution that was forwarded to the Senate that the “large Chinese population of the pure and mixed blood and their proximity to China serves, and could, to a greater degree, as a reservoir of Chinese laborers and a bridge over which Chinese could and would come to the mainland territory of the United States” unless they were stopped by effective legislation.<sup>185</sup>

Similarly, Gompers provided an extensive report in 1922 on a bill being supported by the Hawaiian planters to permit the entry of 50,000 Chinese laborers to the Islands on five-year contracts to address a labor shortage, which would effectively contravene the Chinese Exclusion Act. In his report, Gompers provided an impassioned overview of the history of the AFL’s stance against Chinese and Oriental migration, and the planters’ fears of Japanese militancy on the Islands. Gompers apparently requested a meeting with Hawaii’s Secretary of Labor to discuss this matter further, and found that the commission had “not a labor man on it,” by which he meant that he felt the commission was dominated by planter interests. He told the Executive Council of the AFL that much to his chagrin, the labor commission planned to import 50,000 Chinese laborers “for the Americanization of the Island and the way they wanted to Americanize the Island was to bring Chinese there” and that additionally since there was “no law or power by which the Japanese could be thrown into the ocean,” that importing the Chinese would best offset their militancy and influence.

Gompers called this scheme to simultaneously reduce Japanese influence and Americanize Hawaii by importing Chinese “a conundrum,” but the bill was passed. Gompers appeared before a committee of the Hawaiian state legislature, where he testified that the importation of Chinese plantation labor had made them feel they “had come to something like a concept of their rights and freedom and manifested their desire for something more” by which time the Japanese were then brought in, and were likewise demanding better wages, leading Gompers to conclude that Asiatic labor would fulfill neither the planters’ long-term interests of reducing the militancy of workers, nor the colonization of Hawaii and its incorporation into the American nation.<sup>186</sup>

Similarly, there were fears that Chinese were entering the United States via the Canadian border, again supposedly through the exploitation of gaps in the exclusion laws. The Commissioner General of Immigration, Terrance C. Powderly, appeared before the Executive Council to discuss the Chinese Exclusion Act on February 19, 1901, and said that the Act was “very easily evaded” and that the Canadian Pacific Company was “guilty of the introduction of so many Chinese into this country” and wanted to amend it so that Chinese must land at seaports rather than allowing them entry over land by rail.<sup>187</sup>

Gompers neatly summarized the general attitude of the AFL all throughout the twentieth century towards Asian migration in a letter addressed to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on April 13, 1904, where he said that the protestations of the Chinese Government at exclusionary measures were invalid and should be ignored as “at this late day, it is entirely superfluous to present either arguments or reasons for Chinese Exclusion, as this has been determined to be essential to the well-being of our people and also the settled policy of our Government.”<sup>188</sup> By 1912, the AFL’s anti-Chinese stance would be expanded to include all Asians, and it was declared “that every effort be put forth to prevent any modification of the Chinese exclusion law and to secure the extension of the Chinese exclusion law to apply to all other Asiatics.”<sup>189</sup> This goal, of course, would be accomplished by 1924.

It was in this state of heightened vigilance and American expansion in the Pacific that the AFL would also begin to turn to the question of organizing women workers, and the threat the “coolie” posed to the American household and white womanhood. This shift is first documented in perhaps the most well-known anti-Chinese tract in American history, a pamphlet entitled, *Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion, Meat vs. Rice, American Manhood Against Asiatic Coolieism, Which Shall Survive?*

### **American Manhood and the American Federation of Labor**

Originally published in 1901 on the occasion of the AFL’s campaign to renew the Chinese Exclusion Act, *Meat vs. Rice* was later expanded and reprinted in 1908, with appendices added by the Asiatic Exclusion League. Many historians have tended to focus on the infamous “Meat vs. Rice” argument in the pamphlet, i.e. that Chinese workers supposedly had lower standards of living and so white workers could not hope to compete with them. However, I am more interested in examining how these working men understood both the question of organizing women workers and the Chinese problem as a question of race, gender, and intimacy at the dawn of the twentieth century. With this purpose in mind, I argue that the oppositional pairing of “American Manhood” and “Asiatic Coolieism” in the subtitle of the pamphlet is emblematic of the intersecting racial, gender, and class logics of the AFL’s anti-Chinese politics, as well as its attitudes towards white working women, intimacy, and the domestic sphere. David Roediger has shown that the rhetoric used and identity asserted by the working men of the American labor movement hinged upon the valorization of the free white working man, which implicitly diminished the dignity and merit of the work of white women and people of color, both of whom typically performed “unfree,” un(der)paid, and affective forms of labor.<sup>190</sup>

*Meat vs. Rice* presented itself as a completely objective and empirical treatise on the threat of the Chinese coolie to the free white working man as described by Roediger. It is filled with the early work of urban sociology, government briefs, and other sources that attempted to scientifically prove both the inferiority and threat of the Chinese worker. The authors of the pamphlet say early on that they were “not inspired by a scintilla of prejudice of any kind, but with the best interests of our country and people uppermost in our mind.”<sup>191</sup> Despite its rhetoric of neutrality and scientific objectivity, what is fascinating about this treatise is just how heavily it grapples with the meanings of the intimate from the perspective of the American labor movement. The pamphlet itself is very transparent about centering on matters of intimacy and affective labor and the Chinese Question:

Beginning with the most menial avocations [the Chinese] gradually invaded one industry after another until they not merely took the places of our girls as domestics and cooks, the laundry room from the poorer of our white women, but the places of the men and boys... In the ladies’ furnishing line they have absolute control, displacing hundreds of our girls, who would otherwise find profitable employment. Whatever business or trade they enter is doomed for the white laborer, as competition is simply impossible.<sup>192</sup>

Thus, the AFL was faced with a most abhorrent form of labor competition not only in the realm of the affective labor that was typically the purview of white women, but increasingly in the factories where white men and boys made their living. The scale of this racialized and gendered threat to white working men and women was one of biological and global proportions with “other and higher reasons” that went beyond issues of labor, but ultimately had to do with the survival of white settler colonialism in North America.



Using the language of social Darwinism that was commonplace at the time, the treatise quoted a lengthy document that was drafted by the AFL in Sacramento in March 10, 1886, which was then distributed to the President and Congress. The document argued that the Chinese coolie was a threat to all Americans, even in places where there were little to no Chinese like the East Coast, as “the dominance, if not the existence, of the European race in this part of the world is in jeopardy. Now and while this territory is still practically unoccupied and within the lifetime of the present generation the type of human species that is to occupy this side of the American continent is to be determined for all time.”<sup>193</sup> This firmly situated the Chinese worker as being antithetical to the project that Amy Kaplan has usefully termed Manifest Domesticity, where the process of settling the imagined *terra nullius* of this continent is inextricably intertwined with the spread and defense of white middle-class notions of domesticity. Kaplan points out that in the mid-nineteenth century, as the borders of the nation were in violent flux through the process of Indian removal, the Mexican-American War, and the annexation of Spain’s former territories including Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines, new debates “about the conceptual border between the domestic and the foreign” were being had in the courts and through domestic manuals written by women like Catherine Beecher and her sister Harriet Beecher Stowe.

This connection between the articulation of a white middle-class notion of domesticity and the emergence of an American empire had the dual function of “[expanding] female influence beyond the home and the nation, and simultaneously to contract woman’s sphere to that of policing domestic boundaries against the threat of foreignness.”<sup>194</sup> *Meat vs. Rice* and the AFL’s anti-Chinese politics followed this dual movement of Manifest Domesticity as Chinese labor competition was posed as a crisis in affective labor and a threat to the American household. This is further seen when the tract describes how the Chinese houseboy in particular disrupted both home life and the domestic sphere, and in turn the relations between white women and their employers in intimate spaces like the home:

The white domestic servant was expected to live in the room originally built for John [Chinaman], generally situated in the cellar and void of all comforts; frequently unpainted or unpapered [sic], containing a bedstead and a chair; anything was good enough for John [Chinaman], and the white girl had to be satisfied as well. Is it any wonder that self-respecting girls refused to take service under those conditions? ... Absolute servility was expected from those who took the place of the Chinaman, and it will take years to obliterate these traces of inferiority and re-establish the proper relations of employer and employee.<sup>195</sup>

These themes of white settler colonialism, Manifest Domesticity, and the threat of Chinese labor competition come into sharper relief when the treatise quotes the *Report of the Special Committee of the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco* from 1885. The disruptive presence of the Chinese houseboy is shown to not only be immutable and determined by his inferior race, but also in the insidious way he works in the rarefied intimate spaces of white homes as the model domestic while reverting to the deviant domesticity in his state of nature after his work was done. “It is from such pest-holes as these that the Chinese cooks and servants who are employed in our houses come.” It continued:

Cleanly though they may be in appearance while acting in the capacity of domestic servants, they are nevertheless born and reared in these habits of life. The facility with which they put on habits of decency when they become cooks and servants

simply adds other testimony to their ability to adapt themselves to circumstances when it is in their interest to do so. But the instinct of the race remains unchanged; and when the Chinese servant leaves employment in an American household he joyfully hastens back to his slum and his barrow, to the grateful luxury of his normal surroundings, vice, filth, and an atmosphere of horror.<sup>196</sup>

This discourse of understanding the Chinese servant as a domestic and foreign menace is further expanded upon in a section of the pamphlet entitled “Do the Chinese Have Morals?” The section clearly demonstrates that the AFL directly linked the supposed immorality and threat of Chinese labor competition to their deviant family structure, sexuality, and gender roles— what Nayan Shah has termed the “queer domesticity” of Chinese working men.<sup>197</sup> “Wherever there are families belonging to the better class of the Chinese, the women are guarded and secluded in the most careful manner. Wherever the sex has been found in the pursuance of this investigation under other [namely working class] conditions, ... the rule seems to be that they are here in a state of concubinage merely to minister to the animal passions of the other sex, with such perpetuation of the race as may be a resultant consequence, or else to follow the admitted calling of the prostitute...”<sup>198</sup> According to the AFL, the working-class Chinese household was supposedly somewhere in-between the normative white middle-class family with defined parental and gender roles, and a house of ill-fame with children and prostitute-mothers indiscriminately living together. The authors continue, “No well-defined family relations have been discovered other than as shown, while the next classification seems to be a middle stratum between family life and prostitution, partaking in some measure of each... The most revolting feature of all, however, is found in the fact that there are so large a number of children growing up as the associates, and perhaps protégés, of the professional prostitutes.”

### **Incorporating Women Workers, Excluding Asian Colonial Subjects**

Just as the AFL was arguing that the sexually deviant and racially inferior coolie threatened American manhood, white racial purity, and the gains made by the labor movement, it was also beginning to become interested in organizing and incorporating white women workers. Much like Chinese labor, the labor of white working women was viewed as a threat to the racial and moral health of the nation, as well as a threat to the working man. But unlike Chinese labor, the AFL sought to bring working women into its fold, and in doing so, simultaneously included and circumscribed the roles white working women could play in the labor movement.

In March 19, 1906, Mary McDowell of the Woman’s National Trade Union League appeared before the Executive Council and spoke in favor of a bill to investigate the working conditions of women in the nation. Upon hearing McDowell, the Council instructed her to visit with members of Congress to find support for the bill and to report back to the committee. McDowell returned before the Council a few days later, and argued that the rapid increase in the gainful employment of women had “given rise to many serious social questions, which are of national importance because they threaten the vigor of coming generations.” She also told the leading men of the AFL that census data suggested that women working in the manufacturing sector was growing rapidly, but that it was “beyond the province of the census to show what the sanitary conditions of their employment are, their hours of labor, what the effect of this work is upon the morals of young girls, upon the health of women, upon their homes, upon their children, upon the wage-earning power of their husbands, upon family desertion, upon the birth rate and marriage rate, upon the industrial displacement of men by women.” In other words, the entry of women into the factories raised

questions having to do with morality and deviant behavior, the structure and function of the household, the erosion of the white working man's masculinity, and white women's role as the breeders and caretakers of the nation.

McDowell went on to argue that further qualitative information was needed for "sane legislation" on women's work, and argued for protective legislation as such measures "[have] already been undertaken in many states on the ground[s] that [women's] presence in certain employments, causes immorality or injuriously effect[s] the health of women and imperils the vigor of the next generation, that excessive hours of work, long standing, night work and the employment of married women, or the 'speeding up' and nervous strain involved in working with heavy machinery, may unfit women for the burden of motherhood." Finally, she declared that "Such work is moreover of national importance, for the future race concerns the nation more than any individual state."<sup>199</sup>

However, the AFL's push to incorporate white women into the labor movement was a process that was highly ambivalent and ultimately worked to broaden the scope and political power of the men in the organization at large, and not to dismantle the patriarchal logics that underpinned the labor movement, or even to empower white women. Thus, the double movement of Manifest Domesticity described by Kaplan and others like her— that of empowering white women to become active participants in the task of settling America and ensuring its white racial purity, while at the same time circumscribing their role in the nation as subordinate, affective workers— is made readily apparent through this ambivalence. Though supportive of "universal" suffrage and legislation like minimum wage laws and an eight-hour work day for women, the leading men of the AFL were consistently reticent to cede much or any of their authority to women within the labor movement itself, much less accept them as equal members.

Thus, at the Philadelphia meetings between January 11-16, 1915, the AFL resolved "to work unceasingly for the enactment of laws limiting the working hours of women and children to eight hours per day, and not more than forty-eight hours per week" and "render all assistance possible to organize and aid in the organization of women's union label leagues," while at the same time firmly established male oversight over the working women of the Women's Trade Union League by deciding to continue providing financial support under the condition "that it will be required that organizers to whom the money would be applied should have [Gompers'] endorsement and reports of their work should be made at least monthly to him."

]During this same series of meetings, the AFL also carried into effect the resolution of E. P. Marsh of Everett of the Washington Trades Council, where a rigid enforcement of existing immigration laws, the extension of the Chinese Exclusion Act to all Orientals, and a literacy test "so that immigrants may be required to be able to read and write the language of the country from whence they come, or in some language or tongue," were demanded, and to "urge upon Congress the prompt appropriation of funds for construction of proper immigrant stations and detention sheds on the Pacific Coast..."<sup>200</sup>

Similarly, on October 26, 1917, the Executive Council responded to a resolution adopted by the National Women's Trade Union League (NWTUL), which urged national and international unions to elect women as delegates to the state federations and the annual conventions of the AFL. Gompers and the men of the Council decided "this is not within our province but is a matter to be determined by the national and international organizations themselves."<sup>201</sup>

In other words, the AFL was interested in organizing and defending the rights of women workers, but would not demand its member organizations to put working women in positions of power and relevance. Ethel Smith and others from the NWTUL appeared before and petitioned the Council again, and delivered an extensive statement citing cases of unions excluding women members, and urged the AFL to correct this discrimination. Smith pointed to the "long established policy" of the AFL which "recognizes the equal rights of all mankind, without regard to sex, creed

or color, and the efforts the Federation puts forth to promote the organization of women” demonstrated the need for the Council’s intervention on the matter by providing charters to working women who are refused membership in the AFL-affiliated unions. She continued:

We believe in the principle of trade autonomy, and fully realize that the AFL should not attempt to exercise authority over any of its affiliated bodies...We do believe, however, that there should be a place in the labor movement for every worker, man or woman, who is willing to live up to trade union obligations.

Not done with these appeals to the AFL’s characterization of itself as an inclusive labor movement, Smith used a racial analogy to underscore the hypocrisy of permitting black working men to become members while white women were excluded:

What we are asking, moreover, is analagous [sic] to what has already been enunciated by the [Federation] with reference to colored men. In the economic world colored working men and all [(white)] working women have been similarly handicapped by prejudice and exploitation, to their own disadvantage and the disadvantage of white men, just as they have been politically handicapped and discriminated against -- but equal rights have come more rapidly for colored men than for [(white)] women, both in the political field and in the AFL. We do not believe the AFL should discriminate against either group.

This analogy both served to ingratiate the white men of the Executive Council for their liberalism, while at the same time makes visible the glaring absence of women of color and Asian male workers in the labor movement.

If the NWTUL’s presentation in favor of demanding affiliated unions to be inclusive to white working women was painstakingly detailed in making its arguments, Gompers’ and the Executive Council’s response was very brief and terse in comparison. The Council affirmed its earlier ruling, and the meeting minutes read, “In the course of the discussion [the women’s] attention was directed to the fact that the American Federation of Labor or its Executive Council had no authority to interfere with the authority of the international organizations to determine eligibility and qualifications for membership in their organizations,” and ended the discussion at that.<sup>202</sup>

Finally, for the better part of the year, Gompers, the Executive Council, and several leaders from various affiliated organizations formed a committee to discuss the AFL’s response to two major controversies raised by the AFL’s Portland convention in 1923: the subject of organizing working women, and ensuring the Philippines do not become a kind of bridge for Oriental workers to come to the U.S. mainland or become a source for competition with domestic white labor.

On January 23, 1924, Gompers sent out a letter to all AFL-affiliated national and international organizations “concerned with the problem [of organizing women]” and asked for delegates to be sent to a committee meeting to be held a month later at the AFL headquarters in Washington, D.C. The conference was convened on February 14, 1924 with several leaders from various member organizations appearing before the Council to further discuss one or both of the matters having to do with women workers and the labor in the Philippines.

The committee discussing working women included Anna Neary, the woman organizer for the AFL, Mary Anderson, Director of the Women’s Bureau of the Department of Labor, and (once again) Ethel M. Smith of the National Women’s Trade Union League, as well as many more prominent men from the leadership ranks of the Federation.<sup>203</sup>

Gompers addressed the group, and said he had called them there “for the consideration and effort to find some form by which a campaign, not sporadically but a continuous permanent institution, for the organization of women wage earners in the unions.” He claimed that the AFL “has from its beginning declared and emphasize the principle for the thorough organization of all wage earners regardless of sex, color, nationality, creed or politics,” and has constantly pressured for equal pay for equal work. A table was furnished to the committee, and showed that there were 139,765 female members in affiliated national and international unions by 1924.

Gompers then spoke about how equivalent labor organizations in Britain and Germany had established a department for women, and lauded the National Women’s Trade Union League for its efforts, but said it had fallen short since “it has been more academic than practical in the effort organize the women wage workers.” In other words, with the failure of earlier attempts by women within the AFL to persuade Gompers and the Executive Council to become more proactive in creating spaces for women like themselves within the movement, by 1924 Gompers and the AFL recognized the need to organize women workers and address the matter in an official capacity.

Mary Anderson spoke to the group, supplied figures and charts which showed changes in the employment of women according to the 1910 and 1920 census, hours worked, and their wages. The charts showed that in states where a minimum wage commission was not established, the average wage was considerably below the minimum wage established in states where such laws existed. They also showed that states that worked longer also had the lowest wages.

The head representative of the Cigarmakers’ union (only identified in the records as “Perkins”) submitted a report to the Council on behalf of the committee assembled, and declared “not only for [the] protection [of women] but for the protection of men in the industries there should be organization of all within the industry... We recommend that [Gompers] call a conference of officials [to discuss] a more thorough organizing campaign be planned and inaugurated.”

After presenting his recommendations for a campaign to organize women, Perkins also gave a report on the conditions of labor in the Philippines in regards to a resolution that was passed at the 1923 annual meeting in Portland, which called for the AFL to investigate the conditions of labor in the territory. The report discussed how after the annexation of the Philippines, tax and import laws were adopted which permitted goods produced on the Islands to be imported to the U.S. duty free, and the AFL found that the treatment of Philippine imports as domestic commercial activity was highly objectionable and unfair to white workers on the mainland.

The investigation also found “that the population of the Philippine Islands, and especially those engaged in manufacturing industries, is composed of Chinese coolies, Japanese, natives and several other races of oriental [sic] extraction” and that they work in miserable conditions for poor wages. The report continued:

We find that oriental [sic] labor in the Philippine Islands, when productive capacity is considered, is the cheapest labor in the whole world. The manufactured products that are coming into direct competition with the wage earners upon the mainland of the United States proper, have an injurious effect. The steady demands to lower the wage rate here and wherever and whenever..., the standard of living and the mental, moral and physical conditions of American wage earners is correspondingly lowered.

As a result, the committee recommended “regardless of outward circumstances, the Philippine Islands, in so far as manufactured products are concerned, are in precisely the same position as that which obtains in any foreign country.” Thus, coinciding with the logic of the 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act that would grant the Philippines independence a little more than a decade later, the committee further added that for “the interests, welfare and justice of the Philippine Islands and the

people thereof, and our own betterment here on the mainland” have reached a unanimous conclusion that the Philippines are “ready for independence and self government.” In other words, the blurring of the lines between domestic and foreign through the annexation of the Philippines was seen as a threat to white workers, not only because the Islands contained and depended upon degraded and cheap Asiatic labor, but also because the acquisition of the Philippines created the possibility for domestic manufacturers to produce goods using an Asiatic workforce, thereby circumventing existing anti-Asian legislation. In short, this combined with the lack of import duties gave goods produced in the Philippines by Asian workers a competitive advantage over mainland-produced goods by white workers. A day later, the committee reconvened, and the report on women in industry was discussed and recommendations adopted. Similarly, the report on labor in the Philippines was also discussed and carried into effect. The Council added that it was implausible to provide funds to send an investigator to the Islands to conduct a study firsthand, but otherwise agreed with the report.<sup>204</sup>

The issue of creating a campaign to organize women would be revisited a few more times, however. Seeing as the committee’s recommendations for organizing women workers did not have any specific directions for Gompers, he called another, smaller meeting in New York on March 9, 1924 in order to draft a proposal. This smaller working group consisted of Sara Conboy, Morris Sigman (Ladies’ Garment Workers), Perkins (Cigarmakers), and would later be joined by several women from the Women’s Trade Union League. Working with this smaller committee, Gompers created a draft for a plan of action for the AFL’s campaign to organize women.<sup>205</sup>

Gompers noted that while “studying the elements involved in the problem of a campaign by the Federation to organize women workers, particularly to ascertain where some way could not be found to eliminate trouble that had grown out of the separate activities of the Women’s Trade Union League.” Gompers explained that originally he had “scrupulously refrained from asking any representative of [the WTUL] to participate in the conference,” though “dependable sources” told him inviting them would be beneficial. He then asked Elizabeth Christman, Secretary of the WTUL to join him to talk in Chicago, as well as several other officers of the League, many of them the same women who took part in the initial conference that was held in February. Gompers noted he had extended this invitation to the WTUL to foster joint cooperation, but acknowledged if the objectives of the proposed campaign were fulfilled, “there would no longer be any field for the WTUL.”

It seems Gompers’ fears were unfounded as the WTUL’s Executive Council discussed the matter at their meeting on April 21, and the next day, presented an official statement to Gompers which welcomed the AFL’s plan to organize women, and promised the WTUL’s support and cooperation.<sup>206</sup> On May 21, another conference was called, but this time included the delegates from the WTUL and a few others to discuss the proposal drafted by the planning committee a few months earlier in March. Here, the conference endorsed the plan and appointed a committee to investigate what funds would be needed to implement it. This committee estimated a minimum cost of \$12,240 for the campaign, and submitted a budget for consideration.<sup>207</sup>

Gompers then sent out copies of the plan adopted and the proposed budget to the organizations represented at the conference, as well as requested for nominations for members of the organizing committee that will spearhead the campaign. The next meeting was to be in late June or early July, but Gompers’ health was beginning to fail at this time and he was hospitalized in May upon his physician’s orders. After recovering several months later, on August 9, the discussion of women in industry resumed and the committee reconvened to discuss the implementation of the recommendations throughout the member organizations of the AFL. Gompers reported that most of the unions did not agree with the committee’s recommendations. He added that even if the unions would agree to have a campaign to organize women workers, “now is not the opportune time

for the expenditure of any moneys for this purpose” and that the issue will be tabled until a more opportune time arises.

Gompers said the effort to organize this campaign was further stymied by the fact that qualified candidates to lead the campaign were already in leadership positions within the AFL, creating a kind of chicken-or-the-egg dilemma as “There are others who I believe have the ability and the qualifications but it is only after an opportunity would be afforded them to function in such a position that [these] could be definitely proven [as suitable].”<sup>208</sup>

## Conclusion

I have thus far discussed how the AFL’s anti-Chinese politics went far beyond matters of cheap labor, and so rendered the Chinese worker as a threat to domesticity and the project of settling the American nation. I also developed this argument further by showing how this move also worked in tandem with the political need to simultaneously broaden and constrain the role of white women in the labor movement in the 1920s. When examining the day-to-day activities of the AFL, its Executive Council, and its president Samuel Gompers during this period, two recurring themes were observed: i) the ambivalent effort to lobby on behalf of women’s rights and the organization of women workers as lesser partners in the labor movement, and ii) the continuation of efforts to uphold and expand upon anti-Asian measures, with both efforts occurring in a context where the borders of the United States were expanding. Such ideas were connected to co-emergent struggles over the membership of white women in a labor movement that was overwhelmingly and self-consciously defined by white working men.

In providing the context for the AFL’s political agenda and its internal discussions of excluding Asiatic labor and incorporating white female labor, it is clear that the anti-Chinese politics of the AFL in the twentieth century went beyond issues of being unable to compete with Chinese “cheap labor.” On the contrary, their writings and activities suggest that the Chinese worker’s deleterious effects on affective labor and domesticity loomed large in shaping the AFL’s anti-Chinese politics. It was also demonstrated that this emphasis on the intimate dimensions of the Chinese question also went hand in hand with the AFL’s keen (but ambivalent) interest in organizing white working women at this moment in the AFL’s history. Accordingly, the AFL’s attitude towards the Chinese and its efforts to protect white working women served to both broaden and constrain the role of white working women in the labor movement and the nation. We will now turn to providing the context for how these ways of understanding the Chinese problem and women’s work was also prevalent in British Columbia during the same period.

## Chapter Four:

### The Settler Feminism of Mary Ellen Smith and the Women's and Girls' Protection Act of 1924

[Women today] will see that wages are such that she can live comfortably; that the conditions under which she works will not undermine her health, nor injure the health of the nation, because she is responsible for the future of the race from these and many other standpoints.

—Hon. Mary Ellen Smith, MLA<sup>209</sup>

The effort to legislate the affective labor of —and the intimate relations between— white women and Chinese men began in British Columbia in 1919 with George Bell, a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from Victoria, who introduced an amendment to the Municipal Act that made it illegal for white women and girls from lodging or working with or for the Chinese in intimate settings such as laundries, restaurants, and other businesses owned by Chinese men. This 1919 legislation read as follows:

13. (1.) No person shall in any municipality employ in any capacity any white woman or girl or permit such to reside or lodge in or work in or, save as a bona-fide [sic] customer..., to frequent any restaurant, laundry, or place of business or amusement owned, kept or managed by any Chinese person.

(2.) Any employer guilty of any contravention or violation of this section shall, upon summary conviction, be liable to a penalty not exceeding one hundred dollars, and, in default of payment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two months.<sup>210</sup>

This legislation, however, would not apply to jurisdictions with special charters, such as that of Victoria and Vancouver, by far the two most populous urban centers in British Columbia by this time. Coincidentally, Mary Ellen Smith, who would a scant five years later champion a similar ban in the wake of the Janet Smith case, was also present the day Bell's amendment was discussed in the Legislature, but did not publicly comment on the measure at the time.<sup>211</sup>



However, this would change starting in 1923, when Smith drafted and successfully passed legislation that superseded the 1919 law. Her measure was a separate, new piece of legislation called the Women's and Girls' Protection Act on it was passed on December 20th, 1923. The act prohibited white and Native women and girls from frequenting or working in restaurants, laundries, or any place of business or amusement owned by any Chinese person in all jurisdictions of the province.<sup>212</sup> Here, too, the fine for violating the law was set at a maximum of one hundred dollars. However, the act narrowed the scope of the 1919 law by empowering police authorities to determine whether the law would apply "in the best interest of the morals of such women and girls, that they should not be employed, or reside, or lodge, or work therein, or frequent the same," perhaps with the view to increase its enforceability by the police.<sup>213</sup>

A year later, Smith attempted to amend and strengthen her own measure in the wake of the controversy surrounding the mysterious death of nursemaid Janet Smith and the subsequent trial for Wong Foon Sing, a case that was discussed in Chapter One. This amendment expanded the 1923 legislation to explicitly include private homes and paid domestic work under the legal purview of the Women's and Girls' Protection Act, and not just Chinese-owned businesses:

No person shall employ or keep in the capacity of housemaid or servant any white woman or girl in or about the same dwelling-house in which any male Chinese or Japanese person is employed or kept in the capacity of servant.<sup>214</sup>

Smith explained her actions by emphasizing that "[t]he new law which I am sponsoring this year, in effect, broadens out the measure of last year" by banning the use of Chinese servants in private homes that have white female help.<sup>215</sup> Thus, by 1924, Smith would take up the mantle of banning Chinese servants from working in the same households as white women as fingers began to be pointed at Wong Foon Sing, the Chinese houseboy who would be accused of murdering Janet Smith.

British Columbia was not alone in attempting to pass such statutes, nor was a highly polarizing murder necessary to provoke such legislation, and indeed, the issue of legislating the affective labor of Chinese men and white women became a national issue by 1928. *Chatelaine*, the first Canadian women's magazine to achieve widespread circulation, drew national attention to the controversy through a lengthy feature article written by Anne Elizabeth Wilson, one of the most influential editors in the early years of the publication. The article contained a vivid illustration that spanned across the top of a two-page spread, and it depicted throngs of white women walking out of a building labeled "Chinese business" into another building labeled "undesirable white employer," visually indicating the critical and nuanced stance the publication would take against such measures.

Ontario, which had far fewer Chinese than British Columbia, "passed" a similar law to Bell's 1919 legislation as early as 1914. I put pass in quotation marks because the legislation would be erroneously passed into effect on account of a legal technicality many years after its drafting under legally dubious circumstances. This 1914 Ontario law provided "that no Chinese person shall employ in any capacity or have under his direction or control any female white person in any factory, restaurant or laundry."<sup>216</sup> However, a subsection of the legislation stipulated that the law would only come into effect on a date set by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, which according to *Chatelaine*, "announced the belief of the legislature that there was no necessity of bringing the law into effect unless in the opinion of the government, conditions should require it."<sup>217</sup> But strangely, in 1927, this law was added to the Revised Statutes of Ontario without this subsection due to a clerical error, putting the statute into effect without consultation more than a decade after its initial proposal.

Wilson characterized the controversy surrounding the error as a provincial issue, but added that the questions raised by the law "concerns the country; a concern on which women may well keep

their attention focused with an eye to underlying conditions and future legislation of a national character.” In order to demonstrate the salience of the broader racial, gender, and class concerns raised by the law, Wilson refers to a report made by the National Council of Women’s Committee on Trades and Professions for Women and quotes it at length throughout the article. The report cited the case of Smith’s legislation in British Columbia, and though the measure was eventually thrown out for being *ultra vires*, “[i]n consulting some of the officials who came in touch with the employers and employees we find that they are not willing to say that the employment of white girls by Orientals is harmful either through the conduct of their employer or by patrons.”

In the case of Ontario, the report found that “no white girls are employed in laundries” and that there was “no evidence of girls receiving harmful treatment from employers.” The report went on to say that investigations revealed “that girls so employed are more likely to meet with wrongful treatment from the white patrons of restaurants kept by Orientals. Employees are generally well paid.”

Similarly, in Ottawa it was found that “girls are employed to a considerable extent in restaurants under Oriental management” and that the employment bureau discourages girls “from entering upon this life,” but the Chinese pay the women no differently than white employers, giving no reason for these women to seek work elsewhere.

Saskatchewan also legislated against the affective labor of Chinese men and white women before the issue was taken up in British Columbia. In Saskatchewan, no person could employ a woman or girl in any capacity requiring her to lodge, reside, or work in Chinese establishments without first obtaining a special license from the municipality. The license fee could not exceed one dollar and must be renewed annually. When an earlier version of this measure was passed in 1912, its constitutionality was challenged in the *Rex vs. Quong Wing* case, where the Supreme Court of Saskatchewan upheld the law.<sup>218</sup> The decision was rendered with the opinion that such measures to bar Chinese men and white women from working together in intimate spaces were justified and constitutional because the matter was of domestic scope and thus did not impinge on the jurisdiction of the Dominion government to regulate foreign trade or migration. The decision stated that these laws were not “for the purpose of discriminating against an Oriental race, but inasmuch as Orientals have no Oriental women in this country and as naturally an employee is more or less under the control of her or his employer, this Act protects the white girls and is passed for their protection only.”<sup>219</sup>

Wilson herself was not so fully convinced, and in doing so, represented a distinctly female (perhaps even feminist) perspective on the issue. Accordingly, she said there was “absolutely no evidence that any Chinese employer has behaved improperly toward any white woman in his employ,” though white women so employed “have sometimes suffered disrespect from white customers” which brought up the question of whether Chinese employers could “surround female employees with securit[y] [and] good influences.” She instead pointed her finger at the behavior of white men and added, “It is believed... that no white man intent on mischief would respect the authority of a Chinaman.”<sup>220</sup>

Rev. W. D. Noyes, the pastor of the Eastern Canada Chinese Mission in Toronto, was also doubtful about the need for such laws, and is quoted at length in the article. Noyes lived in China for 27 years, spoke Cantonese fluently and had learned the language before English, and was a missionary in China for seventeen years. Because of his closeness to the Chinese community and his fluency in the language, “he feels to a certain extent competent to speak on the statutes,” and wrote on behalf of the Chinese proprietors who he felt were being unfairly targeted by such legislation. In a statement provided to *Chatelaine*, he reasoned:

A Chinese café man told me that Chinese are more than careful to prevent scandal in their places of business because they know well that every move of theirs is watched by their opponents. Does this not indicate that such places are safer to work in than many others?<sup>221</sup>

He further added that though the “Chinese are of a different race, civilization, culture, it does not make them more criminally inclined,” and claimed their respect for law and order and a Confucian cultural inheritance made such laws unnecessary. Wilson was not quite as glowing in her estimation of the Chinese, but said, “one must admit that [the Chinese employer] is perforce on good behavior.”<sup>222</sup>

Finally, Noyes said that the Chinese resented these laws because they felt they were being “singled out as the only people in the Dominion who cannot employ white women... They with their friends feel it is un-British and un-Christian. Some Chinese are Canadian citizens by naturalization or by birth. Is there a difference in rights or citizens?”

Part of what makes these efforts to legislate affective labor and intimacy interesting is in how they policed racial and gender boundaries, the labor of white working women and Chinese men, and the possibility for interracial intimate relations at the same time, without formally being anti-miscegenation laws. In contrast to the United States, Canada did not officially adopt anti-miscegenation laws. But as Debra Thompson notes in her comparative study of anti-miscegenation laws in Canada and the United States, this did not mean that intimate relations and marriage across racial lines were not policed or legislated against in Canada. On the contrary, Debra Thompson argues the Indian Act for Aboriginal peoples provided for measures that were similar in their racial and gender logics and political intent to American anti-miscegenation laws, since the Act was designed to make it easy for Native women to lose their status through out-marriage, while for Native men, this was not the case.<sup>223</sup> Expanding on Thompson’s work, I argue that these attempts to legislate affective labor in British Columbia and across Canada— the circumscribing of where, with and under whom, and by whom such work could be performed— spoke to and acted upon the same fears of interracial intimacy that were apparent and legally enshrined in the United States.

### **A Modest Proposal: British Columbia, 1919-1924**

Returning to the drafting and operation of this law in the British Columbia context, Mary Ellen Smith was not the sole voice in the Legislature in support of such measures. Attorney General A. M. Manson, the same man who took charge of the Janet Smith investigation after it was found that the municipal police had botched the case as discussed in Part One, also supported proposals to exclude Orientals and to regulate the affective labor of Chinese and white women.

A scant two years before the Janet Smith case shook British Columbia and derailed Manson’s political career, at a speech given at a dinner hosted by the Executive and Advisory Board of the Provincial Retail Merchants’ Association he voiced his support for anti-Chinese laws on account of “ethnological differences” due to the fact that the Chinese “cannot assimilate with our Anglo-Saxon race.” He elaborated:

They labor harder and subsist on harder living conditions than the white man cares to live under, or should live under, and they are still the toiling slave they were in their own countries... They have no desire for the luxury and ease which the white man finds increasingly necessary to his existence.

Echoing much of the same racist arguments as Denis Kearney of the Workingmen's Party of California and that of the American Federation of Labor, he continued, "It is not because the Jap is a better workman than the Anglo-Saxon worker, but simply that he is willing to take less and accept a lower standard of living than the white workman can."<sup>224</sup>

Also prior to 1924, Manson expressed in the Legislature that he feared that municipalities were not enforcing the 1919 laws against the employment of white women by Chinese when his amendments to the Factories Act came before committee. His amendments to the Factories Act were aimed at forcing Asian workers to comply with the legally allowable hours of work, and said that although the 1919 law had been in effect for a number of years, nothing had been done in Prince Rupert until he himself brought it to the attention of the chief of police of the town. Manson also said that the police were empowered to enforce the 1919 legislation, and that restaurants where most of the employment of white women by the Chinese took place, did not come under the BC inspector of factory's purview since factories were not included in the 1919 law.<sup>225</sup>

Because Manson was trained in the law, a talented orator, well-known politician, and the incumbent Attorney General, he would be continually called upon to comment on Mary Ellen Smith's bill both in the press and in the Legislature. At the second reading of Mary Ellen Smith's bill for the Women's and Girls' Protection Act two years later, Manson remained consistent with his earlier anti-Chinese views, and said the bill was justified on "moral grounds," but interestingly, not any empirical basis.

Manson reviewed similar laws passed to Smith's bill (both in BC and in other provinces), including the 1919 law which prohibited white women from being employed in restaurants and laundries operated by Orientals, but that from 1919-1923, no prosecutions had been registered. On the lack of enforcement and ineffectiveness of the law, he quipped that "more energy [had] been exercised in passing such laws than in their enforcement."<sup>226</sup> He also presented his findings for crimes committed against white women in 1923, and said that English, Scottish, and Irish men accounted for forty percent of these crimes, whereas no Oriental had ever been prosecuted for a crime of this nature.<sup>227</sup>

In other words, if Smith and Manson were really interested in protecting white working women and girls from the threat of violence or immorality in the workplace, it would have made more sense to prohibit them from working with or for white men, but this contradiction in logic was never remarked upon, and such a law was of course never considered. Racial, gender, and class logics are fully committed to sustaining elite white male dominance over the vectors of intimacy, and the lacunae in such logics demonstrate how they intersected and worked together to buttress continued inequality at the expense of both white women and Chinese men.

Despite the lack of any empirical reason to legislate affective labor and intimacy, Manson said he "did not think it was to the benefit of white girls to work with Orientals" since the Chinese were "more addicted to the use of narcotics than were other nationals, and in that fact, lay the danger." He added, from a "moral standpoint" he did not think it was wise "to allow Oriental and white servants to mingle."<sup>228</sup> Manson added that he supported Smith's bill since the "Oriental had greater influence for evil upon white girls than did men of any other race," though he was quick to point out there was not enough evidence to suggest this is what had occurred with Wong Foon Sing in the Janet Smith case.<sup>229</sup>

In addition to Manson, the Scottish societies also staunchly supported Smith's campaign to legislate affective labor and intimacy in British Columbia. One of the major Scottish organizations of Vancouver, the St. Andrew's and Caledonian Society, passed a resolution in a council meeting favoring legislation to prohibit white women and girls from working in private homes with Chinese servants. At this meeting, David Patterson, who would later be charged for taking part in the

conspiracy to abduct and torture Wong Foon Sing (discussed in Part One), was also appointed as the Society's representative to lobby for such measures.<sup>230</sup>

Indeed, the newspapers described Smith's introduction of the amendment to the Women's and Girls' Protection Act as a victory for Vancouver's Scottish societies. The St. Andrew's and Caledonian Society and other Scottish groups were in Victoria for some days and through their "vigorous agitation" pushed for the passage of broadened measures against Orientals working in the same homes as white domestics, many of who were of Scottish heritage.<sup>231</sup>

Smith herself claimed that there was broad support for such measures. She claimed her amendment was attracting nation-wide attention and that it might be adopted in other provinces. Smith made public the contents of a letter received from John T. Haig, member of the Manitoba Legislature, who announced his intention to introduce a bill modeled after Smith's "new anti-Oriental measure" and requested a copy of her bill and any suggestions she had to offer.

As a result of the Janet Smith case, Smith claimed that Vancouver housemaids were making a "widespread exodus from homes where they are forced to work with Orientals," and she produced a list of 28 women who resigned from working in "fashionable Vancouver homes" with Chinese houseboys in fear of their safety. Smith explained these resignations "seem[ed] to indicate that their employers prefer[red] to keep the Chinese rather than the white girls. If such discrimination were pushed to extremes it would be serious for our own white women."<sup>232</sup> In short, Smith's bill was designed with the intent to keep working white women safe in their place of work, as well as to keep Chinese out of British Columbian homes and Canada at large, but not everyone agreed with Smith's agenda, though not on account of sympathy for the Chinese.

Other Members of the Legislature were reportedly being "besieged with correspondence" from constituents "protesting against the invasion of their home with any such restrictions," and some pointed out that it would be the women who would lose their positions as domestic workers rather than the houseboys "as the average family employing a nursemaid and a Chinese man for all work, or a Chinese cook, can dispense with the maid more easily than the Chinese." Many people, including Manson himself, questioned the constitutionality of such legislation as race-based exclusionary legislation may not be within the jurisdiction of the provincial legislature due to the Dominion government's jurisdiction over foreign affairs.<sup>233</sup>

The Chinese were also vocal in insisting that such legislation was discriminatory, unjust, and unfounded. The Chinese Consul Lin Pao Heng registered an official complaint regarding Smith's bill. Lin asserted that the bill was "a drastic discrimination against his countrymen" and protested "the introduction of racial issues on such slender grounds as the Janet Smith murder case."

The Chinese Consul-General to Canada, K. H. Chow, also expressed outrage about the bill and it was also discussed at the eighth annual Chinese Nationalist League convention in Toronto, where Dr. C. C. Wu, Envoy Extraordinary of China at Washington and Frank Lee, Chinese Trade Commissioner in New York, joined Dr. Chow in discussing the measure.<sup>234</sup>

In the Legislature itself, the opinion was divided on the bill, with some in the opposition claiming that the bill, if passed, would simply lead to the total exclusion of white women and girls in favor of employing only Chinese men in BC households. They argued "the white girls who have left Vancouver homes because of having to work with Orientals have not been considered as valuable servants as the Chinese" and employers seemed to prefer retaining Chinese servants rather than white women.<sup>235</sup>

Although the sources do not further explain why this was so, it was extremely likely this preference was wrapped up in monetary, racial, and cultural considerations, with Chinese houseboys being cheaper to employ and thought to be more subservient, whereas white domestic help commanded higher wages and were thought to be less willing to perform certain tasks such as hard manual labor.

Some members of the Vancouver press were also opposed to the measure, and one editorial criticized both the majority Liberals and the opposition Conservatives for an unproductive session due in part to the time spent debating over Smith's measure. The editorial accused the BC Liberals, of which both Manson and Smith were high-profile members, of "not scrupling to make political capital out of the Janet Smith case," and thought the entire matter was a cynical waste of time since "there [was] every assurance that the measure is ultra vires" as a similar measure in Saskatchewan was recently disallowed. The editorial also argued that any such bill may be in violation of British treaties with Japan since Smith's bill as originally worded sought the prohibition of all Orientals, including Japanese, from working with white women in intimate spaces.

Tellingly, this opposition from the press was not grounded in anti-racist arguments, or even the consideration of the best interests of white working women. The editorial quoted above continued: "The Province... would not shed a single tear if the whole crowd of [Orientals] were shipped back to Asia, bag and baggage, ...[and that] British Columbia could get along very well without them" but that "while the Orientals are with us, it is our duty to be fair to them, and the Janet Smith bill is not fair." It called the bill "illogical," since it "assume[d] some Oriental was, in some way, to blame for the Janet Smith murder," which had not yet been proven. Thus, in the view of the editorial, the Smith bill was unfair because it essentially condemned all Orientals based on little evidence, and that "[this] is not British justice."

This critique demonstrated a similar logic found in Part One, that of calling on notions of "British justice" and the rule of law, which Constance Backhouse and Scott Kerwin in different contexts have together argued was central to defining Canada as liberal, white, and British.<sup>236</sup> Thus, this critique of the bill did not foreclose the possibility that Orientals working in homes alongside white women was a potential threat, but only that there was not enough evidence to provide grounds for such laws under a liberal juridical framework. Thus, according to this editorial, the illegitimacy of the bill hinged on its apparent disregard for the protocols of British justice, and not because it violated the rights of the working Chinese men and white women involved.<sup>237</sup>

For these reasons, Smith's amendment met an inglorious end, and the act would remain mostly symbolic and unenforced, at least until the controversy surrounding the shooting of Mary Shaw in 1937. Despite her failure, Smith declared that even if the measure was not passed as she had originally intended, she felt "great good" came from the introduction of the measure, and it drew public attention to the dangers of Oriental servants working in the same homes as white women.<sup>238</sup>

## **Settler Feminism and the Chinese Question in British Columbia**

I will now consider what drove Mary Ellen Smith to support such measures, and identify the racial, gender, and class logics that animated her broader politics. I argue that just as racial, gender, and class tensions characterized the AFL's political strategy and activity in the early twentieth century, it would also shape and define the anti-Chinese politics of British Columbia lawmakers and political leaders in the same period. However, in contrast to the agenda of the AFL in the United States, it was the settler feminism of Mary Ellen Smith that drove her to enact legislation that would make it illegal for white women to work with or for Chinese men in intimate settings.

By naming Smith's politics as "settler feminist," I am pointing to an ideology that was unique to the pioneering and elite white women of Canadian politics in the early twentieth century. Jennifer Henderson originally coined the term "settler feminism" to describe a highly specific corpus of national writing by elite, white, Anglo-Protestant, Canadian women at the turn of the nineteenth century. She writes these settler feminist narratives "tell a story about the recuperation of feminist

thinking about freedom on settler terrain, a terrain that was constructed as a space bereft of human history, and appropriated as the ground for race-making projects.”<sup>239</sup>

Settler feminists like Smith paved the way for Canadian women to not only become enfranchised and attain political and economic rights and full(er) citizenship, they also saw themselves as having a unique role to play in shaping the nascent Canadian nation and upholding its white racial purity and Anglo political inheritance. It was demonstrated above that the AFL similarly saw themselves as the dignified defenders of “free white labor” and the white working woman, a position which necessarily entailed the push for the protection of the rights of white women workers and the exclusion of the Chinese coolie. In a similar fashion, the settler feminism of Mary Ellen Smith and others like her championed the rights of white working women while also calling for the exclusion of the Chinese, and these two objectives worked together to motivate Smith to introduce a bill to amend the Women’s and Girls’ Protection Act in 1924.

The period before the Great Depression was characterized by many changes to the Canadian household, not just technologically, but also culturally and politically. The popularity of domestic manuals, the proliferation of magazines and newspaper columns catering to women, the emergence of domestic gurus and domestic science schools, and the flourishing of women’s clubs and organizations all contributed to creating a rich milieu where domestic matters and the perspectives of mostly middle and upper class women were very visibly and publicly discussed for the first time.

The reemergence of *oikonomia* in public discourse was well underway by 1920 with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in the US, and the granting of the franchise to white women in all provinces except Quebec in Canada. However, it was a process that was fraught with political difficulties as the official entry of white women into public life gave way to new questions and concerns. For example, on the occasion of the first Liberal convention for women at which Mary Ellen Smith was a prominent participant, the press remarked that two things were made clear at the convention. First, the convention showed that “women are at least attaining some measure of political consciousness, with a corresponding desire to use their political power.” Second, the meeting was said to be evidence that the recent gains women had won in Canada and the US showed this consciousness “can best express itself and most effectively operate in separate organization of women within the party folds, even though the ultimate ideal of women and men working side by side in the political arena be strongly held.”<sup>240</sup>

Elizabeth Wilson, one of the early editors of *Chatelaine*, also acknowledged the continued neglect of “women’s matters” in the halls of power, such as infant mortality and prenatal health. Wilson declares that Canadian women should push to make these issues important across the gender line, pointing out that such topics are “like most [matters of] women” business, lies in the hands of men.”<sup>241</sup> Thus, Wilson was not only calling for women to participate politically and push private matters into public discourse, but she also understood that the lives of women were still subject to male authority. In other words, though white women were officially endowed with political rights, their ability to enact meaningful change was highly constrained, and elite women like Wilson and Smith both worked within and against these constraints.

Accordingly, at the first convention for Liberal women, Smith was singled out and alternately described by journalists as “a veteran hand at the political game,” an “experienced clubwoman,” and “mother of a mature family, head of a home and a very charming example of the ‘womanly’ woman of that beloved England from whence she came originally to this country.”<sup>242</sup>

One of the outcomes of the convention was that Smith was made the inaugural president of the National Federation of Liberal Women, and in her acceptance speech, it was clear she had a settler feminist vision for the Canadian nation that was at odds with the ambivalence of the newspaper men covering the convention:

So far we women have been pretty well chloroformed in politics, but we ought now to refuse all anaesthetics. As women we want to go on record as constructionists with a definite place in national affairs. We want to raise the status and advance the political education of women; to aid in securing, as well as maintaining, good government. And, above all, we wish to encourage a sound, broad spirit of Canadian nationality within the British Empire.<sup>243</sup>

Thus, by the early twentieth century, the topic that was on the minds of most middle and upper class Canadian women—the producers and consumers of this new form of domestic knowledge and culture, and newly granted suffrage—was the debate over the role of women as household managers and the value of homemaking to the nation.

In the British Columbia context, the domestic question and the role of women took on even more importance as maintaining proper standards of domestic life on Canada's pacific frontier was seen as crucial to settling and developing the province, just as it did in the United States and other frontier contexts. In a 1907 address given at Victoria, Mrs. Bayfield, the president of the Charlottetown chapter of the Council of Women, made these political and economic stakes abundantly clear. She noted that the difficulty of procuring women to help in housekeeping was "causing a situation that threatens to entirely annihilate our homes" and so implored the Council of Women to appoint a committee "to consider the duties and responsibilities of women with regard to domestic life." She went on to remark that the expanded opportunities for women in white-collar work was to blame for the domestic crisis, and recommended that the Council should establish committees to determine how to make homemaking more attractive to women as a profession. She continued, "Our girls congregate in stores as clerks and in offices or as stenographers, often underpaid but they prefer this to helping in a home which their education has caused them to consider menial work. When they marry they make but poor wives and mothers, and worse housekeepers, and so the evil goes round in a circle and gets worse. Now are we Canadian women going to let this state of things remain unchecked?"<sup>244</sup>

The domestic question was also a racial and immigration question. Hon. S. F. Tolmie, the BC Minister of Agriculture, discouraged members of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE) of Victoria from asking for the lifting of the head tax so that the Chinese could come to Canada to act as cooks, domestic servants, and to relieve the labor shortage on farms. Several of the women of the IODE were "emphatic in their declaration that something should be done by the Government to relieve the cook shortage and the high cost of domestic servants," and though Tolmie admitted that the shortage in domestic help was serious, he declared that "Asiatics should not be admitted to Canada when so many people from the Old Country were willing to come out here," and added almost threateningly, "Your Chinese worker of yesterday is your competitors to-day in all lines of trade."<sup>245</sup>

The Dominion government was also keen on solving the domestic question and explicitly connected it to the project of settling the frontier and securing Canada's destiny as a white nation. Accordingly, in 1919, the Royal Commission on the Migration of Women made the following recommendations:

- 1) "As a matter of Imperial policy the Dominion Governments should devote a large part of their activities to, and give increased facilities for, the migration of women, especially young women, with a view to better sex distribution,"



- 2) To not confine this assistance to servants, but also the unemployed and those engaged in work other than domestic service,
- 3) To encourage women's emigration societies to continue their work, and to encourage other women's groups to take up the work,
- 4) Emphasizing that the "ideal will only be attained if the women sent out are such as will consent to live in the rural districts of the Dominion and have the necessary qualifications to fulfill the demands there,"
- 5) To make arrangements for training to prepare women for life in the Dominion, especially for domestic work and,
- 6) Urgent attention to the creation and development of societies to assist in placing and protecting women once they arrive in the country districts, as well as to provide services to facilitate the settling of families.<sup>246</sup>

In the same spirit, in 1920, Dr. Augusta Stowe-Gullen of Toronto gave a speech at the Victoria Club about women's role in Canadianizing the nation, while also calling for stronger legislation to protect women. She spoke about her experience meeting European immigrants at the Strathcona School, and said, "Aliens who adhered to their own language, speaking it altogether in their own homes, were retarding the children from becoming Canadians in the truest sense of the word. Everyone in this country should understand English and should understand Canadian ideals."

After discussing the role Canadian women could play in helping to assimilate immigrants from Eastern Europe, Stowe-Gullen talked about reforming laws affecting women including the increase of the age of consent to eighteen years old, that divorce laws should be modified so that divorce could be obtained for reasons beyond physical cruelty as "there were other forms of cruelty that were just as hard to bear."<sup>247</sup>

Beyond the issues of the migration of British and European women, creating new Canadians, and securing domestic labor, the crisis in women's work and the domestic sphere also extended to public debates about the usage of Chinese men as proxies for white working women. Demonstrating this, a reader calling himself "All White" wrote that there was no crisis in domestic help in Victoria and that the proper solution to any such shortage was not to use Chinese men for domestic work. "How is it that other large Canadian towns can procure white domestic help? Why, by sending to England and Scotland for them... Other Canadian centres do it. Why not this one?" All White continued, "I cannot and will not believe that any Victorian ladies actually prefer a Chinaman about their homes to a smart and clean white girl," and added that "Anyone knows the vast superiority of the white laborer over the yellow one." The letter ended by posing a hypothetical scenario where employing Chinese help could bring the violence of the Tong wars into white homes.<sup>248</sup>

In a related letter to the editor, a Victoria man named Andrew Wright made the direct connection between the domestic and Chinese questions quite explicitly. He wrote that owing to the Chinese migrating to the interior of the country, returning to China, and the reduction of their number through natural decrease, domestic help had been growing scarcer and "As there have been no Chinamen coming in to take the place of those who have departed, wages have been going up each month, till now they are about double what they were. I venture to say that they will continue to increase, till in a year or two only the very wealthy will be able to afford one. All the rest of the citizens will have to wash their own dishes."

He further said that this would drive many of Victoria's best citizens away, implying that the lack of domestic help, whether white or Chinese, makes living in the far-flung city far less attractive. Wright goes so far as to oppose the province's politicians and the "rabid Socialistic agitators" that "loudly cry for Canada being kept a white man's country." He argued that such exclusionary measures would mean "every white man is his own scavenger and every white man's wife her own slavey [sic]." He continued, "...the Chinese servant (who is by far the most satisfactory of all servants) was a strong drawing card to induce people to settle here. Here is a good cook, he is clean and his wages were moderate, and the housewife in the Eastern cities who had experience of the servant girls drawn from the squalid foreign immigrants look with envy on the fortunate dwellers on the Pacific Coast... Unfortunately, this is a drawing card no longer."<sup>249</sup> In short, the continued settlement of British Columbia depended upon on keeping the Chinese houseboy in his station, since it was through his affective labor that the settlement of the province was made comfortable and possible.

Another way in which domestic and intimate matters were directly tied to the Oriental Question in British Columbia was through the policing of the intimate relations between white women and Chinese men and the discourse of "white slavery." For instance, the newspapers reported the sensational story of Bella Walker, a woman who had been driven out of Vancouver for prostitution. She returned to the city from her exile in Seattle in an effort to rescue her sister "who was held in bondage in a Chinese opium den on Canton street." To do this, she began to use opium, wore Chinese clothing, and served "as a serf to her captors" before she could rescue her sister, but was trapped for a night, the opium having sapped all her strength. Walker was later found by Vancouver police and charged with being a keeper of a house of ill-fame, but pleaded not guilty and revealed her extraordinary ordeal to the court, and so was let go with the terse warning, "Remember if you come back [to the city] there will be a sentence of six months waiting for you [for prostitution]."<sup>250</sup>

In the same year, the Juvenile Protection Association held a meeting in 1908 where they discussed white women in Vancouver's narcotics underworld. A man named G. H. Healy criticized the actions of the Vancouver Police, as a girl found in an opium den was exiled from the city, while the proprietress of the house escaped with a three-month sentence, and "the Chinese who debauched the girls went free." Another man added that underneath Dupont Street were "gilded [sic] dens to which the police could not get access" and out of 170 women driven from the city for being prostitutes, 100 were in the "abject slavery of the Chinamen."<sup>251</sup>

Similarly, marriages between white women and Chinese men came under scrutiny at this time, just as they did in the United States. An incident involving what was described as a "mésalliance" (*mésalliance* is a French loan word, meaning marriage to a person of inferior social standing) between a young white woman named Edith Lamoung and a young Chinese fruit merchant named Nip Sue in New Westminster garnered the attention of the press. Repeating some of the themes discussed in Part One, the case involved the death of a white woman, who was apparently shot to death by a jealous suitor after the two were married. The incident seemed to have been precipitated by the couple's alleged ties to sex work as Lamoung and Sue operated a fruit store in Chinatown which was raided by the Vancouver police. During the raid, officers allegedly found two women, one white named Babe Cameron and one black named Sally Lawrence, and both Lamoung and Sue were charged with keeping a house of ill-fame. The police "have considered the marriage all along a ruse to evade the law," revealing that such marriages were seen as illegitimate and possibly connected to the sex trade.<sup>252</sup>

It was in this context that Mary Ellen Smith would become elected as a Liberal to the British Columbia legislature in 1918, easily winning by a landslide margin of 10,220 votes. Smith was the wife of veteran BC politician Ralph Smith and entered politics after his death. Her election would secure her place in the annals of Canadian history, as she became not only the first woman to be

elected to the BC legislature, but later went on to become the first woman cabinet member and first woman Speaker of the House in all of the British Empire. Newspapers speculated that with the entry of a woman into the halls of power, “[Smith] will bring the House into intimate acquaintance with certain important problems affecting society which hitherto have had scant attention.”<sup>253</sup> This prediction turned out to be true as Smith and other pioneering Canadian women like her took it upon themselves to bring matters of the *oikos* to the fore in the Canadian *polis*, and by doing so, paved the way for greater gains for white women’s rights all throughout the twentieth century.

In the weeks after her election victory, Smith steadily began to exert her influence on the House. One of the planks of her election platform was the introduction of a minimum wage for women, and she followed through by introducing a bill to that effect on February 28, 1918.<sup>254</sup> A few days later, Smith addressed the Legislature for the first time since her taking elected office. Women in the public gallery cheered loudly as she spoke on this historic occasion, and “From the moment of commencement Mrs. Smith held the rapt attention of her auditors, not from the mere fact that a person of the opposite sex was talking, but from the absolute sanity and reasonableness of her viewpoint...” By projecting an “absolutely sane” persona, Smith spent considerable time allaying her male colleagues’ fears that a lioness had been unleashed upon them. “I have come to you neither with a chip on my shoulder nor with a sword in my hand, but with a willingness to meet you on equal ground as representatives of the people,” she reassured them.

She continued to downplay her role as the first woman elected to the Legislative Assembly, and reminded the other members of the House that “The co-operation of both sexes is responsible for my being here as their representative,” referring to the fact that less than a year ago, the exclusively male House passed a law enfranchising white women and permitting them to take office. However, she also made it clear she was not there to be idle in her responsibilities, and declared that “I have come to the Legislature for legislation in the best interests of the women and children of the province” and to seek the support of the House for her measures.<sup>255</sup>

By 1921, Smith was appointed to Premier Oliver’s cabinet, thereby becoming the first woman minister in the British Empire. At her acceptance speech, she spoke again on the entry of women like herself into the public life of the nation. “I feel that this is a great honor, not conferred on myself, but on the womanhood of the Province. It is another indication that we are gradually burrowing our way into the public life of the country.” However, she also continued to qualify her (highly limited) feminist agenda, and again she hedged her implicit critique of patriarchy by adopting the position of being a voice of reason and moderation: “One thing we all have to remember is to keep sane and to keep our balance. We fought a long time for our suffrage and we have broken down many barriers. Now it remains to be seen how women can conduct themselves in public life.”

Being the savvy politician she was, upon being asked whether it was easy being a woman in politics, Smith answered both in the affirmative and the negative. “Yes, if you understand the male man. If a woman is willing and able to take a broad viewpoint she will always meet with respect, from the same class of individual of the opposite sex. But there is very little place yet for the narrow-minded woman in public life...”<sup>256</sup> It is from this ambivalent and precarious position that Smith’s settler feminist vision for British Columbia and Canada developed throughout her years in office.

In a 1918 editorial entitled “Women and Economics” Smith wrote for the *Vancouver Sun*, she laid the groundwork for this settler feminist vision of Canada. In it, she argued for the expansion of the rights of white women while defining the nation as indelibly white and British. According to Smith, the time was ripe for (certain kinds of) women to be given full citizenship in the nation, on account of their expanded economic role in the wake of the First World War. Uncannily echoing Aristotle’s discussion of *oikonomia* from Antiquity, she wrote, “Woman, paradoxical as it may seem, is the oldest, as well as the newest factor in economics, the earliest and the latest, according to the area

to which the term economics is applied. In its primary application it signifies the science of household affairs..." And like the AFL, Smith also spoke about the role of women and the household using the language of social Darwinism, and argued "woman, in order today to have a full and complete estimate of her place and power in the evolutionary scheme of life, must be fully conversant with conditions outside of the home, the effect the economic conditions are having on the race, and the outlook for the future of humanity."

She elaborated by arguing that the Canadian woman of the twentieth century now finds herself in a position where "[s]he will see that wages are such that she can live comfortably; that the conditions under which she works will not undermine her health, nor injure the health of the nation, because she is responsible for the future of the race from these and many other standpoints."<sup>257</sup> Smith had a certain kind of woman in mind for securing the future of the race in Canada, namely women like herself who were elite, motherly yet "sane," and of British stock. In other words, Smith's settler feminism, though universalistic in rhetoric, was inlaid with highly specific class, racial, and gendered meanings.

The operation of these highly specific logics can be further seen in a 1930 interview with *Chatelaine*, when she spoke with the magazine in detail on what she thought defined a "capable woman." By this point in her life, Smith had been the first woman cabinet minister in the British Empire, a member of the Legislative Assembly for eleven years, chair of the Liberal caucus, the National President of the Liberal Women's Club, and other high profile positions in public life. For the interview, Smith was prompted by the magazine to answer the following question: "What is meant when a man says that a person is 'capable,' or 'possessed of an unusual capacity for achievement?' And what is the value of the thing to a man or a woman in public life and in private life?" Here, too, the vectors of intimacy are readily apparent in how achievement or capability was framed— both in having to do with private and public life, and man and woman— one's capacity for success straddled these and other intimate vectors.

"Why, of course, capacity is nothing more or less than stored-up power within us," Smith answered with a chuckle. "I mean physical power, health, mental power, to think clearly and to concentrate; spiritual power, which governs our intuitive processes, carries us nearer in sympathy and understanding to our neighbors, gives us the courage to act according to our highest ideals, prompts the wise course when an emergency arises."<sup>258</sup>

It comes as no surprise then that Smith's settler feminism centered on elite, white women like herself who were endowed with these physical, mental, and spiritual powers. The capable woman envisioned in this way foreclosed the possibility of a political womanhood that was defined by the experiences of working and immigrant women, both white and non-white. In other words, capable women like Smith saw themselves as forming a vanguard whose role was to advocate for the best interests of all women, to act as models for their fuller participation in public life, and in ensuring Canada's white racial future and elite notions of domesticity and femininity.

As a leading figure in this vanguard, in 1921, Smith was sent to Europe as a special envoy to encourage the immigration of women to Canada, especially to her home province of British Columbia. The Dominion Government sent Smith to the British Isles, Norway, and Sweden to "offer settlers in return for hard and serious work to develop [Western Canada's] vast natural resources, especially agricultural."<sup>259</sup> Discussing her mission, Smith explained that she was the first woman in Canada selected for this particular kind of work, and it demonstrated "the recognition of women in the capacity of an official to bring intending settlers to Canada." She continued, "I hope to be able to show intending settlers in Britain that we have a worth and wealth of opportunity in Canada to those anxious to become good Canadians."<sup>260</sup>

In a 1923 speech printed in the *Weekly Scotsman* while in Scotland on her international tour for prospective settlers, Smith contrasted the increasingly exclusionary United States with the liberal

immigration policies of Canada as part of the Empire. Drawing from her own experience of being a Briton who had migrated to British Columbia, she emphasized the intimate ties between Britain and Canada forged through an imperial patriotism and the Great War, and in doing so, blurred the line between domestic and foreign, metropole and colonial periphery:

Patriotism as we Britons scattered all over the world understand it is not a narrow domestic thing based in the belief that what you can gain must needs occur at the expense of someone else. Our patriotism is based on co-operation in a true sense... In war-time our Canadian wheat was vitally necessary to the British troops in the field. The spruce from our forests made possible the building of the fleets of aeroplanes, which did so much to gain victory...

Smith then took this opportunity to criticize the United States, a potential competitor for British settlers, while subtly ingratiating her audience by suggesting they were the right kind of men for settling Canada:

We have as yet no portcullis as in the United States, to slam down upon the head of the unlucky immigrant whose ship is half an hour late. But for all that we do want the right men as immigrants. There is nothing selfish in that wish. The tough, ready-to-face-things, adaptable man... is not only certain of a welcome in Canada, but he is going to be made conscious of adding more to the sum-total of human society than he might ever have had opportunity of doing at home.

She concluded her speech with a final appeal to a British patriotism that was tied to the strength of the Empire and its colonial ties. “The development of Canada means an increase of the Empire’s wealth. The more Canada is developed the more she will increase the industry of Great Britain by the exchange of trade.”<sup>261</sup>

Similarly, in another speech given to the Women’s Liberal Association where she defended the Liberal Party’s immigration policy, Smith reassured her audience that the Dominion government “wants preference given to British immigrants” and pointed out that “being of the same race, and living under the same flag, [migrants from the British Isles] are not immigrants, but migrants from one part of the Empire to another.” She concluded her speech by asking her audience to remember that if whites were kept out of British Columbia that the “Indian would still rule over Canada” and urged an “Imperial viewpoint” which would also benefit Canada.<sup>262</sup>

In closing, it was demonstrated that Smith was motivated by a settler feminist logic in her support for the 1924 Women’s and Girls’ Protection Act, a logic that she demonstrated all throughout her political career. This settler feminism was tied to Smith’s elite white womanhood, which envisioned a Canada ruled in part by capable women like herself. These women imbued themselves with the responsibility to not only ensure that Canada remain loyal to the Empire and white, but to assert themselves and reshape the private and public life of the nation according to their image to the detriment of both white working women and Chinese men.

## Epilogue

Part Two described and unpacked the patriarchal, racial, and class logics behind two different proposals to legislate affective labor and intimacy, one through the American Federation of Labor's two-pronged agenda of organizing white working women and excluding Asiatic labor, and the other in British Columbia through the settler feminist politics of MLA Mary Ellen Smith. The purpose of examining these two efforts together was to make legible both the congruencies and specificities of the political actors, subjects, and contexts involved in legislating affective labor and intimacy in Western North America. It was demonstrated that there was considerable overlap in the intersectional logics and tensions that buttressed the settler feminist politics of Smith and the inclusive/exclusionary politics of the AFL under Samuel Gompers, and so both white women and Chinese men working in intimate spaces on the Pacific Frontier were policed accordingly. That said, it was also shown that these intersecting logics of patriarchy, white supremacy, and class status also operated in highly specific ways that were messy, and were both at once enabling and constraining for white women.

I must take time here to qualify my statements and make transparent the unevenness and asymmetries between the contexts of the two cases being discussed. The archival research I have conducted suggests that such bans on interracial labor in intimate spaces were never formally enacted in the Western United States by municipal and state governments, despite the fact that the perils of home were very much a part of the life and politics of the American West, as I have argued throughout this dissertation. Furthermore, as stated above, while both efforts were aimed at segregating white female and Chinese male workers, the proposals were championed by different political actors, and thus responded to different political contexts and needs.

In British Columbia, calls for legislation to segregate white female and Chinese male labor emerged directly as a result of the sensational deaths of two working class white women allegedly at the hands of Chinese men working in domestic spaces, who may or may not have been romantically involved with them. These efforts were spearheaded, and eventually implemented and enforced by, local and provincial authorities that held highly specific, elite, and racially charged beliefs about the role of women in the home and the Canadian nation.

In California and other western states, however, this effort was connected to the white labor movement's efforts to organize and appeal to women workers, whom they increasingly saw as junior partners in the labor struggle rather than as competitors or enemies of the white working man. This political need to include white women workers coincided with the continued need to exclude Oriental labor and maintain white male dominance in the labor movement. In the end, however, the AFL's proposal to legally segregate white female and Chinese male domestic labor was never successfully implemented. Although the proposal received the support of the general membership, the Executive Committee, and Samuel Gompers himself at the AFL's 1913 conference, the proposal never came up again within the organization after 1913 and faded into obscurity.

This begs the question: why compare these two efforts together in the first place, when they clearly grew out of different national contexts, spearheaded by different political actors, responded to different political needs, and when in the U.S. context it was a political failure, and when in British Columbia the measure was mostly symbolic and only sporadically enforced?

Comparing these efforts to legally prohibit white women and Chinese men from working together brings to relief the highly specific ways in which these two groups transgressed and negotiated the boundaries of race, gender, and class in the early part of the twentieth century in two different contexts with shared histories of white settlement and Chinese domestic labor. Thus, I am not arguing that these efforts to legislate affective labor were significant in the sense that they paved

the way for a new corpus of laws and restrictions that were effective at regulating and policing interracial labor and intimacy in both the U.S. and Canadian contexts.

Rather, I argue that these proposals were part of a broader struggle over intimacy and political citizenship which included debates over the need to protect white women from racialized men in intimate spaces, and the deviant intimacies that this kind of work made possible. Furthermore, this chapter demonstrates the highly troubling and messy ways in which white working-class women were unevenly incorporated into the Canadian nation and the American labor movement. In other words, these efforts to legislate affective labor and intimacy cannot be considered political failures and isolated incidents in the last instance, but a telling and neglected part of the long history of struggling with and regulating the intimate vectors of race, gender, class, and labor.

In short, these seemingly obscure proposals were part of a broader struggle over “free” white vs. unfree Chinese labor, defining normative notions of domesticity and citizenship, and debates over the need to protect white women from racialized men in intimate spaces, and the deviant intimacies that this kind of work made possible.

## Conclusion: Making Visible the Unseen Labor of the Sluttish Woman & Chinese Houseboy in History

Clearly the most damaging burden of the erasure of domestic labor fell on servants. The housewife's labor of *leisure* found its counterpart in the servant's labor of *invisibility*.... The wife's labor of leisure and the servant's labor of invisibility served to disavow and conceal within the middle-class formation the economic value of women's work.

—Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather*<sup>263</sup>

This study sought to make visible the hidden work and life of two figures in the history of Western North America: the sluttish woman and Chinese houseboy. The study showed how these two figures were often pitted against each other, and yet both threatened, and at times, transgressed, the boundaries of race, gender, and class in early twentieth century Canada and the United States. Deploying intimacy and a retrofitted configuration of *oikonomia* as the lenses through which I historicized racialized, gendered, and class-specific processes of meaning making and boundary crossing in everyday work and life, I examined two major murder cases involving Chinese servants and two different efforts to legislate affective labor by Samuel Gompers' American Federation of Labor and Mary Ellen Smith, respectively.

Part One described and compared two major murder trials that took place between 1924 and 1930— one in Vancouver and the other in San Francisco. In both cases, a Chinese houseboy was accused of murdering a white woman at his place of employment. Taken together, these two chapters examined the racial, gender, and class tensions that informed and shaped the media coverage and outcome of the two cases. Part One showed how the murder cases evolved into a public discussion of the socially transgressive threat that having Chinese men in such intimate proximity to white working women posed.

Part Two examined political attempts to ban white working women from working with or near Chinese men. This kind of legislation was pursued and enacted in British Columbia largely due to the settler feminism of a pioneering woman politician named Mary Ellen Smith. In the United States, however, it was the American Federation of Labor under Samuel Gompers that sought to incorporate white women into the labor movement while continuing to exclude Chinese and other



Asian workers, and so I argued its proposal to prohibit interracial labor must be understood within the broader context of these organizational goals.

The central argumentative thread running throughout the entire dissertation was to describe and demonstrate how the expansion of white women's political and economic rights and efforts to exclude the Chinese in both Canada and the United States were intimately connected to each other. In addition, my decision to focus on case studies that occurred on the Pacific frontier of the settler states of Canada and the United States underscored the similarities and differences in how these interconnected debates shaped both contexts.

I end this study with a brief consideration of how the above arguments might open our eyes to new ways of seeing the unseen affective labor taking place in our midst in the contemporary period. If the dawn of the twentieth century signaled the shift from a pastoral system of unpaid domestic labor to a paid industrial model raising various racial, gender, and class questions in the process, what is the state of *oikonomia* in the current context of late capitalism and a globalized economy? It goes without saying that by asking this question, I do not mean to make some sort of facile, teleological connection between the slutty woman and the Chinese houseboy to the invisibilized caretakers of today. I am, however, interested in asking how earlier configurations of domestic labor might make the present conditions of life possible. Though a concluding chapter is neither the time nor the place to begin answering this question, I do think it is well worth stating here that I believe the direction that the contemporary feminist sociology of labor is headed in suggests there is still plenty of theorizing and writing about *oikonomia* to be done.

Saskia Sassen's work on globalization, gender, and carework provides a lot of the theoretical backdrop for scholars writing today about gendered labor and the so-called "crisis of care." Sassen argues that in the current context of "professional women in careers, of wanting families but having no time to care for them; domestic tasks are relocated to the market... as a consequence, we see the return of the so-called serving classes in all of the world's global cities, and these classes are largely made up of immigrant and migrant women."<sup>264</sup> In analyzing different examples of how immigrant women are central to solving these crises of care, Sassen says "middle-class households often make exploitative use of immigrant women to do childcare and domestic work. They also suggest the advances of many middle-class white women in the workforce have been largely predicated on the exploitation of the poor, immigrant women."<sup>265</sup>

Rhacel Salazar Parrenas carries out a similar kind of analysis in her monograph *Servants of Globalization*, which characterizes the outmigration of Filipinas and their entry into domestic work in places like Rome and Los Angeles as being a product of globalization, that "it is patterned under the role of the Philippines as an export-based economy" and that "it is embedded in the specific historical phase of global restructuring."<sup>266</sup> She further argues that these migrant Filipina domestic workers, despite being in two different contexts, have a shared experience of "dislocation" which includes "partial citizenship, the pain of family separation, the experience of contradictory class mobility, and the feeling of social exclusion or non-belonging in the migrant community."<sup>267</sup>

Whatever the connections might be between the historical period and two groups examined in this study and *oikonomia* in the contemporary period, there seems to be no end in sight for doing the important and critical work of ensuring that these processes are carefully described and critically analyzed in all their complexity. If anything, the women and men who perform domestic and affective forms of labor have only become even more powerfully exploited, their labor, dignity, and presence disappeared from our notice. And such people, labor, and processes are made to be unseen because of the continuing perils of home.

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- <sup>1</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, With a New Preface edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).
- <sup>2</sup> “Slut, N.,” *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed March 19, 2014, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/182346>.
- <sup>3</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 165.
- <sup>4</sup> Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 12-13.
- <sup>5</sup> Lisa Lowe, “The Intimacies of Four Continents,” in Ann Laura Stoler (Ed.), *Haunted by Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 191-212.
- <sup>6</sup> Many excellent scholars have made the case for transnational approaches to studying Asian migration. See for example Erika Lee, “Orientalisms in the Americas: A Hemispheric Approach to Asian American History,” *Journal of Asian American Studies* vol. 8, no. 3 (Oct., 2005), 235-256.
- <sup>7</sup> Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 209.
- <sup>8</sup> Sunera Thobani, *Exalted Subjects: Race and Nation in the Making of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 5.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.
- <sup>10</sup> See Audrey Smedley, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2007), 89 and 119.
- <sup>11</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, Revised, 10th Anniv., 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 1999), 18.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 18, 228.
- <sup>14</sup> Evelyn Nakano Glenn, “Racial Ethnic Women’s Work,” *Review of Radical Political Economy* 17:3 (1983), 86-109.
- <sup>15</sup> Kimberle Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1, 1991), 1245.
- <sup>16</sup> Aristotle, *The Politics*, trans. Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), I.3, 1253b1–8, trans. Lord.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, I.5, 1254a21–22.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, I.5, 1254b12–15.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, I.7, 1255b20 and I.8, 1256a10–12.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, I.12, 1259a41–1259b1.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, I.13, 1260a9–13.
- <sup>22</sup> Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2, Part 1 (Summer 1966), 152.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.
- <sup>24</sup> Linda K. Kerber, “Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman’s Place: The Rhetoric of Women’s History,” *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (Jun., 1988), 10-11.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.
- <sup>27</sup> Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 1.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

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- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., 18-9.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., 25.
- <sup>31</sup> McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 24.
- <sup>32</sup> Ava Baron, "Protective Labor Legislation and the Cult of Domesticity," *Journal of Family Issues* 2, no. 1 (March 1, 1981): 25–38.
- <sup>33</sup> Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871*, 1st ed. (University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2001), 14.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., 19.
- <sup>35</sup> Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), xiii.
- <sup>36</sup> Boydston, *Home and Work*, xvii-xviii.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid., *Home and Work*, xviii.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., 155.
- <sup>39</sup> Jane E. Simonsen, *Making Home Work: Domesticity and Native American Assimilation in the American West, 1860-1919* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 3-4.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., 44.
- <sup>41</sup> Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 49.
- <sup>42</sup> Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 141-166.
- <sup>43</sup> Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Racial Ethnic Women's Work," *Review of Radical Political Economy* 17, no. 3 (1983), 87.
- <sup>44</sup> Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom*, 12.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid., 55.
- <sup>46</sup> Edna Boncich and Lucie Cheng, *Labor Immigration Under Capitalism: Asian Workers in the United States Before World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), x.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid., 29.
- <sup>48</sup> David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, revised ed. (London: Verso, 2007), 11.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid., 8.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid., 13.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid., 27 and 33-4.
- <sup>52</sup> Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 38.
- <sup>53</sup> Thobani, *Exalted Subjects*, 4-5.
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid., 83.
- <sup>55</sup> Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 1.
- <sup>56</sup> Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 10.
- <sup>57</sup> Harry Con and Edgar Wickberg, *From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities in Canada*, Generations, a History of Canada's Peoples (Toronto, Ont: McClelland and Stewart in association with the Multiculturalism Directorate, Dept. of the Secretary of State and the Canadian Govt. Pub. Centre, Supply and Services Canada, 1982), 20.
- <sup>58</sup> Julie Chinitz, "SHIFTINESS: THE BORDER IN EIGHT CASES," Literary Hub, accessed May 18, 2015, <http://lithub.com/shiftiness-the-border-in-eight-cases/>.
- <sup>59</sup> Here, I am drawing from recent feminist scholarship on gender and empire, particularly Amy Kaplan and Ann Laura Stoler.

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<sup>60</sup> For an excellent social history of the United States during the 1920s, see David E. Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1940: How Americans Lived Through the "Roaring Twenties" and the Great Depression* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004). For work on Canada in this period, see Robert Bothwell, *Canada, 1900-1945* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1987); John Herd Thompson, *Canada, 1922-1939: Decades of Discord*, Canadian Centenary Series 15 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986).

<sup>61</sup> For comprehensive discussions about anxieties over changing gender roles and sexual mores in the 1920s, see Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Angela J. Latham, *Posing a Threat: Flappers, Chorus Girls, and Other Transgressive Performers of the American 1920s* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000); Ralph G. Giordano, *Satan in the Dance Hall: Rev. John Roach Straton, Social Dancing, and Morality in 1920s New York City* (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2008).

<sup>62</sup> "62a Lou Fook, Chinese House Boy, Charged with the Murder of Mrs. Rosetta Baker at 814-California St. on Dec. 8/30" n.d., BANC PIC 1996.003--fALB Jesse Brown Cook Scrapbooks Documenting San Francisco History and Law Enforcement ca. 1895-1936, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>63</sup> "Women Ask Lower Tax on Chinese Servants," *The Daily Province*, March 4, 1907.

<sup>64</sup> In the sociological literature, see for example Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001). In the historical literature, see for example Erika Lee, "Orientalisms in the Americas: A Hemispheric Approach to Asian American History," *Journal of Asian American Studies* vol. 8, no. 3 (Oct., 2005), 235-256.

<sup>65</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, American Encounters/Global Interactions (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>66</sup> Marilyn Barber, "Hearing Women's Voices: Female Migration to Canada in the Early Twentieth Century," *Oral History* 33, no. 1 (April 1, 2005): 69.

<sup>67</sup> Scott Kerwin, "Smith, Janet Kennedy," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, n.d., [http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id\\_nbr=7867&&PHPSESSID=ychnzfqkvzape](http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=7867&&PHPSESSID=ychnzfqkvzape). Accessed 09/15/2012.

<sup>68</sup> W. A. Carrothers, "Scotland Makes Contribution of Value to Canada," *The Daily Colonist*, February 9, 1938.

<sup>69</sup> "Call Crown's Procedure Travesty," *The Daily Province*, May 14, 1925.

<sup>70</sup> "Vancouver Murder Yarns Are Denied," *The Daily Colonist*, October 28, 1924. This public dressing down of the Point Grey police may have accounted for the desperate and illegal tactics they employed against Wong later. It was found in the later stages of the trial that the Point Grey police had paid for and participated in his abduction on two different occasions, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>71</sup> Edward Starkins, *Who Killed Janet Smith?*, 2nd ed. (Anvil Press, 2011), 141.

<sup>72</sup> "Chinese House Boy Disappears," *The Daily Colonist*, March 22, 1925.

<sup>73</sup> "Wong Sing Held Captive?," *The Vancouver Sun*, March 22, 1925.

<sup>74</sup> "Chinese Boy Still Absent," *The Daily Province*, March 22, 1925.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> "Trial by Prejudice," *The Vancouver Sun*, May 20, 1925.

<sup>77</sup> "Shadows' Went On Watch After Wong Abducted," *The Daily Province*, May 3, 1925.

<sup>78</sup> "What Evidence Have Police on Wong?," *The Daily Province*, May 2, 1925.

<sup>79</sup> A look at the minutes for the St. Andrew's and Caledonian Society reveals Vancouver's Scottish societies actively supported anti-Oriental organizations during the Janet Smith case. For instance, on

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January 14, 1925, the Executive Board voted to send a delegate to a Native Sons of Canada meeting which discussed anti-Oriental measures. See St. Andrew's and Caledonian Society, "Executive Meeting Minutes", January 14, 1925, St. Andrews and Caledonian Society fonds, AM453. Box 562-F-3, Folder 3, City of Vancouver Archives, Vancouver, British Columbia.

<sup>80</sup> "Shadows' Went On Watch After Wong Abducted."

<sup>81</sup> Sky Lee was born in Port Alberni, British Columbia, Canada in 1952. In the late 1960s, Lee was one of the founding members of the Asian Canadian Writers' Workshop, which promotes emerging Asian Canadian writers. *Disappearing Moon Cafe* is her most well-known work. For useful biographical sketches of Sky Lee, see Guiyou Huang, ed., "Lee, Sky (1952-)," *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Asian American Literature*, The American Mosaic (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2009), 619-623; Emmanuel S. Nelson, ed., "Sky Lee," *Asian American Novelists: A Bio-bibliographical Critical Sourcebook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 197-203. For literary analyses of *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, see Neta Gordon, "Charted Territory: Canadian Literature by Women, the Genealogical Plot, and SKY Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe*," *Narrative* 14, no. 2 (May 1, 2006): 163-179; Donald C. Goellnicht, "Of Bones and Suicide: Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe* and Fae Myenne Ng's *Bone*," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 46, no. 2 (2000): 300-330.

<sup>82</sup> Tiya Miles, *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom*, American Crossroads 14 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 60.

<sup>83</sup> Sky Lee, *Disappearing Moon Cafe* (Seattle, Wash: Seal Press, 1991), 70. For reasons unknown to me, the author intentionally spells "Chinese" and other racial/ethnoracial terms in all lower-case throughout the text. I omit *sic* in all subsequent passages from Lee's novel.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 76 and 79.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 78-9.

<sup>86</sup> Edward Starkins, *Who Killed Janet Smith?*, 2nd ed. (Anvil Press, 2011), 64.

<sup>87</sup> "Bakers Awarded \$2,000 Damages Against Cowper," *The Daily Colonist*, December 2, 1925.

<sup>88</sup> "Spare No Effort Seeking Guilty," *The Daily Colonist*, September 17, 1924.

<sup>89</sup> "Wong Reappears Held as Killer," *The Daily Colonist*, May 2, 1925.

<sup>90</sup> "Lawyers Clash at Wong Trial," *The Daily Colonist*, May 13, 1925.

<sup>91</sup> "Objection to Interpreter Delays Wong Sing Hearing," *The Vancouver Sun*, May 8, 1925.

<sup>92</sup> "Wong Reappears Held as Killer."

<sup>93</sup> J. A. Macdonald, "Wong Identifies Prison-house; 12 Charged with His Abduction," *The Vancouver Sun*, June 18, 1925.

<sup>94</sup> Julian Sher, *White Hoods: Canada's Ku Klux Klan* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1983), 32.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Darius M. Rejali, *Torture and Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 70-76.

<sup>97</sup> "Wing Foon Sing Regains Liberty On \$10,000 Bail," *The Daily Colonist*, June 24, 1925.

<sup>98</sup> Aristophanes, *LYSISTRATA: New Version & Introduction* by Gilbert Seldes. Illustrated by Pablo Picasso, Collector's edition (Easton Press, 1983), 27.

<sup>99</sup> I will refer to Rosetta Baker as "Mrs. Baker" throughout the chapter whenever her full name is not used or if the context is unclear to distinguish her from Mr. F. L. Baker, Janet Smith's employer, who happened to have the same surname.

<sup>100</sup> "California Benefits by Theater Party," *San Francisco Examiner*, April 3, 1921.

<sup>101</sup> "Elaborate Cotillon [*sic*] by the Gaité," *San Francisco Examiner*, September 2, 1923; "Cotillon [*sic*] Hostess Issues Invitations," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 9, 1923.

<sup>102</sup> "Women's Press Club to Stage Benefit," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 28, 1924.

<sup>103</sup> "Assists in Entertaining Many Visiting Notables," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 22, 1927.

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- <sup>104</sup> “Large Loans Negotiated Recently by Woman Victim in Strangling,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 11, 1930.
- <sup>105</sup> “Chinese Servant Jailed for S.F. Actress Slaying,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 9, 1930.
- <sup>106</sup> “Inflation Calculator: Bureau of Labor Statistics”, n.d., [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm). Accessed 09/29/2012.
- <sup>107</sup> *Lysistrata* must have been an extremely controversial play to take part in for Baker. In Aristophanes’ supreme work of genius, the women of Athens go on a sex strike in order to stop the men from warring in the devastating Peloponnesian War. In the context of the interwar years, where the memory of World War I was still fresh and women were obtaining political rights, the play must have taken on several new meanings. See Emily B. Klein, *Sex and War on the American Stage: Lysistrata in Performance 1930-2012* (Routledge, 2014).
- <sup>108</sup> Unfortunately, *The Judgment of Mrs. Strothers* is quite possibly lost to history as I could not find any other references to the play.
- <sup>109</sup> “New Mystery Veil Thrown on Slaying,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 17, 1930.
- <sup>110</sup> “Jury Refuses to Name Lui as Slayer,” *San Francisco Examiner*, December 17, 1930.
- <sup>111</sup> Ibid. Also, Graves’ testimony corroborated Middleton’s account, adding a few important details, see “Slain Woman’s Friend Tells of Last Evening,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 9, 1930.
- <sup>112</sup> Ethel Bogardus, “Friend Tells Slain Actress’ Love of Gaiety,” *San Francisco Examiner*, December 9, 1930.
- <sup>113</sup> On the anxieties caused by dancing in the 1920s, see Angela J. Latham, *Posing a Threat: Flappers, Chorus Girls, and Other Transgressive Performers of the American 1920s* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000), and Ralph G. Giordano, *Satan in the Dance Hall: Rev. John Roach Straton, Social Dancing, and Morality in 1920s New York City* (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2008).
- <sup>114</sup> “Chinese Servant Jailed for S.F. Actress Slaying.”
- <sup>115</sup> “LuiFook Lays Plight to Fate,” *San Francisco Examiner*, December 10, 1930.
- <sup>116</sup> “Slain Woman’s Gems Found in Servant’s Room,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 10, 1930.
- <sup>117</sup> “Chinese Servant Jailed for S.F. Actress Slaying.”
- <sup>118</sup> “Slain Woman’s Gems Found in Servant’s Room.”
- <sup>119</sup> “Chinese Aids Shadow Actor in Strangling,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 12, 1930.
- <sup>120</sup> “Chinese Servant Jailed for S.F. Actress Slaying.”
- <sup>121</sup> “Baker Murder Clues Collapse, Defense Asserts,” *San Francisco Examiner*, December 12, 1930.
- <sup>122</sup> “Baker Murder Hunt Centers on Cash, Gems,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 15, 1930.
- <sup>123</sup> “Murder of Rich Widow Laid to Chinese Servant,” *San Francisco Examiner*, December 9, 1930.
- <sup>124</sup> “Chinese Hated Victim’s Actor Friend, He Says,” *San Francisco Examiner*, December 12, 1930.
- <sup>125</sup> “Murder of Rich Widow Laid to Chinese Servant.”
- <sup>126</sup> “Slain Woman’s Gems Found in Servant’s Room.”
- <sup>127</sup> “Lawyers, Sleuth Clash in Baker Murder Inquiry,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 13, 1930.
- <sup>128</sup> “Slain Woman’s Gems Found in Servant’s Room.”
- <sup>129</sup> “Murder of Rich Widow Laid to Chinese Servant.”
- <sup>130</sup> “Chinese Servant Jailed for S.F. Actress Slaying.”
- <sup>131</sup> “Blood Spots Link Chinese to Strangling,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 11, 1930.
- <sup>132</sup> Josef von Sternberg, Theodore Dreiser (novel), and Samuel Hoffenstein, “An American Tragedy,” *Internet Movie Database*, Accessed May 18, 2015, [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0021607/?ref\\_=nmbio\\_mbio](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0021607/?ref_=nmbio_mbio).
- <sup>133</sup> Bogardus, “Friend Tells Slain Actress’ Love of Gaiety.”
- <sup>134</sup> “Chinese Servant Jailed for S.F. Actress Slaying.”

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- <sup>135</sup> Bogardus, "Friend Tells Slain Actress' Love of Gaiety."
- <sup>136</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>137</sup> "Chinese 'Framed' in Baker Murder, Counsel Charges," *San Francisco Examiner*, December 11, 1930.
- <sup>138</sup> "Vague Doubt Swayed Jury," *San Francisco Examiner*, December 19, 1930.
- <sup>139</sup> "Speedy Release of Lui [*sz*] Hinted in Baker Case," *San Francisco Examiner*, December 19, 1930.
- <sup>140</sup> "Baker Murder Clues Collapse, Defense Asserts."
- <sup>141</sup> "Let's Dig Deep into Every Angle of This Peculiar Murder Case," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 17, 1930.
- <sup>142</sup> "Liu Fook Tells of Loyalty to 'Boss-Missy' Easy to Have Stolen Cash, Gems, He Says," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 19, 1930.
- <sup>143</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>144</sup> "Slain Woman's Friend Tells of Last Evening."
- <sup>145</sup> "Baker Murder Hunt Centers on Cash, Gems."
- <sup>146</sup> "Slain Woman's Gems Found in Servant's Room."
- <sup>147</sup> Annie Laurie was the pen name that Winifred Bonfils (Oct 14 1863 - May 26, 1936) used when she wrote for the *Examiner*. She wrote for the Hearst Press as Winifred Black. In 1927, she was commissioned by William Randolph Hearst, who was a close friend, to write a biography of his mother. *Time* featured a biographical sketch of the famous columnist, where she is quoted as saying, "[A] woman has a distinct advantage over a man in reporting if she has sense.... Men always are good to women." See "Annie Laurie," *Time*, October 28, 1935 and Annie Laurie, *The Life and Personality of Phoebe Apperson Hearst* (San Simeon, Calif: Friends of Hearst Castle, 1991).
- <sup>148</sup> Annie Laurie, "Old Chinese Houseboy A Strangler? Tut, Tut!," *San Francisco Examiner*, December 18, 1930.
- <sup>149</sup> "Californians Cannot Believe Chinese Servant the Killer," *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 20, 1930.
- <sup>150</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2 edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 2004), 101.
- <sup>151</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>152</sup> "Liu on Ship for Shanghai," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 23, 1931.
- <sup>153</sup> Martha Mabie Gardner, "Working on White Womanhood: White Working Women in the San Francisco Anti-Chinese Movement, 1877-1890," *Journal of Social History* 33, no. 1 (October 1, 1999): 75.
- <sup>154</sup> See Rosanne Amosovs Siu, "Making and Defending Intimate Spaces: White Waitresses Policed in Vancouver's Chinatown Cafes," (Master's Thesis, University of British Columbia, 2010).
- <sup>155</sup> Ibid. Siu's excellent thesis covers all of these aspects of the Mary Shaw/Dick Lee case. Originally, I had independently found and had begun to write about this case in connection to the two examined in this study (the Janet Smith/Wong Foon Sing and Rosetta Baker/Liu Fook cases), but after being made aware of this thesis by Henry Yu and the author herself while I was on one of my research visits to Vancouver, I felt it best to leave it out rather than repeat much of the same points she had already made.
- <sup>156</sup> "Great Convention to Begin Session Monday," *Seattle Union Record*, November 8, 1913, Microfilm A1659., Microforms & Newspapers Collections, University of Washington, Seattle.
- <sup>157</sup> "Meetings of November 11, 24, 26, 1905" November 1905, Minutes of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, 1893-1955. Microfilm. Part 1. 1893-1924, Reel 2, Frame 0266.
- <sup>158</sup> American Federation of Labor, *American Federationist*, vol. XXI, No. 1 (January 1914), 18.

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- <sup>159</sup> “Great Convention Begins Its Work,” *Seattle Union Record*, November 15, 1913, Microfilm A1659., Microforms & Newspapers Collections, University of Washington, Seattle.
- <sup>160</sup> “Meetings of November 8, 23, 1913” November 1913, Minutes of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, 1893–1955. Microfilm. Part 1. 1893–1924, Reel 4, Frame 0720.
- <sup>161</sup> American Federation of Labor, *Report of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor to the Convention to the Thirty-Fourth Annual Convention*, vol. 34 (Philadelphia, 1914), 90.
- <sup>162</sup> “Meetings of January 19–24, 1914” January 1914, Minutes of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, 1893–1955. Microfilm. Part 1. 1893–1924, Reel 4, Frame 0753.
- <sup>163</sup> John Downie, “The Western Labor Immigration Conference,” *Seattle Union Record*, November 15, 1913, Microfilm A1659., Microforms & Newspapers Collections, University of Washington, Seattle.
- <sup>164</sup> “The Influence of the Canal on Immigration,” *Seattle Union Record*, November 29, 1913, Microfilm A1659., Microforms & Newspapers Collections, University of Washington, Seattle.
- <sup>165</sup> E. P. Marsh, “Immigration and the A. F. of L.,” *Seattle Union Record*, December 6, 1913, Microfilm A1659., Microforms & Newspapers Collections, University of Washington, Seattle.
- <sup>166</sup> American Federation of Labor, *Report of Proceedings of the Thirty-Fourth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor*, vol. 34, 1914, 299.
- <sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.
- <sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.
- <sup>169</sup> “A Problem for Labor,” *Seattle Union Record*, December 13, 1913, Microfilm A1659., Microforms & Newspapers Collections, University of Washington, Seattle.
- <sup>170</sup> Greeley-Smith was the granddaughter of the famed editor and New York politician Horace Greeley.
- <sup>171</sup> Nixola Greeley-Smith, “What Is Sphere of Woman? NixolaGreeley-Smith Tells (sic),” *Seattle Star*, November 8, 1913, Microfilm A2202., Microforms & Newspapers Collections, University of Washington, Seattle.
- <sup>172</sup> American Federation of Labor, *American Federationist*, vol. XXI, No. 1 (January 1914), 20.
- <sup>173</sup> American Federation of Labor, *American Federationist*, vol. XXI (March 1914), 232.
- <sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.
- <sup>175</sup> McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 165.
- <sup>176</sup> Fred L. Boalt, “Wealthy Member of Waitresses Union Travels 7,000 Miles to Attend Labor Convention; Wants Men to Help Keep Shop Girls From ‘Easiest Way,’” *Seattle Star*, November 12, 1913, Microfilm A2202., Microforms & Newspapers Collections, University of Washington, Seattle.
- <sup>177</sup> E. P. Marsh, “What Becomes of the Girl Employer Turns Adrift?,” *Seattle Union Record [Originally Printed in Everett Labor Journal]*, November 8, 1913, Microfilm A1659., Microforms & Newspapers Collections, University of Washington, Seattle.
- <sup>178</sup> American Federation of Labor, *Report of Proceedings of the Thirty-Fourth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor*, vol. 34, 1914, 58.
- <sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.
- <sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.
- <sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 358.
- <sup>182</sup> “Representatives of 2,500,000 Men Who Toil Will Open Convention of A. F. of L. in Hippodrome Monday,” *Seattle Star*, November 8, 1913, Microfilm A2202., Microforms & Newspapers Collections, University of Washington, Seattle.



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- <sup>183</sup> Fred L. Boalt, "Gompers Faces Insurrection," *Seattle Star*, November 8, 1913, Microfilm A2202., Microforms & Newspapers Collections, University of Washington, Seattle.
- <sup>184</sup> "Organized Labor a Political Body?," *Seattle Star*, November 13, 1913, Microfilm A2202., Microforms & Newspapers Collections, University of Washington, Seattle.
- <sup>185</sup> "Meetings of April 14–19, 1902" April 1902, Minutes of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, 1893–1955. Microfilm. Part 1. 1893–1924, Reel 1, Frame 0538.
- <sup>186</sup> "Meetings of May 10–13, 15–18, 1922" May 1922, Minutes of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, 1893–1955. Microfilm. Part 1. 1893–1924, Reel 7, Frame 0934.
- <sup>187</sup> "Meetings of February 18–23, 1901" February 1901, Minutes of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, 1893–1955. Microfilm. Part 1. 1893–1924, Reel 1, Frame 0434.
- <sup>188</sup> "Meetings of April 18–23, 1904" April 1904, Minutes of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, 1893–1955. Microfilm. Part 1. 1893–1924, Reel 2, Frame 0001.
- <sup>189</sup> "Meetings of November 10, 18, 24, 1912" November 1912, Minutes of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, 1893–1955. Microfilm. Part 1. 1893–1924, Reel 4, Frame 0422.
- <sup>190</sup> David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, Rev. and expanded ed, Haymarket Series (London: Verso, 2007).
- <sup>191</sup> American Federation of Labor and Asiatic Exclusion League, *Meat vs. Rice; American Manhood against Asiatic Coolieism, Which Shall Survive?* (San Francisco: Published by American Federation of Labor and printed as Senate document 137 (1902); reprinted with introduction and appendices by Asiatic Exclusion League, 1908), 4.
- <sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.
- <sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.
- <sup>194</sup> Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, Convergences (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), 26–28.
- <sup>195</sup> American Federation of Labor and Asiatic Exclusion League, *Meat vs. Rice; American Manhood against Asiatic Coolieism, Which Shall Survive?*, 18.
- <sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.
- <sup>197</sup> Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown*, American Crossroads 7 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 77–9.
- <sup>198</sup> American Federation of Labor and Asiatic Exclusion League, *Meat vs. Rice; American Manhood against Asiatic Coolieism, Which Shall Survive?*, 23.
- <sup>199</sup> "Meetings of March 19–24, 1906" March 1906, Minutes of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, 1893–1955. Microfilm. Part 1. 1893–1924, Reel 2, Frame 0284.
- <sup>200</sup> "Meetings of January 11–16, 1915" January 1915, Minutes of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, 1893–1955. Microfilm. Part 1. 1893–1924, Reel 5, Frame 0079.
- <sup>201</sup> "Meetings of October 18–20, 22–27, 1917" October 1917, Minutes of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, 1893–1955. Microfilm. Part 1. 1893–1924, Reel 6, Frame 0050.
- <sup>202</sup> "Meetings of August 22–30, 1921" August 1921, Minutes of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, 1893–1955. Microfilm. Part 1. 1893–1924, Reel 7, Frame 0572.
- <sup>203</sup> See "Meetings of August 1–2, 4–9, 11, 1924" August 1924, Exhibit A, for a full list of organizations initially invited by Gompers, Minutes of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, 1893–1955. Microfilm. Part 1. 1893–1924, Reel 8, Frame 0722.
- <sup>204</sup> "Meetings of February 11–16, 1924" February 1924, Minutes of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor, 1893–1955. Microfilm. Part 1. 1893–1924, Reel 8, Frame 0540.

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- <sup>205</sup> See “Meetings of August 1–2, 4–9, 11, 1924,” Exhibit B, for this plan.
- <sup>206</sup> See *Ibid.*, Exhibits D and E, for formal statements made by the WTUL supporting the AFL’s campaign to organize women.
- <sup>207</sup> See *Ibid.*, Exhibit C, for the proposed budget.
- <sup>208</sup> “Meetings of August 1–2, 4–9, 11, 1924.”
- <sup>209</sup> Mrs. Ralph Smith Smith, “Women and Economics,” *The Vancouver Sun*, October 6, 1918.
- <sup>210</sup> *Statutes of the Province of British Columbia 1919* (Victoria: King’s Printer, 1919), 271.
- <sup>211</sup> “Bars White Women From Chinese Employ,” *The Daily Colonist*, March 28, 1919.
- <sup>212</sup> As discussed in the introduction, implicit in the westward expansion of the Canadian settler state was the domestication of the continent’s original inhabitants who possessed gender norms and ideas of home life that were seen as completely antithetical to civilization and stood in the way of white settlement. The overwhelmingly male homosocial order of colonial British Columbia meant that white women would play a significant role in civilizing the frontier and in better supporting the settlement process. With the scarcity of white women in the colony, colonists had used Native labor to carry out domestic tasks. By the late 1860s and 1870s, however, Chinese men would fulfill this role.
- <sup>213</sup> *Statutes of the Province of British Columbia 1923* (Victoria: King’s Printer, 1923), 425.
- <sup>214</sup> Bill No. 24, *Revised Statues of British Columbia 1924*.
- <sup>215</sup> “Janet Smith’ Bill Draws Color Line,” *The Vancouver Sun*, November 19, 1924.
- <sup>216</sup> *Revised Statutes of Ontario 1927*, c. 275, s. 30.
- <sup>217</sup> Anne Elizabeth Wilson, “A Pound of Prevention -- or an Ounce of Cure?: A Plea for National Legislation on a Growing Problem,” *Chatelaine*, December 1928, 12.
- <sup>218</sup> For an excellent study of this legal controversy, see Constance Backhouse, “The White Women’s Labor Laws: Anti-Chinese Racism in Early Twentieth-Century Canada,” *Law and History Review* 14, no. 2 (October 1, 1996): 315–68.
- <sup>219</sup> Anne Elizabeth Wilson, “A Pound of Prevention,” 12.
- <sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 12–13.
- <sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>223</sup> Debra Thompson, “Racial Ideas and Gendered Intimacies: The Regulation of Interracial Relationships in North America,” *Social & Legal Studies* 18, no. 3 (September 1, 2009): 362.
- <sup>224</sup> “Asiatic Menace Threatens All,” *The Daily Colonist*, May 18, 1922.
- <sup>225</sup> “Manson Urges Stop to Chinese Hiring While Girls in B. C.,” *Victoria Daily Times*, November 23, 1922.
- <sup>226</sup> S. W. Dafoe, “Sidelights on Proceedings in Legislature of Province,” *The Daily Province*, December 5, 1924.
- <sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>228</sup> “Would Protect Girls from Dope,” *The Daily Colonist*, December 5, 1924.
- <sup>229</sup> “Domestics Bill in House,” *The Daily Province*, December 5, 1924.
- <sup>230</sup> St. Andrew’s and Caledonian Society, “Regular Meeting Minutes” November 7, 1924, St. Andrews and Caledonian Society fonds, AM453. Box 562-F-3, Folder 3, CVA, Vancouver, British Columbia; St. Andrew’s and Caledonian Society, “Annual General Meeting Minutes” December 5, 1924, St. Andrews and Caledonian Society fonds, AM453. Box 562-F-3, Folder 3, CVA, Vancouver, British Columbia.
- <sup>231</sup> “Janet Smith’ Bill Draws Color Line.”
- <sup>232</sup> “House Maids Flee Vancouver Homes,” *The Vancouver Sun*, November 24, 1924.

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- <sup>233</sup> “Bill Likely to Be Killed,” *The Vancouver Sun*, November 25, 1924.
- <sup>234</sup> Anne Elizabeth Wilson, “A Pound of Prevention -- or an Ounce of Cure?: A Plea for National Legislation on a Growing Problem,” 55.
- <sup>235</sup> “Says Chinese Have Right in Homes,” *The Daily Province*, November 26, 1924.
- <sup>236</sup> See Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (University of Toronto Press, 1999), and Scott Kerwin, “The Janet Smith Bill of 1924 and the Language of Race and Nation in British Columbia,” *BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly* 0, no. 121 (1999): 83–114.
- <sup>237</sup> “Playing Politics,” *The Daily Province*, November 29, 1924.
- <sup>238</sup> “Domestics Bill Is Dropped in House,” *The Daily Province*, December 17, 1924.
- <sup>239</sup> Jennifer Henderson, *Settler Feminism and Race Making in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 2003), 12.
- <sup>240</sup> Anne Anderson Perry, “Women Begin to Speak Their Minds,” *Chatelaine*, June 1928, 6.
- <sup>241</sup> Anne Elizabeth Wilson, “Teaching Men to Legislate for Women: A Remedy for the Loss of Canadian Motherhood,” *Chatelaine*, July 1928, 16.
- <sup>242</sup> Anderson Perry, “Women Begin to Speak Their Minds.”
- <sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.
- <sup>244</sup> “Homemaking as a Profession,” *The Daily Province*, April 19, 1907, 6.
- <sup>245</sup> “Advises on Chinese Cook Shortage,” *Victoria Daily Times*, October 19, 1919.
- <sup>246</sup> “Royal Commission’s Report on Subject of Women Migration,” *Victoria Daily Times*, March 24, 1919.
- <sup>247</sup> “Women to Help Work of Canadianization,” *The Daily Colonist*, June 20, 1920.
- <sup>248</sup> “Domestic Help,” *Victoria Daily Times*, December 10, 1909.
- <sup>249</sup> “The Chinese Question,” *Victoria Daily Times*, August 6, 1907.
- <sup>250</sup> “White Slavery in Chinatown,” *Victoria Daily Times*, February 14, 1908.
- <sup>251</sup> “White Woman Slaves of Vancouver Chinese,” *Victoria Daily Times*, June 25, 1908.
- <sup>252</sup> “Sordid Sequel to Mesalliance,” *Victoria Daily Times*, June 30, 1908.
- <sup>253</sup> “First Woman for Legislature Seat,” *Victoria Daily Times*, January 25, 1918.
- <sup>254</sup> “Mrs. Ralph Smith Keeps Her Promise,” *Victoria Daily Times*, February 27, 1918.
- <sup>255</sup> “Making History in Legislature To-Day [sic],” *Victoria Daily Times*, March 1, 1918.
- <sup>256</sup> “Mrs. Ralph Smith Is Sworn in as First Woman in Cabinet,” *Victoria Daily Times*, March 24, 1921.
- <sup>257</sup> Smith, “Women and Economics.”
- <sup>258</sup> C. B. Robertson, “What Is a Capable Woman?,” *Chatelaine*, March 1930, 3.
- <sup>259</sup> “To Foster Interest in Immigration,” *The Daily Colonist*, July 11, 1923.
- <sup>260</sup> “B.C.’s Woman Member Goes to Britain on Immigration Mission,” *The Daily Colonist*, July 25, 1923.
- <sup>261</sup> “Canada for Britons Says Woman Member,” *The Daily Colonist*, September 28, 1923.
- <sup>262</sup> “Mary Ellen Smith Defends Policy of Immigration,” *The Vancouver Sun*, February 26, 1924.
- <sup>263</sup> Anne McClintock, 163-4.
- <sup>264</sup> Saskia Sassen, “Global Cities and Survival Circuits,” in Mary K. Zimmerman, Jacquelyn S. Litt, and Christine E. Bose, eds. *Global Dimensions of Gender and Carework* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 32.
- <sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.
- <sup>266</sup> Rhacel Salazar Parrenas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 11.
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