TAKING UP THE DRAGON:

A Case Study of Chinese-White Intermarriage in the Early 20th Century

By Patrick Lozada

Submitted to Professors Paul Jakov Smith and Alexander Kitroeff

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Abstract

The late 19th and early 20th century was a period characterized by intense xenophobia against Chinese immigrants that was manifested through a host of anti-Chinese laws and extralegal actions. These attitudes were created and maintained through a pervasive discourse of a great “Yellow Peril” that was poised to physically invade America, take American jobs, and most importantly take advantage of American women. Despite the enormous cultural prejudices that painted Chinese men as dangerous and sexually deviant, some women decided to marry Chinese men and create families.

My thesis addresses these women and the identities and prejudices that were inscribed onto them. I argue that these women occupied a racially ‘queer’ discursive space in which they were imagined, in some measure, to be Chinese. This identity was created through discourses surrounding Chinese sexuality and white female purity, and propagated by a number of institutions, especially the law and print media. I plan to examine these mediums and the lives of three women: Mae Franking, Emma Fong Kuno, and Ella May Clemens Wong as a case study. Instead of defiantly proclaiming their ‘own’ identities in the face of a discourse that sought to marginalize them, they adopted and performed Chinese identity. Understanding the discourses surrounding identity, race, and sex and how they affected lived experience is a key element in understanding the social landscape of Yellow Peril America.
# Table of Contents

I. Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1  

II. Source Review .............................................................................................................. 10  
   A. Primary Sources ......................................................................................................... 10  
   B. Secondary Sources ................................................................................................. 16  

III. Intermarriage in the Media ......................................................................................... 28  

IV. Oriental Alliances: Derivative Citizenship and Miscegenation Law ......................... 37  

V. Biographies .................................................................................................................. 37  
   A. Emma Fong Kuno ....................................................................................................... 37  
   B. Mae Franking ............................................................................................................ 39  
   C. Ella May Clemmons Wong ....................................................................................... 40  

VI. Putting on China: 'Sin'icization and the Performance of the Yellow Peril .............. 47  
   A. Self-Identification ..................................................................................................... 48  
   B. Clothing .................................................................................................................... 53  
   C. Expertise .................................................................................................................. 57  

VII. Conclusion ............................................................................................................... 62  

Appendix ......................................................................................................................... 64  

Bibliography .................................................................................................................... 65
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Table of Illustrations</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Figure 1: “The Chinese Jekyll and Hyde” ..................................................................... 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Figure 2: “Mr. and Mrs. Wong Sun Yue Clemens” ............................................................ 59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Figure 3: “A Chinaman’s Bride” ..................................................................................... 68</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Notes

In my writing, I use the Pinyin form of Romanization as opposed to the Wade Giles or Chinese Postal service forms. The exception to this is the names of places or people. I have left these in their original Wade Giles Romanization. In addition, I have edited Chinese names that reverse the name order native to the Chinese language to reflect the Chinese pattern, except in cases where the author has added an English first name. One final note: although at several junctures I use the word ‘chinaman’ and ‘oriental.’ I am using these terms in order to engage with the vocabulary of the time period, not as an effort to malign or stereotype Chinese people.
I. Introduction

On January 24th 1848, only 9 days before Mexico would sign the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceding California to the United States, James W. Marshall struck gold at Sutter's Mill.\(^1\) News of his discovery reverberated not only around the United States, but around the world as fortune seekers from Mexico, the eastern United States, and even from China flooded into California. This first wave of Chinese settlers searching for *Gam Saan* (金山) or the Golden Mountain was soon followed by more Chinese people fleeing from a country divided by internal turmoil and poverty. They sought jobs working on the transcontinental railroad, washing clothing, and any other form of employment.

However, instead of finding the golden mountain they had dreamed of, Chinese settlers were welcomed with hostility and violence. For periods in the mid to late 19th century, Chinese people could not vote, marry, testify in court, or become naturalized citizens.\(^2\) In addition, laws such as the Page Act that effectively barred Chinese women from entering the country because of an assumption that they were prostitutes, as well as natural patterns of Chinese immigration created a Chinese community in the United States that was almost exclusively male.\(^3\) They were endlessly exploited, and even killed and beaten en masse in what Jean Pfaelzer describes as a “race war.”\(^4\) The apogee of this racism came with the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. The Exclusion Act “marked the moment when the golden doorway of admission to the

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\(^1\) Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 2007), 3
\(^4\) Pfaelzer, 13-15
United States began to narrow and initiated a thirty-nine year period of successive exclusions of certain kinds of immigrants.\textsuperscript{5} The act forbade the immigration of Chinese people except for a select minority that included ambassadors and merchants and permanently prevented Chinese immigrants from attaining citizenship.\textsuperscript{6} This act accomplished its goals, and effectively stopped immigration from China until the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century.

The discriminatory measures taken against Chinese immigrants is the action but in many ways is not the substance of the Yellow Peril. At its core, the Yellow Peril was a pervasive fear that Chinese people, often tellingly called ‘Mongolians,’ were engaged in a methodical attempt to invade the Western world. Between the 1860s and the 1940s, popular fiction and print media created and sustained this idea of the Chinese ‘threat’ to America’s safety. A whole genre of popular fiction like Pierton Dooner’s \textit{The Last Days of the Republic} provided dystopic visions of a future ruled by the ‘Mongolians.’ Dooner writes,

\begin{quote}
The very name of the United States of America was thus blotted from the record of nations and peoples, as unworthy the poor boon of existence. Where once the proud domain of forty states...cultivated the arts of peace and gave to the world its brightest gems of literature, art and scientific discovery, the Temple of Liberty had crumbled; and above its ruins was reared the colossal fabric of barbaric splendor known as the Western Empire of his August Majesty the emperor of China and Ruler of all lands.\textsuperscript{7}
\end{quote}

Writing in 1879, Dooner conceives of the Chinese immigration of the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century not as the movement of people moving to the United States seeking opportunity but as a mass racial group slowly infiltrating America directly under the emperor’s orders. Print media, a

\textsuperscript{5} Roger Daniels, \textit{Guarding the Golden Door}, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 3  
\textsuperscript{6} Andrew Gyory, \textit{ Closing the Gate: Race, Politics and the Chinese Exclusion Act} (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1998), 223  
\textsuperscript{7} Pierton W. Dooner, \textit{The Last Days of the Republic} (New York: Arno Press, 1879), 257
supposedly less biased source, similarly reflected these prejudices. One article published after
the passage of a law requiring the registration of Chinese people in San Francisco insisted that
"a fleet of Chinese battleships may be expected at the Golden Gate Bridge at any moment."8
The omnipresence of this discourse created a space in which to be Chinese was to encompass a
whole host of negative meanings and identities.

The idea of a Chinese invasion of America was not limited to a physical invasion of
America's shores but extended to an invasion of white bodies. Sexuality was a central theme,
arguably the central theme, of Yellow Peril discourse. The Yellow Peril created a discursive
framework in which Asian American "bodies, desires, and pleasures were organized and made
meaningful within specific social, political relations."9 Chinese women were portrayed as
hypersexual succubi who spread both moral and physical disease to the white men that they
"preyed" on. Chinese men were portrayed just as badly if not worse. Chinese men were
thought to be hypersexual creatures irresistibly attracted to white women. The following
image found in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* in 1909 is a good illustration of this stereotype:

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8 "Chinese Talk of War: Determined Opposition to the Registration Law in San Francisco," *The Baltimore Sun*, May 8, 1893, 7
This image shows that, no matter how seemingly Americanized a Chinese person was, a ‘chinaman’ of the time period remained an insidious sexual creature who insatiably hungered after white women. Images like this mobilized paternalistic fears about the protection of white womanhood and viscerally engaged white people in the maintenance of an unjust racial/sexual system.

The substance of these fears was not only the fear that Chinese men would violate white women, but also a more complex fear that they would in some way contaminate them. This racial “contamination” was both literal and metaphorical. In his book, *Contagious Divides*,

Nayan Shah documents how syphilis was thought of as an illness inherent to the Chinese body, implying a link between the communication of a disease and a communication of race. This contamination was imagined in popular fiction in the figure of the 'Oriental' luring women into his opium den and trapping her through the use of the drug. The following poem by Henry Ruthrauff artfully illustrates this idea:

**Old Chinatown**  
*(San Francisco)*

**NIGHT—**

_Huddled shadowy figures_  
Slink into black alleys  
Where heavy odors take you by the throat—  
Where dim gasping lamps live at low ebb  
Over grim sunken doorways  
Where silent men,  
With faces like death—  
Keep watch.  
Somewhere a gong shudders—  
And moans—  
And is still.  

Down deep under the alleys—  
Behind barred doors—  
Men—silent yellow men—  
Sit at tables—  
Hatchet men.  
Cards slip—  
Chips click—

**Dawn—**

_Up from a foul cellar_  
Staggers a girl—  
A white girl—  
A girl in years—  
With the face of an old woman—  
And wild staring eyes.  
A chill wind moans through the alley.  
The clock on St. Mary's tower strikes five.  
The girl shivers and crosses herself—  
Girl with the face of an old woman  
And wild staring eyes;  
Draws her thin coat tight about her bones,  
And shambles off.  

_HENRY RUTHRAUFF_  

The influence of Chinese men on this girl has made her unrecognizable. She staggers up from a foul cellar first as a girl, and then—in a horrific moment of realization—a white (?) girl. Her “wild staring eyes” speak of a life of violence, opium, prostitution, and untold sexual horrors. Through her involvement with the “silent yellow men” of Chinatown, she has ceased to be the

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presumably innocent white girl that she once was and has become a thing swallowed by the
gaping maw of Chinatown.

My thesis seeks to deconstruct the dominant sexual and racial paradigms I have
discussed above by examining the rhetoric surrounding interracial marriage in the early 20th
century and observing how it was manifested in lived experience. I argue that white women,
through their marriages to Chinese men occupied a ‘queer’ discursive space between being
Chinese and being white, a status that both became ascribed to them and one which they
themselves performed. In order to engage with this idea, an explanation of the terms ‘queer’
and ‘discursive space’ is necessary. In using the word ‘queer’ I am not referring to sexual or
gender difference as the term today is most commonly used today, but rather to describe a
sexual/racial identity that does not fall into traditional conceptions of race and sex and is
understood to be ‘deviant’. My use of the term closely parallels Nayan Shah’s use of the term
in his book Contagious Divides:

“Rather than viewing the term queer as a synonym for homosexual identity, I use
it to question the formation of exclusionary norms of middle-class, heterosexual
marriage. The analytical category of queer upsets the strict gender roles, the
firm division of public and private, and the implicit presumptions of self-
sufficient economics and intimacy in the respectable domestic household.”

My own use adds mono-racial to the list of norms that the word ‘queer’ questions and poses a
very similar critique of this system. I use the term ‘discursive space’ in the sense that these
women inhabited a place in society in which they were understood to be Chinese. This racial
transformation was not a ‘fact’ in ‘reality;’ these women remained the skin tone we broadly

13 Nayan Shah, Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatowns (Berkeley: University of
California Press, 2001), 14
understand to encompass 'whiteness.' Nonetheless their bodies and selves were made meaningful in a way that caused them to encompass, to an incomplete degree, the identity of a Chinese woman. This inscription of a 'queer' racial identity onto women who married Chinese men provides an important lens for understanding the racial and sexual landscape of early 20th century America.

In examining the rhetoric around intermarriage, I have chosen to focus on unions between white women and Chinese men. Focusing mainly on these women poses a number of historiographical problems. By examining only the white perspective on interracial marriage I am in effect only studying half of the story and perhaps perpetuating the historical invisibility of Chinese immigrant men in the dominant historical narrative. Undoubtedly a more complete analysis of turn-of-the-century intermarriage would include the perspectives of the Chinese men in these marriages. However, I believe my own approach has its own significant merits. I have chosen to focus on the women because their stories refuse to conform not only to traditional narratives of marriage broadly, but also to narratives of interracial marriage and sex. Interracial sex was no stranger to the American cultural landscape at the turn of the century; however these acts usually consisted of an empowered white man imposing his sexuality on a racially distinct female subject. Although ostensibly frowned upon by society at large, these relationships affirmed the understanding of power in relation to the broader racial and sexual paradigm. When these roles become reversed as in the case of these women, their marriages undermined and confused the dominant ideology.14

Another reason that I decided to focus on these women as opposed to their husbands also because of the near total lack of archival data on any of the men. While the wives of these men published long memoirs about their marriage to a “chinaman” or wrote editorials in the newspapers in support of interracial marriage, their husbands are almost entirely absent from the historical record. Even the widespread press coverage of these unions was focused on reporting on the women instead of the men. I believe that this effective invisibility of a Chinese voice in the historical record stems from two primary factors. The first of these is that these women maintained a sense of privilege and access that was unavailable to Chinese men because of language or education barriers. Even when this was not the case, the public was much more interested in hearing a white perspective on interracial marriage perhaps because they were more able to relate to white experiences. The second of these factors is a belief that the women themselves were chiefly accountable for these relationships. From an outside perspective, they were the ones who were inexplicably giving up some form of privilege while the husbands were following the familiar path of the ‘deviant Chinaman’ so prevalent in Yellow Peril fiction. Focusing on the women and society’s fascination with their choices thus provides the best means to approach questions of race and power.

In order to explain the racial discursive space that women who married Chinese men occupied, my paper is divided into two primary sections. In the first half of this paper, I will attempt to identify and speak to the nature of a few of these discourses, specifically print media and the law. Although examining print media and law by no means imparts a complete picture of racial attitudes during the time period, an examination of these mediums does display a key part of the creation and maintenance of Yellow Peril discourses around interracial
sexuality. The second part of my thesis charts how these discourses affected lived experiences.

To this end, I will be studying in depth the lives of three women: Ella May Clemens Wong, Emma Fong Kuno, and Mae Franking. I will examine the ways that they performed their 'queer' racial identities by focusing on their enunciation of their identities in primary source material, a presumed idea of racial expertise, and their use of clothing to express identity. Although the stories of these three women are not representative of the whole range of experiences that white women who married Chinese men faced, their stories and the analytical frame through which I examine them gives some insight into the situation of this group. Their lives and their marriages to Chinese men are veritable stages on which the drama of the Yellow Peril is performed.
II. Source Review

Secondary Sources and Literature Review

My research into popular discourses around Chinese sexuality and their role in reinforcing anti-Chinese laws sits at the nexus of two different sets of histories, namely the history of intermarriage in America and the history of the Yellow Peril and Asian immigration. These two histories have been the site of constant re-visioning and change. As historical circumstances and theories about race and power have changed, so too have the way historians imagined the history of sex and of immigration. Below, I will chart the evolution of these histories and where my own research fits into this evolving discussion.

The first wave of scholarship on the Yellow Peril came out during the early part of the 20th century as social scientists attempted to contextualize their society’s image of the Chinese by examining the still quite recent history of Chinese exclusion. Chinese immigration remained a controversial issue, and as a result these accounts of Chinese immigration often reflected a particular partisan viewpoint. One of the more influential and enduring works written during this period was written by sociologist and self-professed advocate of Chinese immigration Mary Coolidge. Her influential book Chinese Immigration (1909) combined an analysis of both law and history to document the oppression of Chinese immigrants. Central to her argument was the idea that the response to Chinese immigration was initially a favorable one, and that the depression of 1869, coincident with the completion of the transcontinental railroad, created a wave of anti-Chinese sentiment that rippled out from California to the rest of the United States.

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This idea, later called the ‘California Thesis,’ was the standard account of Chinese immigration and received “formidable, almost universal support” up into the 1960’s.¹⁶

The 1960’s was a decade of not only immense political change but also intellectual change. New ideas about race and the beginnings of post-colonial thought prompted a reevaluation of the “Chinese problem.” One of the ways this manifested itself was in the questioning of the assimilationist paradigm that had previously been assumed as part and parcel of the American conception as the melting pot nation. This reconfiguration of race and identity in relation to nation replaced the previous model with Marxist post-colonial constructions of ‘Chineseness’ that transcended local boundaries and encompassed the struggle of people in the third world. Stuart Creighton Miller’s book *The Unwelcome Immigrant* was part of this movement, positing an alternative model to Coolidge’s California thesis. Creighton Miller refutes Coolidge by arguing that negative images of the Chinese were part of a longer tradition of racist anti-Chinese discourse. Miller traces this image back to white Christian missionaries’ accounts of the Chinese and the subsequent transmission of these messages to the general populace. Miller looked through an enormous number of newspapers, monthly magazines, and even pulp fiction methodically painting a picture of a populace bombarded by negative images of the Chinese. Miller is also one of the first to write about how these messages constructed an image of a dangerous Chinese sexuality, although he considers it as just one factor out of many that contributed to Yellow Peril discourse.

Foucault’s theories on the power of discourse and the importance of sex in understanding the way that power is manifested had a significant impact on the study of the

Yellow Peril. Traditionally, power has traditionally been conceived as a top down force emanating from the ruler and enacted on the ruled. Foucault sees power that flows through the interchange between the official exercise of power and the pervasive action of discursive power. Discursive power is generated universally, as much by poems and architecture as by laws and punishment, as much by what is left unsaid as what is said.\textsuperscript{17} For Foucault, discourse is an activity, a practice that can be initiated by a single author or person. Foucault defines discourse as "constituted by a group of sequences of signs, in so far as they are statements."\textsuperscript{18} Discourse in turn shapes everything in society as a whole through something called the enunciative function. As many do in using Foucault's theories, I have shortened this idea to the process of giving discursive objects meaning, but Foucault's model is somewhat more complicated than this. In the \textit{Archaeology of Knowledge} he writes:

"Instead of giving 'meaning' to these units, this function relates them to a field of objects; instead of providing them with a subject, it opens up for them a number of possible subjective positions; instead of fixing their limits it places them in a domain of coordination and existence; instead of determining identity, it places them in a space which they are used and repeated."\textsuperscript{19}

In his model, he does not say that 'society' imposes this or that identity on someone through discourse, but rather grounds that person in a discursive context in which their subjectivity is formed/expressed. My own work harnesses his theoretical framework by examining how Yellow Peril discourses created the discursive identity of the sexually dangerous Chinese man and how that construction affected society.

\textsuperscript{17} Michel Foucault, \textit{The Archaeology of Knowledge}, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), 93
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 107
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, 106
The 1980s and 1990s saw the rise of a plethora of discursive histories of the Yellow Peril. These works are the ones most intimately related with my own work and have informed many of my own beliefs about the nature of the Yellow Peril. There are a number of works that have examined the overall image of the Chinese during the Yellow Peril including Limin Chu’s exhaustive and detailed study of the California short story magazine *The Overland Monthly*, William F. Wu’s *The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction*, and Robert G. Lee’s *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture*. Nayan Shah’s *Contagious Divides* is a very useful and different study on Yellow Peril discourse. Shah examines how medical texts pathologized Chinese spaces and bodies and explores the ramifications of this rhetoric. I am especially indebted to Shah for his larger definition of the word ‘queer,’ which is a key part of my own argument, as well as for his ideas about racial contagion. These works provide an excellent picture of the overall image of the Chinese during the Yellow Peril, but only touch on Chinese sexuality.

Gina Marchetti’s *Romance and the Yellow Peril: Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* has been especially useful in my analysis of popular Yellow Peril discourses. In *Romance and the Yellow Peril*, Marchetti identifies several discrete narratives that pervade Hollywood fiction several of which I use in my own analysis. Her book is one of the only books to focus exclusively on sexuality as an important realm of study. Likewise, Mary Ting Yi Lui’s *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery* has been a particularly useful resource in understanding views surrounding Chinese-white relationships. Her book is the only one that I was able to find in my research that focuses specifically on relationships between white women and Chinese men and the generation of discourse surrounding these women. Ms. Lui shows how the rhetoric
surrounding these relationships helped to reinforce and sustain Chinatown as a racially contained space, although her analysis is largely limed itself to New York’s Chinatown.

Interrace marriage in America has been a rich and productive source of inquiry for historians studying race. Most of these books deal with black-white miscegenation because of its centrality to understanding race relations after the civil war and the discursive figure of the black rapist. Historical studies of Chinese-white miscegenation are much newer to the conversation on intermarriage; most were published in the 1990s.

Susan Koshy’s *Sexual Naturalization* primarily addresses the role of literary and filmic texts in shaping desire and the conventions of marriage. Koshy argues that naturalization is not just a legal project that turns the immigrant into the citizen, but something that extends into the cultural realm. She also argues that histories of black-white intermarriage and Chinese-white intermarriage differ greatly; where black-white marriages may highlight racial difference, Chinese-white marriages deal with racial and cultural differences. The regulation of intermarriage thus further reinforces Chinese immigrants’ status as outsiders.

Candice Bredbenner’s book *A Nationality of Her Own* is a thorough study of the principle of derivative citizenship created by Congress in 1907. Under this law, a woman’s citizenship was determined by the citizenship of her husband. Bredbenner writes extensively about the passage of this law, the movement to repeal it, and the social and racial subscripts embedded in both creating and repealing it. The characters in my narrative are directly affected by the principle of derivative citizenship, and her work thus provides a strong source in my own analysis of the concept of citizenship in relation to race and culture.
Henry Yu’s book *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* addresses the study of intermarriage by the University of Chicago Sociology department as well as the process of exoticizing and othering Asian immigrants. Yu’s book effectively illustrates a picture of attitudes towards Asian and white relationships during this period both in the academic establishment and in society as a whole. Besides the valuable work he does in showing the construction of the Chinese immigrant, Yu also writes directly about Mr. and Mrs. Emma Fong Kuno and their inclusion in Chicago University’s study on Chinese-white intermarriage using many of the same records that I worked with.

My thesis builds on all of these works, both the histories of intermarriage and of The Yellow Peril generally, in order to construct my own unique argument. I will first examine the popular discourses that created an image of the sexually deviant Chinese man and his desire for white women. Unlike many of the discursive histories on the Yellow Peril, my thesis extends beyond simply illustrating an image but goes on to connect this image to actual events and people. Although discursive histories abound, it is essential to realize that they do not exist in a vacuum. They affect real people and shift the way that society configures itself. I do this by examining the lives of three women who married Chinese men and the manifold relations of power that are revealed in these relationships. My analysis of these marriages includes parts of Bredbenner’s writings on derivative citizenship but extends them beyond legal citizenship and into a conception of social citizenship. Similarly, it tackles notions of shared spaces and of social class that underlie many of these work but instead focuses on the middle region that the white brides of Chinese men faced. My thesis provides an alternate viewpoint that complicates and enriches many elements of the study of both interracial marriage and the Yellow Peril and
hints at larger questions about the mechanisms that underlie racism and the control of sexual practice.

Primary Sources

The bulk of my primary source documents come from research I conducted in California archives including the Hoover Institution, The Bancroft Library, The Historical Society of California, and the Stanford University archives. I am indebted to the research librarians at these institutions for being unfailingly helpful and interested in my work. Besides archival research, I also use a number of published books and articles written in the early twentieth and late nineteenth centuries. Many of these books are available online because their copyright has expired, and most have been widely used by historians of this period. In order to give a conscientious treatment of my thesis, I will evaluate these sources for their reliability and to acknowledge any implicit biases in the material.

Most of my information in regard to Mae M. Franking comes from an account of her life published under the title My Chinese Marriage. It is important to note, however, that this publication was not actually written by Franking herself, but rather by the well-known novelist Katherine Anne Porter. This novel was written in 1920 at the very beginning of Porter’s career and was a paid piece written on behalf of Asia magazine.\(^{20}\) Interestingly, she later disowned the book calling it a “mere putting down of someone else’s story,” which possibly reflected not only a desire to distance herself from her early ghostwriting work but also an internal honesty to Mae Franking’s original text. Porter based her writing off of a manuscript which Franking

\(^{20}\) Holly Franking, “Introduction,” in My Chinese Marriage (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991), xix
had written covering her life and marriage, as well as two weeks that she spent with Franking herself. \(^{21}\) Unfortunately, Franking’s original writings have been lost. This text nonetheless proves useful in spite of these shortcomings. Even if the material in my *Chinese Marriage* may not be exactly “truthful” to Franking’s experience (and I would argue it largely is), it nonetheless tells the truth in displaying the perspective of an outsider examining those events.

I use *My Chinese Marriage* with this in mind and attempt to corroborate the sentiments that are portrayed in the books with summaries of letters from Mae to her husband Tiam. The summaries of the couple’s letters were sent to this archive by Holly Franking, the granddaughter of Mae and Tiam. These summaries were located in the Iris Chang Collection at the Hoover Institution at Stanford. Iris Chang was a China historian well known for her writings on the Rape of Nanjing. Holly Franking, an English PhD, sent the summaries and a few newspaper clippings to Chang who had become interested in Chinese-white intermarriage during the Yellow Peril. \(^{22}\) Holly Franking was also involved in the republication of *My Chinese Marriage* in 1991 as well as a short historical account of Mae’s life that appeared in the book’s introduction. Full texts of much of their correspondence are published in the appendix of Holly Franking’s annotated edition of this book, providing another useful source for finding Mae Franking’s voice and for corroborating Porter’s portrayal of her.

The primary source documents on Emma Fong Kuno’s life were obtained at the Stanford archives in the Walter and Emma Fong collections. This collection contained many different kinds of material including, but not limited to photographs, newspaper articles, receipts,

\(^{21}\) Joan Givner, Foreword to *My Chinese Marriage* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991), ix
\(^{22}\) Holly Franking, Letter to Iris Chang, Correspondence, Box 27, Folder 1, Chang (Iris) Collection, The Hoover Institution, Stanford University
Emma’s senior thesis, and legal documents. Material about her life using this collection have appeared in a few peer-reviewed works including Henry Yu’s book *Thinking Orientals* and Yu’s chapter in *American Sexual Histories*. She was also the subject of inquiry in investigations on the nature of intermarriage done by sociologists in the 1920s, and a record of these inquiries in the Hoover Institution corroborate the details found in the Walter and Emma Fong Collection.

The records pertaining to Mrs. Ella May Clemens Wong pose the largest historiographical challenge of any of my primary sources. There has been no scholarly book or article about Mrs. Clemens Wong, and unfortunately many of the sources I have contradict each other. Nonetheless, I have done my best to use different primary sources to compile an accurate account of her life.

The only extant works on Mrs. Clemens Wong’s life is *They Were Franciscans* by Miriam Allen DeFord. *They Were Franciscans* was a set of short biographies of people who DeFord believed embodied the “multicolored fabric that is San Francisco.” DeFord was a journalist and a fiction writer by trade, and consequently her biographies read more like a human interest piece rather than academic studies. She did not cite any sources of her information or explain her methodology. Additionally, she makes several major claims about Mrs. Clemens Wong that seem to contradict other evidence about Ella that I have uncovered. For example, she mistakenly asserts that Ella was born and brought up in Oakland and that she was the daughter of a Southern Pacific Railroad Bookkeeper. This claim contradicts both census records and several newspaper records which all say that she came from Ohio, born to a farming family.

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23 Miriam DeFord, *They Were Franciscans* (Caldwell, OH: Caxton Printers: 1941), 16  
24 Ibid., 256
Although she writes that Mrs. Clemens early history is “obscure,” this mistake still raises serious doubts about her reliability as a source. That said she was a contemporary of Ella May Clemens Wong having come to San Francisco in 1918 while Ella was still alive. As a result, I have attempted to corroborate her information with supporting data from newspapers and other sources when possible, and have tried to use her non-corroborated information she gives sparingly.

My archival research was significantly less problematic. A guidebook to Chinatown published by Mrs. Clemens Wong found at the California Historical Society provides a first-hand account of some of the events of her life in addition to providing interesting insight into Mrs. Clemens Wong’s views on Chinatown and her place in that society. I was also able to find many postcard pictures of Mr. and Mrs. Clemens Wong that the two sold from their Chinatown Shop in numerous collections including the Bancroft Library, the Historical Society of California, and online.

Mrs. Clemens Wong also received fairly significant news coverage as the sister of the actress Katherine Gould, the wife of the son of the robber baron Jay Gould. Most of these newspaper articles seem to be credible sources with the notable exception of a few articles that confuse Mrs. Clemens Wong with her sister. These articles also reveal a problem that I found while researching: Mrs. Clemens Wong changed her name several times through her life. She was born with the last name Clemmons, but changed her name to Overacker, then to Clemens (to hint at a spurious familial relationship with Mark Twain), then to Clemmons Wong, and finally on her deathbed to Groneman. This made finding sources related to her life challenging.

25 DeFord, author bio page
to say the least, and often led me to question whether I had found the right person.

Nonetheless, with diligent research I was largely able to separate the wheat from the chaff and find relevant and accurate sources relating to Mrs. Clemens Wong’s life and marriage.
III. Intermarriage in the Media

Will Wed A Mongol

A Chicago Servant Girl Couldn't Do Much Worse

Chicago, Sept 22,—Morris, Salmonson, the marriage license clerk was somewhat surprised to have an application last night from a Chinaman. Charlie Sloane of 71 Van Buren Street was the applicant and Bessie Huntsman is to be the bride. Charlie has been in Chicago for the past fifteen years and had become lonely, and after some difficulty with "Melican" man's language, managed to tell Bessie that he wanted a wife. Bessie is a German girl and a domestic servant by occupation.26

Print media was an important outlet in which ideas of the Yellow Peril and the dangers of associating with Chinese men were expressed. Newspapers of the time drastically differed from those of today. The early 1900s were the heyday of Yellow Journalism and of the muckrakers. The 'facts' presented in newspapers of the day were almost as indicative of the truth as of the paper's ideological affiliation and the attitudes of society at large. Although this proves a major historiographical problem for historians searching for truthful accounts of events in print media, I view this trait as a strength in relation to my thesis instead of a weakness. Because many papers were so reflective of the attitudes of the public and readily furnished the public with the facts that it was interested in or wanted to hear, I believe that they constitute an excellent source for analyzing the way that the general public viewed the women who engaged in relationships with Chinese men. Almost without exception, newspapers around the country were intensely focused on the character and the respectability of the people involved in these cross-racial relationships, neatly reflecting the images presented in other popular media.

26 "Will Wed a Mongol," The San Francisco Call, September 24, 1894, 9
When examining Chinese-white interracial marriage in the media in the early 20th century, it is impossible to avoid mentioning the murder of Elsie Sigel in what historian Mary Ting Yi Lui calls the “Chinatown Trunk Mystery” in her book of the same name. The murder of Elsie Sigel, the daughter of a prominent union general, was the cause célèbre of its day. Mrs. Sigel was found dead, locked in a trunk with a rope around her neck in the apartment of a ‘chinaman,’ Leon Ling on June 18, 1909. Upon investigating the apartment of Mr. Ling, the police found a series of love letters addressed from Elsie to Leon that indicated the two had been in a loving romantic relationship, and suggesting that he had murdered her out of jealousy because of her relationship with another Chinese man. The police searched for Mr. Ling for several years in a massive nationwide manhunt, but were never able to find him and bring him to trial.27

Although interesting, the details of this case aren’t an important part of my argument. What I do find interesting about this case is the unprecedented coverage this story gained and the powerful reverberations this had on Chinese-white interracial couples across the country. The Sigel murder was front page news in nearly all New York papers for more than a week. From Boston to San Francisco, pictures of Leon Ling and the stories were front page news. Many Asian men who approximated the description of Mr. Leon including a student in Middletown, New York, a Chinese Laundryman riding a street car in New Jersey, a Japanese professor living in the Bronx, and a Japanese butler for an American family in New Jersey were all arrested on suspicion of being Mr. Ling. The daily lives of Asian immigrants throughout the

27 Lui, 1-3, 8-10
country became enmeshed in the national drama of the Sigel murder investigation and newspaper coverage.  

Leon Ling was characterized by newspapers as being fluent in English and able to move in both Chinese and American circles with ease. This description of Mr. Ling broadened the perception of the Yellow Peril from the dangers posed by opium dealers in Chinatown, to an insidious threat posed by every Chinese person, even the most well socialized. The white women who fraternized with these men were Elsie Sigels waiting to happen. This prompted a nation-wide response to "protect women" by defining and isolating Chinatown as a social space. Captain Galvin, an officer in the New York police force proclaimed a "crusade against the white women of Chinatown" that within two months forced 200 women out of Chinatown leaving only six who were able to stay only because they had marriage licenses. Pittsburgh, Chicago, and other cities opened their own "crusades" against "dangerous chinamen" by closing down Christian missions where women taught Chinese pupils and passing laws to isolate Chinatown from the rest of the city. The Sigel case's influence can be seen even as far away as San Francisco. In one of Mrs. Wong Sun Yue Clemens' more witty moments (she was by all accounts a very dour, serious woman), she declared that she would "rather be cut to pieces and put in a trunk by a Chinese husband than be tortured in court by a white husband like Howard Gould." Its inclusion in the newspaper as a reference which the reader would understand gives us an idea that indeed, Elsie Sigel's murder was a point of common knowledge even as far away as

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28 Lui, 13
29 Ibid., 12
30 Ibid., 11
31 Ibid., 14
32 "Woman Prefers Being Murdered to Divorce," The Morning Olympian, Olympia, Washington, July 1, 1909, 3
Washington State. Her engagement with Elsie Sigel's murder less than a month after the Mrs. Sigel's death confirms what Ms. Lui writes in her book. This murder and its repercussions had an impact on the discourse and on the experiences of women married to Chinese men around America.

Although the Sigel case was an important moment in the history of intermarriage in print media, it was by no means the genesis of the discourse. The American fascination with intermarriage between ‘Orientals’ and white people preceded the Sigel murder. The marriage of a Chinese man to a white woman was considered important news. Papers including the *Wilkes-Barre Times* in Pennsylvania, the *Grand Folks Daily Herald* in North Dakota, the *Philadelphia Enquirer* in Pennsylvania, the *Charlotte Observer* in North Carolina, the *San Antonio Express* in Texas, the *Columbus Daily Enquirer* in Georgia, and countless others reported on the union of white women and Chinese men.³³ Often, these marriages were not even ones that occurred locally, but ones that happened far away. For example, an article entitled “Pittsburg Girl Marries Chink” appeared in the Bellingham Herald, a Washington based paper, telling the story of the marriage of a woman named Grace Miller to a Chinese man named Charles Song.³⁴ Although these places were far apart, marriages like this were still considered to be relevant and important news to a public hungry for tales of vicious Chinamen and their appetite for white women.

The focus of these articles says a great deal about the image of the kind of white women who would marry a Chinaman. Nearly every article was concerned with a number of traits and

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³³ These articles were found using a simple search of the America’s Historical Newspapers Database for “marries a chinaman”
³⁴ “Pittsburg Girl Marries Chink,” *Bellingham Herald*, November 27, 1909, 3
identities that come together in what I see as a sense of “respectability.” No “respectable” woman would stoop so low as to marry a Chinese man. As one article documenting the marriage of Loy Deo and his fiancée Mary Blanton incredulously noted, “the woman [Mary] is white and apparently refined and cultured.” This position was left for the less respectable: the poor, those not of English ancestry, and the morally reprobate.

Newspapers asked these questions to discover why a white woman would possibly want to marry a Chinese man. Class was a central element of this dilemma. The newspaper article that I began this section with, “Will Wed a Mongol,” illustrates this idea perfectly. The headline, “a Chicago servant girl couldn’t do much worse,” says it all. White women’s marriage to Chinese men was configured not as a passionate expression of love, but rather as almost a form of institutional prostitution. This is reinforced by a commensurate focus on the husband’s economic status. An article in the Detroit Free Press, “A Chinaman’s Bride: An American Laundress Marries Her Chinese Employer in Detroit,” is another excellent example of this. The article begins by establishing that the bride, Laura Cleary, was an employee of the groom, Ben Hope Lee, and continues introducing her father as a plumber and a part of the “laboring people.” The article goes on to describe in lavish detail the presents that Ben gave his wife, and ends with the telling assertion that, “the husband has an ample bank account for the future.” By structuring marriage as an economic exchange between a poor white woman and a rich Chinese man, these articles made this social arrangement into an economic one explainable only by the woman’s supposed greed.

35 “Bride of Chinaman White,” Twice a Week Spokesman Review, Spokane, Washington, October 24, 1919, 6
36 “A Chinaman’s Bride,” The Detroit Free Press—remaining citation information of this article was lost. I am attaching an image of it to appendix I.
Ancestry played a similarly important role in structuring an idea of respectability. The picture of the woman who married a Chinese man showed a mulatto, Irish woman, or other European group marrying him. The article, “Half Breed Bride is Claimed by Chinese,” is an excellent example of the importance of race. A Chinese man, Wan Kee, is to be married to an apparently white woman named Sadie Leona. Although on the surface appearing to be very “fair skinned,” the writer of this article goes on to reveal that Ms. Leone is in fact half Native American. In order to be married, the couple had to secure affidavits saying that she was in fact of mixed ancestry. Although not different in appearance than if he had married a white woman, her ancestry made her a “half breed” to be “claimed” by a ‘Mongolian.’ This focus on race and ancestry extended beyond people of mixed race into European immigrants like the Irish who though white in our current understanding were considered to be racially different in the early 20th century.

This focus on respectability is essential in understanding the mechanisms by which the institution of virtuous white womanhood was protected and sustained. Newspapers were involved in this enterprise through their focus on respectability. Women who married Chinese men were effectively excluded from a conception of virtuous white womanhood. They were placed in the space of the ‘other’ and conceived of in terms defined in popular culture. They were the white woman who prostituted herself to feed her opium habit and the immigrant woman whose only recourse is a Chinaman like in the film Broken Blossoms. They occupied a queer racial/social identity in which their privilege as white women was stripped and they were

37 "Half Breed Bride is Claimed by Chinese," The San Francisco Call, January 28, 1910
relegated to a social status analogous to that of a Chinese woman. Even when these categories
did not fit to the facts of these interracial couples, newspapers were nonetheless concerned
with their confession and enouncement, a fact which Foucault might remind us is the essence
of the way power works. 39

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IV. Oriental Alliances: Derivative Citizenship and Miscegenation Law

[A]ny American who married a foreigner shall take the nationality of her husband. At the termination of the marital relation she may resume her American citizenship, if abroad, by registering as an American citizen within one year with a consul of the United States, or if residing in the United States at the termination of the marital relation, by continuing to reside therein.

-Section Three of the Federal Expatriation Act of 1907

However, notwithstanding all these pleasant things, I want to say that one shadow - a dark one - has been cast over my life by my Oriental alliances; the loss of my citizenship. When I married Mr. Fong I became Chinese. Upon his death I again became American. By my second marriage I became Japanese. This all seems very strange to me.

-Emma Fong Kuno

Up to this point, I have discussed the idea of the stigma against interracial relationships and subsequent characterization of white women who married Chinese men as racially suspect largely in terms of media. However, these discourses extend beyond the realm of media representations and are manifested in the "real world" partially through the institution of the law. One of the clearest manifestations of these views is the principle of derivative citizenship in the Expatriation Act of 1907 and the subsequent refocusing of that act in the Cable Act of 1922. Under these acts, women who married Chinese men lost their citizenship and adopted the citizenship of their husbands. Derivative citizenship and the racial and sexual implications that it had effectively excluded these women from claiming an American, and I would also argue white, identity.

40 Expatriation Act of 1907 as cited in Anne Marie Nicolosi, "We Do Not Want Our Girls to Marry Foreigners": Gender, Race, and American Citizenship, NWSA Journal, Vol. 13, No. 2, Gender and Social Policy: Local to Global (Autumn, 2001), 4

From the perspective of legislators and most of the voting populace at the time, the Expatriation Act of 1907 seemed unremarkable; derivative citizenship had been an element of British common law and the policy of most of the Western world. In this view, the act was, "nothing more than a...piece of legislation to keep U.S. foreign policy in step with other Western nations." Indeed, the law passed with almost no public outcry, and elicited only as a short note in the congressional record. Nonetheless, it is important to remark that this law was a remarkable intervention in the conception of the citizen in America. Prior to the passage of this bill, a patchwork of judicial decisions and federal statutes had begun to eat away at the principle of coverture, or the subsuming of a woman's legal rights to those of her husband. As early as 1830 in the case *Shenck v. Dupont* the Supreme Court ruled that:

> "marriage with an alien, whether a friend or an enemy, produces no dissolution of the native allegiance of the wife. It may change her civil rights, but it does not effect (sic) her political rights or privileges. The general doctrine is, that no persons can by any act of their own, without the consent of the government, put off their allegiance, and become aliens."

This bill then served as a remarkable "reassertion of the single-identity theory of marriage" and was largely incompatible with prevailing trends in the legislating of women's rights.

Where then did the desire to pass this bill come from, and why at this historical moment? Prior to the passing of this law, the federal government had largely left issues related to citizenship to the court and to the federal institutions that regulated immigration. Viewed in the context of a political atmosphere charged with the extreme xenophobia of the time period

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42 Nicolosi, 1
43 Ibid., 4
44 Shanks et al. v. Dupont et al., 28 U.S. 242, Supreme Court (1830)
and the waves of immigrants who were coming to America, this bill can easily be seen as a measure targeted at protecting white womanhood from the foreign hordes by severely penalizing those who chose to marry foreign born men.

Although this law did not initially attract much attention, it began to attract opposition as the nascent feminist movement began to gain strength. Suffragists were a receptive audience to the cause; after all the Expatriation Act and the loss of citizenship that came with its enforcement were another way to disenfranchise and disempower the female voter. The female citizen was not a citizen but rather a woman citizen, a throwback to coverture or the total subsuming of a woman’s legal rights to her husband. Another set of not contradictory, but certainly less laudable concerns motivated women to protest the law. Namely, the women of the overwhelmingly white middle class feminist movement were wary of bestowing citizenship on immigrant women.

Little progress was made in repealing the law, until after the passage of the 19th Amendment establishing women’s suffrage in 1920. The passage of the 19th Amendment had suddenly created a large group of voters invested in women’s issues. Furthermore, citizenship became a higher stakes game. Instead of only impacting a woman’s ability to travel freely and to hold a job, the Expatriation Act also threatened the voting rights of women who chose to marry Chinese men.46 After several years of lobbying, Congress finally passed the Married Women’s Independent Nationality Act colloquially known as the Cable Act, which purported to end the system of derivative citizenship that had existed since 1907.

46 Nicolosi, 81
The realities of the Cable Act fell far short of truly eliminating the system of derivative citizenship. Instead, the act narrowed the system’s focus to emphasize race as a metric for determining citizenship. This focus stemmed from a provision of the Cable Act which stated:

Provided, That any woman citizen who marries an alien ineligible for citizenship shall cease to be a citizen of the United States. If at the termination of the marital status she is a citizen of the United States, she shall retain her citizenship regardless of her residence.\(^\text{47}\)

People from China and from other restricted Asian nations were one of the few groups that were permanently ineligible to become citizens.\(^\text{48}\) Effectively, this law legitimized the existence of cross national marriages as long as the husband was white, and represented an attempt to mollify the largely white middle class members of the women’s suffrage movement. This refocusing of derivative citizenship to focus almost exclusively on Asian men makes clear what before had been concealed by layers of value neutral language; that the state sought to use women’s citizenship to exercise reproductive control over Asian people as well as construct and redefine racial categories.

This method of control over race and reproduction lasted until the amendment of the Cable Act in 1931. This amendment deleted the clause that expatriated women who married “an alien ineligible for citizenship.” Although this law undoubtedly had a positive impact on women who had lost their citizenship, it at the same time served an opportunity to reiterate ideologies of white supremacy. Testifying before the Senate in


\(^{48}\) Bredbenner, 98
1930, Lawyer Emma Wold, a member of the National Women’s Party Legislative Committee, gave the following statement to congress advocating for the 1931 amendment:

If the objection to removing the present discrimination against women in our Cable Act is due to sentiment against racial mixtures, let me call your attention to the fact that it largely fails of its purpose...So far as white women are concerned, the fact is that under the laws of many of our states, especially the western states, where Japanese, Chinese, and Hindus are found in large numbers, the laws make illegal a marriage between a white person and a Mongolian or Asiatic person. A white woman who enters upon an attempted marriage of this sort may be punished for the violation of the laws on marriage, but the penalty of loss of citizenship cannot fall upon her for the reason that there is no marriage.

Wold’s message to Congress was not that the state’s construction of race and sex were wrong, but rather that miscegenation laws already accomplished this goal. Furthermore, by framing her testimony in relation to white women she betrays an important truth about the feminist advocacy of independent citizenship. Feminist criticism of the Cable Act was not based in criticizing racial and sexual norms, but rather in promoting the rights of white women citizens affected by it.

Stripping these women of their citizenship is a singular punishment that carries significant gender, race, and cultural meanings. This is because citizenship consists of several dimensions, only one of which is the political relationship of the individual to the state.

Citizenship in a democracy:

“(a) gives membership status to individuals within a political unit
(b) confers an identity on individuals

49 Emma Wold cited in Nicolosi, 16
(c) constitutes a set of values, usually interpreted as a commitment to the common good of a particular political unit

(d) involves practicing a degree of participation in the process of political life

(e) implies gaining and using knowledge and understanding of laws, documents, structures, and processes of governance\textsuperscript{50}

The multi-faceted nature of citizenship as encompassing political and cultural implications means that revoking citizenship goes beyond removing a label but extends to revoking the identities and rights embedded in it.

The political implications of revoking citizenship undoubtedly had an important impact on the lives of these women. By revoking their membership status in the American political unit, laws surrounding derivative citizenship effectively robbed these women of many of their fundamental rights. They were not able to hold positions in government, hold down many types of jobs, and were unable to travel freely. Those who married Chinese men faced especially difficult challenges because of the special barriers placed by anti-Chinese legislation like the Chinese Exclusion Act, which forced them to obtain (with difficulty) permits that theoretically allowed Chinese citizens to return to the United States. The validity of these permits was in a constant state of flux, and Chinese people who had the right to come to the United States whether through marriage or through permit were sometimes turned away at the whims of customs officials.\textsuperscript{51} The revoking of these women’s citizenship also robbed them of the right to vote that they may or may not have had previously. It was the removal of this right


\textsuperscript{51} Bredbenner, 125-127
that eventually got the women's suffrage movement involved in trying to overturn the Expatriation Act.

Despite the profound practical implications that derivative citizenship had on those whom it affected, these factors are not a central piece of my analysis. Rather, I am interested in the cultural implications of having one's citizenship revoked. As I mentioned before, citizenship confers an identity on individuals and constitutes a set of values. Legally, the American female citizen was "any female born in or naturalized by the United States, but ideologically she was a woman of Anglo descent who embodied the racial and cultural ideals of American identity." To revoke this identity is to, in some measure, rob the citizen of their racial and cultural identity. A woman's marriage to a foreigner was conceived of as a kind of sexual treason; her marriage to a foreigner an act of disloyalty. White women who married Chinese men ceased to maintain the white Anglo-American identities they once had and were expected to adopt the racial and cultural identities of their new nation. An article published in the Ann Arbor Times in response to Mae and Tiam Hock Franking's marriage is an excellent illustration of how this expectation was justified. Tellingly titled, "A Concrete Reason for the Race Prejudice at Ann Arbor," the crux of the article's argument is that, "the bride as a rule follows her husband and becomes subject to his ideas on the marriage relation and often to the laws of his land concerning it." The adoption of new cultural values was thus grounded in an established patriarchal structure in which the woman follows her husband.

52 Nicolosi, 2
This set of assertions fits in neatly with a developing body of theory called queer citizenship. Although the development of queer citizenship is indelibly grounded in LGBTQ experience, its principles have an important place in conceiving of citizenship generally. Queer citizenship has two main elements. The first element is a heavy stress on the importance of performance of identity in political expression and agency, and a rejection of the importance of the public sphere that is so vital to most conceptions of citizenship. By placing stress on the idea of performance, proponents of queer citizenship theory seek to create a space in which identities that do not fall into the mainstream can be expressed and celebrated. This leads us to the second main element of queer citizenship, namely the aggressive pursuit and critique of questions of membership. This critique is targeted at understanding the way that marginalized groups are excluded from membership in society. It seeks to create a space in which membership in the project of nation is enlarged beyond a cultural majority and into every segment of the minority.

Queer citizenship theory provides a useful tool for exploring the 'queer' racial space that women who married Chinese men inhabited. Performance of their Chinese identities was an important part of how these women became understood to be Chinese. Furthermore, these women were excluded from becoming citizens in both a cultural and a legal sense because of their sexual/social choices. This engagement with an alternative vision of acceptable sexual practice is something that the modern LGBTQ movement that queer citizenship grew out of and racial intermarriage share. Although this digresses from the main thrust of my thesis, I believe

55 Knight and Harnish, 675
that this exclusion from citizenship represents away in which the dominant sexual paradigm is expressed. Groups that are understood to be 'deviant' are ostracized through a loss of their cultural and/or legal citizenship and subsequently become foreign both to the state and to the American mainstream.

The establishment of derivative citizenship put into law the cultural and sexual norms that stigmatized women who married Chinese men. As legal scholar Robert Gordon notes, laws are both the product of, and an authorizing discourse that legitimates, what is thought of as "common sense" in society. Broadly accepted beliefs about race, sex, and citizenship were incorporated into these laws, and established the state as an arbiter of these identities.

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V. Biographies

This section marks the shift from the examination of discourse to the study of lived experiences. I will be accessing this study through the lives of three white women: Emma Fong Kuno, Mae Franking, and Ella May Clemens Wong. Although they came from very different backgrounds, they all shared the fact that they married Chinese men. In order to understand their performance of Chinese identity and the queer racial identity that they occupied, it is important to know a bit about their life stories. Using mostly primary sources, I have constructed a series of brief biographies detailing some of the major events in their lives and highlighting information that is relevant to my analysis of identity and performance.

A. Emma Fong Kuno

Emma Fong Kuno née Howse met her husband-to-be, Walter Ngong Fong, at Stanford when she was a freshman. Walter Fong was born in 1866 in a small village in China's Guangdong province and came to America in 1881 when he was only 15 years old. The young Fong was a precocious young man, and after his arrival he became very involved in the Methodist church, becoming a minister in June of 1883. He attended Stanford for his undergraduate and law degrees, and it was during this time that he met Emma Howse. They courted patiently for a time, and before he graduated in 1896 he proposed marriage to her. Because of laws against interracial marriage in California, the two traveled to Denver, Colorado in June to get married. Their marriage generated no small amount of controversy and an article

57 Emma Fong Kuno, “Account of his life,” Box 1, Folder 11, Walter and Emma Fong Collection, Stanford University Special Collections and University Archives
58 Preaching License, Box 1, Folder 3, Walter and Emma Fong Collection, Stanford University Special Collections and University Archives
was published the next day in the local newspaper *The Rocky Mountain News* with the headline “Eloped With Chinaman.” This news was wired around the nation and reprinted in newspapers across the United States with similar sensational headlines.\(^{60}\)

The couple returned to San Francisco where Mr. Fong began his law practice.\(^{61}\) The two lived in San Francisco for several years and had two children. Mr. Fong was quite active in the Chinese community in San Francisco, getting involved with local and international politics eventually becoming the head of the Chinese Revolutionary Party in America.\(^{62}\) In 1903, Mr. Fong was invited to be the head of the new Li Xing Science College in Hong Kong, a position that he accepted.\(^{63}\) The family moved to Hong Kong and stayed there for several years until Mr. Fong’s death from tuberculosis in 1906.\(^{64}\) Heartbroken, Emma returned to the United States. After spending some time in a sanatorium later that year, she lived on her own, supporting herself for a short time by contributing to magazines and newspapers.\(^{65}\) Less than a year after her husband’s death, Emma married a close friend of her former husband, a Japanese man named Yoshi Kuno. They later moved into the home Emma and Walter had built on Francisco Street, and raised their two children.

\(^{60}\) “Eloped With a Chinaman,” *The Rocky Mountain News* found in the Walter and Emma Fong Collection, Box 1, Folder 9

\(^{61}\) “My Oriental Husbands,” 5

\(^{62}\) “My Oriental Husbands,” 4

\(^{63}\) Fong Kuno, “Account of His Life”

\(^{64}\) Death Certificate, Box 1, Folder 7, Walter and Emma Fong Collection, Stanford University Special Collections

\(^{65}\) Emma Fong Kuno, Letter to Mr. Bridre, Correspondence, December 10, 1906, Box 1, Folder 12, Walter and Emma Fong Collection, Stanford University Special Collections and University Archives
B. Mae Franking

Despite the many miles that separate Michigan and California, Mae Franking’s story in many ways echoes the story of Emma Fong Kuno. Mae met her husband-to-be, Tiam Hock Franking, when they were both attending Ann Arbor High School. They became romantically involved in high school, and subsequently attended college together at the University of Michigan. They became engaged in the spring of 1912, and along with news that Mae was pregnant, they were married in the house of Mae’s parents. Although Mae’s parents approved of the union after some convincing, Tiam’s parents were not nearly as accepting. As a result of his marrying Mae and spurning the bride his family had chosen for him, he was cut off from his family entirely. The marriage also caused huge controversy at the University of Michigan, and the two soon left because of the toxic atmosphere on the campus. Tiam eventually completed a degree in law from the University of Detroit in 1913 and the two made their way to Shanghai where they lived and worked for more than five years. During this time, they had two more children and reconciled with his family. In 1918 the two headed back to the United States so that Tiam could look for a more lucrative job. He did not get the chance to do so because of a bout of influenza along with latent tuberculosis that killed him in early 1919. Mae never remarried, and died in 1926 also of tuberculosis at the age of 35.

66 Holly Franking’s account of this story and the one given by Holly’s parents in an editorial they wrote to the Detroit Free Press—“Never Opposed Her Marriage,” Detroit Free Press, September 22, 1912, 24
67 Holly Franking, “Introduction,” xxxi
C. Ella May Clemmons Wong

The story of Mrs. Ella May Clemmons Wong is perhaps the most dramatic of any of these accounts, reading more like a murder mystery than a series of real life events. As a result, this biography is significantly longer than the others in order to fully document her story. Ella was born in 1871 to Sheldon Perry and Mary J. Clemmons. Ella had two younger siblings: Viola, later Katherine Gould, and Ida born in 1873 and 1875 respectively. Their father, Perry Clemmons, was a farmer of some means while Mary Clemmons tended the house. The family moved to Palo Alto at some point in the 1880's along with their children. Sometime after their move to California and at a very young age, Ella married Charles B. Overacker, a rich orchard owner and the county recorder for Alameda County. The marriage was a troubled one and ended in separation and then divorce in 1900.

The relationship between Ella and her younger sister Katherine (Viola) was one that teetered at extremes throughout their lives, and plays an important part in my narrative. While Ella was characterized as having a “mere blonde prettiness,” Katherine was a beauty and a talented actress and singer. With the help of William F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) she mounted a world tour, and had her older sister accompany her as a chaperone. However, in 1897 Ella and Katherine had a falling out and Ella returned alone to San Francisco. The next year, Katherine married the wealthy financier Howard Gould, son of the infamous robber baron Jay Gould. This

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68 Two separate accounts exist of Ella's place of origin. The first is authored by Miriam A. DeFord, a turn of the century author who wrote a chapter on Mrs. Clemens Wong in one of her books. She says that Ella was born in Oakland, CA, but census records and newspapers seem to indicate that the family was situated in Illinois and that Ella later moved to California. 69 1870 Census, Illinois, Pike County, Montezuma Township, page 21 70 Miriam A. DeFord, They Were Franciscans (Caldwell, Ohio: Caldwell Printers), 257 71 Ibid., 257 72 Ibid., 258
marriage and their subsequent divorce further increased her visibility, and made her somewhat of a minor celebrity in her day. After her divorce, she received an enormous alimony equal to around $600,000 in modern terms.\textsuperscript{73} To quote the entirety of an especially pithy article on the alimony settlement in \textit{The Morning Oregonian}: “Having been allowed $25,000 a year in alimony, Mrs. Howard Gould will now be able to drink herself to death like a real lady.”\textsuperscript{74} The enormous media coverage around her sister’s divorce and the drama that accompanied had real consequences for Mrs. Clemens Wong, making her a person of even more interest to the media.\textsuperscript{75}

After she returned from chaperoning her sister on her world tour, Ella May Clemens\textsuperscript{76} lodged for a time in a boarding house on Stockton Street not far from Chinatown.\textsuperscript{77} Ella May Clemens was very different from her sister. While Katherine went on wild world tours and married a millionaire, Ella was somewhat more severe and somber in appearance and conduct. While on Stockton Street, Ella decided to become a missionary and minister to the needs of the Chinese population. In 1901, she “renounced the frivolities of the world” to quote one newspaper account and set up a mission called the “Little House of Gold.”\textsuperscript{78} She began to learn

\textsuperscript{73} I used inflation calculators available at the following sites to calculate this figure: http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm and http://www.westegg.com/inflation/ as of 4/18/2011
\textsuperscript{74} “Mrs. Howard Gould” \textit{The Morning Oregonian}, November 19, 1908, 8
\textsuperscript{75} Besides the new coverage that was generated because of her sister’s national prominence, she was also among other things dogged by private detectives trying to get dirt on her sister—“Gould Detectives Again,” \textit{Duluth News Tribune}, October, 22, 1907
\textsuperscript{76} I have decided to use this spelling of her last name throughout my paper because it is the one that she went by during the period I am analyzing. At this point her legal name was still Clemmons or possibly Overacker.
\textsuperscript{77} 1900 census—lost original citation
\textsuperscript{78} “Friend of the Chinese,” \textit{San Jose Evening News}, January 14, 1901, 7
Chinese and became known as a tireless advocate for the Chinese community earning the nickname the “Christ Angel of Chinatown.”

The San Francisco earthquake of 1906 was one of the worst natural disasters in U.S. history and an important event in the history of San Francisco. Thousands died during the earthquake and ensuing fires, and nearly all of Chinatown was leveled including the Little House of Gold. In the midst of the devastation, the community began to rebuild itself anew. Known as champion for the Chinese, the “Christ Angel” assumed responsibility for relief effort in Chinatown and moved into a small tent in the Presidio. People came from all over Chinatown to seek her help in rebuilding. One such seeker would later become her husband, Mr. Wong Sun Yue. Ella later recalled their meeting under a regulation army tent and their life in the relief camp living “like soldiers, without floor or fire, facing all the winds and storms of the elements and human wants.” They were married in Chinese fashion in a joss house and later in a Methodist church.

Ella and Sun Yue lived for almost ten years in a house and curio shop they opened at 353 Grant Street across the street from the still largely intact Old Saint Mary’s Cathedral. By this point, Ella had become a devout Catholic leaving her Congregationalist roots behind her.

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79 “Mrs. Sun Yue: Romance of Mrs. Howard Gould’s Sister ‘Angel of Chinatown,’” Biloxi Daily Herald, October 22, 1906, 3
80 An interesting digression: Dr. Sun Yat Sen, the future president of the Republic of China and the George Washington figure of both Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China, visited their tent and met the couple during a visit to San Francisco in 1907.
81 His surname here is notated incorrectly, but it is seemingly in accord with all of the sources I have consulted. In a letter with his seal on it, his name is written using the surname 黃 which would be Romanized as Hwang in Wade Giles or Huang in modern Pinyin.
82 Clemens Wong, “Chinatown,” 29
83 DeFord, 259
84 Clemens Wong, “Chinatown,” 2
and working with the priests at Saint Mary's. The couple made their living by selling objects from the ruins of the earthquake, leading guided tours of Chinatown, and peddling various quack medicines such as a miraculous opium cure that she had supposedly used to wean her husband from the drug. They also cared for two children of ambiguous racial heritage. I have phrased this statement this way because, although one of the only published sources on Mrs. Wong asserts that they were "obviously half-white" and presumably their children, Mrs. Wong later stated they were adopted although this claim is suspect for reasons that I will mention later.

It is during the couple's time running the shop on Grant Street that Katherine Gould once again enters our narrative. Now a wealthy and well known woman, Katherine Gould attempted to reconcile with her estranged sister by agreeing to finance the construction of a school in China. Ella was an ardent believer in Dr. Maria Montessori's philosophy of teaching and wanted to establish a school there in order to improve the lives of Chinese children. The family and Ms. Gould traveled together to Beijing in 1915 and began to lay the groundwork for their school which would be named the "House of Childhood." All signs point to the fact that they expected to spend the rest of their lives there managing this school. Mr. Wong made no provision to return back to the United States as was required under the Chinese Exclusion Act, and would have been denied entrance if he had attempted to do so. A major hitch in their plan occurred when Katharine Gould unexpectedly removed all of the funding from the school that

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86 DeFord, 260
they had tried to establish together.\textsuperscript{88} The motives for this are unclear. Mrs. Gould had been trying to separate the two for years even going as far as to offer her a sizable share of the largest alimony in history to no avail.\textsuperscript{89} These circumstances whether motivated by this desire or by an independent falling out between the sisters, had profound consequences on Ella’s life. The school quickly failed and the Wong’s “children” were afflicted with smallpox. Although they survived the ordeal, Ella and Sun Yue’s marriage did not. It turns out that Wong Sun Yue already had a wife in China, and instead of returning to the United States in 1922 with Ella and the children, decided to stay in China with his Chinese wife.\textsuperscript{90}

Ella returned to the United States a broken woman. It is now that she made public comments about “putting her soul in pawn” to Mr. Wong and declaring it a loveless, childless marriage. Despite the losses she had faced, Ella attempted to re-open the curio shop, this time on Stockton Street. She also threw herself into work for the people of Chinatown, becoming fanatically pious and spending more and more time at Saint Mary’s. She would walk the streets of Chinatown with a huge cross around her neck and write out prayers for her friends. She also began to subscribe to many quack doctors and charlatans in a wild effort to mend her psychological and physical problems, a habit that was facilitated by the death of her sister in 1930 and her inheritance of a modest fortune.\textsuperscript{91}

It was this last tendency that would lead to her death and a murder mystery seemingly ripped out an Agatha Christie novel. After suffering from a bout of seizures in 1938, she

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\textsuperscript{88} DeFord, 261
\textsuperscript{89} “Chinese Husband More Dear: Mrs. Howard Gould’s Offer to Her Sister is Refused,” \textit{Kansas City Star}, March 18, 1908, 7
\textsuperscript{90} “Oriental Romance of Actress Ends Shrouded In Mystery,” \textit{The Miami Herald}, July 1, 1922, 4
\textsuperscript{91} DeFord, 263-264
enlisted the help of a drugless practitioner named Dr. Hjalmar Groneman. "Dr." Groneman was not actually a doctor at all; he had a degree in chiropractic medicine and not in general medicine. Groneman slowly began to earn Ella's trust, and eventually, exploiting her psychological illness began to control her. She cut off all visits to her friends and people in the community and began to follow the orders that Groneman gave her like an automaton. Groneman prescribed for her a number of absurd and damaging treatments such as a diet without water and a diet exclusively of water. Groneman and a "nurse" assistant who was secretly his lover slowly killed Ella all while enjoying her complete trust. A few days before her death, he called a priest in to officiate a wedding. Groneman and Ella May Clemmons Wong were married on September 14th, 1935 as she lay on her deathbed (indeed there was nothing left in her house but this bed as Dr. Groneman had pawned all of her possessions). On September 18th, an ambulance came to take the dying now Mrs. Groneman to the hospital, but it was too late. The damage had been done. The doctor ruled that she had died from natural causes, and Dr. Groneman inherited the entirety of her fortune.

Although my account of Mrs. Wong's life ends with her death, I feel compelled to finish the story of Dr. Groneman. The murder stayed buried some time until a reporter at the San Francisco Call stumbled into the story. Both Groneman and his assistant were subpoenaed and put on trial for murder. Dr. Groneman responded by immediately proposing to his assistant, a Miss Enberg. This action was taken because if they were married, they would not be able to testify against each other, and they were the only witnesses to the events. However, Miss Enberg pulled out of the marriage just before the trial date. Then, she promptly disappeared.
It is not known whether Dr. Groneman killed her or whether she fled to avoid prosecution, but Groneman was not convicted of the crime.\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{92} I have refrained from exhaustively citing the materials regard Mrs. Clemens Wong's murder to avoid clutter. An account of these events can be found in DeFord's \textit{They Were Franciscans} 264-273 as well as in her book \textit{Murderers, Sane and Mad}. I also relied on accounts in newspapers as well as the following report: Charles B. Pinkham, "Board of Medical Examiners of the State of California: News," \textit{California and Western Medicine}, Vol. 44, No. 3, March, 1936, 248-249
VI. "Putting on China:” ‘Sin’icization and the Performance of the Yellow Peril

I wore my first jacket and plaited skirt that night, a combination of pale green and black satin, and now and then I would see Chan-King's eyes turned upon me with the look I best loved to see there—a clear, warm affection shining in them, a certain steady glow of expression that had love and friendship and understanding in it. I think the sight of me in the dress of his country confirmed in his mind my declaration that I loved China—that I wanted to be a real Chinese wife...I had put on China, to wear it always in my heart and mind, and thought only of my husband, his work, and his people.93

-Mae Franking, My Chinese Marriage

The intellectual understanding of race and gender in the early 20th century was one largely based in an immovable biological essentialism. Although we now understand race and gender as social constructs that are performed, in that time one was born a woman or born a man, a white person or a Chinaman. Race was inherent to one's body and determined a host of factors ranging from an individual's sexual predilections to one's food preferences. In the minds of those who believed in polygenesis, this distinction went even further classifying people of different races as different species. An enormous amount of effort was put into classifying and distinguishing the races. Careful drawings of the Negroid and the Caucasian man and exacting measurements of skulls and body parts were created by anthropologists and scientists in attempt to "scientifically" understand each of the races and validate cultural claims on their habits and identities.94

The cases of Mae Franking, Ella May Clemens Wong, and Emma Fong Kuno, however, suggest a slightly different reality. Their marriage to Chinese men transformed their supposedly

93 Franking and Porter, 57-59
inherent racial identities into mutable ones suggesting the existence of an associational idea of race. By so upsetting the racial and sexual status quo by marrying a Chinese man, these women in some measure became Chinese. When I use this term, I do not mean to say that they did not continue to benefit in some measure from their whiteness. These women still held a level of privilege because of the color of their skin. Rather, they lost the cultural values associated with whiteness and had them replaced or replaced them with Chinese cultural values. They lost the respectability that they may or may not have obtained before marrying, their connections in white society, and the identification with the virtues of white womanhood. I will be examining this associational idea of race by examining the ways that these women “performed” race, studying how people talked about these marriages, and by looking at citizenship laws and how they reinforced an idea of racial otherness by codifying into law.

A. Self-Identification

The most direct way that these three women performed Chinese identity was in their own enunciation that they indeed had become Chinese by virtue of their marriage to a Chinese man. Indeed, the central conceit of Mae Franking’s *My Chinese Marriage* is that Mae is transformed into a Chinese woman through her marriage to Tiam and the experiences she has in China. Mae begins this as a mild-mannered young Scotch-Irish girl who meets a young Chinese classmate who ends up being her next door neighbor. True to “proper” bounds of white womanhood, she keeps her distance because “despite all the reasons for sympathy with [Tiam], I felt towards him something amounting to dislike.”\(^\text{95}\) Here, Mae/Katharine Porter inserts an interesting piece of racial commentary. The passage continues, “Against such states

\(^{95}\) Franking and Porter, 4
of mind my sense of personal justice, a trait I had directly from my Scotch inheritance, instantly rebelled. This intervention in racializing Mae's previously implicitly white Anglo-Saxon character, and positing that this racial trait was the seed of Mae's ability to overcome the racial barrier that would normally nudges her away from the idea of respectability tied with racial purity that Yellow Peril discourses were intent on maintaining.

From this space of innocent white womanhood, Mae moves into a space where she and Tiam begin a friendship that blossoms into love and finally into marriage. This period takes up the space of a single chapter of My Chinese Marriage, creating an exposition to introduce the central conflict; namely, Mae's "transformation" into a Chinese woman or rather, to avoid hyperbole, her movement into occupying the discursive space of a Chinese woman. This change comes about as Mae and Tiam move to Shanghai, and eventually return to Tiam's ancestral home. Here, not only is she expected to get along with Tiam's family, but she is expected to learn how to take her place as the first daughter-in-law of the family. During this time, she is represented not only as learning to fulfill this important ritual role in the Chinese household but also becoming steeped in an 'Oriental' mindset.

It is during this time where she gives lengthy descriptions of Chinese life and culture, and ends up conforming to traditional Chinese views that seem utterly shocking for a Western woman to hold. For example, My Chinese Marriage offers a positive commentary regarding foot-binding which was almost universally understood to be a barbaric practice. Mae remarks, "As I watched the daintily shod women of my mother's household, I realized that never before had I appreciated, in reading the literature of my adopted country, the aptness of comparing

96 Franking and Porter, 4
the walk of a woman with bound feet to the grace of bamboo swaying in the breeze." She goes on to stress that, "bound feet were exquisitely cared for" and the bandages regularly changed.

An even further departure from the Western moral tradition comes in the form of her moral understanding of widow suicide and her characterization of it as a "not unnatural process" and the women who practiced it as "heroic." The most striking of the actions that Mae takes is her regret at not leaving one of her children in China as her mother-in-law had requested; even Tiam, a Chinese man had wanted to accept the Western concept of the nuclear family and unity. In some ways, it seems that Holly threw most of her previous Western moral and cultural perspectives and replaced them wholly with Chinese ones. She took attitudes that made her more traditionally Chinese than many Chinese were at that time. She wanted desperately to be Chinese. The telling climax of the book comes as she is accepted into her new Chinese family and her mother-in-law proclaims, "You are a Chinese wife." It seems that in the end, she succeeded.

Interestingly, Mae’s experience was not an isolated one. United States Consul Amos P. Wilder was so alarmed at the growing trend of white women traveling to China with the Chinese husbands that he chose to file a lengthy confidential report on the "sorry lot of American women who marry Chinese and come with them to China to live." In his report, Mr. Wilder painted a grave picture of the ‘oppressed’ existence of these wives. Wilder was particularly appalled by what he viewed as these women’s “automatic assimilation into the

97 Franking and Porter, 47
98 Ibid., 53
99 Ibid., 50
Chinese husband’s culture and society that led them to accept non-Western practices such as foot binding or arranged marriages and the lowering of status and autonomy as women.”

Mr. Wilder’s characterization of the “sorry lot of American women who marry Chinese” stood in stark contrast to the substantial presence of white women missionaries in China; white women made up 60% of the missionaries in China in 1890. In Jane Hunter’s book on the efforts of female missionaries in China, she argues that “mission service offered women many of the gratifications of purpose, status, and performance associated with the developing professions, without requiring the bold assault on female conventions demanded of the new ‘professional’ woman.” It offered a powerful opportunity for women to escape the limited opportunities that were available for women in the United States in the early 20th century. Female missionaries were deeply engaged in work with Chinese women seeking to eliminate the feudalistic treatment of Chinese women through foot binding and the intense focus on hierarchical family relations. Missionary women were a perfect foil to people like Mae Franking. They embodied the “proper” way to engage the Orient, a way solidly grounded in Western, Christian values.

Mrs. Wong Sun Yue Clemens also pronounced that through her marriage to Mr. Wong, she had become a Chinese woman. Although Ella left behind no detailed memoir of her life as Mae did, newspaper records show us her association with the Chinese. An article written by

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101 Mary Ting Yi Lui, 151-152
103 Ibid., 36
104 Ibid., 22
the Associated Press and published in the Los Angeles Herald shortly after the couple's marriage reads as follows:

"Mrs. Yue [sic], who renounces her citizenship to become a Chinese merchant said, "In becoming a Chinese merchant many paths are open to me which were closed before. I have become a member of a tailoring firm called Quong Yuen Yick. It's the dragon for me instead of the colors and stripes."

The word choice in this article and in other publications is important. Mrs. Clemens Wong is not becoming the wife of a Chinese person. She is becoming a Chinese wife by virtue of her marriage. This point is further stressed in that it is tied to her citizenship status as I discussed previously.

This same quote by Mrs. Clemens Wong was front page news as far away as Philadelphia, appearing in an article entitled "Takes up Dragon; Renounces the U.S." This article repeats the story of Mrs. Clemens Wong "taking up the Dragon." What did it mean to "take up the dragon?" If Mrs. Gould's statement here is to be believed, then it means renouncing the United States and American culture and taking up Chinese traditions and values. Inscribed on to her statement about joining a tailoring firm are a number of subtle markers of Chinese identity. Mrs. Clemens Wong, despite no history of being involved as a tailor, is abandoning her previous occupation as a missionary and has decided to join a Chinese company as a merchant, a common pattern among

105 "Gould's Sister-in-Law is Chinese Merchant," The Los Angeles Herald, June 7, 1907, 1
106 "Takes up Dragon; Renounces the U.S." Philadelphia Inquirer, June 16, 1907, A1
107 This statement by Mrs. Clemens-Wong is a little puzzling. As far as I know, and details about her life are fairly sparse, she never worked for a tailoring firm called Quong Yuen Yick. From the records that I have of Mrs. Clemens-Wong, she opened her curio shop soon after the earthquake, though this does not mean she did not also work as a tailor. Despite these reservations, I feel the need to be faithful to the primary source material that I am able to find and to a certain extent take the paper at its word.
Chinese émigrés. Furthermore, she is laying claim to a set of family and racial
connections that are an important part of Chinese life.

B. Clothing

Self-identification and the co-opting of Chinese values and cultural forms is not the only
way that these women performed a Chinese identity. As the quote I included in the beginning
suggests, I believe that clothing is one of the important ways in which this in-between racial
category is performed. Dress is the most apparent outward performance of identity. In the
words of anthropologist Emma Tarlo:

> It [dress] links the biological body to the social being, and public to private. This
> makes it uneasy territory since it forces us to recognize that the human body is
> more than a biological entity. It is an organism in culture, a cultural artefact
> even, and its own boundaries are unclear....Dress is the frontier between the self
> and the not self.¹⁰⁸

Using this lens, Mae's action in wearing a Chinese *qipao* is more than a mundane gesture. By
casting away her Western clothes and almost exclusively wearing Chinese clothing, this gesture
symbolizes a casting away of identity and an effort to embody Chineseness. Mae was not alone
in this respect. Ella May Clemens Wong and Emma Fong Kuno both chose to make Chinese
attire a part of their wardrobe.

The question is, then, what is the significance of this performance? What cultural
scripts caused these women to want to get rid of Western clothing in favor of Chinese dress?
After all, one of the important elements of dress when talked about in this sense is that it is a
voluntary representation of identity. A Chinese *qipao* was not forced on Mae in this instance

¹⁰⁸ Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996), 17
but rather freely chosen. In fact, their choice to wear Chinese dress was a choice seemingly against societal expectations and norms. After all, although the *qipao* and other articles still may have retained a measure of *chinoiserie*, they represented the native costume of an "inferior" culture, more appropriate for prominent display in a museum rather than for the everyday attire of a "respectable" woman. Indeed the reaction of one Chinese observer to this situation is telling of this attitude:

*He looked at me very keenly for a moment, as if he meant to ask a serious question. The he said, in his abrupt manner, "You are happy in that dress?"

"Indeed I am," I answered.

"You like it better than you like American clothes?" he persisted.

I nodded firmly, smiling and catching my husband's eye.

"Then wear it always, said the Doctor, with a pontifical lifting of his fingers." ¹⁰⁹

From a subaltern perspective the desire to wear the clothing of the "inferior" culture is strange. The colonized subject is often remembered as donning the clothes of the conqueror in order to access some sense of power. This perplexingly flips this equation.

Ella May Clemens Wong's donning of Chinese attire highlights another important element of performing Chineseness. Ella and Sun Yue met during the rescue efforts following the 1907 earthquake that decimated Chinatown. When they married, they set up the Wong Sun Yue Tea Garden at 535 Grant Avenue. The tea garden held tours of Chinatown for the curious white outsider and sold relics from the earthquake including the cornerstone of the Chinese firehouse, debris from destroyed churches, and even the remains of trees from "well

¹⁰⁹ Franking and Porter, 20
known places." The most interesting thing on display was not a piece of a tree or even the wood-carved arch brought from China but Mrs. Wong Sun Yue Clemens herself. The Wong-Clemenses sold dozens of different postcards like this one shot by photographer John Kytka to tourists to Chinatown.

Figure 2: John Kytka, "Mr. and Mrs. Wong Sun Yue Clemens inside store"

111 Kathryn Ayres, "Relics Dug From the Ruins," San Francisco Bay Area Post Card Club, Volume XXIII, No. 8 (August 2008), 3
A reporter from the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* wryly recalls how upon entering the tea garden, Mrs. Clemens Wong, "frankly declares that pictures of herself and Chinese husband bring 15 cents a piece."\(^{113}\) That these postcards were sold in large numbers indicates that they were fulfilling a marketable desire to see Chinese-white miscegenation 'in action.'

Where does this desire come from? An integral part of post cards as a medium is that they are re-presented through one person mailing it to another. Souvenir postcards like this almost universally represent something interesting and access a sort of cultural cachet based on seeing and collecting the exotic. These postcards capitalized on the discourse of sexual deviancy that surrounded Asian men, and provided the viewer a sort of visual confirmation of this discursive identity. This is further underscored by the text at the bottom of this and all of the other postcards, "Mrs. Wong Sun Yue Clemens—Mrs. Howard Gould's Sister." Not only was this union between a white woman and a Chinese man, but seemingly a white woman from a 'good' background. Lastly, this postcard says something not only about the couple themselves but about the space that Chinatown occupied in the public's imagination. This postcard was meant to represent the white voyage into the supposedly dangerous and perverse streets of Chinatown. White observers really came to the Wong Sun Yue tea garden to sneak a glimpse into the Chinatown of popular fiction; they wanted to see the highbinders, opium dens, and filthy streets. That the photograph represents this experience is one of an interracial couple in their home says a good deal about the voyeuristic desires of the people who visited the Wong Sun Yue Tea Garden.

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\(^{113}\) "Sister of Howard Gould's Wife Now Chinatown Queen," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, October 27, 1914, 7
Were one or two of these postcards to be sold in isolation, this presentation would be fairly inconsequential. However, these postcards were not only sold but seemingly quite popular; more than 100 different photographs of the two were marketed as postcards.\textsuperscript{114} Several institutions in California hold postcards of the two in addition to libraries as far away as British Columbia. At least one article has been published about postcards featuring the two in postcard enthusiast publications, indicating that there is some familiarity with them in this community.\textsuperscript{115} The larger point is that seemingly inconsequential things such as postcards or a woman’s choice to wear Chinese clothing are actually important ways to access the understanding of race, sex, and gender.

C. Expertise

Emma Fong Kuno’s performance of racial identity has been a striking absence in my narrative so far. In some ways, her case provides an interesting counter-example to the pattern of analysis that I have established thus far. Emma makes it a point in her “My Oriental Husbands” series in the \textit{San Francisco Call} that she remains resolutely a white American woman.

\textit{Through it all, however, my loyalty has never been affected, for whether technically Chinese or technically Japanese, my heart has always been American, and never have I acknowledged allegiance to any flag others than that of my own United States.}\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{114} Ayres, 3
\textsuperscript{115} Several postcard collecting websites keep them in stock, and I was even able to purchase one off of the online auction site eBay.com for five dollars.
\textsuperscript{116} Fong-Kuno, "My Oriental Husbands," 28
Her need to declare that she is resolutely American indicates that there is a cultural and legal presumption that she is otherwise. If her national status and self-identity was not in question, she would simply not address this point at all.

Why didn’t Emma claim Chineseness for herself where Ella and Mae both freely and proudly did so? Does this mean this identity was not applied to her or that she did not in some other way buy into it herself? In answer to my first question, I suspect that her background and education had an effect on her desire to retain a white American identity. Mrs. Fong Kuno was herself a graduate of Stanford, and she had a professional degree. This sets her apart from the other two women: Margaret Franking was primarily a housewife and Ella May Clemmons-Wong was a “Chinese merchant.” Her position as a writer and as an educated middle-class woman no doubt factored into the image she wanted to project. As to the second question, I believe that her marriage to Walter Fong impacted the way that she was viewed in terms of her race and to a certain extent the way that she conceived of herself, despite her assertions to the contrary.

Her case is an opportunity to explore an element of racial performance that I have not explored so far, namely the idea of a kind of racial expertise and a special understanding of the ‘Oriental’ mentality.

Mrs. Fong Kuno’s “My Oriental Husbands” says a good deal about her self-positioning in the racial and sexual hierarchy of the time. In it, she puts herself in the role of an expert on Asian men by virtue of her marriages to two. She combines her personal experiences with her two husbands along with what she knows of Japanese and Chinese history in order to draw conclusions about Chinese and Japanese spouses generally. Chinese husbands, she believes, are the more passionate and emotional of the two whereas Japanese husbands are more
controlling and emotionally distant.\textsuperscript{117} Indeed, her account of her relationships with her husbands was included in the Chicago Survey of Race relations as an academically noteworthy text for understanding the phenomena of interracial marriage at the turn of the century. Overall, Mrs. Fong Kuno’s life experience made her believe that she could authoritatively speak to the mentality and nature of Chinese and Japanese people.

Her claim to be able to speak to the experience and nature of these people is a common thread I found between the three women. Through their experience with their Chinese husbands, they were able to claim a sort of unique expertise in Chinese culture, and saw themselves as bridges between the white and Chinese worlds. For Mrs. Fong Kuno, this bridge was fairly literal. She wrote her doctoral dissertation on Chinese ritual practice, and was throughout her life an important member of the Chinese and Japanese communities.\textsuperscript{118} In addition, she ran a side enterprise giving free tours of Chinatown as well as giving lectures on the Chinese in San Francisco, religion in China, and Chinese-American relations for a 25-cent admission fee.\textsuperscript{119}

In “My Oriental Husbands,” she constructs a life narrative for herself that is focused around her being an exception to notions of white identity and in a unique position with respect to Asian peoples. Mrs. Fong Kuno insists that even when growing up, “Although myself of pure English stock, race prejudice was foreign to my nature.”\textsuperscript{120} Later in the text, she writes that her marriages, “have given me an open door to the lives of both the Chinese and the

\textsuperscript{117} “My Oriental Husbands,” 23-25
\textsuperscript{118} Emma Fong Kuno, “Some Phases of Village Life in South China,” Box 1, Folder 11, Emma and Walter Fong Collection, Stanford University Special Collections and University Archives
\textsuperscript{119} Tour advertisement, Box 1 Folder 4, Emma and Walter Fong Collection, Stanford University Special Collections and University Archives
\textsuperscript{120} “My Oriental Husbands,” 1
Japanese, and that consequentially she had become the “mother of all of the Chinese in town.”

This idea of possessing a sort of motherhood over Chinese people resonates with my interpretation of the text. Her expertise extended beyond being exposed to Chinese and Japanese culture, as she no doubt was. She claimed to know Chinese people in a way that extended beyond the mundane details of culture and ritual and into the essence of their racial/personal selves. Although she did not configure herself as a Chinese or Japanese woman, Emma Fong Kuno viewed herself as a racial exception to her “pure English stock.” She believed that she possessed a sort of quality and experience that allowed her to access the White, Chinese, and Japanese worlds alive. I believe that this idea of racial exceptionalism is, although certainly not synonymous with a self-presentation as Chinese, inextricably linked to notions of racial self-identification.

Mae Franking and Ella May Clemens Wong also claimed this sort of cultural and racial expertise. For Mae, this expertise was one manifested in her desire to write the original manuscript of My Chinese Marriage and work with Katherine Anne Porter to write a more widely sellable version. Ella May Clemens Wong went even farther and made this idea of cultural and racial expertise into a career. Through her marriage to Wong Sun Yue, Ella May positioned herself as a sort of representative for Chinatown in its relations with the outside, and made her livelihood off of this racial/cultural expertise.

Mr. and Mrs. Wong Sun Yue’s business, the Wong Sun Yue Tea Garden located at 353 Grant Avenue, is an excellent example of how Mrs. Wong Sun Yue exercised her expertise on Chinese people in order to act as a sort of bridge between Chinatown and curious, largely white,

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121 “My Oriental Husbands,” 28
outsiders. The couple’s Tea Garden and the “relics from the ruins” that they maintained within was purportedly “one of the most visited of the spots in Chinatown.”\(^{122}\) Although news reports that she had become the “Chinatown Queen” in articles like “Woman Who Married Chink Reaps Fortune” were no doubt an exaggeration, Mr. and Mrs. Sun Yue undoubtedly did well for themselves in their business. One of their most substantial enterprises was the tours of Chinatown that they conducted twice daily at 1:30PM and 8PM. Mrs. Clemens Wong was very involved in rehabilitating the public image and the realities of Chinatown following the 1907 fire. In her pamphlet, “Chinatown” which served both as an advertisement and an introduction to this part of the city, she painted a picture of a new Chinatown replete with Christian institutions, modern technologies, and orderly markets.\(^{123}\) However, I believe that Mrs. Clemens Wong’s presentation of a modern rehabilitated Chinatown was not the factor that drew people to go on her tours. Rather, they wanted a voyeuristic glimpse of Chinese highbinders, opium dens, and vice. They need a real Chinese guide to show them these forbidden sights, but at the same time one who was free from the racial character of the Chinaman. Mrs. Clemens Wong provided this outlet with her racially ambiguous status and her expertise and knowledge of the forbidden Chinatown cityscape. She was able to market her queer racial identity as a commodity to a public craving a glimpse into the forbidden Chinese world.

\(^{122}\) “Woman Who Married Chink Reaps Fortune,” 1
\(^{123}\) Clemens Wong, “Chinatown,” 11-38
VII. Conclusion

In the midst of all these performances of Chinese identity by white women, the question remains: why did these women choose to represent themselves as Chinese? This is a challenging question to answer. In some way, why did society represent *them* as Chinese is an easier question. They transgressed the bounds of the acceptable racial and sexual practices of their day by engaging on an equal playing field with a group characterized as inferior. They threatened the racial and social power structures that were an integral part of American society and thus were cast out of it.

These women made their decision to marry Chinese men despite the discourses around them that characterized Chinese men as deviant. They lost their citizenship, a punishment which legally and culturally separated them from white society. They were imagined as prostituting themselves to Chinese men and as racially suspect in print media. They voluntarily walked into these relationships understanding that they would face censure from family and friends. Their marriages were courageous acts in defiance to a society that told them they were profoundly wrong.

We return then to the question, why did these women who so intentionally stood in opposition to the dominant discourse surrounding Chinese identity characterize themselves as Chinese? There are undoubtedly a number of factors that play into this equation, and to name any one at the exclusion of all others would be to overstep the bounds of reasonable analysis. Yet, I believe that through the application of an understanding of discursive power, these women's choices may be able to be at least in part understood.
One of the key elements of Foucault’s writings is that discourse channels the way in which individual subjectivities are expressed. Our concepts of race, authority, gender, sexuality, and any number of other social identities are understood to be constructed ideas, and our understandings of these concepts are generated from the voices around us. Ella May Clemmons Wong, Mae Franking, and Emma Fong Kuno were not figures set apart from time who were exempt from this. Although they made remarkable choices that strayed from the racial attitudes of their time, they still existed as a part of it. Mrs. Clemens Wong, Franking, and Fong Kuno were historical actors who had to respond to Elsie Sigel’s murder. They had to respond to deviant images of Chinese sexuality. But most importantly they had to respond to the idea transmitted through print media, the law, and countless other discourses that by marrying a Chinese man they became in some way Chinese. Just because these women broke from the norm in one respect does not mean that they did not conform to social expectations about race that stem from that union. Even in an act that profoundly transgressed sexual and racial norms of the day, these same norms were reproduced in the performance of their marriages.

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124 Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 106
Appendix

This is related to footnote # 29

A CHINAMAN'S BRIDE.

An American Laundress Marries Her Chinese Employer in Detroit.

The Detroit Free Press gives this account of a Chinese wedding in that city. A very interesting event took place at Wink Chapel last evening, it being the second wedding in the city in which a Chinese and an American woman were the contracting parties. The Chinese was Man Hon, better known as Hon Hing Lee, and the bride Laura Cherry. They were attended by Wai King, Woon Lee, Joe Wing, John Liu and Joe Lung and Miss Helen and Miss Cherry, all of the city, besides the bride, and Miss Sue Parks, of St. Albans. The affair was noticed about on the streets and there was a good rush of people to the church. During the ceremony the mother of the bride was greatly affected, and it was throughout a solemn ceremony, but after it was over all were very happy. The bride is 20 years old and was born here. Her father, Mr. Cherry, is a plumber by trade and the family are in good circumstances. The bride has been working in her husband's laundry for the past two years and she is highly spoken of by all who know her. Hon Hing Lee was dressed in full conventional style, and the bride in black silk, with lace trimming. The presents were very fine, consisting of a seven stone silver diamond ring, worth $500, from the wedding dress, one diamond and gold bracelet from Joe Lung, and others of like value. The bride's present to the wear of jewelry were two, one an elegant gold watch and chain, which her brother presented to her sometime ago. After the conclusion of the chapel, the party repaired to Sutro's restaurant. There were many guests at the table, and an abundance was served, including wine from all parts of the state. The parents of the bride are Catholics, and it is stated that Hon Hing Lee will require that faith. There was a social gathering at the home of the parents of the bride in the evening. The youngsters had a simple talk about for the future.
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