

criminal life. At an early age George Appo is abandoned by his criminally insane father and orphaned by the death of his mother. Beck describes George as intelligent, well spoken, and a youth who would have been handsome but for a scar across his face, the result of an early knife fight. For Beck, George Appo's life of crime from an early age is symbolic of the emergence of a "new hybrid brood," a dangerous "half-breed" population in the immigrant city. Unlike Patsy O'Wang's farcical ability to shift from one racial identity to another, George Appo's "hybrid" status does not offer a choice between white and Chinese. Despite his intelligence and beauty, his half-breed racial status makes him a permanent outcast and dooms him to a life of criminality. Of the terrible product of "miscegenation," Beck concludes, "In all fairness, such a man is better dead."⁵⁶

The story of Quimbo Appo and his son George is a tale of madness and death that inveighs against miscegenation, the unacceptable alternative to coolieism. Harper's picture of the "Consequences of Coolieism" sought to mobilize Saxon and Celt, Anglo-American and Irish immigrant in defense of the white family. The construction of coolieism was an attempt to insulate the white working-class family from the worst consequences of proletarianization by defining the lowest stratum of menial work as fit only for the coolie or the nigger, and preserving the ideal of artisan labor, with its hope for upward mobility, for the white workingman and his family. As a racial ideology of labor articulated around the trope of the beleaguered White workingman's family, coolieism had to define the Chinese immigrant as a racial Other unfit for white work or white wives.



The Third Sex

The Pacific Railroad Complete

In June 1869, *Harper's Weekly* published a lithograph with the title "Pacific Railroad Complete."¹ The illustration shows a Chinese man, mustachioed, with a thickly braided queue hanging beneath a skull cap, dressed in a baggy Chinese tunic and trousers, standing arm in arm with a white woman dressed in middle-class fashion with a fancy hat and bustled dress. The couple are posed in front of the "church of St. Confucious." [sic] With its caption celebrating the geographic consolidation of the nation, the picture of the wedding of East and West is an ironic visual representation of the complicated anxieties that nineteenth-century Americans had about the changing nature of nation and their families.

The lithograph suggests that the transcontinental railroad ironically "completes" the geographic consolidation of the nation, but in doing so opens up a new set of class, gender, and racial contradictions. It offers a vision of the completed nation as a family, but one that is disturbingly biracial. The West can now be represented by the Chinese man, while the East is represented by the white woman. Their marriage not only is interracial but appears to cross class boundaries as well. The white woman, wearing middle-class attire, represents both the Victorian familial culture and the autonomous female public sphere emerging in the nation's cities; the mustachioed Chinaman represents the new racial and sexual possibilities and threats inherent in the incorporation of the "frontier" into the nation.

In the decades following the Civil War and the completion



PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPLETE.

"The Pacific Railroad Complete" [*Harpers Weekly*, 12 June 1869, p. 384]
(Permission Brown University Library)

of the transcontinental railroad, the family became the principal background against which the ideology of citizenship was debated. At the same time that women renewed their demands for the vote and other rights of citizenship, the nation was faced with the question of citizenship rights for nonwhites. In 1869, Charles Sumner, whose Radical Republican faction in Massachusetts supported both the demand for woman suffrage and the enfranchisement of blacks, urged Congress to eliminate the single word "white" from the naturalization law of 1790. Although Congress amended the statute to allow the naturalization of persons of African nativity or descent, it was unwilling to abandon the principle of a racial qualification for citizenship. Specifically, Congress acceded to the wishes of the Western delegates who opposed immigration from Asia. Even in Massachusetts, where radical egalitarianism was strongest, efforts to give women the vote failed consistently in the early 1870s. As Dale Baum observes, woman suffrage and the "Chinese Question" were the two issues that defined the limits of Radical Republicanism in this most radical of states.²

Kathryn Kish Sklar notes that in the middle three decades of the nineteenth century, white middle-class American women had already constructed vital and autonomous political institutions.³ Middle-class white women constructed a moral authority that challenged male political authority and were able to define their own gender-specific goals outside the formal political system. As historian Peggy Pascoe has shown, particularly in the decades after the Civil War, this moral authority rested on the power of middle-class white women to speak for the needs of women of other races and classes while bolstering the supremacy of middle-class values and institutions, especially with regard to family life.⁴ As the white Victorian bourgeois family took its place as the social norm, the relations of desire with the Oriental (male or female) offered an alternative (albeit a tabooed one) to the social order represented by the racially exclusive, presumptively heterosexual, nuclear family. Against an emergent heterosexual and dimorphic order, Oriental sexuality was constructed as ambiguous, inscrutable, and hermaphroditic; the Oriental (male or female) was constructed as a "third sex"—Marjorie Garber's term for a gender of imagined sexual possibility.⁵

The dynamics of sexuality, gender, class, and race that shaped the Victorian family were driven by changes in the capitalist order. Sexuality, like race, is a socially constructed category of power, formed by the social and political relations of a given culture at a given moment. Sexuality does the political work of defining and regulating desire as well as the body, determining whose bodies and what body parts are eroticized; what

activities are sexual and with whom; under what conditions those activities are acceptable; what privileges, rewards, and punishments accompany sexual behavior; and how the erotic may be distinguished from the non-erotic. Articulated by systems of race and class, with the logics of national identity, and with the organization of gender, sexuality is organized to produce and reproduce the social relations of production.⁶

Nowhere was the capitalist transformation in mid- and late nineteenth-century America so powerfully felt as within the family. Structures and meanings of kinship changed as extended households shrank into nuclear families. Gender roles were redefined as women and men both left (or were forced from) hearth, farm, and workshop to go into the factory. By 1870, cities populated by a new working class, by free people of color, and by immigrants created new possibilities for encounters across class, racial, and sexual boundaries unimaginable a decade or two earlier.

In the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the transformation of the pre-capitalist household into the nuclear family established polarized middle-class gender roles and sexual behavior in what social historians have called the Cult of Domesticity.⁷ The triumph of the bourgeois family transformed American culture from a male-dominated homosocial culture represented by the frontier to a heterosexual culture represented by the Victorian family.⁸

Stephanie Coontz has argued that the cult of domesticity emerged as an ideology whose purpose was to contain the deepening contradictions between the new urban life and older ideals of community, family, and social order. The urban revolution of the 1830s and 1840s had brought about an explosion of new sexual possibilities. In the cities now burgeoning with immigrants, free people of color, professional men, and dandies, factory girls and working-class boys, no longer under the watchful eyes of parents and village, entered into new social relations in the factory, dormitory, and boardinghouse, on the boulevard and boardwalk.⁹

In Coontz's view, for the emergent middle class of the nineteenth century, the private nuclear family with the True Woman as its moral center was imagined to provide a haven from the alienation and anomie of the new competitive and chaotic public life.¹⁰ This construct granted women a monopoly of morality, sensibility, and nurture within the feminine mystique of True Womanhood, while in fact freeing men from such ethical burdens in the public sphere. Home was, however, only a temporary haven, a space in which men might restore their mental and emotional strength before returning to battle in the marketplace. The skills and techniques of crafts and farming handed down from father to son were supplanted by the inculcation of values needed to negotiate and survive

in the marketplace. The discipline of the home, with mother at its center, was expected to reinforce and encourage the development of the competitive values needed to succeed within the new capitalist order.

The Geography of Sex

As the imaginary "frontier" of American culture, a space where male fantasies of sexual, gender, racial, and class aggression and transgression might find expression, the West neatly reversed the reality of the Eastern city.¹¹ At the far edge of the pastoral farm homestead with its links to the communal village, the frontier was conceived of as savage, devoid both of comforting and constraining civilization and of the actually existing capitalist relations of the burgeoning cities. The symbolic emptiness of the West allowed young men to flee both the civilizing disciplines of their families and ruthless capitalism and to recreate themselves not as victims but as vanguard.

The cult of the Western masculine hero, first embodied in the figure of Davy Crockett, valorized untamed savagery in the young single male in service to an onward march of civilization. The frontier provided ground for an anti-familial narrative that reconfigured alienation and isolation as independence and self-sufficiency. It was on the frontier that loneliness could be hammered and honed into the "savage" skill of competitive individualism that was required for survival and success in the capitalist city.

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg notes that the mythic frontier in which Crockett could freely actualize himself and his historical mission was imagined as largely without women, particularly without mothers.¹² Literary critic Eve Sedgwick observes that it is precisely on the register of the homosocial that the boundaries between the heterosexual and the homosexual are contested. The homosocial can thus be understood as the liminal range of alternatives between heterosexual and homosexual oppositions. The Western imagery is often described as homosocial—that is to say, dominated by same-sex relations (like male bonding) that have no sexual component. Yet, as Sedgwick argues, although the homosocial is constituted by that which is not sexual and is distinguished from the homosexual, it does not exist independently of the erotic, but rather is deeply infused with desire.¹³ To describe the West as homosocial is not to deny its sexuality. The land itself was feminized in the metaphor of the virgin land, and the westward movement was imagined in terms of masculine penetration and conquest.¹⁴ In Western frontier imagery, whether the Davy Crockett narratives or the songs of the California gold

rush, the land may have been a woman, but it was a place where boys could be boys.

Imagined as a space where desires that crossed class, racial, and sexual borders were unfettered, the West's freedom from the familial rendered it vulnerable to the homophobic accusation. That is, the Western homosociality engendered and restrained the transgressive impulse; it also sometimes transformed longing into aggression. By the 1870s, as the number of westering women increased, the male-dominated homosocial culture of the West began to be displaced by the Victorian Cult of Domesticity. Domesticity established an increasingly binary and naturalized code of gender and sexuality in an attempt to restore order to sexual behavior. The doctrine of True Womanhood overturned the Protestant republican view that women's sexuality was a natural source of evil. Victorian moralists regarded sexual passion in women as unnatural, deviant, and a marker of degraded lower-class status. Chastity and moral order formed the ideal in which Victorian middle-class women were to fulfill the true nature of their sex. The unbridled sexual energy of men, celebrated in the myth of the Western hero, was to be sublimated to the psychic demands of the marketplace or brought into the service of class reproduction within the privatized family. Sexuality was harnessed to reproduction; the pleasure of the erotic, especially the autoerotic and homoerotic, was to be strictly suppressed.

The cult of domesticity, only partially successful as an ideology of sexual repression, succeeded in constructing the bourgeois family as a private sphere of chastity and piety. On the other hand, a public sphere of sexualized activity also flourished. Prostitution in various forms, from the informal exchange of sexual favors for gifts and meals to the exchange of cash, grew to be commonplace in mid-century American cities.¹⁵ In his 1858 study of prostitution in New York, the social reformer William Sanger found that fully one quarter of his male respondents had visited prostitutes.¹⁶

In the transition from the male-dominated homosocial world of gold rush California to the settled domestic Victorian discipline of California of the 1870s, the Chinese represented a third sex—an alternative or imagined sexuality that was potentially subversive and disruptive to the emergent heterosexual orthodoxy. The Oriental in America could be imagined as an erotic threat to domestic tranquillity for two related reasons. First, during the later decades of the nineteenth century, more than 10,000 Chinese women were brought, for the most part forcibly, to the United States as prostitutes. The Chinese prostitute embodied the available and mute but proletarianized sexuality that mirrored the exoticized female long displayed in the Western literary tradition of Orientalism. If

not contained by race, this image of female sexuality, uninhibited albeit coerced, threatened to undermine the image of the passionless True Woman as the moral center of the chaste and obedient social order. Second, thousands of Chinese immigrant men, displaced from earlier employment in manufacturing, agriculture, or mining, entered the new middle-class family as household servants. This entry into the domestic sphere not only displaced female labor (more often than not, female Irish immigrant workers) but, by opening up possibilities for relations of intimacy and desire across race and class, also threatened to disrupt the patriarchal hierarchy of the family.

The Silenced Presence of Chinese Women

During the middle and later decades of the nineteenth century, thousands of Chinese and later Japanese women were brought to the United States, often under brutally coercive conditions, to labor as prostitutes. In the 1870s and '80s, the figure of the Chinese or Japanese prostitute as a conduit of disease and social decay was sensationalized in newspaper accounts, magazine articles, and official inquiries into the social hygiene of the new cities of the West. Renewing fears of moral and racial pollution, "Chinese" prostitution became a significant political issue in California and a major weapon of those supporting the prohibition of Chinese (and later other Asian) immigration to the United States. The first act limiting Chinese immigration was the Page Act of 1870, which ostensibly prohibited "Chinese, Japanese, and Mongolian women" from being brought to or entering the United States to "engage in immoral or licentious activities." The Page Act, on the presumption of bad character and immoral purpose, required all Chinese women who wished to come to the United States to submit to lengthy and humiliating interrogations of their character prior to being issued a visa in China. The Page Act effectively closed off the immigration of Chinese wives of immigrants already in the United States. But it did little to stop the illegal trade in women, which was protected by corrupt officials on both sides of the Pacific.

The perception of Chinese prostitution as a widespread threat to the nation's moral and physical well-being was greatly exaggerated. At the peak of Chinese prostitution in the late 1870s, Lucie Cheng reports, some 900 Chinese women in San Francisco worked as prostitutes.¹⁷ The number of Chinese (or other Asian) women who worked as prostitutes other than on the West Coast, however, was quite small. Although New York's Chinatown gained notoriety for prostitution, opium smoking, and gambling, the social reformers Helen Campbell and Thomas Knox reported that only three of the prostitutes in the quarter were Chinese,

while the overwhelming number of prostitutes who worked there were white.¹⁸ Anne Butler found that only three of the several hundred prostitutes working in Denver in 1875 were classified as "Oriental."¹⁹

Nevertheless, the image of the Chinese prostitute as a source of pollution was considered a matter of urgent concern. Chinese prostitutes were said to constitute a particular threat to the physical and moral development of young white boys. In San Francisco, a Public Health Committee investigating conditions in Chinatown in 1870 professed shock that boys as young as ten could afford and did regularly use the services of the lowest level of Chinese prostitutes.²⁰ In a popular environment in which theories of national culture were freely combined with theories of germs and social hygiene, it was asserted by some public health authorities that Chinese prostitutes were the racially special carriers of more virulent and deadly strains of venereal disease. The general public tended to ignore the reality and focus on the sensational accounts that fueled the perception of a social crisis.

While highly visible as a symbol in the popular discourse of urban social crisis, the Chinese woman is an almost invisible and absolutely voiceless figure in nineteenth-century popular entertainment. Unlike the figure of "John Chinaman" about whom much is sung, the figure of "China Mary," as Chinese women were often called, is virtually absent in popular songs. One looks in vain for the Chinese prostitute as the subject of some of the several hundred lewd or bawdy songs documented from the period. Perhaps the songs in which she appeared have vanished; more likely they did not exist. Apart from a handful of short stories in *The Overland Monthly* and the *Californian*, in which the Chinese woman appears as the passive object of competition among Chinese men, there is little trace of Chinese women in nineteenth-century popular entertainment.

The Chinese prostitute could not be made a subject of popular entertainment in the nineteenth century because such publicity would unveil the complex homosocial exchange between Chinese men and white men that made possible the profitable exchange of Chinese women's bodies as a commodity. In China, Chinese girls could be bought from their often destitute parents for as little as \$40 and resold to brothels in San Francisco for as much as \$2500. The huge profits involved in this illegal but low-risk trade created a web of exchange between Chinese merchants, brothel owners, and tong members on the one hand and white sea captains, immigration officials, policemen, and politicians on the other. The exchange was not limited to the merely economic, but extended to a shared sexual desire for the bodies of Chinese women. This exchange of commodity and desire created a homosocial bond that was both forbidden and unspeakable.

When the Chinese woman was portrayed at all, she was portrayed as victimized, passive, and silent. The Chinese woman in California, whether a prostitute or the wife of a merchant, was invariably represented in short stories and magazines, such as *The Overland Monthly*, or in travelers' descriptions of Chinese life in California as a silent and isolated figure. The voicelessness of the Chinese woman in American popular culture served the purposes not only of her exploiters but also of her would-be rescuers. Abolitionist Lydia Maria Child, in an early "national culture" survey of the world's women, painted a picture of Chinese women as having an "unknowing visage" and being inherently passive and mute.²¹ Victorian moral reformers, such as the Presbyterian missionary Donaldina Cameron, who freed many a Chinese prostitute from sexual bondage (whose Chinese nickname was fittingly "Lo Mo" or Old Mother), saw her charges as victims without agency, whose only hope was that of being saved by their white missionary mother and perhaps eventually marrying a Chinese Christian convert.²² For the social purity reformers, the image of the mute Chinese woman bound to sexual enslavement, which no doubt accurately described many but not all Chinese prostitutes in nineteenth-century America, served as synecdoche for all prostitutes, indeed for all women whose passionless True Womanhood was at the mercy of predatory male sexuality. The voicelessness of the Chinese woman seemed to confirm the claim to the passionless true nature of womanhood in general.

Fictions of Domesticity

Two short stories, "The Haunted Valley" by Ambrose Bierce and "Poor Ah Toy" by Mary Mote, which tell the story of desire between whites and Chinese, and its tragic consequences, exemplify the ways in which the discourse of desire was overdetermined by race, sex, and class in the transition from the homosocial frontier to the heterosexual family. Although "The Haunted Valley" is a classic Gothic tale and "Poor Ah Toy" is a domestic fiction, both stories address the boundaries of race, class, and gender that divided Chinese and whites in late nineteenth century California.

The stories were published twelve years apart.²³ *The Overland Monthly*, which began publishing in San Francisco in 1868 with Bret Harte as its first editor, was considered the premier literary magazine of the West. Although Harte's work did not appear in the magazine, fiction by Ambrose Bierce, Gertrude Atherton, Jack London, and Frank Norris, among other notable Western writers, did.²⁴ Its editorship, its literary content, and the fact that it was a monthly publication suggest that *The Overland Monthly* was aimed principally at a middle-class audience.

The *Overland Monthly* paid extraordinary attention to the presence of the Chinese in California; of the eighty-two pieces of short fiction that the magazine published throughout its history, sixty-nine involved Chinese characters.²⁵ Ranging from fantasies of a Chinese invasion of the United States to sympathetic accounts of Chinese victimization at the hands of white racists, these stories reflect a contradictory and highly ambiguous view of the Chinese presence in California. The editorial ambivalence and generally sympathetic tone of many of the stories further suggest that the magazine sold to a middle-class readership less hostile to the Chinese than was the white working class.²⁶

"The Haunted Valley"

"The Haunted Valley," the first piece of short fiction that Ambrose Bierce published (in March 1870), shows that Bierce, like his editor Harte, was politically sympathetic to the Chinese. Bierce's journalism criticized in acid prose those he saw as oppressors of the Chinese, in particular Denis Kearney and the Workingman's Party of California.²⁷ Bierce's intense skepticism regarding ideology was both a result of his experience in the Civil War and his interest in the epistemological work of Charles Pierce, an American philosopher interested in linguistics and the indeterminacy of language. "The Haunted Valley" foreshadows many of the themes of the uncertain and the unknowable that would become the hallmarks of Bierce's better-known fiction.²⁸

"The Haunted Valley" is a gothic tale of murder and transracial desire that turns on a sexual masquerade.²⁹ (I use the term transracial, as opposed to interracial, here to indicate that the reader is given no indication that the desire is reciprocated.) The narrator, a young journalist recently arrived in California from the East, can easily stand in for the middle-class reader of *The Overland Monthly* and, as a naïf, can interrogate the story at its various levels. Revealed through a series of interviews, the story revolves around two murders, one that has occurred before it opens and one that occurs during the course of the story.

"The Haunted Valley" begins with the journalist's interview with "Whiskey" Jo Dunfer, an old-timer who is known for his hatred of the Chinese and his love of strong drink. He is reputed to have murdered his Chinese cook and hireling, Ah Wee, some years earlier. Dunfer is willing to tell his story to the young Eastern reporter as a way of explaining to the newcomer the "nub of the [Chinese] problem." The reason Dunfer gives for killing Ah Wee is that Ah Wee "put on airs" and refused to chop down the trees on the site of a new cabin in the manner in which Dunfer had instructed. This shallow rationale for homicide, absurd on the face of it, was one that had been accepted with full faith and credit

by the local jury, which had acquitted Dunfer of any wrongdoing. The interview comes to an abrupt end as Dunfer recoils in terror when he sees "an eye black as coal" looking at him through a knothole in the barroom wall.

On his way back to the city, the young reporter comes across Ah Wee's neatly kept and flower-decorated grave, and discovers that the story is perhaps more complicated than Dunfer has let on. The gravestone reads:

Ah Wee—Chinaman

Aig unnone. Wikt last Wisky Jo.

This monument is ewrektd bi the saim to keep is memmery grean. An liquisize a wornin to Slestials notter take on ayres like Wites. Dammum! She was a good eg.³⁰

When the young reporter returns to the Haunted Valley, it is Jo Dunfer who has died. On his weed covered grave a crudely carved sign simply says, "Jo Dunfer, Done For."³¹

In a subsequent interview Dunfer's other hired hand, "a little cuss named Gopher" (as Whiskey Jo called him), tells another story. In his version, Ah Wee was a woman. Gopher had fallen in love with Ah Wee and had rescued her from prostitution but had subsequently lost her to Dunfer in a card game. Gopher had followed Dunfer and Ah Wee to the valley so that he could be near her. After some time, Dunfer had himself fallen in love with Ah Wee. As Gopher recounts the story, Dunfer killed Ah Wee by accident when he came across Gopher and Ah Wee in what he had thought was a sexual embrace. Immediately after striking the fatal blow with his ax, Dunfer had discovered, to his horror, that the embrace had actually been an innocent attempt by Gopher to brush a wasp away from the face of the sleeping Ah Wee.

Although he had not contradicted Dunfer's preposterous story to the jury, Gopher admits to having poisoned Dunfer to avenge Ah Wee's death. After this now complicated tale is told, however, the reporter elicits the admission that Gopher has himself gone mad.

This is no simple ghost tale. In the middle of the story, the reader is led to Ah Wee's flower-decorated gravestone with its inexplicable inscription, "with its meagre but sufficient identification of the deceased; the impudent candor of confession; the brutal anathema, the ludicrous change of sex and sentiment." The inscription is an invitation to revisit the story offered by Whiskey Jo in his cups. When Dunfer says at the beginning of the interview, "You young Easterners are a mile and a half too good for this country, and you don't catch on to our play," and asserts that his story will explain the "nub of the [Chinese] problem," the derisive comment should be a warning to us that to accept, on faith,

Dunfer's glib rationale for murder is to naively recapitulate the racism of the jury.

The triangle of desire between Dunfer, Gopher, and Ah Wee turns on the racialized and sexualized relations of capital. In direct competition for Ah Wee, the object of desire, are Dunfer and Gofer. The primitive pun on their respective surnames parallels the stage of primitive accumulation of capital that their relationship represents. For Whiskey Jo Dunfer, the petty capitalist, the economic structure of primitive accumulation and its homosocial culture that allow him to control both Gopher and Ah Wee are ideal. For Dunfer, the "nub of the problem" comes with the introduction of bourgeois familial society, represented here by religion and politics. It is the church (here Bierce is forecasting his lifelong feud with what he called "organized hypocrisy"³²) that introduces taboo into the homosocial idyll. Nostalgically, Dunfer recounts that he had hired Ah Wee in the days before the onset of politics and religion, when he "had no nice discriminating sense of my duty as a free W'ite citizen; so I got this pagan as kind of a cook and turned off a Mexican woman." Dunfer claims that it is when "I got religion over at the Hill and they talked of running me for the legislature, it was given for me to see the light"—that is, the error of his racial transgression. Despite the pressure to dismiss his Ah Wee, he resists. "If I made him sling his kit and mosey, somebody else'd take him and mightn't treat him well," Dunfer asserts, revealing some concern for the well-being of his Chinese hireling.³³

Dunfer's view of the "nub of the problem" has some historical merit. In the 1850s and 1860s, California was still a largely male terrain. Until the arrival of large numbers of white women from the East Coast in the mid-1870s, the gender ratio in California was twelve men to one woman. Between 1860 and 1882, thousands of Chinese workers who had been dismissed as railroad builders and driven from the mines and farms took up independent employment in service industries as launderers, tailors, and restaurateurs, or worked for wages as domestics and cooks.

While the study of the anti-Chinese movement in California generally has emphasized its economic rationales, Ralph Mann's study of the anti-Chinese movement in Nevada City and Grass Valley demonstrates that it was the arrival of white women and the establishment of families that precipitated the movement in those two gold-mining communities. The establishment of family life reconstructed bachelor life in the mining towns around a new more hierarchical social and moral order. Many of the services that Chinese immigrant men had provided, such as laundering and cooking, were now performed by families, or by white women who provided services to bachelor populations to supplement their family incomes. Other, heretofore welcomed services provided by

the Chinese, such as gambling, prostitution, and opium smoking, were declared morally unacceptable and provided justification for the control, segregation, and finally removal of the Chinese residents of these communities.³⁴

Dunfer's rhetorical and somewhat cynical questions—"What was I to do? What'd any good Christian do, especially one new to the business?"—make it clear that racial transgression in the realm of employment is framed as a moral transgression.³⁵ The regime of the bourgeois nuclear family, reproductive and heterosexual, extends its reach by defining the boundaries between acceptable nonsexual homosociality and deviant same-sex relations. In this case, the accusation against Dunfer and Ah Wee is overtly a charge of economic racial transgression, the employment of a Chinese. In light of Dunfer's affection for Ah Wee, however, the effect of the accusation is homophobic panic. Ah Wee's masquerade as a man is no longer necessary and sufficient to protect the relationship. Ah Wee must "take on ayres like Wites" if the relationship is to survive.

This intervention of the bourgeois family into the homosocial frontier explains Bierce's insistent description of the valley not in pastoral terms but as a "twisted and blasted heath, a unnaturally foreboding place." It also explains his suggestive choice of the word "hermaphrodite" to describe Dunfer's dwelling.³⁶ The overtly racial and covertly sexual dilemma also explains Dunfer's effort to build a new cabin far back in the woods as an attempt to reconstruct a pastoral utopia in the face of heterosexual and racial discipline.

Gopher, the hired man, is described as misshapen and deformed, while Dunfer, the petty capitalist, is described as looking like he had not worked for some time, and as a prodigious consumer of tobacco and drink. Gopher's body is deformed both by his economic exploitation and by his frustrated desire for Ah Wee. The erotic rivalry between Dunfer and Gopher is intense but, given their class relations, one-sided. It ends only in the death of Dunfer and can be measured by the terse bitterness of the crude grave marker that Gopher has made for his erstwhile master. Bierce uses the figure of Gopher to represent working-class frustration, both at capitalist affection for and exploitation of the Chinese and with its own desire for the Chinese. Gopher has won and lost Ah Wee. He does not object to Dunfer's glib rationalization of Ah Wee's homicide in the public record, for to do so would also reveal his own secret desire for Ah Wee. Instead, he waits to poison Dunfer.

As a racially subordinate object of desire, Ah Wee has neither voice nor agency while alive. Even Ah Wee's physical description is limited to Dunfer's exclamation that "Ah Wee had face like a day in June, and big

black eyes—I guess maybe they were the damn'dest eyes in this neck o' woods." Only Ah Wee's eyes are physical markers of difference. The only other thing that sets Ah Wee apart is a distinctive style in chopping down trees—chopping around the base of the tree, whereas Dunfer chops across. Whether this difference in woodsmanship is symbolic of other unspoken differences in sexual behavior, one can only speculate. On his return trip the young reporter does note, however, that the tree stumps, however differently cut, seem all to have rotted away in the same manner. This discovery reveals the superficiality of Whiskey Jo's courtroom rationale for homicide. The "nub" of the question is obviously elsewhere.

Ah Wee's masquerade as a man works to protect the interracial couple as long as it is assumed that the homosocial relations that sustain it are not erotic. However, the introduction of the bourgeois family with its heterosexual orthodoxy brings with it the threat of the homophobic accusation, and the sexual masquerade becomes as threatening as the exposure of racial transgression. Thus the threat of the Chinese servant as an ambivalent sexual object reasserts itself.

Although Ah Wee's sexual identity is what Dunfer and Gopher must both keep secret so as not to reveal their (racially and/or sexually) transgressive desires, it is race and not sex that determines Ah Wee's fate. Ah Wee's death is a warning to other Chinese not to "put on ayres as White" after all. It is race that asserts itself in determining the value and outcome of this relationship. While "The Haunted Valley" does not secure the sexuality of Ah Wee or Dunfer or Gopher, the gender triangle does secure racial difference. The story finally turns on the establishment by bourgeois society of an immutable difference between Ah Wee's Chineseness and Dunfer's and Gopher's Whiteness. Ah Wee's permanent status as the subordinate object of desire is determined by race. Ah Wee is "won," after all, in a poker game. On the face of it, Ah Wee's race, not her sex, is the principal social marker of difference and transgression. It is Ah Wee's Chineseness to which the people upon the Hill object. It is this racial object in the first instance which makes necessary Ah Wee's sexual masquerade. As it turns out, the question of Ah Wee's sex is made moot by the jury's unquestioning acceptance of Jo Dunfer's silly plea; the public value of Ah Wee's life is measured only by Ah Wee's race.

It is only in death that Ah Wee's presence is felt through the supernatural power of the evil eye. Mary Douglas reminds us that those who represent the danger of pollution are often endowed with magical powers, especially the power to cast evil spells.³⁷ It is Ah Wee's eyes, the very same eroticized body parts that Dunfer exclaims are the "damnd'est eyes around," the physical markers of race that have "incapacitated his servant for good service," which, in death, become Ah Wee's instruments of

terror. After Dunfer's scream of fear, the young reporter "saw that the knot-hole in the wall had indeed become a human eye—a full, black eye, that glared into my own with an entire lack of expression more awful than the most devilish glitter."³⁸ In this moment, sexualized and racialized difference is reified in the persistence of the sign of the Oriental body—the inscrutable eye.

"Poor Ah Toy"

By contrast to the unknowable gothic of "A Haunted Valley," Mary Mote's "Poor Ah Toy" seems at first glance to offer a didactic and straightforward cautionary tale about the potentially disastrous consequences of miscommunication between white mistresses and Chinese servants. Historian Glenna Matthews notes that the "servant problem" dominated the pages of women's magazines between the 1870s and the First World War. Matthews writes that in the mid-nineteenth century, the "help" of neighboring farm girls who were, more often than not, considered part of the family was displaced by immigrant (often Irish) "servants" whose cultural, linguistic, religious, and class differences were pronounced. "No one was going to call "Bridget," as she was frequently so personified, a republican independent dependent. She was Catholic, poorly educated, and highly vulnerable."³⁹ For thousands of middle-class white families, finding a substitute for Bridget meant turning to a male Chinese servant.

"Poor Ah Toy" tells the sad story of the relation between a young white middle-class matron, Fanny Siddons, and her Chinese servant, Ah Toy. Fanny Siddons arrives in California shortly after the end of the Civil War to take over the household duties of her deceased sister-in-law, who has left Robert Siddons a widower with two young children. Finding the Irish female housekeeper unsuitable and trying a series of imperfect Chinese servants, Fanny is sent Ah Toy, the young cook and houseboy of a close family friend.

Ah Toy proves to be an excellent domestic servant in every respect, a quick learner and a patient worker under Fanny's tutelage. For some time, domestic order and tranquillity are restored, and Ah Toy becomes a member of the household. When he falls ill after news of the death of his mother, Fanny cares for him as a child, much the way that she had for an old Negro slave in her father's home in Virginia. Ah Toy is entrusted with the care of the family and, in Robert Siddons' absence, is invited to join the family at the hearth.

This idyll of reconstructed family begins to unravel with the arrival of Captain Ward, a suitor to Fanny. Ah Toy becomes immediately jealous of Captain Ward. After Ward and Fanny are engaged, Ah Toy angrily confronts Captain Ward and is dismissed by Fanny for his insolence. In the

kitchen after his dismissal, overcome by frustrated passion, Ah Toy attempts to kiss Fanny's hand and to profess his love for her.

Fanny recoils in horror, saying that her brother would kill Ah Toy if he found out what Ah Toy had done. Shaken, Fanny tells Ah Toy that he must leave at once. She hires another Chinese servant, one Gong Wah, who proves to be an incompetent. Nevertheless, Fanny is distracted and can no longer sustain an interest in the household's management.

A dramatic change for the better in the condition of the household makes Fanny suspicious of Ah Toy's renewed presence. She believes she hears him singing and she thinks she feels someone touching her cheeks at night. She sends her brother on a fruitless search for Ah Toy that seems to reveal only the extent to which Fanny has been driven to distraction by her emotional entanglement with Ah Toy.

The next morning, however, Gong Wah finds Ah Toy's body in the barn. Ah Toy has hanged himself and left a note stating that he cannot bear to be apart from Miss Fanny and that he desires to be buried on the farm so as to be with her forever. This extraordinary request is granted. Fanny goes on to marry Captain Ward, but returns often to visit the grave of Ah Toy.

"Poor Ah Toy" is at one level a domestic fiction that reiterates the taboo on interclass and interracial intimacy. Like Charles Nordhoff, Mary Mote serves up a warning to female employers of Chinese household servants.⁴⁰ They should not succumb to their own image of the Chinese as childlike. They should be careful not to let their own "natural" kindness be mistaken for affection. Finally they should be careful not to allow servants to assume positions within the private realm of the family as surrogate family members.

"Poor Ah Toy" reverses the power relations of social history: the least socially powerful, the spinster homemaker and the Chinese servant, are the principal agents of the story. The most socially powerful, Robert Siddons, Fanny's older widowed brother, and Captain Louis Ward, a former Union officer, are given little agency in this story. In the rivalry between Ward and Ah Toy for the affections of Fanny, there is nothing equal in the social contest between the white gentleman and the Chinese houseboy. Ward has to do nothing to gain the adoration of Fanny, while there is seemingly nothing that Ah Toy can do to gain her affection. Nevertheless, at the psychological level, Ah Toy's transgressive display of affection, his departure, and his death all have a deep effect on Fanny, the unattainable object of his desire.

Fanny and Ah Toy are economic orphans of the post-Civil War economy. Fanny is like many a young woman from a genteel former slaveholding family, for whom factory work is unsuitable and marriage to the ap-

propriate gentleman difficult. One of Fanny's few options, apart from teaching, for making her own living and enabling her to retain her class status is to establish herself as the surrogate mother of her widowed brother's family. Ah Toy, like thousands of other Chinese immigrant men displaced from mining, railroad building, or farm work in the 1860s and 1870s, enters the white middle-class household as cook, houseboy, and laundryman. In entering into domestic labor either as household servants or independent service providers, such as laundrymen or tailors, Chinese men avoided competition with white men but competed directly with women, particularly immigrant Irish women.

Indeed, Fanny's first act in establishing her rule as a True Woman in command of the household is to replace the "slatternly" Irish housekeeper, "who had aspired to become the mistress of the situation." The housekeeper leaves muttering that Miss Siddons was only fit to be served by "them nasty Chinamen, for no dacent woman would stand the likes of her domineerin' ways." Ah Toy's arrival relieves Fanny of "the hundred petty details to be attended to in paying sacrifices to the exacting Moloch of neat housewifery" which, "in addition to the watchful observance of the children, were on the shoulders of the conscientious and diligent girl."⁴¹

While it saved True Womanhood from the physical demands of the secular cult of cleanliness, the entry of men into the domestic sphere threatened to unsettle the gendered division of labor, putting men in domestic roles such as cleaning and cooking and assigning supervisory and management roles to women. The creation of the domestic male required a place for an alternative masculinity. This alternative masculinity, opposed to True Womanhood by gender and class and to the Western Hero by race and class, could be contained by racial taboo and facilitated by the assumption that the Chinese male immigrant, bereft of family in the United States, would eventually return to China. Thus a critical turn is taken when Ah Toy is orphaned by the death of his mother in China. Her death takes away the reason for his future return to China; he declares his permanent residence in the United States: "Me no go to my Chiny-place, me allee time stay here." Ah Toy's orphan status makes him available to assume a permanent position within the domestic sphere of the Siddons household, transforming him from sojourner to permanent alien. It also make him available as both a surrogate child to Fanny and an alternative head of household.

This surrogacy is made manifest when Ah Toy falls ill and "Fanny wait[s] on him with the womanly tenderness her mother had shown to a favorite slave." This is a clear warning that Fanny's behavior is anachronistic, better suited to the extended pre-capitalist household under the

rules of slavery. The same act in the "modern" bourgeois family has been given a different meaning and has different consequences.

The construction of Ah Toy as a surrogate child accomplishes several things. It symbolically shifts him from an object of exchange, a commodity, into an imagined family member. The reader recalls that Ah Toy had been "given" to Fanny by a friend of the Siddons. His arrival had been accompanied by a note:

Now that you have undertaken the charge I am not willing that all the sacrifices shall be yours; and therefore tender to you my own private and particular factotum, Ah Toy, hoping that he will lighten your burdens as he has mine. He is cleanly, honest, faithful, but lest you disbelieve in my paragon, I must own that he is unduly sensitive and has been somewhat spoiled.⁴²

Ah Toy's childlike, "feminine" qualities can be safely contained, indeed inventoried and deployed in the service of the household. Initially, Ah Toy is described as "tall, youthful, comely, jauntily dressed. With a bow, this Mongolian exquisite presented a delicately tinted, faintly perfumed billet."⁴³ Ah Toy's fastidiousness and sensitivity distinguish him from earlier household servants. "Evidently Ah Toy was of another ilk, and as complement to his exceptional tidiness, his bedroom was hung with cheerful paper, a dozen flaming lithographs were bestowed to adorn the walls, and a bright colored matting laid upon the floor."⁴⁴

Since Ah Toy's labor has restored "comfort and order" to the "storm-tossed" Siddons household, attention to his sensitivity is a small price to pay. When Robert Siddons attempts to admonish Ah Toy, Fanny is quick to remind her brother that Ah Toy is "the very center of our domestic economy."⁴⁵ Here Ah Toy's role in restoring the domestic economy is seen as part of a pastoral restoration; his dual role as servant and surrogate child recapitulates the role of bonded servant or apprentice in the pre-capitalist extended household. In actuality, his role as waged servant brings the entering wedge of capitalism into the bourgeois household itself.

As a surrogate child, Ah Toy can enter into the intimate sphere of the family. After a short time, Robert Siddons leaves the family in Ah Toy's trusted and skilled hands while he travels on business. Ah Toy is able to claim a space within the family sphere.

Ah Toy, solitary in the kitchen one rainy evening, donned his best silk blouse and, tapping at the door, timidly begged leave to join the little circle. As the dog and cat were outstretched in lazy content on the rug, it seemed hard to deny the one lone servant admission to the hearth; so he was welcomed to a humble seat corner, where he shared the mirth and good cheer in a deferential way: popping corn, cracking nuts, and making ingenious little toys for the children.⁴⁶

In crossing to the hearth, Ah Toy is crossing the internal boundaries of race and class. Despite his trusted position as temporary guardian of the household, his permission to enter the domestic sphere of the hearth relies on his status as a surrogate child. He is not, and he is conscious of the fact he is not, the surrogate master. "Henceforth, in Mr. Siddons's absence, he often joined the group, never presuming to do so when the master presided."⁴⁷

Finally, Ah Toy's status as a surrogate child makes possible, and at the same time, unresolvable, the erotic tension between himself and Fanny. Establishing a surrogate mother/child relation between Fanny and Ah Toy establishes an alternative vehicle for intimacy that conforms to Victorian codes of gender and desire and thus was extremely familiar to the Victorian woman.

In the ideology of domesticity, the constrained relationship between disciplined husband and passionless wife was paralleled in importance only by the intimacy between mother and her male child. G. M. Goshagian has demonstrated the central role that an obsession with imagined incest between mother and son played in the domestic ideology of the Victorians.⁴⁸ The male child/mother relationship established a vehicle for intimacy and simultaneously raised an incest taboo to suppress or contain passion.

It is the confrontation between this third, alternative gender, figured as the male child, and the Western hero that is at the heart of the relations of desire among Ah Toy, Louis Ward, and Fanny Siddons. "Poor Ah Toy" directly compares this version of Orientalized sexuality with Western masculinity. Fanny describes Louis Ward, a former Union officer whom she admires despite his former status as an enemy, as "a real Yankee, but a gentleman, intelligent, accomplished, agreeable." On his arrival at the Siddons's door, Ward is described as dark and handsome, in sharp contrast to the more elaborate and feminized description of Ah Toy on his arrival. In keeping with Victorian conventions of gender and sexuality, which assigned emotional sensitivity, if not sexual passion, to the female, Ah Toy is rendered as vastly more sensitive and emotionally complex than either Robert Siddons the brother, or Louis Ward the suitor, who are depicted as civil and restrained. In emotional terms Ah Toy is much more closely aligned to Fanny.

Ward's arrival is marked by a bold assertion of his masculinity: "Fanny's smile of welcome was more eloquent than speech, for Captain Ward took both her hands and boldly kissed her lips."⁴⁹ It is when Ah Toy presumes to assert his own sense of racial equality and to act in the same way that the incest taboo asserts itself. Refusing a large tip for the favor of walking twelve miles to deliver the very telegram that will bring Ward to the Siddons home, Ah Toy asserts a claim to class status. "I no

T-a-r-t-a-r. I allee same gentleman.”⁵⁰ Later, frustrated by the evident permanent presence of Ward, Ah Toy attempts to use his indispensability to the domestic economy to oust his perceived rival for Fanny’s affections from the position as honored guest. When Ah Toy angrily confronts Ward, Fanny rebukes and dismisses him; moments later in the kitchen, a space that Ah Toy shares with Fanny, he makes the following advance.

The yellow features of the spectator grew ashen with suppressed feeling, his black eyes glittered with a strange light, as he caught her hand and pressed the jeweled fingers to his lips, in imitation of a salute he had seen when the captain fancied himself and Fanny unobserved.⁵¹

Fanny recoils in horror and shameful knowledge. Ah Toy’s kiss has pierced the veil that has marked their relationship. The single gesture of desire violates the surrogate child/mother relationship and breaks the incest taboo, exposing the seams of race, class, and sexuality that suture their relationship.

That Ah Toy has broken the incest taboo between mother and surrogate child is made clear from Fanny’s immediate verbal response to his kiss. Her first words are, “you are a bad man.”⁵² This is the first and only time Ah Toy is referred to as an adult. Fanny’s further response is to internalize the incest violation, blaming herself as mother for the failure to successfully tutor the child: “She darted from the room, white, cold, heart-sick, to throw herself on her bed in an agony of shame and apprehension, sobbing to herself: I am to blame, I am to blame.”⁵³

This transgression is cathartic and transformative. Although Ah Toy has been driven from the household, his presence continues to be felt. Although Ah Toy’s successor proves incompetent, the once fastidious Fanny is distracted from her duties as superintendent of the household. “Fanny bore herself to Gong Wah with an icy hauteur that astonished Robert. She kept entirely aloof from the kitchen, and refused to correct his short comings.”⁵⁴

It is Ah Toy’s racially and sexually transgressive kiss, and not her engagement to Ward, that transforms Fanny from a girl into a woman. This transformation is beset with pain, since it flows not from an orderly transition from girlish innocence to True Womanhood but from exposed desire, both Ah Toy’s and her own. After Ah Toy’s exile, Fanny is described as being full of “womanly shame and remorseful anxiety.” Desire, guilt, and remorse have transformed Fanny. She has become

a changeling, for the frank, sunny girl had been displaced by an irritable, absent-minded, and dejected woman—a metamorphosis that dumbfounded the men to whom she was dear, she grew wan, careworn, and

strangely nervous. The truth was that she was harassed by vague forebodings and by constant self-reproach.⁵⁵

The search for Ah Toy on the Siddons ranch reveals the depth of her mixed feeling for him. “The pitiable condition of the wretched creature and his presence in the valley filled her with apprehension that drove her half wild.” When her “eager quest” for Ah Toy turns up no sign of him, she admits that “I have thought about that wretched boy till I am almost insane.”

Ah Toy’s suicide is his final gesture of resistance. He hangs himself in a manner that underscores his status as a racially defined subordinate, the racial status that makes his desire for his white mistress impossible. Ah Toy kills himself by the very sign of his difference: “He had managed to suspend himself with the long and thick cue which had been the object of his pride.”⁵⁶

Ah Toy leaves a note stating that, unlike many Chinamen who die in America, he does not want his remains to be sent back to an ancestral home in China but wants instead to be buried on the Siddons ranch. Gong Wah translates and paraphrases the note to Fanny: “He no wantee bones go back Chiney, he wantee puttee in glound here, so he allee time see Miss Fanny.”⁵⁷

Gravestones mark the presence of people on the landscape. In both “The Haunted Valley” and “Poor Ah Toy,” the headstones of Chinese immigrants signify their status as permanent resident aliens in America. Both headstones are inscribed with epitaphs that, reflecting the ambivalence of their authors toward their subjects, are layered in meaning. Both mark the racial parameters that simultaneously created and constrained new possibilities for relations of desire, conflating the sexual with race, class, and gender formations. The crude warning on Ah Wee’s gravestone to “Celestials” not to be “putting on airs” underscores Ah Wee’s subordinate and vulnerable status as a racial Other. The warning against “putting on airs” of presumptive racial equality is ironic, in the face of the “airs” of sexual identity that Ah Wee is supposed to have put on in collaboration with Dunfer and Gopher. Just below the warning, the “revealing” comment “She was a good egg,” attests to that ambiguity of transracial (and more ambiguously, homosexual) desire that shaped the relationship between Ah Wee, Dunfer, and Gopher in the transition between the homosocial world of the gold rush and the heterosexual world of Victorian California. On the second headstone, the simple inscription “Poor Ah Toy” both recognizes Ah Toy’s subordinate class status dictated by his race and, at the same time, is an oblique expression of sympathy for his desires. In his suicide note, Ah Toy stakes two claims, both unat-

tainable for the Chinaman in life: The first is on the heart of Fanny Siddons, the second is for a place in America. The first is achieved simply by interment, the second by the memorial. "Fanny Siddons never returned to the spot; but Mrs. Louis Ward came more than once to see an humble grave whose headstone bore the brief inscription, 'Poor Ah Toy.'⁵⁸

Displacing Women, Destabilizing Gender

The presence of the Chinese male disrupts the fragile balances between sexes within the household, both in the realm of sexuality and in the realm of labor. On the one hand, the Oriental domestic could be made the site of homoerotic and/or multiracial alternatives to the emergent heterosexual and monoracial orthodoxy of Victorian America. At the same time, the employment of the male Chinese servant to do "woman's work" destabilized the gendered nature of labor.

In 1868, the song "Irish Widdy Woman," meant to be sung in Irish brogue, castigated Chinese laundryman for having "ruint th' thrade."

For I kin wash an' iron a shirt,
An' I kin starch a collar as stiff
As any Chineseman, I'm sure;
But ther dhirty, pigtail haythens,
An' ther prices they are paid
Have brought me to the state you see—
They've entirely ruint th' th'rade.⁵⁹

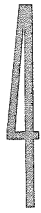
Boycotts of industrial and agricultural employers of Chinese led Chinese to seek employment in the home or to open small businesses in industries most identified with "woman's work." In both "The Haunted Valley" and "Poor Ah Toy," the Chinese immigrant enters and displaces a non-Chinese woman (in the first case, Mexican, and in the second, Irish).

In 1910 the State of Montana attempted to drive the Chinese out of the laundry business by requiring the purchase of a ten-dollar license to operate a laundry. The law exempted steam laundries and laundries operated by women. Quong Wing, a Chinese male laundry operator, sued for the return of his ten dollars. Arguing the case before the US Supreme Court, Quong Wing's attorney did not claim that the intent of law was racial discrimination, which it was, but rather that the law discriminated against Quong Wing as a man. Seeking to preserve a separate (and protected) female sphere and the gendered nature of work, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes responded:

Hand laundry work is a widespread occupation of Chinamen in this country; while on the other hand, it is so rare to see men of our race engaged in it that many of us would be unable to say that they had ever observed the case. . . .

If Montana deems it advisable to put a lighter burden upon women than upon men with regard to employment that *our people commonly regard* as more appropriate for the former, the Fourteenth amendment does not interfere by creating a fictitious equality where there is a real difference.⁶⁰ (Emphasis added.)

The presence of Chinese men in the sphere of domestic labor, once naturalized as "woman's work," required a new formulation of the separate spheres. Although Justice Holmes did not empower the Fourteenth Amendment to create "fictitious equality," the "real difference" between sexes could no longer be taken for granted, but now had to be recognized as a social construction, defined by the "common regard."⁶¹



Inner Dikes and Barred Zones

At the end of the nineteenth century, Theodore Roosevelt wrote to his friend, the diplomat Spring Rice, "Together . . . the two branches of the Anglo-Saxon race . . . could whip the world."¹ Roosevelt joined Alfred Thayer Mahan, the apostle of American naval power, in calling for a program of vigorous military preparedness and an "Anglo-Saxon" alliance of English-speaking peoples.² Roosevelt and Mahan shared a concern about competition from Germany, Russia, and Japan for concessions and spheres of influence in China and Korea and an anxiety about a revanchist challenge to the white domination of Asia. In 1905, this anxiety over a "Yellow Peril" assumed the status of a nightmare after Japan's stunning military victory over Russia.³

While a formal British-American alliance never materialized, the spirit of Anglo-Saxonism expressed by Roosevelt shaped the racial discourse of the first two decades of the new century. Between the time that Roosevelt rode off to liberate the Cubans and the passage of the Immigration Act of 1923, Cuba, the Philippines, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico were all brought under the American eagle. The American transformation from republic to (comparatively small) empire created anxieties about new immigration and "racial suicide." These anxieties were voiced in debates over nationality, naturalization, and family in which the Oriental was consolidated as the Yellow Peril.⁴

The construction of the Yellow Peril was paralleled by a consolidation of whiteness. Roosevelt's call for an Anglo-Saxon alliance prompted columnist Finley Peter Dunne's trenchant observer of American life, Mr. Dooley, to observe to his pal Hinnessy:

An Anglo-Saxon . . . is a German that's forgot who was his parents. . . . Mack is an Anglo-Saxon. His folks come fr'm th' County Armagh, an' their nay-tional Anglo-Saxon hymn is 'O'Donnell Aboo.' Teddy Rosenfelt is another Anglo-Saxon. An' I'm an Anglo-Saxon. . . . Th' name iv Dooley has been th' proudest Anglo-Saxon name in th' County Roscommon f'r many years. Schwartzmeister is an Anglo-Saxon, but he doesn't know it, an' won't till some wan tells him. Pether Bowbeen down be th' Frinch church is formin' th' Circle Francaize Anglo-Saxon club, an' me ol' frind Domingo . . . will march at th' head iv th' Dago Anglo-Saxons whin th' time comes. There ar-re twinty thousan' Rooshian Jews at a quarther a vote in th' Sivinth Ward; an', ar-rmed with raghooks, they'd be a tur-r-ble thing f'r anny inimy iv th' Anglo-Saxon 'lieance to face. Th' Bohemians an' Pole Anglo-Saxons may be a little slow in wakin' up to what th' pa-apers calls our common hurtag, but ye may be sure they'll be all r-right whin they're called on.⁵

As Dooley observed, the Anglo-Saxon "race" had become a big tent, under which immigrants from many nations might be gathered, so long as they shared the "common hurtag." How exactly the "common hurtag" might be defined was never clear. The Naturalization Act of 1790 offered U.S. citizenship to immigrants if they had resided in the United States for five years, had declared their intent to become American citizens two years prior to applying for naturalization, and were "free white persons."⁶ The 1790 act was inclusive with regard to cultural difference (it allowed Catholics and Jews, German and French immigrants to become citizens), but it was exclusive with regard to race (only "free white persons" could be naturalized).

The category "free white persons" appeared clear enough when contrasted to enslaved Africans or indentured Europeans. However, it seemed less obvious when it came to Asians. George Washington, for example, had expressed surprise to discover that Chinese were not "white."⁷ In practice, the naturalization of Asian immigrants was inconsistent across the country. In the 1850s and 1860s, Chinese immigrants were denied citizenship by California courts, but courts in Massachusetts naturalized Chinese applicants. In the early decades of the twentieth century, courts in Oregon and Washington granted citizenship to Sikh and Muslim applicants from India, while California courts approved the naturalization petitions of Filipinos. Similar petitions were denied in New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts.⁸

By 1870, the abolition of slavery and the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment prompted the amendment of the "free white persons" stipulation of the naturalization statute. Charles Sumner, the old Radical Republican from Massachusetts, called for the simple removal of the single word "white" removed from the naturalization statute, thereby opening citizenship to all regardless of race. However, the law was

amended to specifically include only “persons of African nativity and descent.” Furthermore, the 1870 legislation expressly prohibited Chinese immigrants, “subjects of the Celestial Empire,” from gaining citizenship through naturalization.⁹ In 1882, Chinese workers were barred from entering the United States.

Although the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1870 explicitly denied Chinese immigrants the right to become naturalized citizens, it did not define the term “free white person.” Other Asian immigrants continued to settle in the United States. Between 1885 and 1908, more than 150,000 Japanese immigrants came to the United States. After the United States conquered the Philippines at the turn of the century, 26,000 Filipinos immigrated. Almost 6,000 Korean immigrants and just over 5,000 immigrants from the Indian subcontinent arrived in America in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Hundreds of these Asian immigrants, not barred as Chinese, would apply to be naturalized Americans and challenge the notion of the “free white person” in an effort to share Dooley’s “common hurtage.”

All of these Asian immigrants met widespread and well organized hostility; anti-Japanese, anti-“Hindoo” and anti-Filipino political movements, violence, and discriminatory legislation followed in the tradition of the anti-Chinese movement.¹⁰ Although hostility toward the Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and Indian immigrants was concentrated on the west coast, local agitation led to state and federal legislation aimed at curbing “Oriental” immigration and prohibiting “Orientals” from becoming naturalized citizens. At the federal level, the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907 insisted that Japan “voluntarily” agree to stop issuing visas to Japanese laborers seeking to come to the United States. As part of the Immigration Act of 1917, Congress created the “Asiatic Barred Zone,” which prohibited the immigration of any person whose ancestry could be traced to the Asian continent or Pacific Islands. In 1922, Congress passed the Cable Act, which stipulated that a female American citizen who married a foreign national would lose her citizenship. In 1924, the exceptions for immigrants from Japan were eliminated, and Japanese immigration was brought to a halt.¹¹

It was not only a fear of the Yellow Peril but also a thirst for overseas markets and its passion for coaling stations that had led the United States to seize dominion over Puerto Rico, Cuba, Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, and the Philippines. Notwithstanding its rapid acquisition of a mid-sized empire at the turn of the century, the United States was deeply divided on the issue of direct colonial rule over overseas possessions.¹² President McKinley himself professed ambivalence about the annexation of the Philippines. In an interview with Protestant ministers who had come

to express their concerns about the brutal war to suppress Filipino independence, the deeply religious McKinley offered this account of his epiphany about “The White Man’s Burden”:

The truth is I didn’t want the Philippines and when they came to us as a gift from the gods, I did not know what to do about them. . . . I thought first we would take only Manila: then Luzon: then other islands, perhaps also. . . . One night late it came to me this way. . . . One, that we could not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable; two, that we could not turn them over to France or Germany—our commercial rivals in the Orient—that would be bad business and discreditable; three, that we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government—and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain’s was; and four, that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all and by God’s grace do the very best we could do by them, as our fellowmen for whom Christ also died. And then I went to bed, and to sleep and slept soundly.¹³

The anti-imperialist movement marshaled a wide array of arguments against colonial expansion. Some argued that an American imperium was antithetical to its republican tradition and values. Others cited a popular revulsion against the brutality of the Philippine war, and a sympathy for national independence movements. However, many of its most prominent participants opposed the annexation of Hawaii and later the Philippines on the grounds that it would result in the arrival of millions of yellow and brown immigrants.

The steel magnate Andrew Carnegie saw the potential addition of Asian subjects to the polity as a threat to national unity and asked, “Is the Republic to remain one homogeneous whole, one united people, or to become a scattered and disjointed aggregate of widely separated and alien races?”¹⁴ Historian C. Vann Woodward has noted that

The doctrine of Anglo-Saxon superiority. . . . which justified and rationalized American imperialism in the Philippines, Hawaii, and Cuba differed in no essentials from the race theories by which [anti-imperialist] Senator Benjamin R. Tillman of South Carolina or Senator James K. Vardaman of Mississippi justified white supremacy in the South.¹⁵

Both imperialists and anti-imperialists shared the view that the threat from the East represented a peril to the nation; they differed on its proximity.

David Starr Jordan, the founding president of Stanford University, held that democratic institutions had been uniquely developed by Anglo-Saxons and could only exist where Anglo-Saxons thrived. Anglo-Saxons, in particular the Anglo-Saxon family, Jordan asserted, could not thrive in

the tropics, hence democratic values and institutions could not take root there, nor were those born under such conditions likely to become assimilable citizens. "Colonial Aggrandizement is not national expansion; slaves are not men. Wherever degenerate, dependent or alien races are within our borders to-day, they are not part of the United States. They constitute a social problem; a menace to peace and welfare."¹⁶

Jordan warned that the race problem was an even greater problem for the United States than the threat of foreign armies. He compared the potential "social problem" presented by the attempt to incorporate millions of yellow- and brown-skinned peoples into America to the "social problem" presented by the freed African American. Jordan feared the annexation of the Philippines would expand the "race problem" in the United States, since he believed that because of their tropical environment Filipinos were naturally unsuited to democratic institutions and hence to economic and social development. Jordan asserted, "The race problems of the tropics are perennial and insoluble, for free institutions cannot exist where free men cannot live."¹⁷

Quoting "The White Man's Burden," Kipling's sardonic ode to the American annexation of the Philippines, on the floor of the Senate, Senator "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman, the Georgia populist who had led the crusade to disenfranchise blacks and to establish Jim Crow segregation in the South, also invoked the so-called Negro Problem in warning against the racial problems implicit in the imperialist adventure.¹⁸

We [Southerners] understand and realize what it is to have two races side by side that can not mix or mingle without deterioration and injury to both and the ultimate destruction of the civilization of the higher. We of the South have borne this white man's burden of a colored race in our midst since their emancipation and before.

It was a burden upon our manhood and our ideas of liberty before they were emancipated. It is still a burden, although they have been granted the franchise. It clings to us like the shirt of Nessus. . . . Why do we as a people want to incorporate into our citizenship ten millions more of different or of differing races, three or four of them?¹⁹

More explicitly, Samuel Gompers, who as president of the Cigar Makers Union and president of the American Federation of Labor had waged a successful war against Chinese immigration and who was in the midst of mobilizing the organized labor movement against Japanese immigration, asked rhetorically,

If the Philippines are annexed what is to prevent the Chinese, the Negritos and the Malays coming to our country? How can we prevent the Chinese coolies from going to the Philippines and from there swarm into the

United States and engulf our people and our civilization? If these new islands are to become ours, it will be either under the form of Territories or States. Can we hope to close the flood-gates of immigration from the hordes of Chinese and the semi-savage races coming from what will then be part of our own country?²⁰

The same narrative that linked the racial peril at home to the one abroad could be found in the popular culture as well as in the elite debates over America's imperial adventures. A one-act skit, *The King of the Philippine Islands*, is an example of the popularity of this theme.²¹ Subtitled "a ludicrous afterpiece," *The King of the Philippine Islands* was written for the vaudeville and amateur stage by Frank Dumont, a veteran of the blackface minstrel stage. In the classic Jim Crow style, the skit features Willie Danger, a "colored cook" who, through cowardice and stupidity, brings about an attack by Filipino rebels on an encampment of American soldiers. But Danger, like his model Zip Coon, survives and finally outwits his captors. Willie Danger is portrayed as an abject coward who survives out of blind luck and a willingness to claim that he is "half Filipino." Danger then outwits the "savage natives" by offering them "citizenship" in a sham republic of which he has declared himself president. Just before he is to be cooked and eaten by the Filipino "savages," Willie in desperation announces,

Now that you're free as Cuba, and you have reciprocity and beet sugar men with you, it is just that we should rule the Philippines and we will! (Natives cheers) . . . These islands are the only free and independent spots on the globe. (cheers) [J. P.] Morgan owns everything on the sea—[Mark] Hanna owns the land. But we've got this and were going to hold it! (cheers).²²

The Filipinos follow Danger until he greedily takes all of the island's spoils for himself. The farce ends when Danger is blown up, although he appears again waving an American flag while white American soldiers round up the native insurgents.

In this sketch, it is the emancipated black Willie, and not the Filipinos, who is the real danger to the republic. The Spanish American War was the occasion for white veterans from both the Union and the Confederacy to reconcile around a military call for national unity.²³ In the first instance, the portrayal of Willie as a coward serves to erase from public memory the actual courage of black American troops in the Spanish American War, much as their service in the Civil War had been effaced. Willie is fit only to be a cook; when assigned to guard some prisoners, he immediately becomes a groveling coward, as a result of which the American camp is overrun by Filipino insurgents. This is a thinly disguised play

on reconstruction. Willie is only fit for servitude; once enfranchised he leads to ruin.

Reversing the account of atrocities that took place in the brutal suppression of the Filipino independence struggle, the White American troops are shot from cannons.²⁴ The portrayal of the Filipinos as savages and, when they threaten to cook and eat Willie Danger, as cannibals corroborate David Starr Jordan's contention that the native of the tropic lacks the capacity to participate in democracy. Finally, the image of the two colored peoples coming together to form an ersatz republic underscores the need for a policy that ensures white supremacy.

The identification of imperialist policy abroad specifically with the "Negro problem" at home was by no means coincidental. Walter Benn Michaels argues that the non-racialist argument against imperialism as a violation of constitutional limitations on federal power and an erosion of the republican tradition went hand in hand with the racist claim that empire would open the floodgates to undesirable nonwhite immigrants. Southern anti-imperialists saw Reconstruction as nonconstitutional and a form of imperialism. The notion of constitutional limits on federal power abroad bolstered Southern arguments for the limited federal power in the enforcement of Reconstruction at home.²⁵ Benn Michaels points out that Thomas Dixon, whose novel *The Clansman* (1905) became the film *The Birth of A Nation*, characterized the South under Reconstruction as an "African" empire. Benn Michaels writes, "For Progressives like Dixon, however, citizenship in the 'new nation,' produced out of resistance to an 'African' empire, became essentially racial; the legitimacy of the state (its identity as nation rather than empire) was guaranteed by its whiteness."²⁶

The King of the Philippine Islands also served the agenda of progressive reform. Willie Danger's pronouncement of his rule over the Philippines is a blackface mimicry of McKinley's justification of American conquest, and his "presidency" satirizes the corruption scandals of the McKinley administration. Willie Danger's first act is to pardon "all persons found guilty of postal frauds and other trivial matters." He celebrates the tycoons Mark Hanna and J. P. Morgan and warns his new citizens "not to expect too much—you've got your freedom! You will vote as you are told to, or you won't get any patronage." The natives later throw out Danger, crying, "we've been buncoed again."²⁷

The satire of William McKinley speaks to the concerns of the powerful progressive reform movement that had emerged in the last decades of the nineteenth century in the face of capitalist industrialization and the failure of party politics to address the progressives' desire for more responsive government. The movement, building on the autonomous fe-

male public sphere that had arisen in mid-century, mobilized thousands of middle-class women and fostered the maturation of their political culture in the years between 1900 and 1920.²⁸

Female reformers saw a need for reconstructing the home as a sphere apart from the office or factory. Eileen Boris observes that "progressives attempted to mitigate the impact of capitalist industrialization by consciously or unconsciously stabilizing the social order, in which reconstructing the family was a central component."²⁹

Although disenfranchised in all but a few states, and excluded from the male domain of party politics, women mobilized support for the protection of women and children through social legislation and court action. By the turn of the century, the state actively protected the reconstruction of the family in an effort to preserve gender-based obligations; in separating home from polity and economy, the state ratified not only existing power relations within families but also the relationship of different family members to the state.³⁰

This newfound concern on the part of the state for the reconstruction of the family was not unrelated to the question of race and empire. The influx of immigration, not only from Asia but also from Central and Southern Europe, had given rise to anxieties among the still predominantly "old stock" Anglo-Saxon middle class about "racial suicide." Alisa Klaus notes that Theodore Roosevelt linked the nation's military and economic vigor with the strength of the family and likened motherhood to military service.³¹ When the Supreme Court upheld legislation establishing a minimum wage for women in 1911, it did so on the basis that the compelling national interest was the survival of the common heritage. "As healthy mothers are essential to vigorous offspring, the physical well-being of a woman becomes an object of public interest and care in order to preserve the strength and vigor of the race."³²

Fu Manchu: Consolidating the Oriental

The threat to the white race was not from Willie Danger's "cannibals"; the Filipino nationalist movement was crushed with brute ferocity. The Yellow Peril came in the form of immigrants who resided in the Chinatowns of the white world. This Yellow Peril was given a face and a body in Dr. Fu Manchu, the fiendish mastermind created in the novels of Sax Rohmer.

Imagine a person tall, lean and feline, high shouldered, with a brow like Shakespeare, and a face like Satan, a close shaven skull and long magnetic eyes of true cat green. Invest him with all the cruel cunning of an entire

eastern race, accumulated in one giant intellect, with all the resources . . . of a wealthy government. . . . Imagine that awful being, and you have a mental picture of Dr. Fu Manchu, the yellow peril incarnate in one man.³³

Although Fu Manchu resided in London's Chinatown, he served "Eastern dynasts" who sought to bring the world under the rule of an "Asiatic Empress." The tales of Fu Manchu harnessed the great tradition of Orientalism to the purposes of Yellow Peril hysteria. The pulp fiction villain was created by Arthur Sarsfield Ward who, as Sax Rohmer, wrote thirteen novels, four short stories, and a novelette about his machinations. The first three novels, *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu* (1913), *The Return of Fu Manchu* (1916), and *The Hand of Fu Manchu* (1917), set the pattern for the whole series. The novels enjoyed massive popularity in the United States. Fu Manchu was the first universally recognized Oriental and became the archetype of villainy. After a hiatus of fourteen years, Sax Rohmer moved to the United States and resumed the Fu Manchu series in 1931. His last Fu Manchu tale was published in 1959. In the forty years that spanned Fu Manchu's career in evil, millions read the books, listened to stories about him on the radio, watched him on film and television, and followed his crimes in the comics.³⁴

Orientalism, like other theories of domination and difference, relies heavily on establishing authority over the Other through knowledge of and access to the Other's language, history, and culture as a privilege of the colonial agent. The power of knowledge lies in the authority to define the colonized subject and determine its fate. Edward Said writes that "to have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate 'it', to have authority over 'it.' . . . Since we know it and it exists in a sense as we know it."³⁵

In the Fu Manchu stories, Rohmer simultaneously deployed Orientalist authority and reduced the Orientalist tradition of humanistic scholarship and textual authority to a simple racial struggle between the evil Fu Manchu, bent on nationalist revenge, and his Anglo-Saxon nemesis, the ex-colonial agent and Asia expert, Nayland Smith. Just as Kaiser Wilhelm insisted that the struggle between Christendom and the Orient was a "fight to the knife" for racial survival, the "Asiatic" threat that Rohmer's Fu Manchu represents is explicitly the threat of racial annihilation. Nayland Smith makes clear to Dr. Petrie, his sidekick and chronicler, that "the swamping of the white world by Yellow hordes might well be the price of our failure."³⁶

The following passage from *The Hand of Fu Manchu*, in which Nayland Smith reveals the secret Oriental plot to rule the world, contains all the elements of the Orientalist paradigm.

You will perhaps remind me . . . of the lowly place held by women in the East. I can cite notable exceptions, ancient and modern. In fact, a moment's consideration will reveal many advantages in the creation by a hypothetical body of Eastern dynast-makers not of an emperor but of an Empress. Finally there is a persistent tradition throughout the Far East that such a woman will one day rule over the known peoples. I was assured some years ago, by a very learned pundit, that a princess of incalculably ancient lineage, residing in some secret monastery in Tartary or Tibet, was to be the future empress of the world.³⁷

First, Smith sounds the alarm, introducing the latest and most "shocking" Asiatic problem. The threat from the East is not the open challenge of military might but the threat of subversion. As the chief agent of domination by an Oriental "empress of incalculably ancient lineage," Fu Manchu threatens not only international political stability but also "natural" gender categories that are the pillars of Western civilization and of the white race itself. In carefully balancing received wisdom about the Orient ("the lowly place of women in East") with obvious fantasy ("a secret monastery in Tartary or Tibet . . . assured by an ancient pundit"), Rohmer establishes his Anglo-Saxon hero, Nayland Smith, as an Orientalist authority with appropriate references to logical analysis and a command over both "fact and fantasy" about the Ancient East. "Much of this is legendary," Smith informs Petrie, "some of it mere superstition, but . . . *part of it is true.*"³⁸

As the shift from Fu Manchu's Chineseness to "Tartary or Tibet" and "the East" suggests, Rohmer's Orientalism collapses national histories into an ahistorical cultural category of Oriental Otherness. Although Fu Manchu is presented as Chinese and the headquarters of his evil empire is located in London's Limehouse Chinatown, his Chineseness is only a marker of his generalized Oriental alienness. Chinatown, long familiar to American readers as a den of vice and moral corruption, is less distinctively Chinese than Oriental. Here, Sax Rohmer describes a "den" in Chinatown that is a hideout for Fu Manchu and his many minions.

These divans were occupied by a motley company of Turks, Egyptians, Greeks, and others, and I noted two Chinese. Most of them smoked cigarettes, and some were drinking. . . . A girl was performing a sinuous dance . . . accompanied by a young Negro woman upon a guitar.³⁹

As Smith explains to an awed Petrie, the place is "sort of a combined *Wekaleh* and place of entertainment for a certain class of Oriental residents in or visiting London." In this passage, Nayland Smith exercises his power as the Asia expert to define the Orient. In doing so, he

simultaneously constructs the Orient and establishes authority over his audience.

Throughout the Fu Manchu stories, distinctions among Asian nationalities and cultures are collapsed. Chinamen skulk about in Chinatowns. Reference is continuously made to the underworld of the British empire inhabited by dacoits (Indian bandits), thugees (murderous devotees of the cult of Kali, the Hindu deity of destruction), Lascars (originally a term for Indian soldiers which was extended to include sailors on merchant vessels and laborers and servants), and the "Burmese" death via the suitably exotic "Zayat-kiss." The authority of Nayland Smith, the archetypal area studies expert, comes from his ability to recognize the evidence of a myriad of different Asian criminal elements and to track them back to Fu Manchu, the fount of Oriental evil. Smith's ability to reveal and explain this hidden spectacle to the reader through Petrie establishes his bona fides as an Asia expert and is ultimately the source of Smith's power to thwart Fu Manchu's stratagems.

In an age of beleaguered Victorian masculinity, with its obsession about racial suicide induced by anxieties about over-consumption, over-civilization, and the loss of martial spirit, virility, and authenticity, the "fight to the knife" for racial survival served as a masculine tonic, another opportunity for regeneration through violence.⁴⁰ The racial struggle is marked on the bodies of the two contestants. Fu Manchu, cruel of lip and long of fingernail, the agent of the ultimate female domination, is invariably described physically in feline and androgynous terms; Nayland Smith, like Owen Wister's Virginian, is the imaginary archetype of the Anglo-Saxon hero: gaunt, tanned, weathered, a figure evolved from Sir Walter Scott's novels of romantic knighthood.⁴¹ Fu Manchu's power to incite the fevered imagination lies in his ambiguous sexuality, which combines a masochistic vulnerability marked as feminine and a sadistic aggressiveness marked as masculine. Fu Manchu is the archetype of the sado-masochistic Asian male character in American popular culture narratives of the twentieth century. His sexual attractiveness (and his popularity) springs from this simultaneous heterosexuality and homoeroticism. The sexual ambiguity is reflected in the ambiguity of Fu Manchu's racial and cultural background. His Chinese racial identification is de-centered by the fact that much is made of his scientific Western education and his sophistication. Fu Manchu is the very definition of the alien, an agent of a distant threat who resides amongst us. He represents the cosmopolitan world of Empire. Yet this cosmopolitanism masks his evil intent, which, Nayland Smith warns, "is to 'pave the way' . . . for nothing less than a colossal Yellow Empire. That dream is what millions of Europeans and Americans term 'the Yellow Peril!'"⁴²

The construction of the Oriental has always made sexuality a con-

tested terrain. The Orient, Edward Said reminds us, is constructed as a feminized object of desire. At the heart of Fu Manchu's underworld lies Rohmer's Orientalist sexual fantasy, domination by the Orientalized woman.

[The would be Empress of the world] always remains young and beautiful by means of a continuous series of reincarnations; also she thus conserves the collated wisdom of many ages. In short she is the archetype of Lamaism. The real secret of Lama celibacy is the existence of this immaculate ruler, of whom the Grand Lama is merely a high priest. She has as attendants, maidens of good family, selected for their personal charms, and rendered dumb in order that they may never report what they see and hear. "Her body slaves are not only mute, but blind; for it is death to look upon her beauty unveiled."⁴³

Having momentarily lost himself in this sexualized Orientalist reverie, Nayland Smith quickly recovers his position of authority over the East by resisting its erotic power and at the same time exercising interpretive power over the whole. Through Smith's Orientalist expertise, Rohmer exercises an erotic power over the reader by revealing the unknowable mysteries of the feminized Other, including its apparent silence.

The passage above reminds us that the construction of the Oriental, the denial of subjectivity, takes the form of a sexual domination in which the Orient is constructed as feminine and silent. In this passage, the Orient is not only given gender but also infused with female sexuality and represented as a female object. It is Nayland Smith's mature masculinity, his control over erotic desire, and his appropriation of language and logic that enable him to defeat the clever and cunning Dr. Fu Manchu, who cannot control his own desire to conquer white civilization. Key to the Orientalist's appropriation and control of language is his denial of rationality, sanity, and maturity, all seen as male attributes, to the Oriental. Representing the Orient in terms of female sexuality has been a strategy for establishing the difference between the intellectual, social and historical West and the immature East, caught in the throes of irrationality and unable to exercise self-control. As Smith and Petrie escape yet another trap laid by Fu Manchu, Smith says, "We owe our lives, Petrie, to the natural childishness of the Chinese! A race of ancestor worshippers is capable of anything."⁴⁴

Rescuing Family and Nation at the Movies

If Sax Rohmer gave the Yellow Peril a body and brought him to Chinatown, the movies brought the Yellow Peril from Chinatown into the home. Cecil B. DeMille's *The Cheat* (1915, Paramount) and D. W. Griffith's *Broken Blossoms* (1919, United Artists), two of the earliest feature-

length American movies, made explicit what the Fu Manchu stories had only hinted: the Yellow Peril's sexual threat to white civilization. Both *The Cheat* and *Broken Blossoms* constructed and deployed the imagery of sexual relations between Asian men and white women in order to interrogate and ideologically resolve the twin crises of family and nation.

In 1915, David W. Griffith captured the white imagination with his masterwork of racism, *The Birth of A Nation*. The film brought to millions of Americans a historically twisted but emotionally compelling narrative of national redemption through racial revival.⁴⁵ *The Birth of A Nation* treated the crisis of a nation still divided by regional loyalties and the politics of race as a crisis of family. The desire to restore a sense of national unity was articulated in terms of national kinship based on racial purity. The divided nation is represented as the white national family, represented in turn by the northern Stonemans and the southern Camerons, who are kin by blood but divided by the politics of race. The white national family is torn asunder by the Civil War, where the cousins are pitted against each other on the battlefield. In a deeply sentimentalized battle scene, two of the cousins are brought together in a dying embrace. The wounded nation can heal only when the attempt to bring blacks into the national family, through emancipation, citizenship, and, worst of all, miscegenation, is brought to an end. Griffith's message was simple and powerful. Black participation in the national family means political corruption and social chaos—in short, the downfall of the white nation. The broken national family can only be redeemed when it recognizes “Negro savagery” and miscegenation as its true enemy. The nation can be reborn in the Klan, where Stonemans and Camerons are reunited in a defense of a “common Aryan birthright.” In the flaming Celtic cross, Griffith's Klan deployed a symbol of Christian Anglo-Saxonism in service of a romantic racial nationalism. From the White House, Woodrow Wilson, the first president from the South since Andrew Johnson and a former history professor, enthused that *The Birth of a Nation* was like “writing history with lightning.”

The same year that *The Birth of a Nation* celebrated the “redemptive” terror of the old Klan, a new Ku Klux Klan was inaugurated at Stone Mountain, Ga. Although the new Klan found its strongest support in the New South, its popularity spread to all sections of the country. The membership of the new Klan was broadly middle-class; the lawyers, doctors, sheriffs, and bankers who made up the elite of a myriad of small towns provided its institutional core. By 1920, the new Klan could claim the power to mobilize five million defenders of the “Aryan birthright” against not only blacks, but also Catholics, Jews, immigrants, and “deviant” whites.⁴⁶

Wilson's enthusiasm for *The Birth of a Nation* was not merely an expression of appreciation for what he believed to be a vindication of the victimized South, but also a recognition of the power of the movies to mobilize national identity. The movies were the most powerful cultural medium in the first half of the twentieth century. The power of the movies was both social and semiotic. Motion pictures became the main format for the creation of a national audience and the popular articulation of a national narrative. Historian Lary May argues that in the cultural crisis brought about by economic and social changes of the late nineteenth century, the movies provided “both models for an idealized society of consumption and comforting, Victorian reassurances of the perils of indulgence and materialism.”⁴⁷

Beginning in the first years of the century, short film strips and one-reelers shown in nickelodeons catered to working-class and immigrant audiences.⁴⁸ By the second decade of the century, as movies shifted toward the more complex and novelistic feature-length narrative and as movie theaters were designed to imitate legitimate theaters, the movies began to take on a more reputable image and attract a middle-class audience. When the Lynds began their study of white working-class life in Muncie, Indiana, in 1900, there were no movie theaters in “Middletown”; by 1929, when the study was complete, “Middletown” had seven movie houses. While cinema houses remained rigidly separated by race, the movies began to create a white “national” audience across boundaries of region, class, and ethnicity.⁴⁹

The movies created a new world for their audiences, allowing them to see what previously they had only read, heard, or dreamed about. Visuality could overwrite, undercut, and contradict the verbal narrative; the simplest editing collapsed both time and space. At a moment when the “weightlessness” of middle-class life was being called into question and when the middle-class worried about its lack of “authentic” experience,⁵⁰ visuality allowed the movies to intensify everyday life and to manipulate emotions beneath the surface of the written word. Film theorist Raymond Durnat observes, “For the masses the cinema is dreams and nightmares, or it is nothing. It is an alternative experience freed from the tyranny of the ‘old devil consequences’; from the limitation of having only one life to live. One's favored films are one's un-lived lives, one's hopes, fear, libido.”⁵¹

From the beginning, films were interested in race and sex and the relationship between the two. A list of D. W. Griffith's one-reelers produced for the Biograph Film Company before 1915 reads like an ethnology text and includes such titles as *The Red Man and the Child*, *The Hindoo Dagger*, *the Mexican Sweethearts*, *A Child of the Ghetto*, *The Greaser*,

and *The Chinaman and the Sunday School Teacher*.⁵² Film historian Nick Browne writes that “the imagery of the movie world linked and intermingled exoticism and consumerism . . . for cultural possession and incorporation of the ancient wealth of Asian sexual secrets and material life. The Orient served as the emblem of a deepening reterritorialization of desire.”⁵³

The Cheat and *Broken Blossoms* brought together the nation’s external threat, the Yellow Peril, and the nation’s domestic threat, the emergence of the New Woman. To progressive reformers who sought to preserve the family as a sanctuary from the market, the New Woman appeared to be the antithesis of her True Woman mother. She was independent, educated, and liberated; she was a public woman, a consumer, a participant in an autonomous women’s public culture, and increasingly a self-conscious sexual being. At the very moment that the over-civilization and weightlessness of middle-class life have weakened the self-confidence of the middle-class male, the New Woman offered a direct challenge to his late-Victorian masculinity.

In her study of maternalist ideology and progressive reform, Eileen Boris argues that in an effort to protect the women and children from the worst effects of capitalism, progressives supported the ideological separation between public and private spheres and consequently reinforced the treatment of women as dependents.⁵⁴ Film historian Gina Marchetti notes that “racial difference, particularly when linked to issues of female sexuality or woman’s economic autonomy, has consistently appeared in Hollywood’s melodramas as an element of disruption to the smooth functioning of the domestic order.”⁵⁵

Despite their immediately apparent differences, both *The Cheat* and *Broken Blossoms* used the theme of miscegenation between an Asian man and a white woman to examine domestic crises within a nation already beset by racial and class contradictions. Marchetti observes that “rape or the threat of rape of a Caucasian woman by an Asian man is the narrative pattern of the Yellow Peril as it is portrayed by the Hollywood film.”⁵⁶ *The Cheat* examined the crisis of consumption and the emergence of the leisure class, while *Broken Blossoms* explored the crisis of the working-class family under imperialism. For the audiences of these two early feature-length movies, race rode to the rescue of the national family.

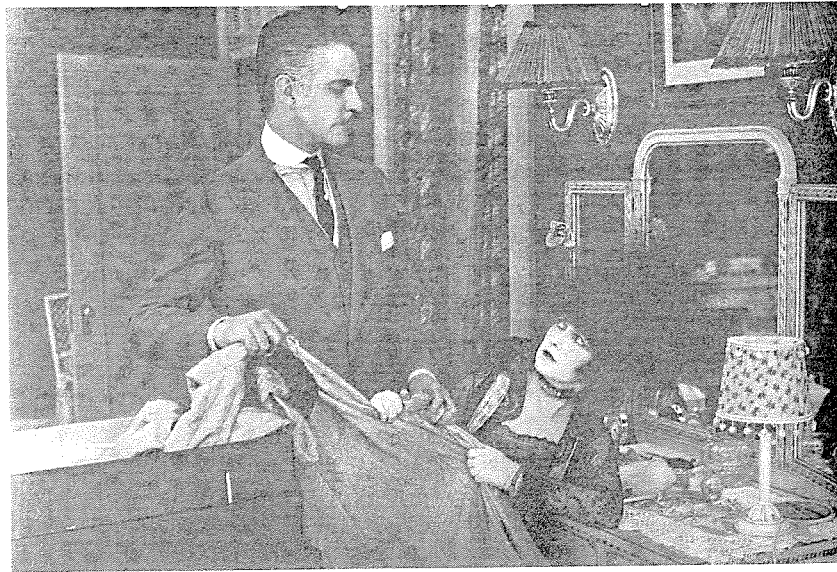
The Cheat: Race, Sex, and Finance Capital

The Cheat, a post-Victorian cautionary tale of seduction and corruption, warns against the hidden dangers of immigration, female sexuality, and the emerging culture of consumption. Its melodramatic plot revolves around an erotic triangle involving Edith Hardy, a young socialite ma-

tron (Fannie Ward), her stockbroker husband, Richard Hardy (Jack Dean), and Hisuru Tori, a wealthy Japanese (or after the film’s re-release in 1916, a “Burmese”) curio merchant (Sessue Hayakawa). Edith Hardy embezzles funds from a charity ball for Belgian War Relief, which she invests on the advice of a friend and then loses when the company goes bankrupt. Desperate, she turns to her friend, Tori, who agrees to lend her the money to make good the loss. Tori, with the expectation of sexual favors, demands that she come to his mansion. In the meantime, Richard Hardy’s investments have returned profit and Edith is able to get a check from her husband to pay back Tori. Frustrated in his attempt to extort sex, Tori attempts to rape Edith. He kisses her, rips her blouse, and succeeds in branding her on the shoulder with his seal. Edith shoots Tori, wounding him. Richard comes to Edith’s aid only belatedly, after she has already shot Tori and stopped his attack. Later, Richard publicly takes the blame (and credit) for shooting Tori and is put on trial for attempted murder. In a last-ditch effort to save her husband from prison, Edith confesses to shooting Tori and reveals her secret. The courtroom erupts in pandemonium as spectators rise in an attempt to lynch Tori. Thus, in an outburst of violent racial retribution, Edith and Richard are reunited as the white bourgeois family, free to reproduce the new nation.

The Cheat is a melodrama in which psychological development is abandoned in favor of social type. Edith Hardy, a bourgeois matron and “socialite,” represents the New Woman as simultaneously consumer (of material goods and of Tori) and consumable (the object of exchange between Richard Hardy and Tori). On one hand, Edith Hardy exercises the independence of the New Woman, going on an outing with Tori without the company of her husband, maintaining an active social life among the local elite, and, of course, shopping. On the other hand, these activities lack a proper Victorian moral center. Edith is not measured by her appropriate role as a reproductive mother or moral anchor for the family, which are the expectations of Victorian True Womanhood; instead, she is defined by consumption. The luxurious clothes that she wears and the company she keeps are fetishized commodities that mark the value that Edith brings to the bourgeois family.

Representing the new capitalist, Richard is not a captain of industry but an investor. He is defined by finance capital, not production. He is trapped in the iron cage of capitalism even more tightly than Edith. Finance capital alienates him from his family and emasculates him. While Edith must seek fulfillment with her “smart set” outside the home, Richard must stay away from family life and even social life to watch over his investments. (When his male friends go to play golf, Richard must stay by the ticker tape.)



In *The Cheat*, Richard (Jack Dean) and Edith Hardy (Fanny Ward) fight over money: a modern bourgeois family caught between accumulation and consumption. Still courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art Film Archives

The tension in the Hardy household revolves around Richard's absence and preoccupation with his investments and Edith's extravagance. Finance capitalism may be more profitable than production, but it is less stable. Richard Hardy waits nervously for his investments to "come in," unable to assure his family's financial security, while Edith feels compelled to keep up the appearance of secure prosperity through extravagant consumption.

This situation reveals the central tension of gender in the new bourgeois society. At the turn of the century, the new middle-class woman was the entering wedge of consumer culture. By the end of the nineteenth century, it was possible for women who had become middle-class to leave the hearth and loom to create a form of leisured life in which their role shifted to class reproduction. Conspicuous consumption defined the social status of the bourgeois household. Unlike the Victorian True Woman, who had been measured by her role as mother and moral compass, the modern socialite woman was measured by the social capital that she brought to the family. Bourgeois men, on the other hand, worked to ensure that their wives could be maintained in a style to which they had become accustomed and, more important, a style which their neighbors and associates might envy. Women's role as arbiter of taste and fashion was not a mere indulgence, but a critical weapon in the war of social

competition. Bourgeois women defined fashion, and fashion defined the bourgeois woman.

The tension between Edith's extravagance and Richard's Puritanism is a reflection of this division of labor. It is manifest not only in their distanced lives but even in their dress. Edith's costumes are lively, luxurious, and sensuous. This extravagance and sensuality are identified with the West's historical source of luxury goods, the Orient. For example, in one scene Edith is shown holding a piece of silk to her skin. On the other hand, Richard is always dressed in dark, sober, stiffly formal business attire. Here dress defines class, gender, and race; the masculine is visually identified with the sober, the rational, and the West, while the feminine is identified with the extravagant, the sensual, and the East.

The Cheat links its narratives of economics and sexuality through the introduction of the Oriental interloper, Tori. In the original version of the film, Tori is identified as Japanese. As a result of protests from the Japanese Association of Southern California, however, Paramount Pictures changed Tori's ethnic identity to Burmese and gave him the name Araku.⁵⁷ Notwithstanding the literal intention of the change in subtitles, its effect is to collapse specific Asian national or ethnic identities into a single, collapsed, racialized Oriental identity.

The most complex of the characters, Tori is initially presented as a socially assimilated, well-to-do man about town. He arrives at the Hardy household nattily decked out in a vested sports suit ready for an outing with Edith. Although the audience sees the smiling, handsome Tori as perfectly acceptable, we know in an instant that the domestic economy is about to be disturbed. The flamboyant Tori is presented as the very opposite of the sober Richard. He is dressed in the same bright sporting clothes as Edith, not in the dark business attire of Richard. Tori is immediately identified with the culture of consumption of Edith and her female society. The subtitle tells us that Tori is a "darling of the smart set." In the opening scene, Tori is Edith's Oriental consumable, an attractive lively companion apparently unconnected to Richard's world of capital. Tori's identification with the world of consumption and his sociability with women have the effect of feminizing and sexualizing him, constructing him as the Oriental Other to Richard Hardy's rational Western Man.

The darker side of this Orientalized identity is revealed in the privacy of his own mansion. In this setting, Tori is shot against a dark background, and shadows darken his face. Here, in what may be the archetype of Orientalist lighting technique, DeMille plays light against dark to distinguish white civilization from the Orient. When the boundary separating the Orient from the West is breached, when Tori is shown as neither foreign nor native, his villainous nature as an alien is revealed.⁵⁸

In his darkened study, Tori is shown obsessively “branding” all of his possessions with his seal. A merchant who buys, sells, and owns, Tori is like Richard in that he is not a producer. But Tori represents an insidious Yellow Peril. Unlike Fu Manchu, the agent of a foreign power, Tori operates on a more intimate level, more threatening to the national family. At a moment in which the reproduction of the national family is threatened by bourgeois over-civilization, Tori represents both the seductiveness of Oriental luxury and the danger of over-consumption.

The West has historically viewed the Orient with desire as the source of luxury, sensuality, and sexuality and thus identified it as erotically female.

At the end of the nineteenth century, commodities associated with the Orient became a central trope of the new feminized consumer culture, through the consumption of Oriental decorative arts and domestic products produced in the “Oriental style.” As Mari Yoshihara has recently shown, the Orient was consumed by the middle-class household at the turn of the century.⁵⁹ Both *Chinoiserie* and *Japonisme* became popular motifs in women’s clothing styles and in household design. The Gorham company designed silver table settings in the “Japanese style”; the silk kimono became a staple in the dressing closet of middle-class women. In 1914, the socialite Mrs. Belmont opened the grand Chinese Teahouse on the grounds of her Newport mansion, Marblehouse, with a tea honoring an international conference of women reformers. On more plebeian ground, Sid Grauman opened his Chinese Theater in Hollywood.

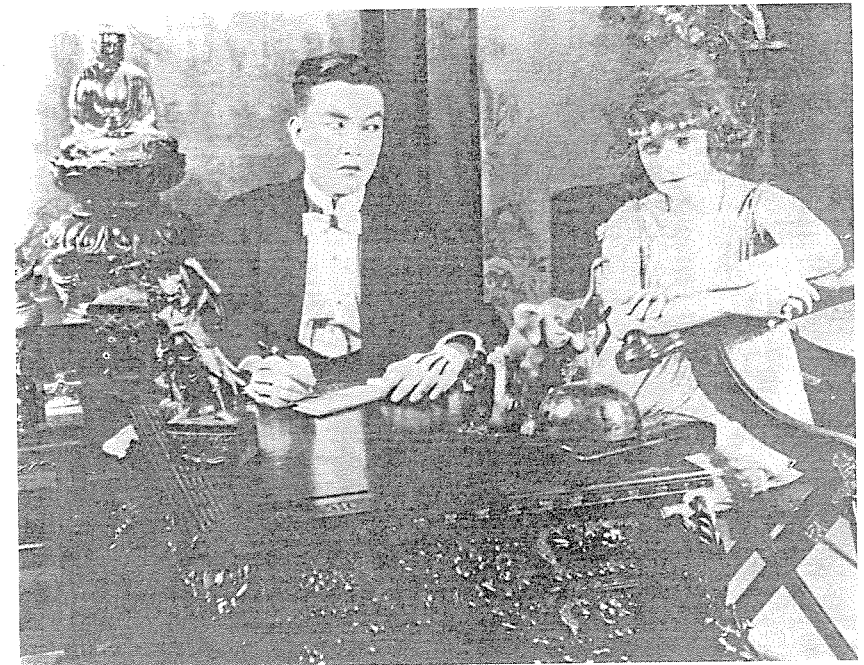
While Fu Manchu may have been the agent of a foreign government, Tori, the merchant, is the agent of Oriental consumption. Tori is identified with *jouissance*, the preoccupation with pleasure. The Orientalized subject is suspected of having the power to seduce its consumer into its ambit of pleasure. The joy and pain of addiction to pleasure is also a central trope of the Orientalist construction of the sensual; thus the opium den is central to descriptions of Chinatowns by virtually every commentator on the Oriental from Charles Nordhoff through Sax Rohmer. In his attempt to rescue Edith from Tori, Richard is protecting her from being Orientalized not only by Tori’s sexual assault but by her own addiction to consumption.

Tori does not, of course, seduce Edith, nor does Richard actually rescue her. Tori’s “seduction” of Edith is actually an attempted extortion of sexual favors by a man precluded by racial taboo from competing directly for Edith. Tori can realize his desire only through commerce, cash for sex. Tori, the Orientalized male, can only attempt to extort sex from the white woman because he is never to be allowed to be sexually mature. The Orientalized male is assumed to have been hypnotized by the premature pleasures of the senses. His moral development, and therefore

his powers of logic, language, and self-control—powers arrogated to Western man—are arrested. The Orientalized male can only vacillate between a superficial boyish charm and sadistic cruelty fueled by frustrated desire. He can only use his IOU as a whip. Tori cannot hope to talk Edith into bed; that would break a taboo stronger than rape. The rape narrative is critical to the maintenance of the racial boundary. Marchetti notes,

while the [stolen] kiss for women can be looked at as a fulfillment of secret, forbidden desires for the pleasures and freedoms promised by a love affair with a man of another race, it also marks the beginning of Edith’s punishment and . . . turns away from any ambivalence about Tori’s villainous character.⁶⁰

Tori does not succeed in having his way with Edith, but he does brand her on the shoulder, marking her as his property. The branding scene evokes both the memory of the chattel enslavement of Africans and contemporary fears of white slavery, the coercion of women into prostitution. Since Chinatowns were widely believed to be centers of urban vice such as prostitution and opium smoking, the identification of white



Tori (Sessue Hayakawa) and Edith in *The Cheat*: the cash nexus. Still courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art Film Archives

slavery with the Oriental was easily made. The marking of Edith as property, as a commodity, can also be read as a warning of the slippery boundary between consumer and consumable. Edith is a consumer *par excellence*, but in the hands of Tori, the expert merchant who knows her desires, she can become the consumed.

Richard Hardy, the New Man of finance capital, fails to protect Edith. He arrives only after she has defended her own honor by shooting and wounding Tori. Edith's shooting of Tori, although it upsets the traditional narrative of patriarchal rescue, is necessary to keep Tori in his racially subordinate status. For Richard to have shot and wounded, or even killed, Tori after Tori had attacked and maimed his wife would only have balanced the moral economy of the movie. After all, Richard has largely abandoned Edith to her own devices and to Tori's advances, and he too shares culpability as a cheat. For Richard to shoot Tori would simply even the masculine exchange. Edith's shooting of Tori, on the other hand, is a decisive racial rejection of Tori's claim to masculinity and bars him from escaping the realm of the feminine.

Richard Hardy's triumph as the patriarch of the new bourgeois family is delayed until he is vindicated in the courtroom. Richard has taken the blame and credit for shooting Tori, and his conviction on assault charges is all but assured until Edith comes to his aid and confesses all. A riot breaks out in the courtroom as a mob rushes forward in an attempt to lynch Tori. At the end of the scene, after Tori has been hustled away, Edith and Richard Hardy are restored as the American family, a restoration made possible only through the re-establishment of the patriarchy. Richard has been restored to his central role as protector of the family and his virility renewed through an authenticating struggle with the racial Other.

Everyone has been a cheat, and the survivors have learned a lesson. Tori is a cheat for having attempted to coerce Edith into having sexual relations with him and for having the pretension of becoming white through acculturation. Edith is a cheat because she has abandoned the moral high ground of True Womanhood and embezzled money, lied to her husband, and cheated Tori of his expected sexual reward. Richard is a cheat because he has abandoned his role as protector of the family in favor of his investments and also because he has taken credit, albeit with honorable intent, for the shooting of Tori. As the new bourgeois family obsessed with consumption, Edith and Richard have cheated their nation, their class, and their race by not having children. The presumed lesson is that Richard and Edith will free themselves from the compulsive consumption that had led them down the Oriental path and return to their home to restore domestic order and to reproduce.

Broken Blossoms: Race, Sex, and Reform

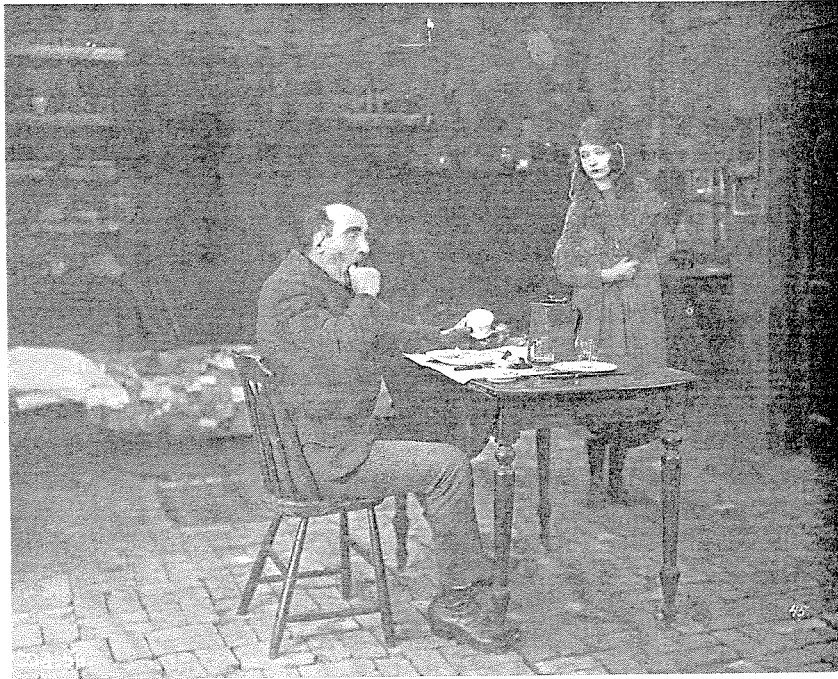
Broken Blossoms followed D. W. Griffith's two spectaculars, the immensely successful but controversial *Birth of A Nation*, in which he articulated his vision of race and national revival, and the hugely expensive failure *Intolerance* (1917), a monumental but disjointed attack on censorship. With *Broken Blossoms*, Griffith turned to another central concern, the family, which was at the center of the progressive reform effort to stabilize the social order.⁶¹ Basing his movie on "The Chink and the Little Girl," a short story by the British writer Thomas Burke, Griffith turned to the "art" movie, the small domestic melodrama, to explore the intersections of class, family, and race.

Broken Blossoms opens in a Hollywood backlot version of a Chinese city. Cheng Huan (Ronald Barthlemes), also called the "Yellow Man," is shown in a Buddhist temple dressed in as a young priest. He is given a mission to take "the message of peace to the warlike Anglo-Saxons," an extension of the antiwar theme in *The Birth of a Nation*. Cheng Huan's first encounter with the West is an attempt to intervene in a fight among a group of sailors; he is beaten for his troubles. Ronald Barthelmes' Yellow Man is slender, delicate in appearance, and timid, the very opposite the imposing, evil of Fu Manchu. Cheng Huan fits perfectly Renan's image of the Oriental male, "like those individuals who possess so little fecundity that, after a gracious childhood, they attain only the most mediocre virility."⁶²

The next scene finds Cheng Huan, some years later, standing against a wall in London's Chinatown, now a shopkeeper. Cheng Huan's dejected look and the subtitles tell us that the ideals of his youth lie in shards. Nearby, Battling Burrows (Donald Crisp), a local boxing champion, lives with his stepdaughter, Lucy (Lillian Gish), also called "the Girl." Battling Burrows is the antithesis of Cheng Huan. He is big, crude, strong, and violent, a working-class champion. Burrows' weaknesses, the subtitles tell us, are women and drink. He is also possessed of a "hatred of all persons not born in this great country."

Lucy is bereft of her mother, whose early death has left her unprotected in the face of her stepfather's violent physical abuse. Played by Lillian Gish, Lucy is a waifish fifteen-year-old who appears much younger. Like Cheng Huan, Lucy is delicate, timid, and passive. She is Burrows' slave; he regularly beats her, and implicit in these beatings is sexual abuse.

Lucy has saved scraps of tin foil and the ribbon given to her by her dying mother. Craving beauty even in such degraded circumstances (this symbolizes her inner beauty), Lucy takes the foil and goes to the Yellow



The working-class household in *Broken Blossoms*: Battling Burrows (Donald Crisp) and The Girl (Lillian Gish). Still courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art Film Archives

Man's shop to trade it for flowers. Later, after a particularly brutal beating, Lucy again goes to Cheng Huan's shop, where she collapses in the doorway. Cheng Huan takes her into his shop and nurses her back to health, keeping her there overnight and promising to protect her.

Battling Burrows finds out that his daughter is at the Chinaman's store and with three accomplices drags her back to his shack, whereupon he savagely beats her to death. Cheng Huan, notified of her abduction, races to save Lucy but arrives too late. In a rage, Cheng Huan shoots Burrows, and then returns to his rooms with Lucy's body and commits suicide.

The sympathetic treatment of the relationship between Cheng Huan and Lucy allows *Broken Blossoms* to be read as a retreat from *The Birth of a Nation*'s overt and virulent racism. The Yellow Man and his message of Eastern pacifism are contrasted as a positive, albeit insipid, alternative to the self-destructive violence of the West. At the level of the narrative, *Broken Blossoms* portrays the Oriental as a protector of innocence. The

film ends in tragedy as a "pure," that is to say unfulfilled, love relationship is destroyed by Burrow's jingoistic hatred and thinly veiled perverse erotic desire.

Notwithstanding the apparent liberalism of the narrative, the melodramatic power of *Broken Blossoms* rests on its play between three powerful taboos: pedophilia, miscegenation, and incest. Linda Gordon notes that public concern about incest and the sexual abuse of children by strangers were linked. At the turn of the century, police and child protection agencies had raised alarms about the incidence of sexual abuse and incest between fathers and daughters, particularly among poor and immigrant families, but by the end of the decade these agencies had shifted their concerns to attacks on younger girls by strangers. She writes,

The discovery [of stranger attacks] coincided with the diminished visibility of incest. This was not a coincidence but a replacement of one crime by another. Often girls assaulted "on the streets" had been incest victims whose problems were not noticed when they took place within the family.⁶³

The sexual abuse of Lucy by her father is implied from the first scene between the two. After Battling Burrows beats Lucy, he forces her to smile for him. This is something Lucy can not accomplish except by pushing her lips into a smile with her fingers. Beaten into complete selflessness, Lucy warns Burrows not that she might die from his abuse, but rather that he might hang for "hitting her once too often."

The incest theme is underscored in the scene of Lucy's murder. In an excruciating scene of domestic violence, Battling Burrows smashes in the door of the closet in which Lucy is cowering, throws her onto the single bed in their household, and beats her with the butt end of a whip. The bed and the obvious phallic symbolism of the butt of the whip aside, the shifting of the camera angle from a close-up shot of abject terror in Lucy face to her view of her father breaking through the closet door is pornographic in its intimate implication of the audience in her violation.

Battling Burrows's role as violent and incestuous father is paralleled by Cheng Huan's role as passive but licentious "dirty old man." In the first decade of the century, the construction of the "dirty old man" played an important role in shifting the focus of child sexual abuse away from incest to sexual attack by strangers. Linda Gordon writes that in Boston,

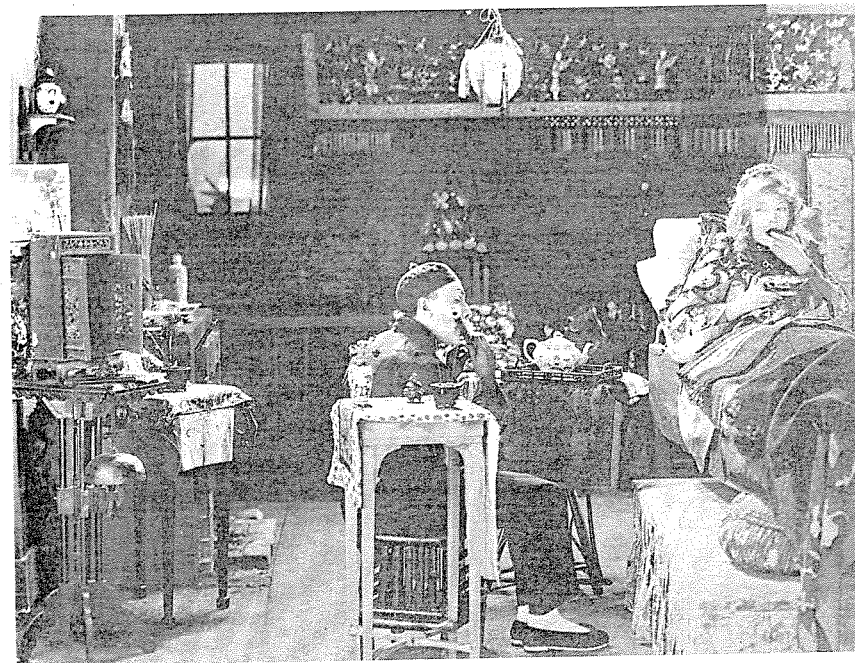
The accused [child molesters] were often small businessmen, craftsmen, or employees in shops which provided the physical space for secret activities with children. . . . They were old from the child's point of view. . . . They often appeared as kindly, entertaining children and giving them treats; and it is important to remember the great attraction of small gifts for very poor children.⁶⁴

The threat of rape or molestation is made visible when Cheng Huan professes his adoration of Lucy. The scene of Cheng Huan gazing at and then slowly approaching, the sleeping Lucy is intercut with shots from Battling Burrows' boxing match. When Cheng Huan approaches Lucy, she shrinks from him. He then kisses the hem of her sleeve. Ironically underscoring the sexual implication of this gesture, the title tells us "His love remains pure and holy—even his worst foe says this." This shot is immediately followed by the shot of Battling Burrows winning his boxing match.

The splicing of the slow adoration scene with the brutal boxing match achieves a number of effects. On the level of the narrative, it serves to underscore the difference between the delicate and timid Cheng Huan and the brutal, aggressive Battling Burrows. At the same time, the change of pace from boxing ring to bedroom and back intensifies the parallel sexual tensions that are implicit but, like the incest theme, remain carefully unstated. Cutting from bedroom to boxing ring also enables the audience to imagine the punishment in store for Cheng Huan should he consummate his obvious desire for Lucy.

Cheng Huan's nursing of Lucy is double-edged. He not only brings Lucy back to life but transforms her into a Orientalized woman. This restoration and transformation takes place in his bedroom. Unlike Burrows' sparsely furnished home, where a table and hearth are the focal point, Cheng Huan's rather opulent room is organized around the bed and an elaborate altar to Buddha. Unlike the starkness of the Burrows household, Cheng Huan's quarters are opulent and ornate, redolent of ritual and consumption. Following Manicheean convention, Burrows' home is starkly lit, while Cheng Huan's apartment is all shadows, soothing and mysterious. Here the film makes reference to another social and pornographic theme of late Victorian society, white slavery (the white woman entrapped into sexual service) and child prostitution (innocence violated).

While the titles declare Cheng Huan's love to be pure and his intentions honorable, visually the audience is led to witness the transformation of the white child into the Orientalized prostitute. Cheng Huan dresses Lucy in a silk robe, the transformative properties of which—"blue and yellow silk caressing white skin"—arouse the sensual in Lucy and the audience. Cheng Huan, who the titles tell us has "dreamt that she is all his own,"⁶⁵ spends the night holding her hand. The image of Lucy reclining in the silks of Cheng Huan's bed enables the audience to envision Lucy not only as saved but also as the child prostitute. Lucy takes on the passive but available sensuality of the Orientalized woman described by the French Orientalist Ernest Renan:



The Yellowman's apartment: Cheng Huan (Donald Barthlemes) and Lucy.
Still courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art Film Archives

The Oriental woman is an occasion and an opportunity for the Orientalist's musings; he is entranced by her self-sufficiency, by her emotional carelessness, and also by what, lying next to him, she allows him to think. Less a woman than a display of impressive but verbally inexpressive femininity . . . a prototype of all the versions of female carnal temptation.⁶⁶

In Cheng Huan's ornate apartment, Lucy's beauty blossoms and she is transformed into a woman. When she awakes she sees herself amid the Oriental opulence of the Yellow Man's bedroom. She is then shown in a close-up, primping as a woman. Transition to womanhood is not a cause for unalloyed celebration; Lucy has been warned by working-class women on the street to try to escape the two common fates of prostitution and marriage. Lucy's close examination of her face in the mirror thus takes on a double meaning. On the one hand, she recognizes herself as a woman, and a beautiful one. On the other hand, given the Victorian belief that the wages of sin and moral turpitude are marked on the body, Lucy's study of the mirror can be read as a self-examination of her moral state. For the first and only time, Lucy smiles without the aid



The transformative gaze:
Cheng Huan and Lucy in Cheng Huan's bedroom.
Still courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art Film Archives

of her fingers, suggesting that her simultaneous recovery and fall from innocence please her. As Linda Gordon notes,

It was part of the mysterious and fetishized nature of sexual experience in the Victorian sexual system that the victim was herself polluted. . . . These fears were associated with childhood "precocity" or "sophistication," synonyms for sexual experience. The sophisticated could never again be naive.⁶⁷

At the same time, the apparent innocence of her question to Cheng Huan, "Why are you so good to me, Chinky?" prompts the audience to doubt the sincerity of her protector's intentions. When Lucy asks Cheng Huan to give her the doll that she has seen in his store window, it is a gesture that reasserts her childhood but can also be seen as the price that she extracts for indulging Cheng Huan's fantasy. The request reminds us of Lucy's vulnerability as a poor child and it ominously foreshadows a future of prostitution. In the final analysis, Lucy is rescued from this imagined "fate worse than death" by death itself.

Containing Chinatown

Before Sax Rohmer made "Chinatown" the headquarters for Oriental evil, Chinatown had already become a well-rehearsed trope for the mysterious and unfathomable Oriental in Charles Hoyt's 1881 *A Trip to Chinatown*, the first Broadway musical smash hit. The play deploys an imaginary trip to Chinatown as a foil in a romantic comedy of manners between two young, white, middle-class couples.

The Cheat and *Broken Blossoms* confirmed visually to white audiences the subtle and intimate dangers of Chinatown as home to the Yellow Peril in their midst. These movies allowed Americans to "see for themselves" what writers could only describe about the Oriental, Chinatown, and the Yellow Peril. Even Asians who might appear assimilated, like Hayakawa's Tori, were, beneath their surfaces, cruel and brutal. Even the wispy and pure-of-heart Cheng Huan could transform a white girl into a prostitute. His intentions were irrelevant; his very presence induced moral decay in everyone with whom he came into intimate contact.

The Cheat and *Broken Blossoms* followed Fu Manchu in consolidating the Oriental as a trope of racial difference. Distinctions between Hisuru Tori, the Japanese (or Araku, the Burmese), and Cheng Huan, the Yellow Man, and the myriad Malays, Dacoits, Thugees, and Tibetan princesses that inhabited Fu Manchu's netherworld were collapsed into the single racial trope of Chinatown. In a wide-angle shot of an opium den deep in Griffith's London Chinatown, a white woman dressed in the masculine mode identified with the New Woman reclines among a motley crew of Orientals who could have come directly from Fu Manchu. Much like the pleasure den described in *The Hand of Fu Manchu*, which also catered to an ethnically mixed Oriental population, "Chinese, Malays, and Indians" and colored men of all sorts mix here easily and scandalously with white women. In this scene, the audience can imagine that Lucy's missing mother is not dead at all, but has merely abandoned the family. She may be this New Woman lost, at the level of the visual at least, to the opium den.

This shot visually confirms the reports Americans had read about Chinatowns as sinks of iniquity since the very establishment of Chinese settlements in the 1870s. Even sympathetic travel narratives from journalists such as Charles Nordhoff in *California for Travellers and Settlers* and Mrs. Frank Leslie's travel accounts in *Leslie's Weekly Magazine* reported in detail on the dark side of the Chinese quarters. In 1880, the virulently anti-Chinese San Francisco Public Health Committee issued a report declaring San Francisco's Chinatown a "public nuisance." In the early years