

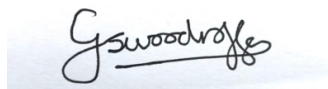
# **Brewing Discontent: Tea and Chinese American Identity in U.S. Literature, 1900 – 2020**

Submitted by Georgia Woodroffe to the University of Exeter  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in English  
July 2021

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that any material that has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University has been acknowledged.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Woodroffe', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

## Abstract

Tea is one of the most popular and pervasive commodities: it has started wars and fuelled nations' economies. Despite the brew's longstanding presence and significance within U.S. society, it has been relatively unexplored by cultural historians of the United States. This thesis investigates the extent to which representations of tea in U.S. literature might provide an index of the exclusion of Chinese Americans from full participation in national life. Drawing on U.S. food and drink studies, diaspora studies, and critical race theory, this thesis argues that tea's singular position within the United States has provided writers with a lens through which to portray, negotiate, and challenge Chinese American marginalisation from 1900 to 2020.

The study explores how tea signifies in works both sympathetic and hostile to Chinese Americans. It chronologically analyses well-known and obscure novels, autobiographies, plays, and short stories, beginning with tea scenes in early twentieth-century periodical fiction, and how such episodes either protest Chinese exclusion or support "yellow peril" fears. The thesis then considers how, in the 1930s and 1940s, when stereotypes of effeminate Chinese men were popular in pulp fiction, depictions of tea-drinking in autobiographical texts express patriarchy and women's growing rejection of subjugation within Chinese American communities. The study moves on to examine the extent to which tea-drinking in novels portrays the relationship between ethnicity and masculine anxiety during the 1950s and 1960s. The final chapter investigates how, in novels published in the last quarter of the twentieth century, tea ceremonies present the importance of mother-daughter relationships in the development of Chinese American women's self-care and sexuality. The study closes with a consideration of how tea in the *Crazy Rich Asians* trilogy illustrates the interconnections between taste, wealth, and citizenship in the twenty first century.



## Acknowledgements

The undertaking and completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the guidance, support, and opportunities given to me by many brilliant people and institutions. Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Sinéad Moynihan, for her enthusiasm and her engagement with my writing, which have always been constructive, encouraging, and inspiring. I am also exceptionally grateful to my second supervisor, Paul Williams, for his thought-provoking feedback on many of my chapter drafts.

I am also thankful to the University of Exeter and the British Library (B.L.) for their plethora of resources. The first editions held at the B.L. of many rare and obscure texts provided my thesis with invaluable information. The tranquil B.L. reading rooms were also a place of solace within London where researching was always a joy. Furthermore, I am thankful to online archives, like The Unz Review, for allowing me to access texts that are physically unavailable in the U.K.

The opportunity to attend conferences enabled me to share my research with fellow academics and to develop my ideas. I am thankful to Queen's University Belfast, the British Association for American Studies, and the B.L. for inviting me to deliver conference papers and thereby enabling me to listen, and talk, to fellow academics in American Studies. I am also grateful for the teaching positions I have held with The Brilliant Club and as a teacher of English at Eastbourne College. They have given me the opportunity to share my enthusiasm for literature and my research.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and close friends who have provided me with immeasurable support, love, encouragement, and friendship. To my friend and teacher, "Mr. Mac," whose wisdom, advice, and knowledge have inspired and informed my work for over a decade. To my parents, Sonia and John, and their humour, love, support, and unwavering faith in me. To my grandmother, Paula, and her love of literature and history which inspired me to immerse myself in our shared interests; her vigorous proofreading of my work from a young age has made me into the writer that I am today. To my partner, James, whose support and affection have been invaluable in the writing of this thesis. Finally, to my *papou*, Nicholas, whose vitality for life and unending positivity were a light at the end of any tunnel. Sadly, he passed away before the completion of this thesis. It is to him and my family that this thesis is dedicated.

## List of Contents

<b>Title Page</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>List of Contents</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>List of Illustrations</b>	<b>5-7</b>
<b>Definitions</b>	<b>8-10</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>11-49</b>
<b>Chapter 1. Age of Exclusion I: “Dark Dregs Telling the Tale”: Women Writers, Tea, and “Yellow Peril” Literature, 1900-1924</b>	<b>50-109</b>
Justifying Exclusion	
“Yellow Peril” Literature and <i>The Second Generation</i>	
“Crossing the Threshold” and Questioning Borders	
Calling for a United Front Against Patriarchy	
<b>Chapter 2. Age of Exclusion II: “A Little Mystery, a Little Spice”: Tea in Pulp Fiction and Chinese American Autobiographies, 1924-1945</b>	<b>110-164</b>
The Leniency Era	
Relocating the Dainty Brew: Reclaiming Chinese American Masculinity	
Negotiating Gender Roles	
Bonding over a Cup of Tea: Inter-generational Unity for Progress	
<b>Chapter 3. Looking for Answers and Drinking Deep: Confronting Masculine Anxiety during the 1950s and 1960s</b>	<b>165-221</b>
“The Touch of a Cup and Saucer”: Model Families and U.S. Suburbia	
Heading Eastward: Jack Kerouac’s Escape from Conventional Society	
Forming New Families in Old Chinatowns	
<b>Chapter 4. “The Flavor Always Comes Back”: Mother-Daughter Relationships in Fiction by Chinese American Women, 1976-2000</b>	<b>222-262</b>
Stereotypes of Chinese Women in the U.S. Imaginary	
Redefining the Limits of Maternal Nurturing	
Desire and Devotion: Exploring Women’s Sexuality	
<b>Coda. “Milk [Tea] is Thicker than Blood”: Superrich Asians and Transnational Chinese Identity in the Twenty First Century</b>	<b>263-285</b>
<b>Works Cited</b>	<b>286-330</b>

## List of Illustrations

- 1.1 *The Able Doctor; or America Swallowing the Bitter Draught*, May 1774, black and white etching, *London Magazine*.
- 1.2 John Singleton Copley, *Paul Revere*, 1768, oil on canvas.
- 2.1 *The Inferior Woman*, 1910, black and white illustration, *Hampton's Magazine*.
- 2.2 'Now Little Sister,' *Comforted Mrs. Spring Fragrance*, 'You Must Not Grieve,' 1910, black and white illustration, *Hampton's Magazine*.
- 2.3 *Afternoon tea at the Hotel Royal Poinciana, Palm Beach, FLA*, 1910, black and white photograph.
- 2.4 Haddon Sundblom, *Pierce-Arrow*, 1925, car advertisement.
- 2.5 The interior of Tally-Ho, a tearoom in New York, 1923, black and white photograph.
- 2.6 The interior of Satsuma Tea Room in Nashville, 1922, black and white photograph.
- 2.7 Arnold Genthe, *Waiting for the Car*, c.1896-1906, black and white photograph.
- 2.8 Arnold Genthe, *Carrying New Year's Presents*, c.1896-1906, black and white photograph.
- 2.9 Arnold Genthe, *The Street of the Gamblers (by day)*, c.1898, black and white photograph.
- 2.10 *Mrs Spring Fragrance*, 1912, front cover.
- 2.11 *The Second Generation*, 1917, black and white illustration, *Munsey's Magazine*.
- 2.12 *Melican Man he mus dlink Tea an den he get so fat like me*, c. 1880s-1890s, trade card, Union Pacific Tea Co.
- 2.13 R. Hoyt, *Untitled*, 1882, trade card for G. Rossler.
- 2.14 *The Yellow Claw*, 1916, illustration, *Detective Story*.
- 2.15 *The Pigtail has Got to Go*, 1898, cartoon, *Puck*.
- 2.16 Nicholas Joseph Crowley, *Fortune Telling by Cup Tossing*, 1842, oil on canvas.
- 3.1 *For Vitality: Turn to Tea Today*, 1937, poster, International Tea Market Expansion Board.

- 3.2 *How to Tell Japs from the Chinese*, 1941, annotated photographs, *LIFE*.
- 3.3 *How to Tell Your Friends from the Japs*, 1941, illustrated article, *Time*.
- 3.4 Jacques Bonneauud, *Fu-Manchou*, 1929, film poster.
- 3.5 Thomas Nast, *Blaine's Teas(e)*, 1880, cartoon, *Harper's Weekly*.
- 3.6 *The Secret Moral Code of the Screen*, 1926, front cover illustration, *Photoplay*.
- 3.7 The armed services edition of *Father and Glorious Descendant*, photograph.
- 3.8 Jade Snow Wong, *Untitled*, mid-1950s, earthenware vase.
- 4.1 Robert Osborn, *Untitled*, 1958, front cover illustration, *The Decline of the American Male*.
- 4.2 *TAKE TEA AND SEE*: *SEE* what a glow you get from hot and hearty tea for dinner, 1951, Tea Council advertisement, *LIFE*.
- 4.3 *Check the Flavor! Check the Price!* 1952, Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company (A&P) advertisement, *Woman's Day*.
- 4.4 *If he comes home UNDER PRESSURE, give him tea for dinner*, 1951, Tea Council advertisement, *LIFE*.
- 4.5 *Aren't you glad you switched?: TAKE TEA AND SEE*, 1952, Tea Council advertisement, *LIFE*.
- 4.6 *Tea For Two (1950) Official Trailer*, July 28, 2014, video still, Youtube.
- 4.7 John Cohen, *Jack Kerouac, Chinatown*, 1959, black and white photograph.
- 4.8 John Cohen, *Kerouac, Lucien Carr, and Ginsberg singing in Chinatown*, 1959, black and white photograph.
- 4.9 Gary Snyder wearing a Kimono and drinking tea, 1956, black and white photograph.
- 4.10 Bruce Tea bottles, 2016, photograph, *Instagram*.
- 4.11 A Bruce Tea prize winner, 2016, photograph, *Instagram*.
- 4.12 Bruce Tea van, 2016, photograph, *Instagram*.
- 4.13 Jackie's Tea House, photograph, Xel Pharmaceuticals.
- 5.1 *They would only let him peep at her through the devil screen, but still she seemed to smile*, 1939, illustration, *Argosy Weekly*.

5.2 Robert Carter, *The Real Yellow Peril*, 1909, illustration, *New York World*.

5.3 Kathryn Uhl, *Untitled*, 1978, illustration.

6.1 Afternoon tea at Tea & Sympathy, 2021, photograph.

6.2 Helayne Seidman, *The interior of Tea & Sympathy and its owners Nicky Perry and Sean Kavanagh-Dowsett*, November 25, 2018, photograph, *New York Post*.

6.3 George Frederick Keller, *The Coming Man*, May 20, 1881, cartoon, *The San Francisco Wasp*.

6.4 *The Great Fear of the Period: That Uncle Sam may be Swallowed by Foreigners: The Problem Solved*, c.1860-1869, cartoon, San Francisco: White & Bauer.

6.5 *The Return of Dr. Fu Manchu*, 1930, film poster.

6.6 *The Return of Dr. Fu Manchu*, 1930, film advertisement.

6.7 *Members of the Massachusetts's Asian American Commission protesting against the racism directed towards Asians during the COVID-19 pandemic*, March 24, 2020, photograph, *The Guardian*.

## Definitions

Asian American: it is believed the term first came into public circulation with the creation of the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) in 1968. The organisation strove to unite Asian Americans and form a movement to drive political and social action that advocated for racial equality. “Asian American” refers to Americans with origins in East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. As a result, some Americans with Asian roots are not considered part of the group, while some ethnicities are more prevalent than others. In Chapter 4 I begin using the term “Asian American” due to the new ways Chinese American identities were being negotiated within and in relation to this larger minority group within the United States.

Chinese American: I use this term to refer to people of Chinese ethnicity who either are born in the United States, are U.S. citizens, wish to become U.S. citizens, or live in the United States for most of their lives. Their exhibition of U.S. beliefs in opinions and actions is also of note. Due to exclusionary laws, many people of Chinese descent who considered themselves American were denied citizenship. In my scholarship I am concerned with how the Chinese see themselves and present their identity: thus, if they identify as “American” in one or more of the ways listed above I will call them Chinese American.

Chinese immigrant: I use this term to refer to Chinese people who have recently moved to the United States. They often exhibit one or more of the following traits: plan to return to China, do not wish to set up a home in the United States, do not have U.S. citizenship, do not speak English, staunchly follow Chinese traditions and practices, keep their lives limited to Chinese communities, and do not wish to assimilate into, or take part in, wider U.S. society.

Colonial: I use the adjective to characterise tea customs that were created and adopted by Europeans during the height of Europe’s, and especially Britain’s, maritime trading history and colonial occupation in East and Southeast Asia. This period runs from the eighteenth century up to the twentieth century, when tea-drinking became a custom to communicate the refinement and “superiority” of white people. Mainland China was not part of the British Empire; however, Britain

did have a foothold within China after the Opium Wars through treaties granting free trade to all traders (including the trade of opium), Hong Kong becoming a British colony, and China being forced to pay reparations. Furthermore, due to the tea trade and China's East Asian location, orientalist depictions of the nation became prolific, and its tea culture was adopted and adapted by Britain during the colonial era.

Transnational: a transnational perspective enables, as Shelley Fisher Fishkin notes, an analysis of the "multidirectional flows of people, ideas, and goods and the social, political, linguistic, cultural, and economic crossroads generated in the process."<sup>1</sup> I use this term to refer to the breakdown of strict cultural and national boundaries through developments in transport, business, and technology. The term is used in my consideration of how depictions of tea-drinking in U.S. literature are often suggestive of the cultural, societal, moral, and imperial influences and "crossroads" between different cultural groups and nations.

White American: in most instances I have chosen this term, instead of Anglo-American, because the participation in colonial tea-drinking, with the aim to communicate white superiority, is not limited to those with Anglo roots in the United States. European American is too broad a term to use due to Southern Europeans being considered inferior and less desirable than Northern Europeans in twentieth-century U.S. immigration law. The term "white American," especially when considering twentieth-century texts, is appropriate because tea-drinking is partaken in to communicate a general sense of white superiority. Thus, despite tensions and hostilities between different white immigrant groups along class, cultural, economic, and other lines, tea-drinking was used to signify their "superiority" over other ethnic groups that were more physically dissimilar. If a particular ethnicity is mentioned in relation to the characters or community, for instance, English, then I will be more specific in my phraseology.

"Yellow peril": the phrase is used to identify texts and artwork that present Asians as an existential threat to the Western world. This thesis is concerned with "yellow

---

<sup>1</sup> Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies: Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004," *American Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (March 2005): 22, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40068248>.

peril” narratives that present ethnically Chinese people as a threat to white American society. To acknowledge the racist nature of this term, I maintain the quotation marks around “yellow peril” throughout.



## Introduction

On 7th November 1890, the *Montreal Daily Witness* published an unsigned vignette that has subsequently been attributed to the celebrated Anglo-Chinese writer Edith Maude Eaton (alias Sui Sin Far). Titled “A Chinese Party: A Singular Scene at the Windsor Street Depot,” the story depicts nineteen Chinese men waiting in Boston Harbour for their passage home. For part of the journey they will travel “in bond, like a Saratoga trunk,” to Vancouver. As they wait for their ship, they “[squat] upon their luggage” and they drink tea out of

the daintiest little teakettles and teapots, and tiny little cups about the size of a thimble, hand-painted, so fragile that a breath would reduce them to nothingness—things of beauty that would have been the despair of the aesthetic boarder, accustomed to vessels as thick as boiler-plate.<sup>2</sup>

Through these cups and the tea they contain, Sui Sin Far symbolises the beauty and delicacy of a minority group faced with perennial outsider status in the United States. Despite the wealth and success of these Chinese merchants, they are forced to travel like cargo, much like tea itself. For centuries, many Asian cultures have believed that tea has “civilising properties.” The rise of the global tea trade led to this idea proliferating, with Erika Rappaport noting that this notion became “one of the most long-lived and dominant advertising appeals in history.”<sup>3</sup> For instance, Europeans, from as early as the seventeenth century, aligned tea with gentility.<sup>4</sup> The association between tea and civility is expressed in this scene. The superior taste and refinement of the Chinese men is indicated through the fragility and finery of their kettles, teapots, and cups compared to the less tasteful, clunky, and unsightly tea sets on-board transportation services, which are described as “vessels as thick as boiler-plate.” An aesthetic boarder, we are informed, would be envious of the Chinese men with their beautiful tea sets. The vignette emphasises a paradox in white American society: of admiring and collecting foreign commodities while disdaining the people who make them.

---

<sup>2</sup> Sui Sin Far, “A Chinese Party: A Singular Scene at the Windsor Street Depot,” in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings*, eds. Amy Ling and Annette White-Parks (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 180.

<sup>3</sup> Erika Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 19.

<sup>4</sup> Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*, 19.

The “party” of Chinese men, the “boarders,” and Boston Harbour are evocative of the Boston Tea Party of 1773 when the Sons of Liberty, disguised as Native Americans, boarded East India Trading Company ships and ruined a whole shipment of tea by throwing it overboard. The event was an act of protest against British colonial rule and high tea taxes, and the dissemination of the protest’s events in newspapers across the continent was central to the formation of U.S. national identity.<sup>5</sup> However, the Chinese men of this party calmly drink their tea and in the face of their mistreatment by U.S. law, the story suggests, they follow “the philosophy of the Chinese [...] — silence.”<sup>6</sup> The lack of violence in their interaction with tea stresses their respectful and peaceful demeanour, which is ultimately ineffective when it comes to obtaining acceptance. Though the Chinese men have made their fortunes in the United States, this is not enough to keep them in a country where they are considered permanent aliens. By setting her story in the symbolic Boston Harbour, a place of protest to secure what Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address of 1863 calls a “new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal,” Sui Sin Far accentuates the racial limits of the United States’ mantra of equality and liberty for all.<sup>7</sup>

In this thesis I argue that tea’s unique position within white American and Chinese American history has provided writers with a lens through which to portray, negotiate, and challenge Chinese American identity and exclusion from 1900 to 2020. Tea emerges as a flexible trope across a wide range of cultural texts to signify the injustice of Chinese exclusion, the conditions and limits of masculine identities, and the independence and resilience of Chinese American women. Tea is invoked in particularly significant ways in relation to questions of gender: for that reason, several of the chapters in this dissertation are focused on gender. Arjun Appadurai categorises a commodity as “*any thing intended for exchange*,” and to study a commodity is to trace how “meanings are inscribed in

---

<sup>5</sup> Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*, 53-54; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *This Violent Empire: The Birth of an American National Identity* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 23; David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 29.

<sup>6</sup> Sui Sin Far, “A Chinese Party,” 180.

<sup>7</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “The Gettysburg Address,” transcript of Cornell University’s copy, accessed March 1, 2018, [http://rnc.library.cornell.edu/gettysburg/good\\_cause/transcript.htm](http://rnc.library.cornell.edu/gettysburg/good_cause/transcript.htm).

their forms, their uses, [and] their trajectories.”<sup>8</sup> The commodity-centred approach to cultural history present in this study highlights how the fears and desires of a nation are depicted through tea culture, as they are portrayed in tea advertisements and cartoons, exhibited through consumer habits, and either supported or contested in literature. By “tea culture,” I mean the different practices associated with tea’s consumption. Where I use the term “tea scene,” I am referring to a moment in a text when tea is either being drunk, served, offered, or observed. Additionally, “tea ceremony” refers to the serving of tea in a social setting.

I begin the study in 1900, when Chinese Americans were beginning to develop a voice in U.S. literature, because prior to this date published Chinese American literature in English is scarce. My thesis is focused on examining how imaginary tea-drinking is used to shore up “yellow peril” rhetoric on the one hand; but also to challenge it, on the other. The coda brings the thesis to a close in a period of globalisation and what Aihwa Ong calls “flexible citizenship.”<sup>9</sup> I decided to conclude the study’s historical framework in 2020 because of the reinvigorated depiction of imperial British-inspired tea ceremonies during the last two decades, and how the wealth, power, and status of Chinese and Singaporean Americans are markedly communicated through extravagant tea ceremonies rooted in British tea heritage during the 2010s. A commodity’s signification is never stable, since prevalent and fluctuating anxieties, expectations, and hopes can change a product’s symbolic meaning and reception. The chronological structure of the thesis supports my analysis of how the consumption of tea has underwritten changing societal attitudes, apprehensions, and aspirations that have appeared and/or fluctuated in visual and literary U.S. culture over the last hundred and twenty years.

My thesis focuses largely on the consumption of hot tea made from *camellia sinensis* (tea plant) leaves. Interestingly, in the 1990s and twenty first century, it has been predicted that 80-85% of tea consumed in the United States

---

<sup>8</sup> Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 5, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

is iced.<sup>10</sup> In its iced form, tea is considered an American beverage and an American “discovery,” with a popular misconception being that iced tea was invented in the United States.<sup>11</sup> Compared to the popularity of iced tea, my continual discovery of hot tea in U.S. literature presents the symbolic weight of its temperature, as hot tea is associated with Britishness, imperialism, and East Asian culture. This pattern of representation leads to the study concentrating on how economic, political, and social developments have impacted the representation of tea in U.S. literature, and how depictions of tea-drinking reflect the shifting social, economic, and political positions of Chinese Americans. One of the key concerns of this project is to investigate the extent to which representations of tea are gendered and racialised to distinguish between who is and who is not accepted as “American.” Another key concern is how, and to what extent, depictions of tea can contradict racist stereotypes of Chinese immigrants, display intersectional forms of oppression, and communicate the “Americanness” of the American-born Chinese and their elders.

Additionally, the thesis considers how tea, as a cultural product, can comfortably reinforce the dominant beliefs of the era, or how it can contest, contradict, and deconstruct them. The thesis focuses on narrative forms, and particularly on prose, due to the ability to trace repeated occurrences of tea scenes within these forms’ longer narrative structures. My thesis aims to be a valuable contribution to American Studies because, as consumerism and materialism continue to govern social behaviour and values (particularly in the Western world) tracing the cultural position of tea—a commodity that has signified authority and power within at least three different empires—displays the extent to which a commodity can inform national identity. Furthermore, the study considers tea as a site of struggle: as a symbol of both prestige and colonial ambivalence. Empires often adopt the “clothes” of each other; tea is one of these items. My analysis of tea scenes in U.S. literature serves to enhance our understanding of inter-imperiality and of the use of culture in battles for and against white supremacy and patriarchy.

---

<sup>10</sup> Florence Fabricant, “Iced Tea’s New Popularity as a Pour that Refreshes,” *New York Times*, June 10, 1992, C1; Jane Pettigrew and Bruce Richardson, *A Social History of Tea* (Danville, Kentucky: Benjamin Press, 2014), 217.

<sup>11</sup> Rappaport, *Thirst for Empire*, 203, 303.

It is believed that hot tea was first invented as a drink in China and was spread across China by Buddhist monks in the eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, tea's association with health, civility, tranquillity, transcendence, and other spiritual and moral states also originates in Chinese culture. As a result, tracing the journey of tea's many cultural significations from China through to the United States proves extremely fruitful, as one can trace how ancient Chinese heritage and philosophy inform Chinese American and white American tea culture.

Furthermore, the historical extent of the mistreatment of Chinese immigrants in the United States adds another layer to the analytical framework; this mistreatment occurred largely because Chinese immigrants were the first East Asian ethnic group to come to the United States in substantial numbers, and their arrival in the United States in the early to mid-nineteenth century increased anti-Chinese sentiment. The racist treatment to which Chinese immigrants were subjected is dramatised in imaginary tea scenes that either communicate their worthiness for acceptance or, to further aggravate their mistreatment, stress the idea of white American superiority. Though tea is also present in Japanese American fiction, as seen in *Nisei Daughter* (1953) by Monica Itoi Sone and *No No Boy* (1957) by John Okada, the prevalence of tea in their work comes much later, as does their more targeted persecution on the U.S. mainland.

---

<sup>12</sup> James Benn, *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2015), 42.

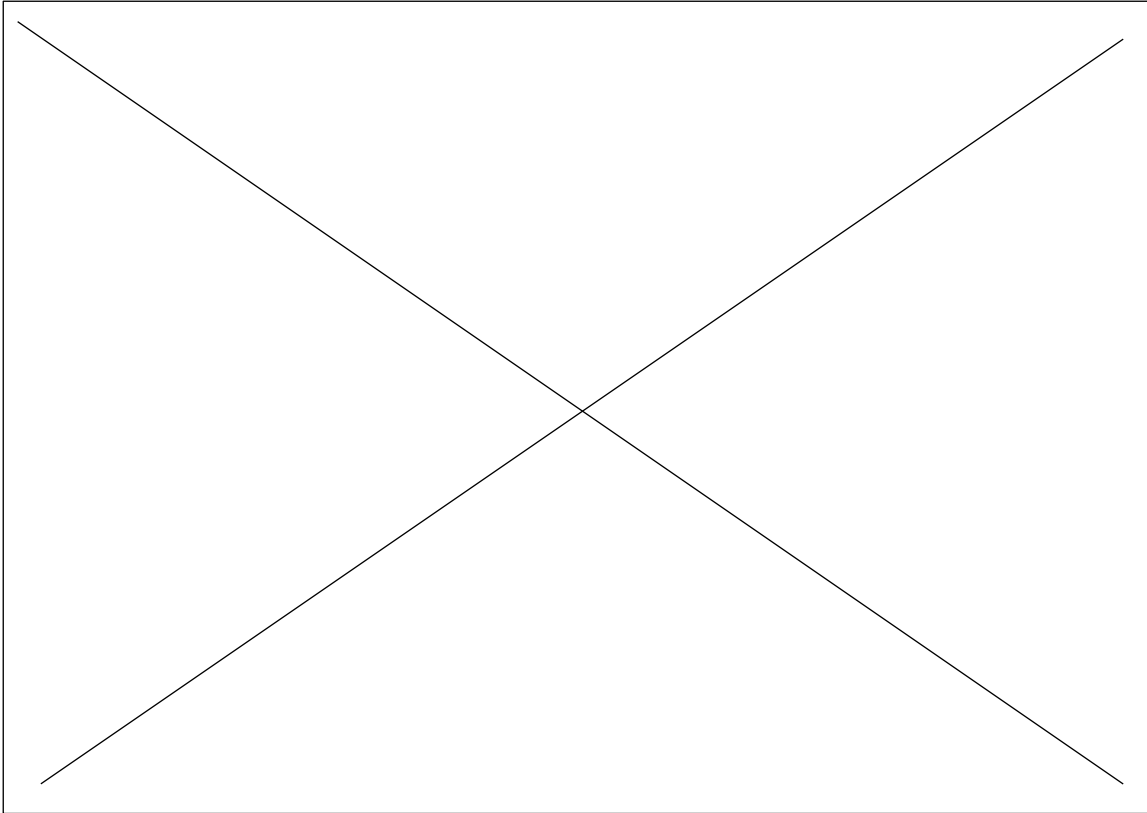


Figure 1.1 *The Able Doctor; or America Swallowing the Bitter Draught*, May 1774, *London Magazine*, vol. 43, 184. Reprinted in *The Royal American Magazine* 1 no. 10, June 1774, Boston.

The cultural position of tea in twentieth- and twenty-first-century U.S. society is directly impacted by the beverage's earlier history in the United States. Therefore, a brief exploration of the brew's location in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century U.S. history is necessary. Tea was a revolutionary drink long before the Boston Tea Party. Partially due to the high taxes on the leaves, it is estimated that perhaps over two-thirds of annual tea imports into colonial America were smuggled.<sup>13</sup> Though many historians have traditionally seen tea's role within the Revolution as largely incidental, the signification of tea as a beverage of British imperialism is important in the context of colonial America seeking to gain independence from Britain. This is because tea came to signify entrapment in colonial America, as seen in an English cartoon of 1774, which was widely circulated by Paul Revere, and depicts a Native American woman being force-

---

<sup>13</sup> Hoh-Chueng Mui and Lorna H. Mui, "Smuggling and the British Tea Trade before 1784," *American Historical Review* 74, no. 1 (October 1968): 44-73; Rappaport, *Thirst for Empire*, 44.

fed a toxic tea by English ministers (see fig. 1.1).<sup>14</sup> The depiction of a Native American woman was a popular trope in anti-colonial rhetoric as she was used to represent white Americans as “native” and emphasise their oppression at the hands of Britain. The Boston Port Bill is being pulled out of Lord North’s pocket; the bill demanded that the port of Boston be closed, and the residents of the city pay for the tea ruined during the Boston Tea Party. Lord Sandwich, a well-known womaniser, is restraining the woman and peeking up her skirt. The brew is poured out of a teapot, and a goddess symbolising their distant and beloved Britain, covers her eyes in resignation.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, tea symbolises the continuation of Britain’s corrupt oppression of its American colonies through taxation and controlling American trade.

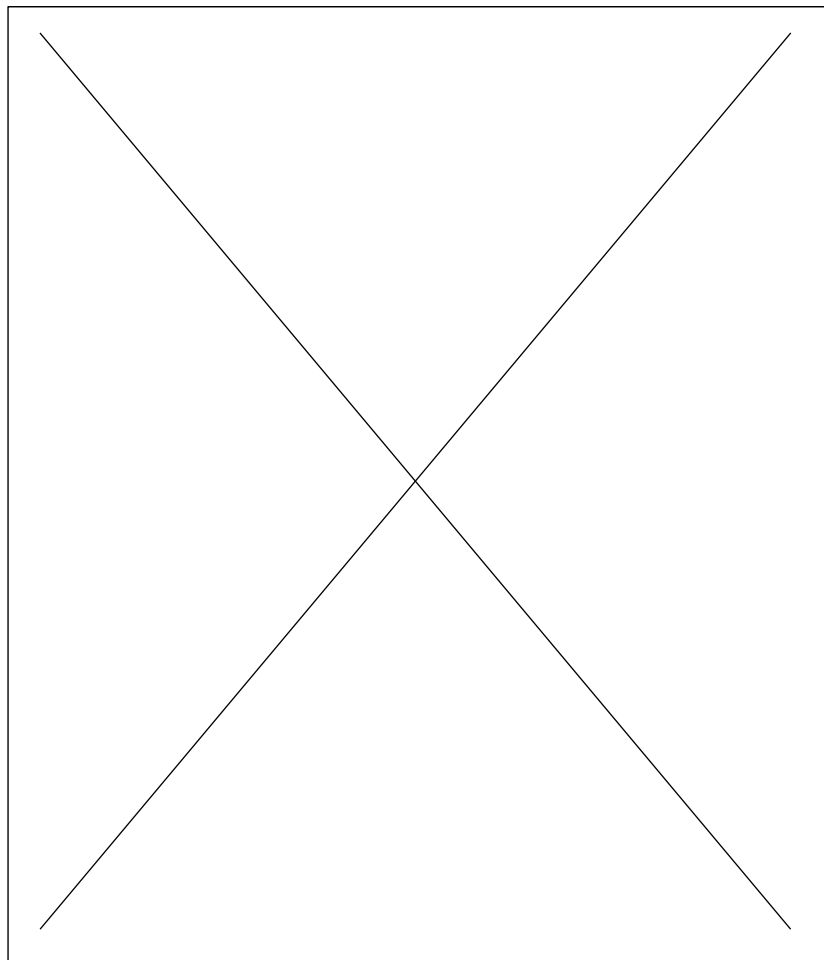


Figure 1.2 *Paul Revere* by John Singleton Copley, 1768, 89.22 x 72.39 cm, oil on canvas.

---

<sup>14</sup> Caroline Frank, “The Art of Tea, Revolution, and an American East Indies Trade,” in *Global Trade and Visual Arts in Federal New England*, eds. Patricia Johnston and Caroline Frank (Lebanon, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2014), 37.

<sup>15</sup> Frank, “The Art of Tea,” 37.

The association between tea and the Revolution is depicted in John Singleton Copley's portrait of patriot Paul Revere in 1768 (see fig. 1.2). Though Copley claimed to be neutral when it came to politics, the confident, questioning glance of Revere as he holds the teapot in his left hand reflects more than his trade as a silversmith and engraver.<sup>16</sup> The Stamp Act of 1765 crippled Revere's business, and by this date, Revere was already an active figure in the dissident cause. By choosing a teapot over other silverware products, the painting is suggestive of British trade control and monopoly, and the need for Americans to take their economy and trade "into their own hands."

Throughout the revolutionary period tea symbolises imperial violence, distrust, and, as Caroline Frank observes, "sexual and military dominance."<sup>17</sup> As Frank summarises about the Boston Tea Party,

[it] was a [revolutionary] trigger with specific cultural content. It represented a shared fear of having the colonial body force-fed an intoxicating Eastern potion by a mother-turned-Leviathan [Britain], of succumbing to a primitive and gendered form of bodily exploitation rather than rising to manly mastery [...].<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, it is not surprising that, as part of the American Revolution, there was a patriotic rejection of tea. The night of the Boston Tea Party a physician, Dr. Thomas Young, delivered a speech to thousands of listeners at the Old South Meeting House in Boston. He spoke for twenty minutes on "the ill Effects of Tea on the Constitution," and how the drink threatened the patriotic white American body; his speech was interrupted by frequent applause.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, I concur with Frank that the destruction of tea, and only tea, on the night of the Boston Tea Party, was a demand for physical liberty, a message so powerful in its meaning that it unleashed the revolutionary spirit of colonial America.<sup>20</sup>

Afterwards, the United States wanted to forget about its past as a colony of Britain and they sometimes did so by asserting coffee as the national drink. According to one apocryphal story, John Adams wrote to his wife, Abigail, that

---

<sup>16</sup> Carrie Reborá, Paul Staiti, Erica E. Hirshler, Theodore E. Stebbins Jr., and Carol Troyen, eds., *John Singleton Copley in America* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995), 46.

<sup>17</sup> Frank, "The Art of Tea," 37.

<sup>18</sup> Frank, "The Art of Tea," 46.

<sup>19</sup> L. F. S. Upton, "Proceedings of ye Body Respecting the Tea," in "Notes and Documents," *William and Mary Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (April 1965): 287-300; Pauline Maier, "Reason and Revolution: The Radicalism of Dr. Thomas Young," *American Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (Summer 1976): 229-249.

<sup>20</sup> Frank, "The Art of Tea," 46.



true Americans were coffee drinkers. He wrote that while travelling through Massachusetts he asked at a resting place if “it was lawful for a weary Traveller to refresh himself with a Dish of Tea provided it has been honestly smuggled, or paid no Duties?” The lady of the house’s reply was a stern “No Sir...we have renounced all Tea in this Place [...] I’ll make you Coffee.”<sup>21</sup> The link between coffee drinking and U.S. identity has been a prevalent national narrative for centuries.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, a rejection of tea has been labelled as American, with Americans holding bonfires to burn tea which was considered a “slow poison which not only destroys our constitutions, but endangers our liberty.”<sup>23</sup> Protesters made tea symbolic of Britishness, and thus something they must be rid of, with one revolutionary in a New York newspaper describing tea and the tea trade as “enslaving and poisoning ALL the AMERICANS.”<sup>24</sup>

Despite tea’s negative connotations of Britishness, the United States could never completely shake off its tea habit. In 1784 *The Empress of China*, a merchant ship sailing from New York to China, started a new Pacific trading route which brought tea to the nation. Americans thirsted for tea and, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, after anti-British sentiment subsided and fears of non-Northern European immigration grew, tea enabled consumers to indulge in conceptions of British heritage, imperialism, refinement, and nativist ideas of white superiority and entitlement. However, for Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans, tea is rooted in their Chinese heritage culturally, religiously, and politically. As a result of tea being embedded within Chinese and white American culture, and largely symbolising civility and morality in both from the nineteenth century onwards, the depiction of tea in U.S. literature has stressed,

---

<sup>21</sup> Timothy H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 317; Rappaport, *Thirst for Empire*, 54.

<sup>22</sup> See: Mark Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World* (London: Texere, 2001); Julie Kjendal Reitz, “Espresso: A Shot of Masculinity,” in *Food, Culture & Society* 10, no.1 (2007): 10-11, DOI: 10.2752/155280107780154114; Robert W. Thurston, “United States,” in *Coffee: A Comprehensive Guide to the Bean, the Beverage, and the Industry*, eds. Robert W. Thurston, Jonathan Morris, and Shawn Steiman (Maryland: Powman & Littlefield, 2013), 206-214; Steven Topik and Michelle Craig McDonald, “Why Americans Drink Coffee: The Boston Tea Party or Brazilian Slavery?” in *Coffee: A Comprehensive Guide to the Bean, the Beverage, and the Industry*, eds. Robert W. Thurston, Jonathan Morris, and Shawn Steiman (Maryland: Powman & Littlefield, 2013), 239; Erin Meister, *New York City Coffee: A Caffeinated History* (Charleston: American Palate, 2017), 90-96.

<sup>23</sup> Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*, 308; Rappaport, *Thirst for Empire*, 54.

<sup>24</sup> Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*, 301; Frank, “The Art of Tea,” 44; Rappaport, *Thirst for Empire*, 54.

and continues to stress (purposefully or unwittingly) similarities between the Chinese and white populations of the United States.

## Research Context

The thesis draws on and contributes to the following fields of scholarship: American Studies, food and drink studies, commodity histories, Orientalism and imperialism studies, diaspora studies, and critical race theory. In this section, I outline the existing scholarship in these different fields, and how my work contributes to each.

### American Food and Drink Studies

American food and drink studies has become one of the most researched and debated subfields in American Studies over the last twenty years. There is substantial crossover between popular and academic work; both reveal what food and drink choices communicate about a person's social, moral, political, and economic choices. Food and drink studies is an interdisciplinary area of inquiry with scholars from diverse fields including anthropology, sociology, literature, and public health.<sup>25</sup> Some scholars have focused on the role of food and drink in influencing how class, gender, race, ethnicity, and national identity are conceptualised; key writers who have produced pioneering work within these aspects of the field are Sidney Mintz, Warren Belasco, Marjorie DeVault, Jeffrey Pilcher, Andrew Smith, and Mark Pendergrast. These scholars, among others, have focused on, and agree that, dietary trends have influenced migration and population size, led to the winning or losing of wars, caused political, social, and economic changes, reflect one's social class, can be imbued with spiritual and emotional value, and have paved the way to new lifestyles.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> The range of disciplines that contribute to this field is evident in the following works: George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society: An Investigation into the Changing Character of Contemporary Social Life* (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 1996); Marion Nestle, *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Fran Hawthorne, *Inside the FDA: The Business and Politics Behind the Drugs We Take and the Food We Eat* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2005); Lorna Piatti-Farnell, *Food and Culture in Contemporary American Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> These areas of focus are evident in: Stephen Mintz, *Sweetness and Power* (New York: Penguin, 1985); Warren Belasco, *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989); Marjorie L. DeVault, *Feeding the Family: The*

Donna Gabaccia, Hasia Diner, and Joel Denker have written histories of how different ethnic groups have shaped the United States' national and local gastronomic habits.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Williams-Forson, in her social study *Building Houses out of Chicken Legs*, focuses on one ethnic group (African Americans) and one food type: Williams-Forson firstly acknowledges how racial stereotypes about African Americans have developed in connection to chicken, and then she investigates the income and empowerment the meat has provided to African American women.<sup>28</sup> In a different vein, Shun Lu and Gary Allan Fine in their essay "The Presentation of Ethnic Authenticity: Chinese Food as a Social Accomplishment," and Sherrie Innes in *Secret Ingredients: Race, Gender, and Class at the Dinner Table*, explore ideas surrounding the "authenticity" of Chinese food in the United States.<sup>29</sup> With regard to Chinese Americans specifically, Robert Ji-Song Ku in *Dubious Gastronomy* suggests that Chinese American food is "doubly dubious," being neither Chinese nor American enough, and how this status reflects the social and cultural positioning of Chinese Americans.<sup>30</sup>

In ethnic food studies, extensive research has been conducted in the twenty first century on Chinese American food, markedly so on chop suey.<sup>31</sup> Chop Suey has been of great interest to scholars due to the dish's mythical origins in China and the United States, its popularity and existence in the United States since the Gold Rush, and its pivotal position in Chinese American cuisine history. More general studies on Chinese American food include *From Canton*

---

*Social Organization of Caring Work as Gendered Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Jeffrey Pilcher, *¡Que Viva Los Tamales! Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); Andrew Smith, ed. *The Oxford History of Food and Drink in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*.

<sup>27</sup> Donna Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Hasia Diner, *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Joel Denker, *The World on a Plate: A Tour Through the History of America's Ethnic Cuisine* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> Psyche Williams-Forson, *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food and Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Shun Lu and Gary Allen Fine, "The Presentation of Ethnic Authenticity: Chinese Food as a Social Accomplishment," *Sociological Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 545–547, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4120779>; Sherrie Innes, *Secret Ingredients: Race, Gender, and Class at the Dinner Table* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 39-60.

<sup>30</sup> Robert J-Song Ku, *Dubious Gastronomy: The Cultural Politics of Eating Asian in the USA* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2013), 9.

<sup>31</sup> See: Yong Chen, *Chop Suey, USA: The Story of Chinese Food in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014); Andrew Coe, *Chop Suey: A Cultural History of Chinese Food in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Anne Mendelson, *Chow Chop Suey: Food and the Chinese American Journey* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

*Restaurant to Panda Express: A History of Chinese Food* by Haiming Liu, and *The Fortune Cookie Chronicles* by Jennifer 8. Lee. These studies on Chinese American food have considered how, despite there being more Chinese restaurants in the United States than Burger Kings, McDonald's, and KFCs combined in 2008, Chinese American food is considered less American than European American food.<sup>32</sup> These works inform my thesis due to their analysis of how Chinese American identity formation is reflected through the migration, assimilation, alteration, and invention of dishes, drinks, and customs. Tea is only mentioned in passing in these studies, if at all. Chen's study mentions how sightseers on a tour of Chinatown in 1904 had "tea and chop suey";<sup>33</sup> perhaps it is because chop suey is the focus of his study that a consideration of the brew's consumption in such moments is left unexplored. This oversight is not uncommon in Chinese American food and drink studies, and so this thesis develops the research already conducted, as it examines the role of imaginary tea scenes in negotiating Chinese American identity.

The scholarly attention tea has received is largely located in historical studies. These studies are usually focused on pre-twentieth-century historical moments such as the Boston Tea Party of 1773, the public abandonment of the brew following American independence, tea's position as a signifier of white American supremacy in the nineteenth century and the colonial revival era, the rise of iced tea in the nineteenth century, and the tearooms of the early twentieth century. A focus on the historical development of tea as a drink is evident in the practical *Tea Lover's Treasury* by James Norwood Pratt, which documents the origins of tea-drinking, different types of tea, and various ways to make the brew. This focus is also seen in *A Social History of Tea* by Jane Pettigrew and Bruce Richardson, which traces the origins of tea etiquette in the Western world, and in *Tea: A Global History* by Helen Saberi, which provides a brief overview of tea's origins in Asia and the brew's introduction to European countries. In all three studies, their consideration of tea in the United States is limited and centred on its Anglo-American heritage and development.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Jennifer 8. Lee, *The Fortune Cookie Chronicles: Adventures in the World of Chinese Food* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2008), 9.

<sup>33</sup> Chen, *Chop Suey*, 99.

<sup>34</sup> Pettigrew and Richardson, *A Social History of Tea*; Norwood Pratt, *Tea Lover's Treasury* (California: Cole Group, Inc., 1982); Helen Saberi, *Tea: A Global History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010).

*Drinking History: Fifteen Turning Points in the Making of America* by Andrew Smith brings the historical analysis of tea up to the 1980s. His chapter dedicated to tea considers, among other things, how tea became a health drink in white American culture in the 1960s and a bottled brew in the 1980s.<sup>35</sup> In all the texts mentioned so far, Chinese American tea history is not investigated. In studies that do concern Chinese American food and drink, tea is either unmentioned, unexplored, or discussed in relation to China. This is evident in *China to Chinatown: Chinese Food in the West* by J. A. G. Roberts. The text does not consider the socio-cultural role of tea in the United States, and despite mentioning how tea was the most commonly ingested product from China in the United States throughout the nineteenth century, Roberts's consideration of tea is limited to its trade history and the first impressions of white Americans who try the brew in China.<sup>36</sup>

An analysis of the archaic cultural values and significations of tea is evident in *The Rise of Tea Culture in China: The Invention of the Individual* by Bret Hinsch, and *Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History* by James Benn. These essential works on tea investigate the long history of tea in China (pre-1911), and how the brew has been infused with power, morality, masculinity, and transcendence. My thesis furthers their work by tracing the representation of traditionally Chinese cultural understandings of tea in twentieth- and twenty-first-century U.S. literature: I investigate how Chinese customs are enacted and revised to question what it means to be an American.

In terms of literary food and drink studies that concern tea in American literature, a limited amount of research has been conducted. Most studies concern themselves with Eurocentric tea culture or tea-drinking that takes place in Europe. One example is Victoria Coulson's consideration of tea ceremonies and teacups in the writing of Henry James and Constance Fenimore.<sup>37</sup> Studies that question how Asian American identities are defined, altered, and/or managed through food and drink consumption include *Reading Asian American Literature:*

---

<sup>35</sup> Andrew Smith, *Drinking History: Fifteen Turning Points in the Making of American Beverages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

<sup>36</sup> J. A. G. Roberts, *China to Chinatown: Chinese Food in the West* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), 19, 60, 99.

<sup>37</sup> Victoria Coulson, "Teacups and love letters: Constance Fenimore Woolson and Henry James," in *Henry James, Women and Realism* by Victoria Coulson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 96-140.

*From Necessity to Extravagance* by Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, *Consumption and Identity in Asian American Coming-of-Age Novels* by Jennifer Ho, and *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American Literature* by Wenying Zu. These studies evidence a main shift in scholarship in the 1990s and 2000s, as they move away from critical narratives that present food as a way to engage with the exotic other, and instead see ethnic food and drink as a means through which communities are formed, and struggle and identity formation are presented. Their explorations of food in Asian American literature demonstrate how important food and drink are in negotiating Chinese American identity. I extend the field of research by analysing the literary role of tea in this discipline, as scholars including Wong, Ho, and Zu do not consider the beverage in their studies beyond passing references.<sup>38</sup>

There are numerous studies by critics, including Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong, that explore and problematise the representation of Chinese culture in Chinese American literature, and see it as archaic and oppressive to the extent that it unquestionably legitimises ideas of Western superiority and Western feminism.<sup>39</sup> Another concern of critics is how writers have utilised what writer and activist Frank Chin calls “food pornography” which gives white readers a “tourist guide” view of Chinese American culture and “amusing but not too taxing glimpses of the mysterious ways of the Chinese.”<sup>40</sup> Chin’s main focus in his work and criticism is on promoting literature that will rehabilitate Chinese American masculinity after decades of representations of effeminate Chinese American men in U.S. culture. Part of this process includes a strong rejection of literature that he sees as pandering to a white readership. Jade Snow Wong, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Amy Tan have all been criticised for “selling” themselves and their culture by catering to a white readership and providing “food pornography” in their work. Though the term refers to food specifically, different portrayals of tea, with more or less detail, as exotic or quotidian, are apparent in U.S. literature. Chin’s

---

<sup>38</sup> Jennifer Ho, *Consumption and Identity in Asian American Coming-of-Age Novels* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong, *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Wenying Zu, *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008).

<sup>39</sup> Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong, “‘Sugar Sisterhood’: Situating the Amy Tan Phenomenon,” in *The Ethnic Canon: Histories, Institutions, and Interventions*, ed. David Palumbo-Liu (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 174-210.

<sup>40</sup> Frank Chin, “The Year of the Dragon,” in *The Chickencoop Chinaman and The Year of the Dragon* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), 86-87; Wong, *Reading Asian American Literature*, 55, 66.

concept informs my readings of depicted tea ceremonies as I question the possible meanings and interpretations of these descriptions. Furthermore, I complicate his unyielding critique and consider the complexities and multiple impacts of imaginary tea scenes.

## Commodity Histories

Compared to the diversity of structures and frameworks a food and drink study may have, commodity histories usually have a recurrent methodology. The approach and structure of commodity histories have proven instructive for my own research methods. Additionally, the discoveries of commodity histories centred on tea have enabled me to trace patterns in tea's signification from the mid-sixteenth century into the twenty first century.

The sweeping conclusions in *The Fur Trade in Canada* (1930) by Harold Innis has led to the text sometimes being side-lined as a founding text of the field. However, Innis's study revealingly presents how the social, economic, and transportation histories of Canada were hugely influenced by the fur trade. For many scholars, the publication of *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (1985) by Sidney Mintz marks the beginning of the field.<sup>41</sup> Commodity histories often focus on a particular food, with cotton, rubber, coffee, and oil also being popular subjects.

Commodity histories since the 1980s have continued to look at the varied social, economic, and political impacts of a commodity; however, they usually employ a global perspective on its influence. For instance, *Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World* by Mark Kurlansky, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* by Sven Beckert, and *Cotton: The Fabric that Made the Modern World* by Giorgio Riello all trace the global impacts of a particular commodity over an expansive breadth of time. In contrast, this study draws on the inter-imperial position and symbolic employment of tea in one nation. Furthermore, though ancient cultural beliefs and pre-1900 history are analysed, my thesis is focused on U.S. literature published in the last 120 years.

---

<sup>41</sup> Bruce Robbins, "Commodity Histories," *PMLA* 120, no. 2 (2005): 455, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25486171>.

Tea has received significant attention within the field from Piya Chatterjee and William Wayne Farris: Chatterjee is concerned with tea in post-colonial India and Farris investigates Japanese tea history.<sup>42</sup> In American Studies, commodity histories of tea have tended to focus on the American Revolution, while studies that address tea-drinking in the twentieth and twenty first centuries tend to skim over the United States, and if U.S. tea culture is explored, then it is nearly always focused on white American culture.

Broad commodity histories, and cultural histories of Chinese objects in the United States, provide insight into tea's pre-1900 reception. Lenore Metrick-Chen's book *Collecting Objects/Excluding People: Chinese Subjects and American Visual Culture, 1830-1900* explores the consequences of politicised imagery of the Chinese in the United States. Her analysis of the tea industry's trade cards offers insight into the brew's often orientalist appeal in the nineteenth century. Caroline Frank's *Objectifying China, Imagining America* is more concerned with the commodity's journey into the American home, and how "oriental" products in the home space influenced American living habits and the way white Americans perceived themselves. In the last chapter of her book, Frank delves into tea's place in the rhetoric and activities surrounding the formation of the United States. Her work also explores many widespread ideas surrounding tea during the eighteenth century, including that the brew was considered unpatriotic due to the Tea Act of 1773, and that consuming the brew would lead to the drinker taking on inferior Chinese habits.<sup>43</sup> Overall, Metrick-Chen's and Frank's work investigate how tea has been laden with cultural and ethnic significance in the United States since the seventeenth century, and how the brew's cultural content has adapted to its contemporary international and domestic relations. I build upon their analytical approach and findings, as I trace how ideas surrounding tea were often adapted or resurface in the decades that followed.

In *Global Trade and Visual Arts in Federal New England*, Frank's chapter on tea, the American Revolution, and East Indies trade, explores how the

---

<sup>42</sup> Piya Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea: Women, Labor and Post-colonial Politics on an India Plantation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); William Wayne Farris, *A Bowl for a Coin: A Commodity History of Japanese Tea* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2019); Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*.

<sup>43</sup> Frank, *Objectifying China, Imagining America*, 189, 192.



depiction of tea became increasingly political from the 1760s onwards, with white North America's (mainly on the East Coast) desire for tea threatening to shift them from the coloniser into the colonised through Britain's control over their access to tea. Therefore, the dispute over drinking tea was laden with ideological and moral repercussions, "pitting patriots against merchants, republicans against tyrants, [...] virtue against hedonism, and ultimately self-preservation against self-destruction."<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, Frank highlights how East Coast colonial America perceived the East Indies as a fantasy place, an outlook created by Europeans, and reimagined by white Americans through their own geopolitical identity. My analysis of white American tea-drinking practices demonstrates the continuation of this stance, as generally the white American custom of tea-drinking is inherently British imperial in design and is adapted to suit the political motivations of the time.

Erika Rappaport's book *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World* provides a comprehensive history of imperial networks and the impacts of globalisation on tea's reception. As the title suggests, the book questions and examines the narratives of empire, as well as the gendered, racialised, political, patriotic, and imperial connotations that have been attached to tea over the centuries in different nations. Despite the impressive breadth and depth of Rappaport's study, the tea culture of Chinese Americans goes unmentioned. However, Rappaport does provide rich analysis of tea's location in white American culture over the centuries. The book also investigates China's role in the origins of tea-drinking, the nation's influence over the moral beliefs tea can signify in the West, and the country's history as part of the tea trade. *A Dark History of Tea* by Seren Charrington-Hollins is also an insightful study, as it traces in Britain the association of tea with opium, seduction, prostitution, hysteria, adulteration, and health; her historic focus is largely on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Interestingly, the various associations she outlines between tea and degradation within British society manifest themselves in the United States in the decades and centuries to come. My study advances the work already conducted by tea commodity scholars, as I examine the relatively ignored cultural history of tea in the United States between 1900 and 2020, and investigate, specifically, literary

---

<sup>44</sup> Frank, "The Art of Tea," 28.

depictions of tea that concern the position of Chinese Americans within U.S. society.

## Orientalism and Imperiality

The concepts of Orientalism and imperialism are important to my thesis because the way Chinese Americans have been portrayed and treated is evidently informed by histories of imperialism. Edward W. Said's theory of "Orientalism" is foundational for studies that consider depictions of "the East" and the politics of ethnic minority representation.<sup>45</sup> Orientalist representations of Chinese Americans, which have focused on exaggerating difference to project white superiority, are exhibited through the depiction of Chinese immigrants as opium addicts, prostitutes, and gamblers. The not-always-subtle but persistent portrayal of the Chinese in the United States as "other" is at the centre of my thesis.

Scholars that have furthered Said's work in relation to the United States are Lisa Lowe, Christina Klein, John Kuo Wei Tchen, Malini Johar Schueller, David Weir, and Douglas Little.<sup>46</sup> Americanists have taken a more expansive view to show how orientalist ideas have informed the United States' philosophy and national identity for centuries. For instance, Weir in *American Orient* has focused on how Chinese philosophy was employed by writers and Presidents to buttress the Enlightenment ethics of the United States, and by the transcendentalists to imagine what the United States could be without materialism or commercialism. Tea-drinking is strongly associated with Buddhism and Chinese philosophy. My thesis advances existing scholarship by exploring how fictional tea scenes complicate the "othering" process, as the acceptance of tea-drinking into U.S. white society jars with the exclusion of the brew's creators.

Moreover, I examine how Jack Kerouac partakes in tea-drinking to immerse himself in Chinese philosophy and religion to create an alternative lifestyle in the post-World War II United States. In a similar vein to the transcendentalists, Kerouac

---

<sup>45</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Abingdon: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978; London: Penguin, 2003). The 2003 edition is cited in this thesis.

<sup>46</sup> See: Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East Since 1945* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Malini Johar Schueller, *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790-1890* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); David Weir, *American Orient: Imagining the East from the Colonial Era through the Twentieth Century* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011).

embodies and practises Chinese philosophy; for the Beat Generation specifically, this is often fulfilled through orientalised tea-drinking. I examine the role of the commodity in this process, and furthermore I trace how Chinese philosophical ideas are signified through tea's consumption across the twentieth and twenty first centuries.

Other scholars, including John Tchen, have outlined the role of cheap labour, stereotypes, and law in racial formation. Regarding Chinese American studies, the stereotypes of the "heathen chinee," opium addict, and inscrutable alien, among others, have been analysed for their impact on constructions of race. The aim of Tchen's *New York before Chinatown* is to "tease out more subtle patterns in U.S. history" so that it becomes evident that U.S. orientalist portrayals from 1776 to 1882 "coincided with shifts in the political, economic, and social institutions of the United States" and have "played a role in the formation of a modern 'white' identity."<sup>47</sup> Tchen traces how orientalism in the United States "began with some admiration or fascination for an actual Chinese thing, idea, or person, then went through a phase of emulation and mimesis, and ended with European American mastery and dominance."<sup>48</sup>

Additionally, Tchen explores how patrician orientalism was part of "elite community building" in the early republic.<sup>49</sup> Tea-drinking, Tchen highlights, was foundational to communicating aristocratic breeding, authority, prestige, civility, elegance, and conversational skills. Tchen pays particular attention to the habits and possessions of George Washington, who invested a great deal of money in his tea, porcelain, and general *chinoiserie* décor.<sup>50</sup> However, Tchen's analysis of tea is limited to a few pages, and his historical focus predates mine. I continue his work by investigating the sustained representation of white superiority in depicted tea ceremonies. Alongside "yellow peril" representations, I examine how Chinese American writers, and white American writers sympathetic to their cause, portray tea-drinking to exhibit similarities between Chinese Americans and white Americans, and to reinvoke an "admiration" that was first experienced when encountering the Chinese and their culture; this emotion is expressed by Benjamin Franklin in 1768 when he wrote in the American Philosophical Society

---

<sup>47</sup> John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001), xv.

<sup>48</sup> Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown*, xx.

<sup>49</sup> A topic also explored by Frank in *Objectifying China, Imagining America*.

<sup>50</sup> Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown*, 4-12.

journal, “Could we be so fortunate as to introduce the industry of the Chinese, their arts of living and improvements in husbandry [...] America might become in time as populous as China.”<sup>51</sup>

Orientalism is a direct result of imperialism, and imperialism is at the heart of the United States’ political ideology. Since the nation’s birth, it has projected the idea of its being at the head of a “new empire” for global progress, a view articulated by statesmen like John Adams and historians like John Fiske.<sup>52</sup> The civilisations of China, and of the East more generally, were considered past their glory, with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century nationalists believing the United States would emerge on the horizon as the next great western civilisation.<sup>53</sup> It is widely believed that this happened in 1914, with the start of what has been coined the “American Century,” when the United States became a leading economic and military power, rivalling the global dominance of the British Empire.<sup>54</sup> Such broad interpretations of global political and economic developments are sweeping and full of biased generalisations; nevertheless, the ideas of superiority and achievement behind this label provide a telling glimpse of what underpins U.S. identity.

It is important to stress, as Said does, that after colonialism ends imperialism lingers “in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices.”<sup>55</sup> Tea was central to communicating wealth, spirituality, and status in China’s ancient dynasties; then, in the age of the British Empire, tea-drinking also came to symbolise Britain’s superiority and refinement at the centre of a global empire. In the “American Century,” I analyse how tea is a flexible motif, employed in “yellow peril” rhetoric

---

<sup>51</sup> American Philosophical Society, *Transactions* 1 (1768): xix, quoted in Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown*, 17.

<sup>52</sup> Ashley Dawson and Malini Johar Schueller, “Introduction: Rethinking Imperialism Today” in *Exceptional State: Contemporary U.S. Culture and the New Imperialism*, eds. Ashley Dawson, Malini Johar Schueller (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 3; John Adams wrote in 1807, “There is nothing, in my little reading, more ancient in my memory than the observation that arts, sciences, and empire had travelled westward; . . . that their next leap would be over the Atlantic into America.” Quoted in Loren Baritz, *City on a Hill: A History of Ideas and Myths in America* (New York: Wiley, 1964), 107.

<sup>53</sup> Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown*, xvi.

<sup>54</sup> The “American Century” is a term coined by the publisher of *Time* magazine, Henry Luce, in 1941, to characterise his missionary zeal for the United States to take responsibility and defend democratic values globally. Ashley Dawson and Malini Johar Schueller, “Coda: Information Mastery and the Culture of Annihilation,” in *Exceptional State: Contemporary U.S. Culture and the New Imperialism*, ed. Ashley Dawson and Malini Johar Schueller (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 275; Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown*, xv.

<sup>55</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 8.

and pro-Chinese texts. In the “Chinese Century” that some argue we now find ourselves in, tea once again is employed to communicate refinement, wealth, and status on a global scale.<sup>56</sup> Said notes: “Partly because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic.”<sup>57</sup> Tea, as a global commodity, rooted within the cultures of three imperial nations, is evidence of this, as the adoption and adaption of tea-drinking within different nations is influenced by foreign cultures.

Though studies of empire have often focused on European colonialism, the United States has and continues to be at the centre of geographical and cultural imperial expansion. The publication of *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (1993), edited by Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, marked a monumental shift in American Studies, as the essays in the collection present how a “denial of empire” has wrongly been at the centre of American Studies.<sup>58</sup> This is demonstrated through the imperial incorporation of the land which is now part of the Southern and Western United States, that was finalised by the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, and the annexation of the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico at the close of the Spanish-American War. “The White Man’s Burden” (1899) by Rudyard Kipling, written in response to the annexation of the Philippines, verified for many the position of the United States as a new empire, with a responsibility to free its “new-caught, sullen peoples / Half-devil and half-child.”<sup>59</sup>

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg in *This Violent Empire* investigates how, with a lack of shared culture, history, or governmental infrastructures, the white American male founders turned to imagining “others” to create a sense of stability and shared identity. The groups designated as “other” were so due to their ethnicity, sex, and income. Smith-Rosenberg explores how these “others,” both feared and desired, fought against their marginalisation; however, the discrimination of government bodies and a lack of support from larger society meant that numerous acts of sexism and racism were tolerated. The expansion

---

<sup>56</sup> Michael Beckley, “China Century? Why America’s Edge Will Endure,” *International Security* 36, no. 3 (Winter 2011/12): 41–78, [muse.jhu.edu/article/461859](http://muse.jhu.edu/article/461859).

<sup>57</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xxix.

<sup>58</sup> Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, eds., *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

<sup>59</sup> Dawson and Schueller, “Introduction,” 3; Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden,” in *Kipling Poems* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 96.

of the United States in the late nineteenth century aggravated fears of “miscegenation,” with the many Acts passed against Chinese immigration and citizenship highlighting the presence of an internal and external imperialism that endures to this day.<sup>60</sup>

The interrelationships and influence of empires, economics, politics, and literature on each other are central to my study. Laura Doyle’s concept of inter-imperiality theorises the co-emergence of competitive power structures, including empire, language regimes, literary cultures, and institutions. Doyle reveals how they have created a systemic stratification of racialised and gendered labour, and how literature can endorse the current situation or challenge it.<sup>61</sup> In a similar vein, I examine how literature is tied to the politics of its time, while also being capable of expressing the possibilities of what could be.

One foundational interpretative method of inter-imperiality is considering how “successive and surrounding empires [...] act like yeast in the present text and time.”<sup>62</sup> This approach is enabling to my study, as I consider how tea has for centuries been adopted as a cultural practice by empires to communicate power and superiority. Recognising the inter-imperial position of tea elucidates the influence (often inspirational) of empires upon each other. Furthermore, U.S. tea scenes emphasise the conflicting messages within cultural evocations of superiority, as tea’s long history as a drink for “superior” beings (spiritually, financially, racially, or otherwise) highlights the waxing and waning of an empire’s power. As a result, the depiction of tea-drinking in white American parlours, dingy Chinatown brothels, and many spaces in-between, emphasises anxieties over maintaining an imperial status in the face of inevitable change.

Two main approaches of inter-imperial studies are to lengthen “the typical temporal dimensions of critical theory by considering eras before the rise of Europe” and to widen “the spatial dimensions of critical theory by considering the full field of interacting empires in any period.”<sup>63</sup> My employment of these methods has enabled my analyses to reveal how tea scenes can depict desired differences

---

<sup>60</sup> Dawson and Schueller, “Introduction,” 3.

<sup>61</sup> Laura Doyle, *Inter-imperiality: Vying Empires, Gendered Labor, and the Literary Arts of Alliance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

<sup>62</sup> Laura Doyle, “Inter-imperiality and Literary Studies in the Longer *Durée*,” *PMLA* 130, no. 2 (March 2015): 342, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44015715>.

<sup>63</sup> Laura Doyle, “Inter-imperiality: An Introduction,” *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 64, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 395, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.2018.0035>.

and clear similarities between empires, as well as the adoption, adaptation, and romanticisation of ancient Chinese culture to “verify” U.S. white patriarchy, or to heighten or lessen the fear that ethnically Chinese people are a threat; these cultural processes are evidenced in U.S. fiction throughout the twentieth and twenty first centuries, and thus, illustrate the continual use of tea as a cultural inter-imperial product.

## Diaspora Studies

Diaspora studies is central to my thesis because fictional tea-drinking often links characters to an imagined homeland, and to a culture they feel close to or distant from. The borders and identities within the diaspora are often presented through how characters interact during tea ceremonies. Like food and drink studies, diaspora studies is an interdisciplinary area of research. Since the 1990s, the study of diasporic identities has shifted its focus from homeland orientation to decentred models that minimise the importance of the point of origin. This transition is evident in 1991 when William Safran observed the beginnings of a shift in the field and stressed the importance of developing clear boundaries for what counts as diaspora. For him, a diaspora must retain a collective memory of “their original homeland,” cherish an idealised image of their “ancestral home,” feel a desire to restore “the original homeland,” and continue to “relate” to the homeland in many ways.<sup>64</sup> Though he does go on to expand and not enforce all the traits he lists as diasporic, his initial rigidity about the homeland clashes with work from the mid-1990s onwards which deconstructs territorialised identities.<sup>65</sup>

The shift is explicit in the work of Avtar Brah. In 1996 she provided a conceptualisation of diaspora that “offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins, while taking account of a homing desire, as distinct from a desire for a ‘homeland’.”<sup>66</sup> Other scholarly interventions during this decade, by critics including Yasmin Soysal, argue for de-centred models of “home” as it can be interpreted in a range of ways, from a place of settlement to a virtual community. What must be rejected, Soysal notes, is the limiting interpretation of a “home-

---

<sup>64</sup> William Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,” *Diaspora* 1, no.1 (Spring 1991): 83–84, DOI:10.1353/dsp.1991.0004.

<sup>65</sup> William Safran, “The Jewish Diaspora in a Comparative and Theoretical Perspective,” *Israel Studies* 10 no. 1 (Spring 2005): 37, <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/180371>.

<sup>66</sup> Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London: Routledge, 1996), 16.

bound, ethnic-based orientation.”<sup>67</sup> In the Chinese American literature central to my study, Brah’s and Soysal’s negotiations of the concept of home are fitting as authors often explore the illusory desire to return to an idealised China, and show that what is central to satisfying a homing desire is community, acceptance, and performing traditional cultural customs such as tea-drinking.

In 2005, however, Khachig Tölölyan, a leading scholar in the field and editor of the journal *Diaspora*, warns against dismissing the importance of attachment to a place, while being aware that overstressing this point can lead to scholarship being seen as “discredited nationalist rhetoric” or as “naïve about the global spaces that have opened up in the past several decades.”<sup>68</sup> In emphasising the necessity to identify the core characteristics central to all diasporas in the contemporary period, Brubaker states that “three core elements that remain widely understood to be constitutive of diaspora” are *dispersion* (whether voluntary or forced across state borders), *homeland orientation* (whether a real or imagined place) and *boundary maintenance* (the necessity of the dispersed group to stay united).<sup>69</sup> Regarding the Chinese American experience, my consideration of Chinatowns, and the substantial movement of Chinese Americans out of them from the 1940s onwards, is informed by the concepts of dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundary maintenance. However, the American-born generation which moves into the suburbs and beyond complicates these notions, as their dispersion is national, their homeland orientation is often complicated by linguistic barriers and cultural identification, and the boundaries of their community are neither clear nor finite. My analysis of how tea is used as a cultural commodity to cross boundaries, and create diverse home spaces, goes some way to show the extent of how varied the reality of Brubaker’s three core elements can be.

What is particular to Chinese diaspora studies is the consideration of what counts as the “homeland.” Lynn Pan suggests that because China is split into provinces with different dialects, customs, diets, and traditions, the mystical

---

<sup>67</sup> Yasemin Nugoğlu Soysal, “Citizenship and Identity: Living in Diasporas in Post-War Europe?,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, no.1 (2000): 2–3, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/014198700329105>.

<sup>68</sup> Khachig Tölölyan, “Restoring the logic of the sedentary to diaspora studies,” *Les Diasporas: 2000 ans d’Histoire*, ed. Lisa Anteby-Yemini, William Berthomière and Gabriel Sheffe (Rennes: Presse Universitaires de Rennes, 2005), 138–9.

<sup>69</sup> Rogers Brubaker, “The ‘diaspora’ diaspora,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (January 2005): 5-7, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000289997>.



homeland is usually a village or place of emotional attachment. Pan notes that “For commitment to one’s native place, one’s ancestral home, few people could beat the Chinese.”<sup>70</sup> Loyalty to certain places and family is evident in how a family’s journey, and the journey of recipes and the food and drink they consume, are often meticulously narrated in Chinese American literature, whether it be from a village in the Hunan province to San Francisco, or with grandparents from the Fujian province, parents from Taipei, and children born and raised in Florida. Tea was spread across China by Buddhist monks and then popularised by the publication of *Classic of Tea* by Lu Yu in the mid-700s.<sup>71</sup> Thus, tea is one of the few consumed delights which relates to the entirety of the Chinese diaspora.

Wang Gungwu also stresses the importance of geographic specificity, as he notes how he has “long advocated that the Chinese overseas be studied in the context of their respective national environments, and taken out of a dominant China reference point.”<sup>72</sup> Though specificity is important, tea in U.S. literature appears to negotiate what it means to be part of a larger Chinese minority in the United States, which is ethnically and sometimes culturally united, but not always aligned in terms of national and/or provincial affiliation. Sensitivity to particular national and provincial origins is important. However, I am concerned in this thesis with how their common experiences in the United States, where their shared racial identity is assumed and enforced by exterior social forces, leads to Chinese Americans depicting tea in similar ways in literature to portray connectivity, reclamation, and identity formation.

Studying the formation of social movements led Martin Sökefeld to argue that diasporas need to be considered as a state which must be mobilised through opportunity structures (including elite political allies and an open legal system) and mobilising practices (for instance, fundraising events and neighbourhood groups).<sup>73</sup> Yet this outlook on diasporic identity leaves little space for negotiation or partial identification. Ien Ang voices her opinion on the constraints of diasporic

---

<sup>70</sup> Lynn Pan, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: The Story of the Overseas Chinese* (London: Mandarin, 1991), 12–13, 21.

<sup>71</sup> Benn, *Tea in China*, 43.

<sup>72</sup> Gungwu Wang and Annette Shun Wah, *Imagining the Chinese Diaspora: Two Australian Perspectives* (Canberra: Centre for the Study of the Chinese Southern Diaspora, 1999), 1.

<sup>73</sup> Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 13; Martin Sökefeld, “Mobilizing in Transnational Space: a Social Movement Approach to the Formation of Diaspora,” *Global Networks* 6, Issue 3 (June 2006): 265-284, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2006.00144.x>.

studies regarding Chinese Americans when she notes that “it is the myth of the (lost or idealized) homeland, the object of both collective memory and of desire and attachment, which is constitutive to diasporas, and which ultimately confines and constrains the nomadism of the diasporic subject.”<sup>74</sup> Max Weber’s classic “ideal” type can, in some ways, solve the issue of diaspora’s rigid application. His use of the adjective “ideal” is not a value statement; instead, it is used to contrast with the real, and thus shows the varied nature and ever-changing condition of diasporas.<sup>75</sup> These developments and applications of old and new approaches in the field are critical in understanding the Chinese American diaspora, which continues to evolve due to exogamy, nomadism, and other factors.

It is important to consider theorists who focus on different diasporic communities because scholarship on any diaspora group may be relevant to the study of others, though of course the need to be attentive to nuance and specificity remains at the forefront of diasporic studies. James Clifford notes that diaspora theorists “cross paths in a mobile space of translations, not equivalences.”<sup>76</sup> In the 1990s, Clifford led the way with Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall in the shift within diasporic studies from a focus on assimilationist or exclusionist models of identity to multicultural ones where its diasporic makeup waxes and wanes over the centuries.<sup>77</sup> Clifford notes the different experiences of the rich and the poor, and what becomes apparent is how the “degrees of diasporic alienation, the mix of coercion and freedom in cultural (dis)identifications, and the pain of loss and displacement are highly relative.”<sup>78</sup> This idea is particularly relevant when considering the Chinese American diaspora from the late twentieth century onwards. My study shows how writers explore, through fictional tea scenes, the way cultural customs can communicate the variety of members in the Chinese

---

<sup>74</sup> Ien Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asian and the West* (London: Routledge, 2001), 25.

<sup>75</sup> Stephen Kalberg, “Weber, Max (1864-1920),” in *The Social Science Encyclopaedia*, ed. Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper (London: Routledge, 1999), 906–910; Max Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: The Free Press, 1947).

<sup>76</sup> James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 272.

<sup>77</sup> Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 222–37; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (London: Verso Books, 1993).

<sup>78</sup> James Clifford, “Diasporas,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (August 1994): 312-313, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/656365>.

American diaspora, and the desire and ability of subjects to become part of mainstream society.

Lisa Lowe builds upon Clifford's theories and argues against rigid identifiers of "Chineseness" because otherwise cultural politics risks relying "upon the construction of sameness and the exclusion of differences" when considering the Asian American diaspora. This diaspora, Lowe notes, "is unstable and changeable, with its cohesion complicated by intergenerationality, by various degrees of identification and relation to a 'homeland,' and by different extents of assimilation to and distinction from 'majority culture'."<sup>79</sup> It is by reconceiving what it means to be part of a diaspora, and "the various degrees of identification" with the "homeland" and mainstream U.S. culture, that the complexities of being part of the Chinese American diasporic community can be more comprehensively considered; the range of ways tea is depicted in literature can be seen as cultural projections of these complexities.

Aihwa Ong's concept of "flexible citizenship" has been helpful for my analysis of the fictional, wealthy Chinese immigrants discussed in the coda. The term refers to a range of subject positions, from those with dual citizenship to Chinese investors in the United States. An example Ong provides of a flexible citizen is a Chinese investor in San Francisco who states, "I can live anywhere in the world, but it must be near an airport."<sup>80</sup> In this situation the term "diaspora" is stretched but still relevant. Ong notes that "Their subjectivity is at once deterritorialized in relation to a particular country, though highly localized in relation to family."<sup>81</sup> The tea ceremonies of Chinese American characters who enact flexible citizenship present their cosmopolitan, international lifestyles, as well as their staunch loyalty to family through diverse but traditional tea ceremonies. The fictional Chinese American and Singaporean Chinese characters discussed in the coda embrace the colonial and Chinese heritage of Singapore through tea ceremonies, and also enjoy traditional English tea in an Anglo-American restaurant in New York. The world appears to be their oyster,

---

<sup>79</sup> Lisa Lowe, "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences," in *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., ed. Min Zhou and Anthony C. Ocampo (New York: NYU Press, 2016), 535-36.

<sup>80</sup> Aihwa Ong, "On the Edge of Empires: Flexible Citizenship among Chinese in Diaspora," *Positions* 1, no. 3 (Winter 1993): 771, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1215/10679847-1-3-745>.

<sup>81</sup> Ong, "On the Edge of Empires," 771-72.

and yet their attachment to an ethnic group, usually at some remove from their current location, is palpable.

Tölölyan's blurring of definitive community borders is an example of how diaspora and transnational studies overlap in many ways: on this topic Tölölyan famously proclaimed that diasporas are the "exemplary communities of the transnational moment."<sup>82</sup> The transnational "turn" in American Studies since (at least) 2005 has transformed the way I and other scholars consider works of literature written by those coming from the many subgroups of the Chinese diaspora. Today, "transnational" is used to characterise a post-Fordist economy, where, as Lan P. Duong notes, "people, ideas, and goods traverse regions or nation-states [aided and accelerated by] modes of telecommunications and transportation" and, as a result, studies "tend to decentralize the nation-state as an analytic framework within which to study the modes of culture, history, and people that are formed and reformed transnationally."<sup>83</sup> Tea and the Chinese in the United States have adapted and are "American" in various ways and, as such, I explore the idea of tea as a transnational commodity, and the use of it to represent the transnational relationships and ethnic solidarity present within the Chinese American diaspora.

In the twenty first century, transnationalism—as an area of study and as a lived experience—has developed substantially. In her Presidential Address to the American Studies Association in 2004, Shelley Fisher Fishkin recognised the growing realisation that to understand the United States necessitated looking beyond national borders. Part of this process includes, as Paul Lauter puts it, the recognition of "a world system, in which the exchange of commodities, the flow of capital, and the iterations of cultures know no borders."<sup>84</sup> In studying the depiction of tea ceremonies in U.S. literature, the flow, variation, and borderless condition of identities is presented, as tea can be consumed in both traditional and novel ways. What is equally shown are the connections each subject has within and outside diasporic communities, as they battle borders of differentiation and what it means to be "American" through tea's transnational consumption.

---

<sup>82</sup> Khachig Tölölyan, "The Nation-State and its Others: In Lieu of a Preface," *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 5, DOI: 10.1353/dsp.1991.0008.

<sup>83</sup> Lan P. Duong, "Transnationalism," in *Keywords for Asian American Studies*, ed. Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, Linda Trinh Võ, and K. Scott Wong (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 232.

<sup>84</sup> Paul Lauter, quoted in Fishkin, "Crossroads of Cultures," 21.

Ang is particularly interested in the relationship between the overseas Chinese and the “homeland” for another reason. She is concerned with how “symbolic orientation towards the ‘homeland’ tends to complicate the problem of identity, as ‘China’ is presented as the cultural/geographical core in relation to which the westernised overseas Chinese is forced to take up a humble position, even a position of shame and inadequacy over [their] own ‘impurity’.”<sup>85</sup> This process, she points out, cannot be reversed, as seen in the predicament of her grandfather who “In the late 1920s, encouraged by the Chinese nationalist mood of the day, [...] decided to go ‘back’ to the homeland and set up shop there, only to realize that the mainland Chinese no longer saw him as ‘one of them’.”<sup>86</sup> As a result, Ang argues that this “in-between-ness” creates a hybrid space for members of the diaspora, a “postmodern ethnicity” resulting from the intermingling of the culture carried by immigrants and that of the host country.<sup>87</sup> By considering tea in this cultural dialogue, there is a multiplicity to tea’s cultural position in the United States, with the two broad areas studied here being tea’s Anglo-imperial heritage and Chinese heritage in the United States. In analysing tea ceremonies in Chinese American and white American literature, I investigate how the brew can become politicised or portrayed to explore the complexity of identifying with the Chinese American diaspora, China, and the United States.

### Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) is relevant to my thesis because I consistently analyse how the impacts of law, politics, racist stereotypes, and society have been expressed through fictional tea ceremonies. CRT became a recognised field of study in the 1970s when activists, lawyers, and scholars comprehended that the progress made in the civil rights era had stalled or perhaps gone backwards.<sup>88</sup> In the 1980s, two events which were pivotal to the emergence of CRT as a distinct field of study were the 1981 “Alternative Course” on race led by Derrick Bell at Harvard Law School, and the National Critical Legal Studies conference in 1987

---

<sup>85</sup> Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, 32.

<sup>86</sup> Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, 27.

<sup>87</sup> Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, 35-36.

<sup>88</sup> Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York: University Press, 2001), 3-4.

on race, silence, and the law.<sup>89</sup> Angela Harris notes that at the heart of CRT is “a commitment to a vision of liberation from racism through right reason” which involves, as Derrick Bell notes, a “radical critique of the law [and] radical emancipation by the law.”<sup>90</sup> As a result, scholars in the field display how valuable legally constructed rights are, and critique how the law, and current institutional and power structures, believe in white superiority and white privilege.

Pioneering scholars of the field during the 1980s were Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Richard Delgado.<sup>91</sup> From the late 1980s to the 2000s, scholars including Camara Phyllis Jones, Karen Pyke, and Neil Gotanda developed the field through their work on institutionalised racism, internalised racism, and race consciousness.<sup>92</sup> Regarding the Chinese in the United States, Erika Lee, Ronald Takaki, Eric Yamamoto, Mari Matsuda, and Neil Gotanda have written essential work on the position of Asian Americans legally, politically, and economically within the nation. Here, I chiefly concern myself with the revisionist, materialist, and Chinese American-focused theorists of CRT due to their relevance to my topic and approach.

The basis of most CRT studies is an awareness of the currency of whiteness, which is a topic explored by many theorists, including Theodore Allen and Ian Haney Lopez. They investigate the legal origins of whiteness, and show that it pays to be white in U.S. society and law.<sup>93</sup> The article which arguably sparked the field’s creation is Derrick Bell’s revisionist argument which revises

---

<sup>89</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, introduction to *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas (New York, The New Press, 1995), xxi-xxiii.

<sup>90</sup> Derrick A. Bell Jr. “Who’s Afraid of Critical Race Theory?” *University of Illinois Law Review* 1995, no. 4 (1995): 899; Angela P. Harris, “The Jurisprudence of Reconstruction,” *California Law Review* 82, no. 4, Symposium Critical Race Theory (July 1994): 743, DOI: 10.15779/Z389J06.

<sup>91</sup> An important text by Crenshaw during this period is Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Law Forum* (1989): 139-168.

<sup>92</sup> Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “Race, Reform, and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation Antidiscrimination Law,” *Harvard Law Review* 101, no. 7 (May 1988): 1331-1387; Neil Gotanda, “A Critique of ‘Our Constitution is Color-Blind’,” *Stanford Law Review* 44, no. 1 (Nov. 1991): 1-68, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1228940>; Camara Phyllis Jones, “Confronting Institutionalized Racism,” *Phylon* (1960-) 50, no. ½ (2002): 7-22, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/4149999>; Karen D. Pyke, “What is Internalized Racial Oppression and Why don’t we Study it? Acknowledging Racism’s Hidden Injuries,” *Sociological Perspectives* 53, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 551-572, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2010.53.4.551>.

<sup>93</sup> Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race: Racial Oppression and Social Control*, vol. 1 (New York: Verso, 2012); Ian Haney López, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*, 10th anniversary ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

the view that landmark civil rights decisions were to mainly benefit African Americans, and stipulates that advances in civil rights laws always coincided with benefits for the white elites.<sup>94</sup> Bell critiqued the famous *Brown v. Board of Education* and asked readers why the legal system in 1954 suddenly ruled racial segregation in schools unconstitutional. Initially his article was viewed as cynical and then, twenty-four years later, Mary Dudziak's analysis of documents held by the U.S. Department of State and of Justice revealed that Bell's theory was correct. She discovered that when the Justice Department intervened for the first time on the side of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) in a school desegregation case, it was in response to numerous letters, cables, and memos which express the United States' desire to improve its reputation in developing countries.<sup>95</sup>

Bell's theory and Dudziak's research also characterise CRT's interest in material determinism, a concept used in the field to suggest that there is little motivation to eradicate racism, because racism benefits the white elite and the working class. In Chinese American history, revisionist and material determinist CRT highlights how the exclusion and acceptance of the Chinese in the United States has been politically and economically motivated to benefit white Americans. Alexander Saxton's *The Indispensable Enemy* became a founding text in Asian American critical race studies: Saxton investigates the criss-crossing tensions between class and race, and analyses how anti-Chinese sentiment during the nineteenth century was used to build white labour solidarity.<sup>96</sup> David Roediger also explores white working-class racism and how, beyond labour competition, there are complex psychological and ideological tools which stress racial stereotypes.<sup>97</sup> Fictional tea scenes emphasise difference or similarity depending on which side of the "Chinese question" the text falls on. I am concerned with how tea is employed as a cultural tool to support or criticise white privilege.

---

<sup>94</sup> Derrick A. Bell, Jr., "Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma," *Harvard Law Review* 93, no. 3 (Jan. 1980): 518-533, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1340546>.

<sup>95</sup> Mary L. Dudziak, "Brown as a Cold War Case," *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 1 (June 2004): 32-42, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3659611>.

<sup>96</sup> Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (California: University of California Press, 1971).

<sup>97</sup> David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness* (New York: Verso, 1991).

David Eng explores how white American benefits are evident in the reassignment, in “yellow peril” literature, of the “evil” Asian from a Chinese to a Japanese ethnicity in the run up to the Second World War.<sup>98</sup> To foster good relations with China in the face of their shared enemy, Japan, Chinese Americans experienced new levels of tolerance in the United States.<sup>99</sup> Additionally, during and after World War II, with the rise of communism, the State Department (with the help of media outlets, artists, and writers) wished to portray the United States as a liberating society, and it funded cultural diplomacy initiatives in order to achieve this aim. This included tours by ethnic artists in the Asia-Pacific region, and disseminating stories and artwork by Chinese Americans to display empowered Americans from ethnic minorities.<sup>100</sup> Material determinist and historical CRT scholars, including Erika Lee and Ronald Takaki, have analysed the ebb and flow of Chinese American treatment in relation to the nation’s history.<sup>101</sup> Their work informs my examination of *Father and Glorious Descendant* (1943) by Pardee Lowe and *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1945) by Jade Snow Wong, with both autobiographies having been used by the U.S. government to portray the United States as tolerant and accepting during the 1940s.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, my investigation reveals other undercurrents within the texts, as the authors depict tea ceremonies to undermine demeaning characterisations of Chinese Americans, show intergenerational unity, and narrate the “Americanness” of their characters.

My thesis benefits from CRT that addresses the intersections between race, class, sexuality, gender, and sex; every chapter is invested in how Chinese American literature explores the particularity of Chinese American lives. This focus leads to my application of Kimberlé Crenshaw’s theory of intersectionality.

---

<sup>98</sup> David L. Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Duke University Press, 2001), 104-106.

<sup>99</sup> Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015), 253.

<sup>100</sup> Ellen D. Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 122-123, 126.

<sup>101</sup> Ronald T. Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990).

<sup>102</sup> Wong went on a four-month speaking tour in Asia to present the wonders of American democracy and the opportunities available to people from minority groups if they work hard. Furthermore, Lowe’s autobiography utilised Lowe’s enlistment into the army to market it. Linda Trinh Moser, “Pardee Lowe,” in *Asian American Autobiographers: A Bio-bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Guiyou Huang (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001), 234; Fu-jen Chen, “Jade Snow Wong,” in *Asian American Autobiographers: A Bio-bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Guiyou Huang (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001), 390.



Intersectionality theorists investigate how race and gender (and other subject positions) interconnect to shape a person's (usually a woman's) oppression.<sup>103</sup> bell hooks commented that the emergence of this theory importantly "challenged the notion that 'gender' was the primary factor determining a woman's fate."<sup>104</sup> In my analysis of fictional tea ceremonies involving women, I consider the ways in which a scene can represent how a character's womanhood and ethnicity are interdependent. Whether she is presented as a sexualised and exoticized server of tea, or as a woman negotiating the racial, sexual, and patriarchal limitations she faces, in each case her gender and race interconnect to shape her portrayal, and her reception, by other characters and readers. Furthermore, I explore the interconnection between race and gender for Chinese men, as tea scenes can support their effeminate characterisation in "yellow peril" fiction, highlight their masculine anxiety, or communicate their patriarchal control.

In contrast to the "yellow peril" stereotypes circulating during the early twentieth century, in the 1960s the Chinese became known as a "model minority."<sup>105</sup> This myth—which depicts the Chinese as industrious and meek with nuclear families and higher educational goals—has been a source of contention in CRT. Though it appears to be a flattering stereotype, as Robert Chang notes, it has proven damaging as it leads to, among other things, the needs and negative experiences of the minority being ignored and dismissed.<sup>106</sup> When CRT first appeared, the focus was on the black/white paradigm. This meant that experiences particular to the Asian American minority were left largely unexplored or questioned. The damage wrought by the model minority myth, and other misconceptions about Asian Americans, led to scholars from the 1990s onwards, such as Eric Yamamoto, Mari Matsuda, and Bill Ong, developing Asian American CRT.<sup>107</sup> The surge in anti-Asian attacks since the beginning of the

---

<sup>103</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241-1299, DOI: 10.2307/1229039.

<sup>104</sup> bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), xiii.

<sup>105</sup> L. Ling-chi Wang, "Roots and Changing Identity of the Chinese in the United States," *Daedalus* 120, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 181, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20025379>.

<sup>106</sup> Robert Chang, *Disoriented: Asian Americans, Law, and the Nation-State* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 53-55.

<sup>107</sup> Topics explored in: Mari Matsuda and Charles R. Laurence, *We Won't Go Back: Making the Case for Affirmative Action* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1997); Eric Yamamoto, *Interracial Justice: Conflict and Reconciliation in Post-Civil Rights America* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Bill Ong, *To Be an American: Cultural Pluralism and the Rhetoric*

COVID-19 pandemic in the United States has led to a moment of reckoning. The murders of six women of Asian descent in the Atlanta spa shootings of March 2021, along with the recorded 3,800 hate incidents that have targeted Asian Americans in the last year, emphasise the continued alienation and scapegoating of the Asian American minority.<sup>108</sup>

Ju Yon Kim in her book, *The Racial Mundane*, argues that the unclear relationship between the body and our behaviours has supported the paradoxical representation of Asian Americans as simultaneously the perfect and the impossible Americans. Kim questions how, why, and to what effect routine behaviours become actions of public scrutiny. Kim considers the controversial book *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mom* (2011) by Amy Chua. In it, Chua advocates raising children “the Chinese way” because it is the best way; this method involves parents restricting children from doing some “fun” activities, like sleepovers, and making them focus on other, more “practical” activities, including homework. Chua’s book supports the model minority myth, and many Asian Americans were angry at Chua because not only does the book present sweeping generalisations about Asian parenting techniques, it also endorses a myth that has led to mental health problems among Asian American students, tensions between minority groups, and political justification to cut welfare and affirmative action programmes.<sup>109</sup> The presentation, reception, and interpretations of actions, from tea-drinking to sleepovers, continually inform our understanding of individuals, communities, and their values and experiences.

Sucheng Chan states that the most difficult challenge facing Asian American rights activists now comes from the heterogeneous condition of their community along lines of race, class, political ideology, language, religion, citizen status, etc. Due to this there are numerous answers to the following questions that Chan asks, “Who among the Asian-ancestry population should qualify for affirmative action? Should well-to-do Asian immigrants, including those who are not U.S. citizens, enjoy the benefits originally intended for historically oppressed

---

*of Assimilation* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Ju Yon Kim, *The Racial Mundane: Asian American Performance and the Embodied Everyday* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

<sup>108</sup> “8 Dead in Atlanta Spa Shootings, with Fears of Anti-Asian Bias,” *New York Times*, March 26, 2021, accessed May 19, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/03/17/us/shooting-atlanta-acworth>.

<sup>109</sup> Kim, *The Racial Mundane*, 173.

racial minorities, [...]? [And] should high-achieving Asian American students be allowed to enroll in unlimited numbers at elite schools [...]?”<sup>110</sup> Chan advises that Asian Americans in the United States should think

of themselves not as minority Americans but as transnational members of various Asian diasporas [because they] must never forget that whatever rights [they] have acquired in the last century and a half have been contingent on [their] ability to claim membership to *American society*—claims [they] began making long before Asian immigrants were allowed to become naturalized citizens.<sup>111</sup>

What is apparent is the call for political unity among the ethnic Chinese minority, as laws will not be upheld or changed without unified protective or corrective action, respectively. I investigate how tea in literary and cultural texts may generate a sense of unity, as tea is a custom that is passed down and is rich in Chinese American history and cultural heritage. It unites its drinkers and shows the importance of cultural memory in establishing community and in understanding the need to fight for rights.

## Methodology

My project is a cultural history that investigates how attitudes, values, desires, and prejudices shape, and are evidenced in, fictional tea-drinking scenes in U.S. literary and cultural texts. I model my approach on Raymond Williams’ “structures of feeling”:<sup>112</sup> I trace how tea scenes question dominant ways of perceiving Chinese Americans and highlight various perspectives vying for dominance on race, gender, and their intersections. The project surveys a breadth of literary texts, from popular culture to more “literary” texts: for instance, I analyse Pulitzer-prize-winning novels, sensational short stories, and racist cartoons alongside each other. This approach enables the project to trace patterns of representation, and to identify the extent to which tea recurs in U.S. texts. The significance of fabricated tea-drinking becomes apparent through analysing an array of sources.

---

<sup>110</sup> Sucheng Chan, “Asian American Struggles for Civil, Political, Economic, and Social Rights,” in *Asian American Studies Now: A Critical Reader*, ed. Jean Yu-wen Shen Wu and Thomas C. Chen (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 231.

<sup>111</sup> Chan, “Asian American Struggles,” 232.

<sup>112</sup> Raymond Williams, “Literature and Society,” in *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays*, ed. Alan O’Connor (London: Verso, 1980), 24-26.

I analyse, among other cultural products, U.S. newspapers and magazines. The sources I examine in these publications include short stories, plays, advertisements, articles, novelettes, and cartoons. The magazines and newspapers analysed—including *Munsey's Magazine* and *Harpers Weekly*—provide material that is often politically motivated and influenced by the racist fears and prejudices of their readership. The mission statements, political leanings, geographical location, and circulation of the periodicals inform my analysis. Furthermore, the paratexts are examined because they frame the reader's experience.

In this thesis I also examine films, ceramics, cartoons, photographs, advertisements, and paintings. My project evaluates visual materials to strengthen the analysis of the literature. The circulation and the target audience of the piece are considered, along with the political context, inscriptions, colours, and the people depicted. I situate the visual and literary material of this thesis within their wider historical context to trace tea's evolving position within U.S. society and to substantiate my claims.

The nature of the thesis requires different forms to be consistently analysed beside each other. Genre studies are employed to consider the reception, audience, motivations, and narrative techniques of a text. I combine literary texts and artwork which have not been paired together before in analysis, and I utilise historical sources and theory which have not previously been deployed to address the consumption of tea in these texts.

Furthermore, writers from minority groups are often burdened more heavily with the responsibility of improving mainstream opinion and understanding about their culture.<sup>113</sup> Chinese American autobiographies, novels, plays, and other literary forms have been heavily criticised for misrepresentations of their culture and people, and for not considering the assumed political and social responsibility that comes with the publication of their work. Should writers limit their work to "truthful" representations of culture, even if their work is classed

---

<sup>113</sup> The impact of this pressure on the work of minority writers is explored in Monica Ali, "The burden of representation," *The Guardian*, July 13, 2003, accessed February 9, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/jul/13/fiction.features>; Toni Morrison, "The Site of Memory," in *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. William Zinsser, 83-102 (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995); Deborah Woo, "Maxine Hong Kingston: The Ethnic Writer and the Burden of Dual Authenticity," *Amerasia Journal* 16, no.1 (February 2019): 173-200, DOI: 10.17953/amer.16.1.v6744nn1717w551q.

as fictional? And should writers provide explanations and details to cater to a mainstream readership? These questions guide my interpretation and analysis of the literature at the centre of my thesis.

## Chapter Introductions

Periodicals were a popular venue for “yellow peril” literature in the early twentieth century. They reflected the apprehensions of the time and fuelled them through regular instalments. The imperial heritage of tea which found its way into the lives of wealthy white American society is depicted in this form to present the “necessary” alienation of the Chinese. A case study of the “yellow peril” novelette *The Second Generation* (1917) by Camilla Kenyon, published in *Munsey’s Magazine*, serves to elucidate the negative views held against Chinese immigrants, and evidences how tea-drinking can be employed to signify white superiority. In response to well-circulated negative portrayals of the Chinese, I examine in Chapter 1 how Sui Sin Far in her short story collection *Mrs Spring Fragrance* (1912), and Paula Jakobi in her play *Chinese Lily* (1915), portray fictional tea ceremonies in their work to emphasise the impact of economic and societal exclusion on Chinese women in the United States. During a period when women’s suffrage led to gendered limitations being confronted and changed, these writers’ tea scenes downplay racial distinctions and focus on uniting women through cross-racial sympathy.

Chapter 2 continues the thesis’s examination of “yellow peril” fiction and considers the pulp fiction novel *The Chinese Parrot* (1926) by Earl Derr Biggers. I analyse how the tea-drinking of the novel’s protagonist, detective Charlie Chan, exemplifies the “necessity” of feminising Chinese men if they are to be tolerated in the white American imagination. I examine how, to reject the feminisation of Chinese American men, Pardee Lowe in his autobiography *Father and Glorious Descendant* (1943) portrays the masculinity of Chinese American men through locating tea-drinking in acts of heroism, and by using the brew to emphasise the bifurcation of gender roles. Asserting Chinese American masculinity often came at the cost of women’s equality. Consequently, I also investigate how, in response to this situation, Jade Snow Wong in her autobiography *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1945) presents the way women, both Chinese and white American, have been

pushed into performing their perceived “natural” and submissive domesticity. In changing where and how the brew is consumed, Wong shows that aspiring Chinese women desire and deserve the same freedoms white women were fighting for during the 1940s.

In Chapter 3 I investigate white and Chinese American anxieties over masculinity once more. I consider how Jack Kerouac in his roman-à-clef *The Dharma Bums* (1958) depicts the necessity of rejecting the conservative family model, and how he does so by displaying the counterculture’s departure from conventional society through Chinese tea-drinking. As a result, he unwittingly further alienates Chinese Americans from U.S. cultural norms. I then explore how two novels, *The Flower Drum Song* (1957) by C. Y. Lee and *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1961) by Louis Chu, portray, through tea scenes, apprehensions concerning Chinese American masculinity caused by exclusion, popular stereotypes, and women’s expectations. Importantly, they stress through fictional tea ceremonies that, though escaping the bonds of Chinatown and their elders might be desired, holding on to one’s heritage and minority community is imperative to creating and stabilising notions of Chinese American masculinity and self-worth.

Chapter 4 explores how Chinese American women in the last quarter of the twentieth century portray tea in their novels to stress the significance of mother-daughter relationships. They highlight the self-worth and self-discovery that can come from open, understanding, and supportive maternal bonds. The novels central to this chapter are *The Kitchen God’s Wife* (1991) by Amy Tan, and *Eating Chinese Food Naked* (1998) by Mei Ng. Maternal bonds are expressed through imaginary tea-drinking in China and the United States; the transnational location of tea-drinking highlights the diasporic condition of second-generation Chinese American women. The use of tea to evoke the homeland, and the role the brew plays in displaying the impact of heritage and maternal bonds on the formation of Chinese American women’s identities, self-worth, and sexualities, are examined in detail.

In the coda a consideration of the #milktealliance movement leads to an analysis of how, in the twenty first century, U.S. texts circle back to viewing tea as a global beverage, though one with nationally specific customs, philosophies, and significations. I analyse how conceptions of superiority and inter-imperialism are communicated once again through fictional tea ceremonies in Singaporean

American Kevin Kwan's trilogy *Crazy Rich Asians* (2013), *China Rich Girlfriend* (2015), and *Rich People Problems* (2017).

In paradoxical fashion, throughout the twentieth and in the early twenty first centuries, tea in U.S. cultural products signifies both health and toxicity, refinement and barbarity, femininity and masculinity, feminism and sexism, and acceptance and exclusion. Firstly, this thesis explores how tea symbolises refinement and white American supremacy as a Eurocentric custom in the early twentieth century. However, tea scenes also display the barbarous—as businesses, writers of “yellow peril” fiction, and cartoonists employed tea to stress the idea that Chinese immigrants could “poison” the nation’s physical health and Christian morality. My argument predominantly focuses on how, to counter “yellow peril” fiction and the orientalisering of their culture, Chinese American writers have employed tea’s rich heritage as a religious, social, political, and health drink to present the impact of exclusionary laws on Chinese Americans, the formation and overcoming of generational divides, and the development of Chinese American diasporic communities and identities.

## Chapter 1

### Age of Exclusion I

#### “Dark Dregs [Telling] the Tale”: Women Writers, Tea, and “Yellow Peril” Literature, 1900-1924

“The Inferior Woman” by Sui Sin Far (b. 1865, d.1914) was first published in May 1910 in *Hampton’s Magazine*, and later in her short story collection *Mrs Spring Fragrance* (1912).<sup>114</sup> *Hampton’s* was sympathetic to women’s suffrage, and in May 1910, also ran a pro-suffrage essay series.<sup>115</sup> The story is set in a suburb of Seattle and the Chinese immigrant protagonist, Mrs Spring Fragrance, is the wife of a Chinese curio merchant. She is liked within her predominantly white community due to her efforts at assimilation, which are evident through her proficiency in English, and her participation in white women’s cultural customs. However, her relative acceptance rests partly upon their patronising her, with the third-person narrator referring to her as “the little Chinese woman.”<sup>116</sup>

In the story Mrs Spring Fragrance serves tea at her home to her white friend and neighbour, Mary Carmen. Mary is distraught that her son, Will Carmen, is infatuated with Alice Winthrop, a private secretary to an esteemed lawyer. Mary has “traced [Alice’s] history, and [has found] that she is not only uneducated in the ordinary sense, but her environment, from childhood up, has been the sordid and demoralizing one of extreme poverty and ignorance.”<sup>117</sup> Mary eventually “sipped a cup of delicious tea, tasted some piquant candied limes, and told [of her trip to Oregon] and the Chinese people she had met there,” then she reverts to the situation of her son.<sup>118</sup> We are told that Mary’s “prejudices do not extend to the Chinese.”<sup>119</sup> However, they are separated by Mary from the white population

---

<sup>114</sup> Sui Sin Far, “The Inferior Woman,” in *Index to Hampton’s Magazine XXIV: January 1910 to June 1910* (New York: Columbian-Sterling Pub. Co., 1910), 727-731; Sui Sin Far, “The Inferior Woman,” in *Mrs Spring Fragrance* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1912; New York, Dover Publications Inc, 2013). Citations refer to the Dover Publications 2013 edition.

<sup>115</sup> Mary Chapman, “A ‘Revolution in Ink’: Sui Sin Far and Chinese Reform Discourse,” *American Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (December 2008): 988, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40068558>.

<sup>116</sup> Sui Sin Far, “The Inferior Woman,” 23

<sup>117</sup> Sui Sin Far, “The Inferior Woman,” 20.

<sup>118</sup> Sui Sin Far, “The Inferior Woman,” 24.

<sup>119</sup> Sui Sin Far, “The Inferior Woman,” 23.



and valued for their “Chinese” customs: for instance, “Chinese ideas of filial duty chimed with [Mary’s] own.”<sup>120</sup> Mrs Spring Fragrance highlights how alienation can easily lead to scorn. When Mrs Spring Fragrance compares her husband to Alice, she depicts the similarity between racial barriers to exclude the Chinese from assimilation, and the social barriers that condemn businesswomen. She says to Mary,

you are so good as to admire my husband because he is what the Americans call ‘a man who has made himself.’ Why then do you not admire the Inferior Woman who is a woman who has made herself?<sup>121</sup>

Mary replies: “I think I do.”<sup>122</sup> Mary considers herself a suffragette. Mrs Spring Fragrance highlights the hypocrisy of promoting women’s education, rights, and independence, while scorning women who achieve financial success and independence through employment. The tea scene ultimately highlights misplaced prejudices, and the similarities between Chinese immigrants and white American people as they appreciate financial success, enjoy the same cultural customs, and respect social etiquette.

Furthermore, Mr and Mrs Spring Fragrance are presented as entertaining oddities in the short story “Mrs Spring Fragrance” (1910). The story was published in *Hampton’s Magazine* four months prior to “An Inferior Woman.”<sup>123</sup> In the story a reporter wishes to get a “scoop” on Mr Spring Fragrance by attending his smoking party.<sup>124</sup> The reporter explicitly asks him not to “invite any other white fellows” as they would sabotage his “scoop.”<sup>125</sup> This scene serves to present their continual alienation even when welcomed by many members in the community. As Mary Chapman notes, both short stories “[suggest] that the rhetoric of inferiority and protection that informs U.S. understandings of class and gender also informs ideas of ethnicity and race.”<sup>126</sup> Chapman’s observation is applicable to subsequent publications by Sui Sin Far.

---

<sup>120</sup> Sui Sin Far, “The Inferior Woman,” 24.

<sup>121</sup> Sui Sin Far, “The Inferior Woman,” 25.

<sup>122</sup> Sui Sin Far, “The Inferior Woman,” 25.

<sup>123</sup> Sui Sin Far, “Mrs Spring Fragrance,” in *Index to Hampton’s Magazine XXIV: January 1910 to June 1910* (New York: Columbian-Sterling Pub. Co., 1910), 137- 141.

<sup>124</sup> Sui Sin Far, “Mrs Spring Fragrance,” in *Mrs Spring Fragrance* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1912; New York, Dover Publications Inc, 2013), 7. Citations refer to the Dover Publications 2013 edition.

<sup>125</sup> Sui Sin Far, “Mrs Spring Fragrance,” 7.

<sup>126</sup> Chapman, “A ‘Revolution in Ink’,” 990.

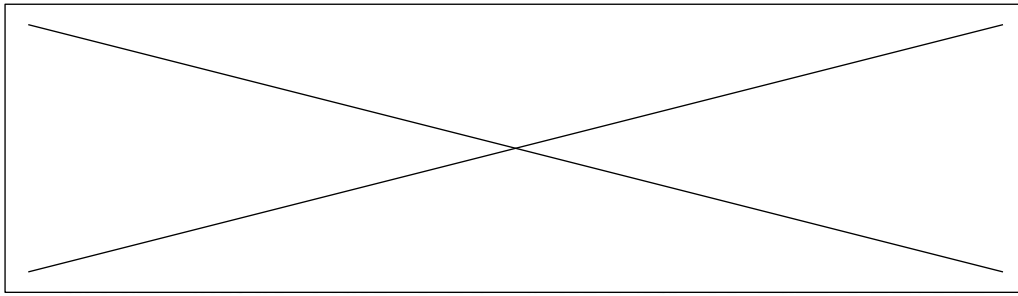


Figure 2.1 The titular illustration for “The Inferior Woman” in *Hampton’s Magazine*, May 1910.

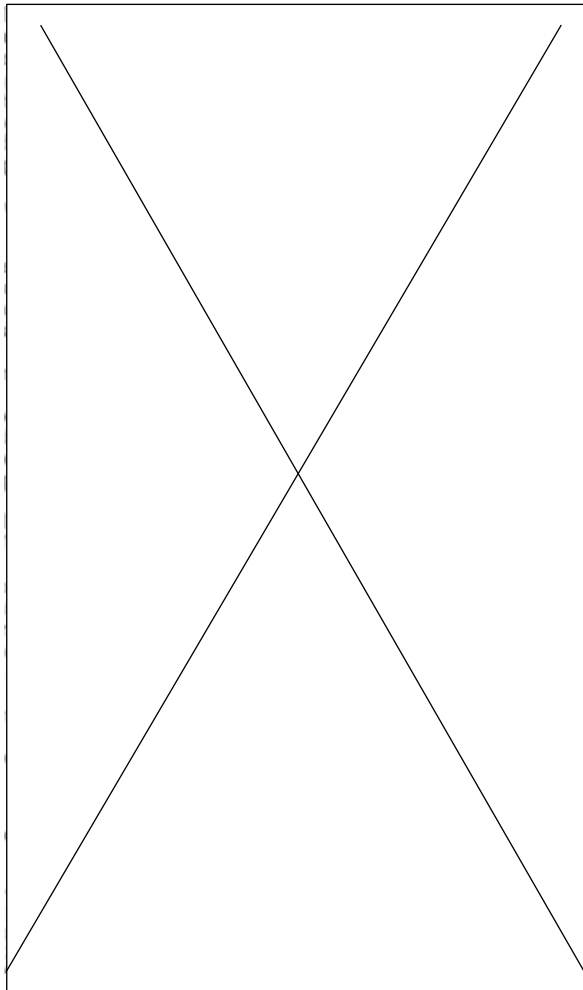


Figure 2.2 An illustration from “Mrs Spring Fragrance” in *Hampton’s Magazine*, January 1910.

In 1900 Sui Sin Far encountered a translation of *Analects of Confucius* from which she regularly quoted.<sup>127</sup> According to Confucius, as Chapman summarises, “the ‘Superior Man’ is distinguished from the ‘Inferior Man’ not by class but by qualities: social virtue, social good feeling, and gratitude to one’s fellow man.”<sup>128</sup> The title of the story alludes to Confucius’ idea and the hypocrisy

---

<sup>127</sup> Chapman, “A ‘Revolution in Ink’,” 989.

<sup>128</sup> Chapman, “A ‘Revolution in Ink’,” 989.

of accepting a few Chinese people and rejecting the rest. The illustrations *Hampton's* provides for the story and for "Mrs Spring Fragrance" ironically highlight the alienating racist perspective that Sui Sin Far was writing against in her stories (see fig. 2.1 & 2.2). In the illustration for "The Inferior Woman," the protagonist is orientalist through the use of traditional Chinese dress and décor (see fig. 2.1). Similarly, in the illustration for "Mrs Spring Fragrance," Mrs Spring Fragrance's tea-drinking is exoticized through Chinese décor and fashion, and—fundamentally—through her demure and subjugated posture as she is positioned facing away from viewers, and therefore at the mercy of their gaze (see fig. 2.2). The illustrations do not present the opinionated and westernised protagonist of the stories. Consequently, the illustrations serve to evoke imperial fantasies of power and possession over subjugated bodies.

In this chapter I am concerned with how Sui Sin Far, and one of her allies among white women, depict fictional tea scenes in their periodical fiction to combat "yellow peril" literature and generate solidarity between white and Chinese women in the United States. As seen in the works investigated in this chapter, focusing on women and domesticity in fiction was a deliberate strategy used to present Chinese women as assimilable, as it positioned Chinese women as similar to white women in their lifestyles and concerns. It also helped them get published as they appeared to be writing about "what they know best." However, their narrative approach, though effective in getting their work published, is problematic as it ultimately upholds patriarchal ideas about women and domesticity.

This chapter analyses how the following texts strive to combat "yellow peril" literature by providing insight into the lives of Chinese women in the United States: three short stories from Sui Sin Far's short story collection, *Mrs Spring Fragrance* (1912)—"The Wisdom of the New," "Its Wavering Image," and "The Americanizing of Pau Tsu"—and the play *Chinese Lily* (1915) by the white writer Paula Jakobi (b. 1870, d.1960).<sup>129</sup> Specifically, the chapter identifies previously undiscussed links between these texts to investigate how depictions of tea ceremonies highlight the domestic and familial lives of the girls and women of San Francisco's Chinatown. These texts break down the white supremacy

---

<sup>129</sup> In this thesis, *Chinese Lily* always refers to Jakobi's play and not Sui Sin Far's short story "The Chinese Lily" (1912).

expressed through colonial tea customs, seen in texts such as *The Second Generation* (1917) by Camilla Kenyon.

The three short stories central to this chapter by Sui Sin Far were first published in her short story collection. They are more politically overt compared to many of her previous periodical short story publications; they portray women disappointed by the men in their lives and who refuse to tolerate their mistreatment. It appears that the short story collection format enabled Sui Sin Far to publish her more provocative stories as she intersperses them with more “flowery” tales.

The texts I discuss in this chapter draw on a number of popular genres, forms, and tropes, including sentimentality, melodrama, and domestic fiction. Many of these works—both those sympathetic to and anxious about Chinese immigration—are tales of prostitution, murder, infanticide, and intrigue. Melodrama is evidenced through drastic actions, gaudy décor, and foreign villains. The combination of intense plot twists and larger-than-life characters with domesticity presents Chinese women’s lives as complex and physically overwhelming. Karen Sánchez-Eppler’s belief that women’s sentimental abolitionist literature focused on “rearranging the real” through sentimentality and melodrama for “marketability and [...] political efficacy” also applies to Sui Sin Far’s and Jakobi’s work.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, the “sentimental,” as Sánchez-Eppler outlines, “refer[s] at once to emotion and to physical sensation, and in sentimental fiction these two versions of *sentire* blend as the eyes of readers take in the printed word and blur it with tears.”<sup>131</sup> As a result, the physicality of the reading experience—which leads to the empathetic sharing of emotions between characters and readers—serves to breakdown racialised and gendered barriers through a shared understanding of human emotional and bodily experience.

Though Sui Sin Far’s work was ground-breaking through its topics and reach, a major limitation of her work is its focus on the merchant class. They were a small percentage of the Chinese population in the United States and had special privileges due to their recognised benefit to the economy (which was not considered a threat to white Americans due to their interest in consuming Chinese

---

<sup>130</sup> Karen Sánchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 26.

<sup>131</sup> Sánchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty*, 26.

objects and goods). This focus left the majority of Chinese immigrants without sympathetic representation. Therefore, pairing her work with Jakobi's play works well, as *Chinese Lily* looks at the underbelly of San Francisco's Chinatown, with a particular focus on prostitution.

Unlike Sui Sin Far, Jakobi does not provide sympathetic portrayals of Chinese men in her work; instead, they are stereotyped as unassimilable sexist criminals. Jakobi's sympathy appears bound so tightly to her feminist cause that she is dismissive of the trials and tribulations of Chinese men. She focuses instead on portraying the hardships of Chinese women and white women. Through employing tea's transnational heritage, both authors contradict anti-Chinese depictions of women (and in Sui Sin Far's case, of men as well) to navigate questions of assimilation, and to stress how women should unite against their racist and sexist oppression in the early twentieth century.

The pervasive portrayal of Chinese women as either immoral prostitutes or corrupt madams contributed to a genre titled "yellow peril" literature. Many credit Kaiser Wilhelm II for coining our modern usage of the term "yellow peril" in the 1890s. He had a dream which involved Buddha riding on a dragon and creating a storm over Europe.<sup>132</sup> He commissioned Hermann Knackfuss to paint his dream; it took Knackfuss three years, and he completed the painting in 1898.<sup>133</sup> Since then, the term "yellow peril" has been used to characterise a genre of literature that portrays East Asians as a looming threat which could lead to the destruction of the Western world through corruption and/or domination.<sup>134</sup>

"Yellow peril" fiction boomed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The genre does not have strict start and end dates; portrayals of dangerous Asian stereotypes have waxed and waned over time. The rise in Chinese immigration into the United States in the mid-nineteenth century inspired U.S. literature that presents the Chinese as a threat coming to or already on "our shores." The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 highlights the impact of "yellow peril" texts in inciting anti-Chinese sentiment. World War II saw the Japanese cast in principal role of "yellow peril" threat; however, the Cold War saw the Chinese

---

<sup>132</sup> John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, eds. *Yellow Peril! An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear* (London: Verso, 2014), 12-14.

<sup>133</sup> Tchen and Yeats, *Yellow Peril*, 12-13.

<sup>134</sup> Tchen and Yates, *Yellow Peril*, 12-14

occupy this position once again. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a new wave of “yellow peril” texts (for instance, in phraseology and graffiti).<sup>135</sup>

One of the most consistent and popular attributes of U.S. “yellow peril” fiction in the early twentieth century was its focus on the supposed “bachelor society” aspect of Chinatowns. The term reflects the widely held and false view that Chinese men in the United States were single and without familial responsibilities in the United States or China. The laws barring many, but not all, Chinese women from entering the United States, helped to legitimise and inspire mysterious and dangerous settings in “yellow peril” fiction: of narrow streets and secret locations occupied by inscrutable and perilous Chinese men.<sup>136</sup> The banning of Chinese women from entering the country was to stop the Chinese from settling or procreating in the United States. The lack of Chinese women led to “yellow peril” fiction presenting Chinese men as a threat to white women due to their supposedly pent-up sexual desire, with a lack of familial responsibilities and domesticity also presented as leading to crime.<sup>137</sup> Sui Sin Far’s and Jakobi’s tea scenes disrupt and condemn many of these reductive Chinese stereotypes.

The Chinese were consistently and incorrectly labelled as sojourners throughout the early twentieth century. Though many did come to the United States planning to one day return to China, around 50% of European immigrants from Britain, Italy, Poland, and Greece returned to their home country in the early twentieth century.<sup>138</sup> Consequently, labelling the Chinese as “sojourners” and the Europeans as “settlers” was an exclusionary myth.<sup>139</sup> In response to the Chinese being portrayed as relentlessly foreign, undesirable, and threatening, and by utilising the same tactics as their critics—writing in English and publishing their work in the same periodicals, including the *Overland Monthly* and the *North American Review*—the Chinese in the United States, and their white allies,

---

<sup>135</sup> Hannah Joe Sachs, “‘Yellow Peril’ in the Age of COVID-19,” *Humanity in Action*, April 2020, accessed May 17, 2021, [https://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledge\\_detail/article-usa-hannah-sachs-yellow-peril-in-the-age-of-covid-19/](https://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledge_detail/article-usa-hannah-sachs-yellow-peril-in-the-age-of-covid-19/).

<sup>136</sup> William F. Wu, *The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction 1850-1940* (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1982), 69; Arnold Genthe, *As I Remember* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1936; London: G. G Harrap & Co, 1937), 33. Citations refer to the 1937 edition.

<sup>137</sup> Rachel Moran, *Interracial Intimacy: The Regulation of Race and Romance* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 33.

<sup>138</sup> Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 11.

<sup>139</sup> Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 10.

attempted to counter their negative portrayals in print by publishing texts designed to elicit understanding and sympathy.<sup>140</sup>

The texts under analysis in this chapter were published during a period characterised by exclusion. The Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) was renewed indefinitely in 1904, and in 1924 the National Immigration Act was signed. The latter Act intensified the alienation of the Chinese by forbidding the immigration of people ineligible for naturalization. The list of ineligible persons included all Chinese people, even the Chinese husbands and wives of U.S. citizens.<sup>141</sup> To counteract their exclusion, Sui Sin Far gained a voice in popular periodicals through fiction focused on domestic settings; in doing so, she used literature as a form of protest, and fought the adversary—"yellow peril" literature—during its arguably most sensational period (the late 1870s to late 1920s).<sup>142</sup> Sui Sin Far admired the journalist and leader of the Chinese Reform Party, Liang Qichao. She supported his belief that newspapers could change the social system and lead to the improvement of the people.<sup>143</sup> In contrast to Chinese reformers such as Sun Yat-sen who advocated violence, Liang called for a "revolution of ink, not a revolution of blood."<sup>144</sup> The fiction analysed here endeavours to prove Liang Qi Chao's method correct by giving insight into the lives of Chinese women through fictional tea scenes, as these provide a space of cultural overlap, where the issues presented over tea's consumption become more transparent, and ultimately, transcend race and gender barriers.

Despite the understanding some suffragists felt towards Chinese immigrants, many also tried to repudiate the link forged between them and the Chinese by the mainstream press (for instance, in 1909 *The New York Tribune* described suffragists distributing copies of their new journal near Brooklyn Bridge

---

<sup>140</sup> K. Scott Wong, "Cultural Defenders and Brokers: Chinese Responses to the Anti-Chinese Movement," in *Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities during the Exclusion Era*, ed. K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 3-4.

<sup>141</sup> Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 14.

<sup>142</sup> Evidenced in exclusionary propaganda, which reached a high in the late 1870s before the passing of the first Chinese Exclusion Act. Also documented in the change in "yellow peril" fiction, as it became more focused on using the Chinese as a literary trope to depict the superiority of white Americans. Wu, *The Yellow Peril*, 162.

<sup>143</sup> Chapman, "'Revolution in Ink,' 978.

<sup>144</sup> Barbara Mittler, *A Newspaper for China? Power, Identity, and Change in Shanghai's New Media, 1872-1912* (Cambridge, MA: President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2004), 378.

as a “yellow peril” to the public).<sup>145</sup> Support for suffrage in California, where Sui Sin Far lived from 1898 to 1904, came largely from those who “made no secret of their condescension toward [ethnic] Chinese [and] all non-Anglo, lower-class citizens.”<sup>146</sup>

However, some suffragists identified with Chinese women, and saw in Chinese efforts to end foot-binding and sex slavery a feminist movement that paralleled the feminist struggles taking place in the United States. “China may even yet be one of the prime movers in the suffragist campaign,” *The American Suffragette* predicted in 1910.<sup>147</sup> After the Chinese Revolution of 1912, Chinese women were considered by many to be “modern and at the forefront of international suffrage developments.”<sup>148</sup> Jakobi, I argue, fits into this cohort, and portrays tea-drinking to domesticate and familiarise the setting so that the protagonist of *Chinese Lily* is not judged due to her race, but is considered a woman who is pushed to commit a serious crime due to her double oppression as a Chinese woman.

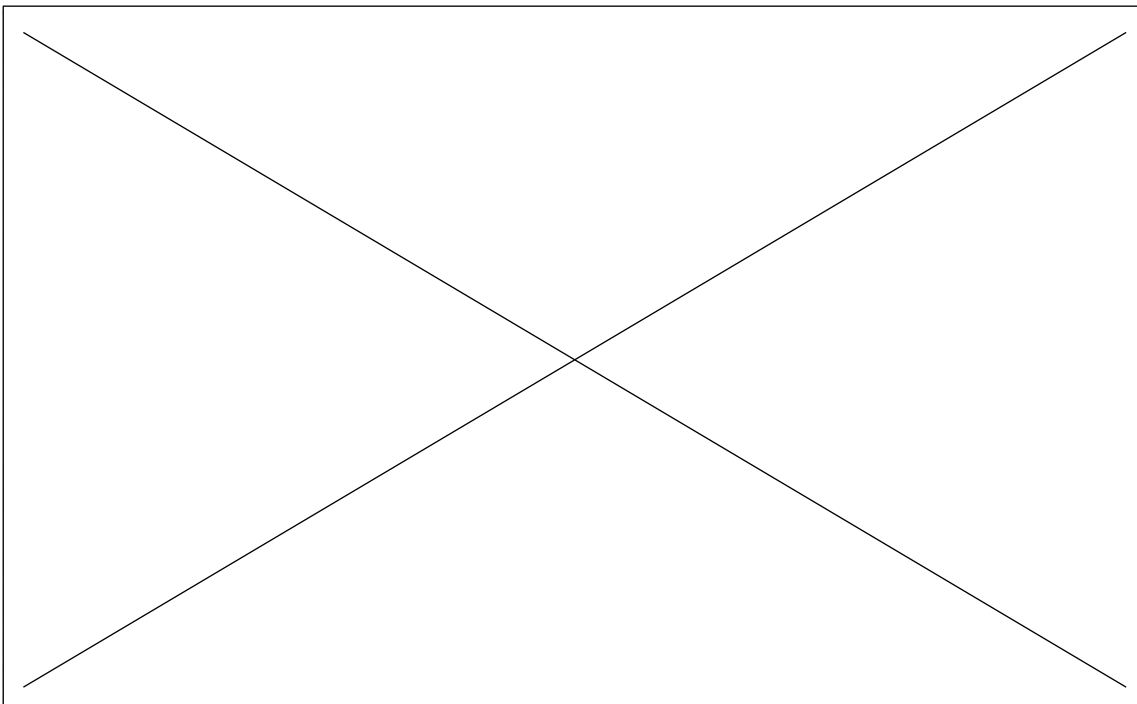


Figure 2.3 Afternoon tea at the Hotel Royal Poinciana, Palm Beach, Florida, 1910.

<sup>145</sup> *American Suffragette* (reprinted from the *New York Tribune*), “Tilt with Police,” December 1909, 18.

<sup>146</sup> Susan Scheiber Edelman, “‘A Red Hot Suffrage Campaign’: The Woman Suffrage Cause in California, 1896,” in *California Supreme Court Historical Society Yearbook 2* (1995), 88.

<sup>147</sup> *American Suffragette*, “A General Awakening,” February 1910, 6.

<sup>148</sup> Chapman, “Revolution in Ink,” 995; Selina Solomons, *How We Won the Vote in California: A True Story of the Campaign of 1911* (San Francisco: New Woman Publishing Co., 1912), 71.



Before analysing their work, it is necessary to understand the position of tea within white American society. In the United States during this period, tea was associated with imperialism and femininity. Rappaport notes that, in U.S. advertising, tea-related material was saturated with imperialist ideology which built upon notions of racial difference and white supremacy.<sup>149</sup> Tearooms, which became immensely popular places for women to socialise during this period, exhibited these notions, since they often presented themselves as colonial-inspired and bohemian, or as fashionable hotel tea rooms.<sup>150</sup> This is evident in the colonial revival setting of afternoon tea at the Hotel Royal Poinciana in Palm Beach, Florida, in 1910, where participation is characterised by upper-class decorum—as seen through their formal white dress—and depicts the idea of colonial white supremacy, which is aided by the semi-tropical surroundings (see fig. 2.3).

The colonial revival movement in the United States was used to assert white supremacy and the importance of “ethnic purity” through adopting white colonial and imperial heritage during “an age of immigration”; the movement reached its peak between 1880 and 1940.<sup>151</sup> The idea was to create a decorative impression of a second empire through Europe’s imperial heritage. The link to European history and power overshadowed Chinese culture: thus the paradox in colonial revival was its close-mindedness while appearing cosmopolitan and looking to the orient for inspiration. Even so subtle, intelligent, gifted, and cosmopolitan a writer as Edith Wharton shares this view in her book *The Decoration of Houses* (1898). Wharton commends artists for “absorbing the spirit of Chinese designs” to complement the superior designs of Europe.<sup>152</sup> Tea provides a safe distance during this period as participants could subtly draw on Chinese classical culture, while stressing white supremacy through tea’s heritage as a British imperial beverage. Consequently, drinkers could present themselves as cosmopolitan, which was considered essential for “good taste,” and as

---

<sup>149</sup> Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*, 133.

<sup>150</sup> Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*, 205.

<sup>151</sup> Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 39-40.

<sup>152</sup> Edith Wharton and Ogden Jr. Codman, *The Decoration of Houses* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1898; New York: Cosimo Inc., 2008), 167. Citations refer to the 2008 edition.

cultured through their orientalist participation in Asian culture, while also communicating their perceived superiority and civility over exoticized nations.<sup>153</sup>

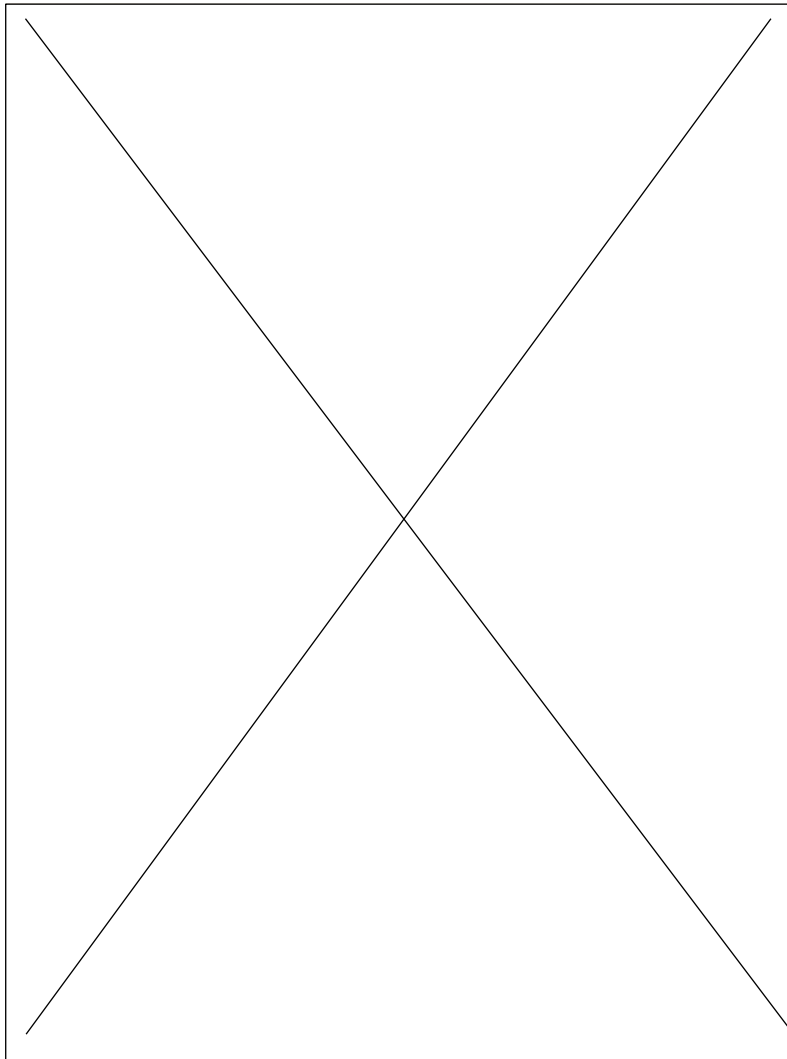


Figure 2.4 Haddon Sundblom's *Pierce-Arrow* car advertisement from the mid-1920s.

It was not only in public spaces that tea was consumed. In domestic settings tea was also used to depict white, privileged, homely, and feminine spaces. This is evinced in a mid-1920s advertisement for the New York motor-car company, Pierce-Arrow: in it, two white women leisurely participate in tea-drinking in a private setting (which can be assumed due to their casual demeanour) with the park and the expensive car depicted outside their window highlighting their privilege (see fig. 2.4). The combination of tea with an affluent setting further emphasises the employment of tea to communicate a refinement

---

<sup>153</sup> Oliver Coleman, "Taste," *House Beautiful* 12, September 1902, 242-244.

and class privilege tied to ideas of white supremacy, as western tea practices ultimately evolved from a desire to present colonial and imperial superiority.

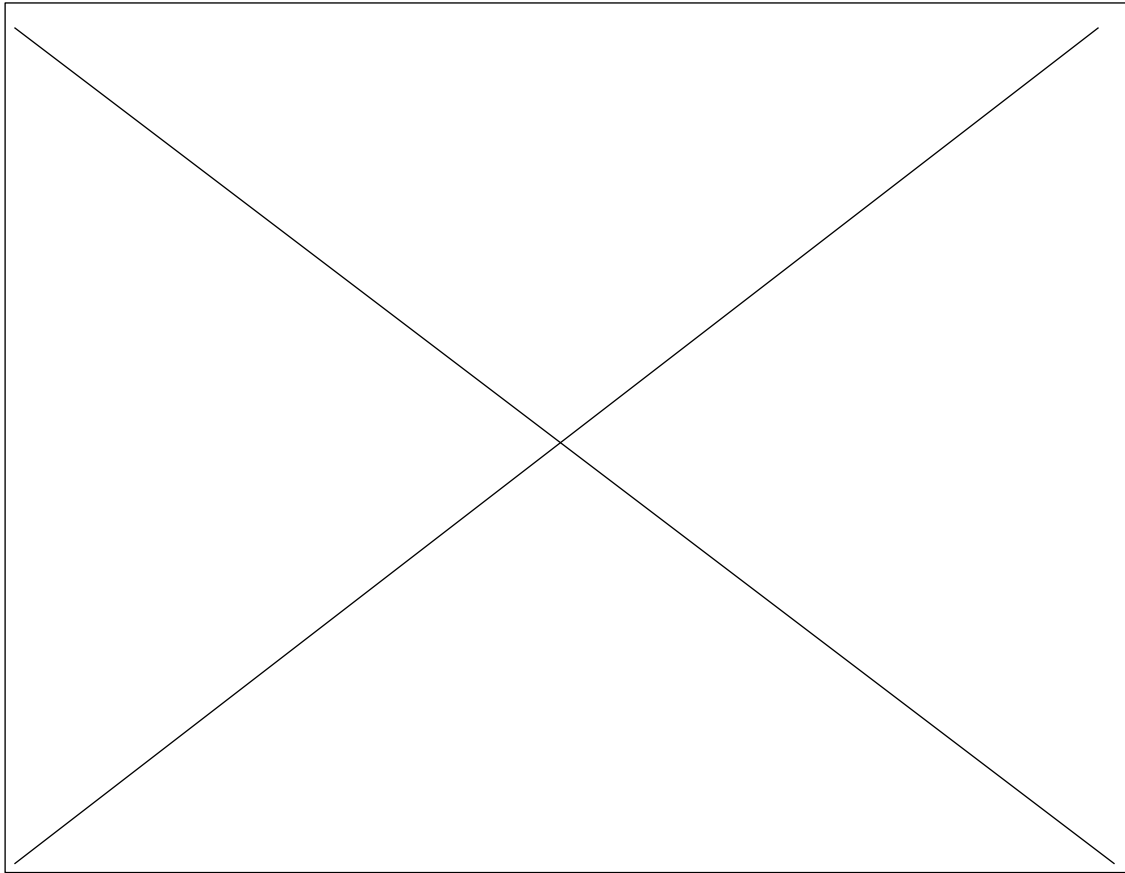


Figure 2.5 The interior of Tally-Ho, a tearoom in New York, July 1923.

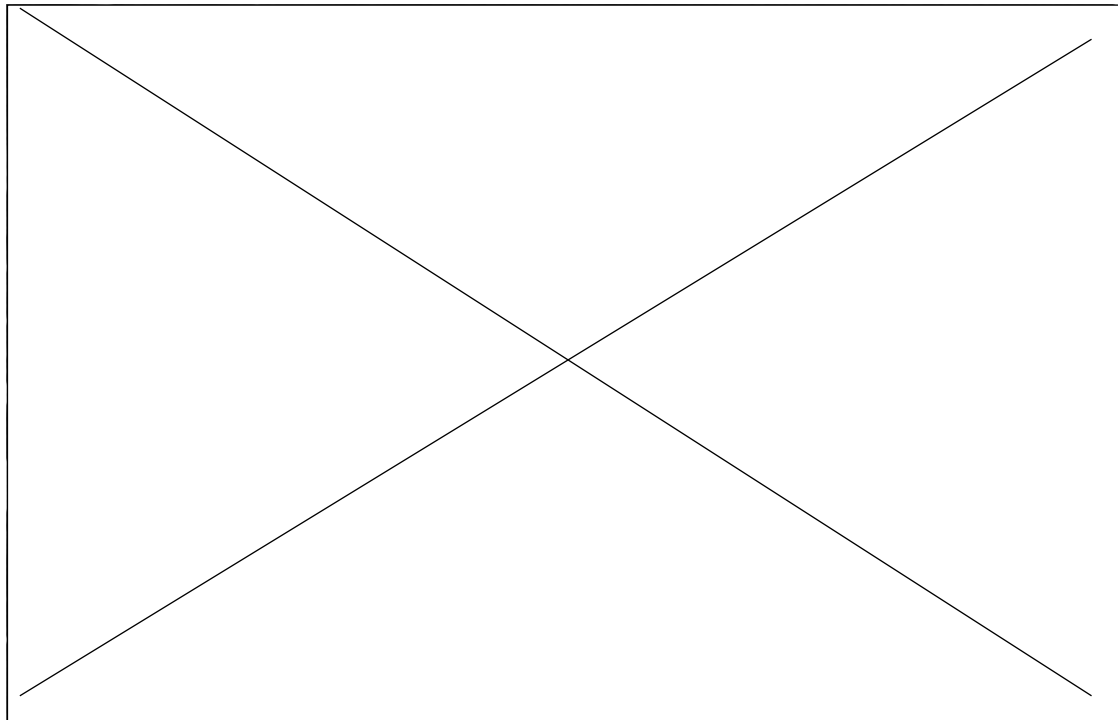


Figure 2.6 The interior of Satsuma Tea Room, Nashville, August 1922.

Alongside the signification of white supremacy through tea, the opening of thousands of tea rooms in the United States during the early twentieth century caused more women to enter into, as Cynthia Brandimarte notes, “the business world.”<sup>154</sup> Tea rooms opened for a number of reasons: some to provide women mill workers with jobs after the mills closed, others solely to provide financial success for the operator.<sup>155</sup> In most cases, the operator and the workers were all women.<sup>156</sup> The clientele was mostly upper-class women, with the rooms providing them with a place to socialise outside of the home and to talk about many topics, including politics and sexuality (see fig. 2.5 & 2.6).<sup>157</sup> The ability of the rooms to provide financial rewards and a new, productive space for women to discuss and debate, complemented the era’s fights for (mostly white and upper-class) women’s rights.

Despite the use of tea to portray white supremacy, morality, and women’s entrepreneurial development, it proves impossible to separate the plant from its roots. In 1883, the year after the first Chinese Exclusion Act was passed, the United States passed the Tea Adulteration Act. The Act was one of the first to regulate imported food and drink in the United States.<sup>158</sup> The fear was that tea coming from China was being adulterated to make more money: scientists concluded during the early 1880s that most of the tea imported from China had been artificially dyed.<sup>159</sup> Both Acts reflect fears about Chinese contamination and invasion, and the United States market turned towards British colonial teas largely from India and Ceylon (now known as Sri Lanka).<sup>160</sup> However, despite efforts to rid tea of its Chinese heritage, it is impossible to fully eliminate the history of tea. Sui Sin Far and Jakobi utilise tea’s Chinese heritage and draw on its position in white American culture to display the morality and refinement of the ignored, simplified, and misunderstood lives of Chinese women in the United States.

Part I of this chapter documents the barring of Chinese women from entering the United States, the rationale behind Chinese exclusion, and the

---

<sup>154</sup> Cynthia A. Brandimarte, “‘To Make the Whole World Homelike’: Gender, Space, and America’s Tea Room Movement,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 30, no. 1 (Spring, 1995): 1, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4618478>.

<sup>155</sup> Brandimarte, “‘To Make the Whole World Homelike,’” 4.

<sup>156</sup> Brandimarte, “‘To Make the Whole World Homelike,’” 4.

<sup>157</sup> Brandimarte, “‘To Make the Whole World Homelike,’” 6.

<sup>158</sup> Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*, 142.

<sup>159</sup> Thomas Taylor, *Food Product: Tea and Its Adulteration* (Buffalo: Bigelow Printing, 1889), 51-52.

<sup>160</sup> Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*, 143, 154.

impacts of exclusion on Chinese immigrants. It also considers the publication and reception of Sui Sin Far's and Jakobi's work. The next section is a case study of the "yellow peril" novelette *The Second Generation* by Camilla Kenyon. I examine how Kenyon's text displays the numerous ways fictional tea-drinking was employed to express ideas of white supremacy and to depict the Chinese as a threat.

Part III examines how Sui Sin Far portrays tea ceremonies in her short stories "The Americanizing of Pau Tsu" and "Its Wavering Image" to explore the difficulties facing the Chinese as they strive to create a home space in the United States. Sui Sin Far set many of her texts in San Francisco's Chinatown; in 1920 40% of the Chinese population lived in New York City or San Francisco.<sup>161</sup> Overcrowding became severe because securing a residency outside of Chinatowns was rare and dangerous. One-room units were shared by whole families, with often, as Esther Wong notes, no privacy or bathrooms.<sup>162</sup> The lack of space for residents—with the town's strict borders—fostered impoverishment, hardship, and alienation. I investigate how Sui Sin Far creates a space where tea—a transnational product located in the intimacy of the home space in both cultures—emphasises the humanity and familial ambitions of Chinese women, the effects of geographic restrictions, and the severity of economic and societal exclusion on the Chinese.

Part IV examines the portrayal of tea to display the similarities in the construction, and oppressive results, of racialised and gendered positions. The term "Chinese American"—most likely first used in print by Sui Sin Far—acknowledges the possibility of being both Chinese and American, and rejects the idea that these two identities are mutually exclusive.<sup>163</sup> Through tea, Sui Sin Far stresses the limitations of singular racial identifiers and strict gender roles. I analyse how, contrary to the press's lack of representations of Chinese women, with their depiction largely limited to that of enslaved prostitutes or brothel owners, Sui Sin Far and Jakobi give individuality and purpose to the Chinese women who found themselves in the predominantly male Chinese communities

---

<sup>161</sup> Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 245.

<sup>162</sup> Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 245; Hoover Institution Archives, *Interview with Esther Wong*, Survey of Race Relations, March 1924, Stanford University, Box 28, Folder 239, no. 11, 1-4.

<sup>163</sup> Annette White-Parks, *Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton: A Literary Biography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), xvi.

in the United States: between 1900 and 1920 women made up, on average, 7.6% of the Chinese population in the United States.<sup>164</sup> By bringing Chinese women to fictional tea tables, these authors disrupt what Annette Parks summarises as the “[female] stereotypes of silence, invisibility, and the ‘bachelor society’ in which pioneer Chinese Americans are said to have lived.”<sup>165</sup> Overall, this section investigates the use of tea ceremonies to depict the similarities between the oppression of women in China and the United States, the intersections between racial and sexist subjugation in the United States, and the potential for women from different ethnicities to unite to attain female liberation.

At a time of exclusion, immigration, and the expansion of U.S. global trade, the spaces tea-drinking creates serve as an in-between—a place where a drinker and a reader can be humbled or unnerved by the intimacy facilitated through a shared custom. However, the purpose of colonial revival was, as Kristin Hoganson notes, to represent good taste, racial superiority, and patriotism through a “longing to claim Europeanness.”<sup>166</sup> In this capacity, tea-drinking was an “American” custom used to unite and legitimise the Americanness of the white American population by linking them to the imperial wealth and perceived racial supremacy of their British ancestry.<sup>167</sup> The writers analysed in this chapter work with the paradox of tea communicating both white supremacy and the rich culture and civilization of the Chinese.

The paradox does not lead to a cultural battle through fictional tea-drinking. Instead of a fixation on ownership and domination the writers here, apart from Kenyon, are concerned with presenting the brew to communicate the citizenship and social acceptance that Chinese women immigrants yearn for and deserve. I will examine how these texts accentuate the injustice of the perpetual positioning of the Chinese as unassimilable, alien, and dangerous in the early twentieth century. Since tea is part of Chinese and white American heritage and culture, the depiction of tea to show that the Chinese deserve acceptance contradicts, in the process, the use of tea to stress white American supremacy. I will focus on how Sui Sin Far and Jakobi explore tea’s heritage to portray, through the brew’s

---

<sup>164</sup> U.S. Census Bureau Publications, “Chinese Population by Sex—1860-1980,” seen in Judy Yung, *Chinese Women in America: A Pictorial History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), 118.

<sup>165</sup> White-Parks, *Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton*, 1.

<sup>166</sup> Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium*, 35.

<sup>167</sup> *The Literary Digest*, “Substitutes for Tea,” June 24, 1905, 934.

international consumption and appreciation, the universality of the human condition, and the Chinese as worthy of U.S. citizenship and acceptance. These texts, however, are problematic because of the limitations placed on women authors regarding publishable subject matter, the melodramatic plotlines which diminish the seriousness of their topic, and the racist portrayal of a Chinese man present in Jakobi's play. Additionally, the conditions that define worthiness are subjective and fluctuating; "worthiness," therefore, it is a concept that must be challenged.

## I. Justifying Exclusion

Prior to analysing the fiction central to this chapter, a more detailed examination of the authors and the impact of Chinese exclusion on women is necessary. One of the most common misrepresentations in "yellow peril" fiction was the exclusion of Chinese women unless they were madams, prostitutes, or slave girls. In 1870, the census records 71% of Chinese women in San Francisco as prostitutes, but this percentage lowered as the twentieth century approached, and in 1880, it was recorded in the census that 21% of Chinese women in San Francisco were prostitutes.<sup>168</sup> I concur with Wendy Jorae that the wives, mothers, and children in early twentieth-century Chinatowns have been rendered largely invisible in contemporary sources and in scholarship up until the 1990s.<sup>169</sup> It was not until Annette White-Parks published her study on Sui Sin Far in 1995, and other historical studies on Chinese immigrant women were subsequently published, that their lives and narratives have started to be reclaimed.<sup>170</sup> However, Jorae and other scholars, including Evelyn Glenn, are still limited in their appraisal of the position and portrayal of familial women in Chinese American communities.<sup>171</sup> Many scholars continue to side-line literary output by women; for example, Scott

---

<sup>168</sup> Lucie Cheng Hirata, "Free, Indentured, Enslaved: Chinese Prostitutes in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs* 5, no.1 (Autumn 1979): 23-24, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3173531>.

<sup>169</sup> Wendy Rouse Jorae, *The Children of Chinatown: Growing Up Chinese American in San Francisco, 1850-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>170</sup> For instance, Huping Ling, *Surviving on the Gold Mountain: A History of Chinese American Women and their Lives* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

<sup>171</sup> As seen in Jorae's *The Children of Chinatown* and Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Split Household, Small Producer and Dual Wage Earner: An Analysis of Chinese-American Family Strategies," in *A Companion to Asian American Studies*, ed. Kent Ono (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 177-195.

Wong's essay "Cultural Defenders and Brokers" investigates how, in response to the anti-Chinese movement of the late nineteenth century, Chinese writers in the United States advocated the hard-work ethic of the Chinese and their similarities with white Americans due to class, religion, and law, but Wong only discusses male writers who focus on men in their work; he does not even mention Sui Sin Far's contributions.<sup>172</sup>

Recent studies of the history of Chinatown still largely ignore women and girls. Though the scholarship has moved past the "bachelor society" model to consider the split-household community (for instance, the father in Chinatown and the mother and children in China) it continues to leave the formation of nuclear family units at this time relatively unexplored.<sup>173</sup> By 1920 eight thousand Chinese women resided in the United States.<sup>174</sup> This chapter is concerned with literature by women because of their depiction of fictional tea ceremonies to portray the small but important population of Chinese women in the United States.

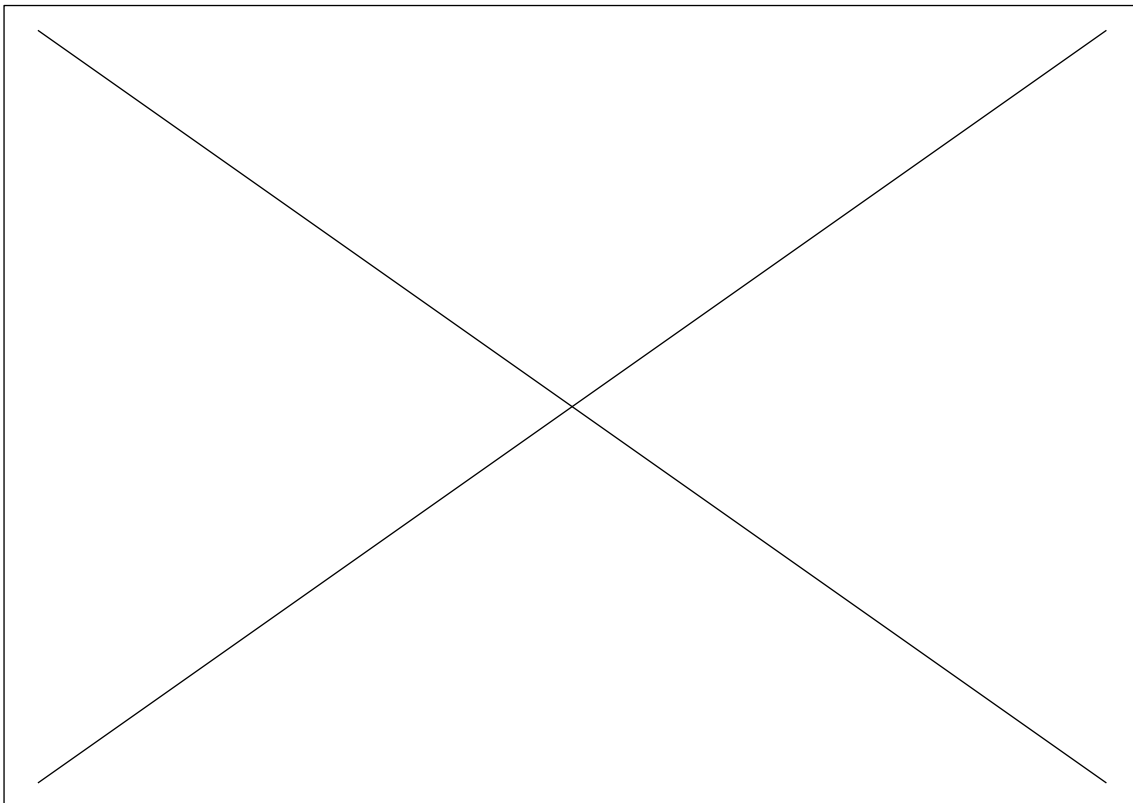


Figure 2.7 Arnold Genthe, *Waiting for the Car*, c.1896-1906.

Figure 2.8 Arnold Genthe, *Carrying New Year's Presents*, c.1896-1906.

<sup>172</sup> Wong, "Cultural Defenders and Brokers," 3-40.

<sup>173</sup> Jorae, *The Children of Chinatown*, 1; Glenn, "Split Household, Small Producer and Dual Wage Earner," 180-181.

<sup>174</sup> U.S. Census Bureau Publications, "Chinese Population by Sex—1860-1980," quoted in Yung, *Chinese Women in America*, 118.



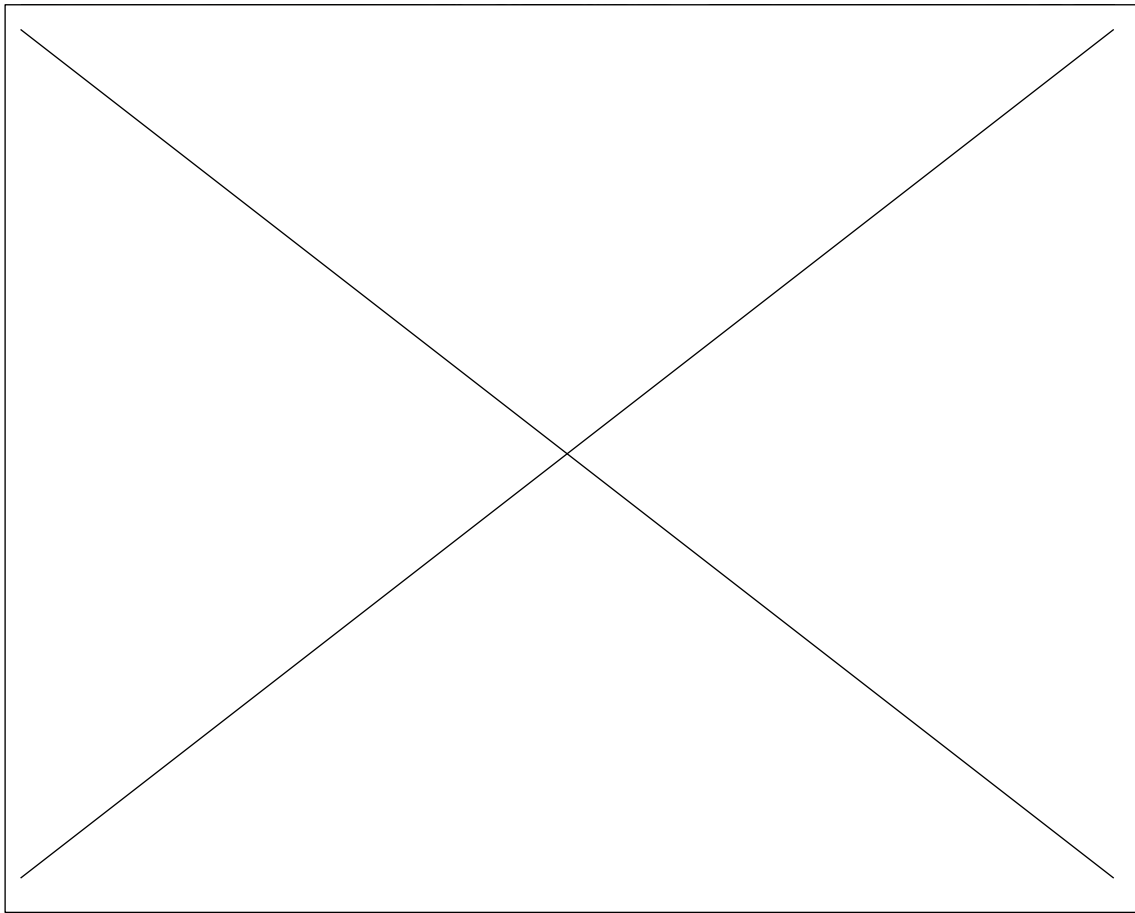


Figure 2.9 Arnold Genthe, “The Street of the Gamblers (by day),” Ross Alley, c. 1898.

Figures 2.7 and 2.8, taken by Arnold Genthe in San Francisco’s Chinatown sometime between 1896 and 1906, present the rarely acknowledged Chinese wives and mothers who lived in the United States during the early twentieth century. Published in 1908, Genthe’s photobook *Old Chinatown* is the most visually comprehensive guide to San Francisco’s Chinatown before the 1906 earthquake which razed the district to the ground. The photos are accompanied by text written by Will Irwin. The women and children that are visually presented throughout the book are largely ignored in Irwin’s writing, which focuses on depicting Chinese men in the United States either as appreciated servants or laundrymen who are transplanted aliens from the “Orient,” or as opium smokers and gamblers prone to crime in their district of “underground passages” (see fig. 2.9).<sup>175</sup> Irwin also acknowledges that the children of Chinatown were “the pride,

---

<sup>175</sup> Arnold Genthe, *Old Chinatown* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Co., 1908; London, Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd, 1913), 28, 29, 130, 131, 153. Citations refer to the 1913 edition.

joy, beauty and chief delight of the Quarter.”<sup>176</sup> Their mothers and older sisters, however, remain invisible in Irwin’s prose. Despite the evident presence of Chinese women in photographs and censuses from the period, *Old Chinatown* is an example of the relative invisibility of Chinese women in early twentieth-century U.S. culture.

The lack of attention paid by most periodicals to Chinese women and girls (unless they were presented as slave girls, prostitutes, or madams) enabled the Chinese to be consistently portrayed as an alien threat. Furthermore, the domesticity, family life, and innocence often attached to women and two-parent family structures were absent from depictions of the Chinese. Anti-Chinese writers portrayed the lack of two-parent family structures in Chinatowns’ “bachelor societies” as evidence of Chinese unwillingness to adapt to U.S. society, and their inability to contribute to the mainstream economy.<sup>177</sup> Due to their alienation from the United States’ normalised social and economic structures, they were portrayed as an economic and moral threat to the sanctity of the white middle-class family.<sup>178</sup> As a result, I concur with Wendy Jorae who states that “images of deviant Chinese domesticity justified policies of segregation.”<sup>179</sup> By excluding depictions of wives and daughters from the press, and by presenting deviant structures as sinful or undesirable, the Chinese were reduced in print from a population with complex emotional and familial bonds, to one of greedy male sojourner immigrants who instigate sin and crime, and thus threaten sound Christian morality.

After the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Chinese population in the United States dropped from 107,475 in 1890 to 61,639 by 1920.<sup>180</sup> Despite their decreasing numbers, the Chinese were still subject to exclusionary laws discouraging or prohibiting them from obtaining citizenship, owning land, or marrying white women.<sup>181</sup> They were still, as Roger Daniels summarises, “at the very bottom of the ethnocultural pyramid, with a legal status

---

<sup>176</sup> Genthe, *Old Chinatown*, 63.

<sup>177</sup> Jorae, *The Children of Chinatown*, 43.

<sup>178</sup> Jorae, *The Children of Chinatown*, 43.

<sup>179</sup> Jorae, *The Children of Chinatown*, 3.

<sup>180</sup> Xiaofen Chen, “Labor and Employment, Chinese American,” in *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia*, vol.1, ed. Huping Ling and Allan W. Austin (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2010; London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 197. Citations refer to the 2015 edition.

<sup>181</sup> Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 14; Sally Kitch, *The Specter of Sex: Gender Foundation of Racial Formation in the United States* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2009), 147-154.

lower than that of African Americans.”<sup>182</sup> Their position is evinced by how in 1870 men of African descent could become naturalised, but Chinese men were barred from attaining citizenship until the repeal acts of 1943-1952.<sup>183</sup>

Race was and continued to be a critical political and economic tool in the United States. In 1907 the journalist John L. Cowan declared that while the “Negro problem [was] a problem for the South,” the “yellow race” was the “problem facing the people of the Pacific Coast.”<sup>184</sup> The continued segregation of the Chinese (as the largest Asian population in the United States at the turn of the century) from white American society and business meant that Chinatowns remained a popular source of inspiration for “yellow peril” literature.

The movement of the Chinese population into the confines of Chinatowns was viewed as necessary by those who supported segregation as a means of maintaining the racial purity of the white American populace. When, in 1892, Theodore Roosevelt examined the census of 1890, it seemed to him, and others who shared his ideas on race, that “old-stock” Americans were in decline, which would lead to the “swamping of the old stock by the racially inferior immigrants.”<sup>185</sup> But the policy of hindering Chinese women from coming to the United States (to stop the men from settling down) led to the fear that bachelors would seek sexual and familial pleasure with white women instead.<sup>186</sup> World War I and the loss of white American men, along with the decline in immigration from Northern Europe during this time, could only exacerbate this fear. The census marked what Thomas G. Dyer describes as Roosevelt’s “twenty-eight year obsession with the maintenance and preservation of the racial integrity of old-stock Americans and indeed of all members of the ‘English-speaking race.’”<sup>187</sup>

To aid exclusion, anti-miscegenation laws were passed to protect the white American populace from mingling with “inferior” races. In the early twentieth century women were considered the creators of a race, as they are the source of human life. This perspective is evident in the writings of eugenicist and lecturer

---

<sup>182</sup> Roger Daniels, foreword to *Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton: A Literary Biography* by Annette White-Parks (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), xi.

<sup>183</sup> Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 11.

<sup>184</sup> John L. Cowan, “In the Lair of the Bear: The Japanese Question,” *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine*, January 1907, 88-89.

<sup>185</sup> Thomas G. Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 143-144.

<sup>186</sup> Moran, *Interracial Intimacy*, 33.

<sup>187</sup> Dyer, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race*, 144.

in heredity Albert Edward Wiggam, who stressed in his bestseller *The Fruit of the Family Tree* that white women were “the natural Conservator of the race, the guardian of its blood.”<sup>188</sup> The 1907 Expatriation Act made it mandatory for a wife to assume her husband’s nationality.<sup>189</sup> In cases of divorce a woman could become naturalised, but only if her race made her eligible for naturalisation. Consequently, this law particularly targeted Chinese American women. The Cable Act of 1922 served to target Chinese men as it made an American woman’s citizenship dependent on her husband’s.<sup>190</sup> These acts were put in place, as Pat Shea notes, to “protect’ white women and ensure the racial homogeneity of their children.”<sup>191</sup>

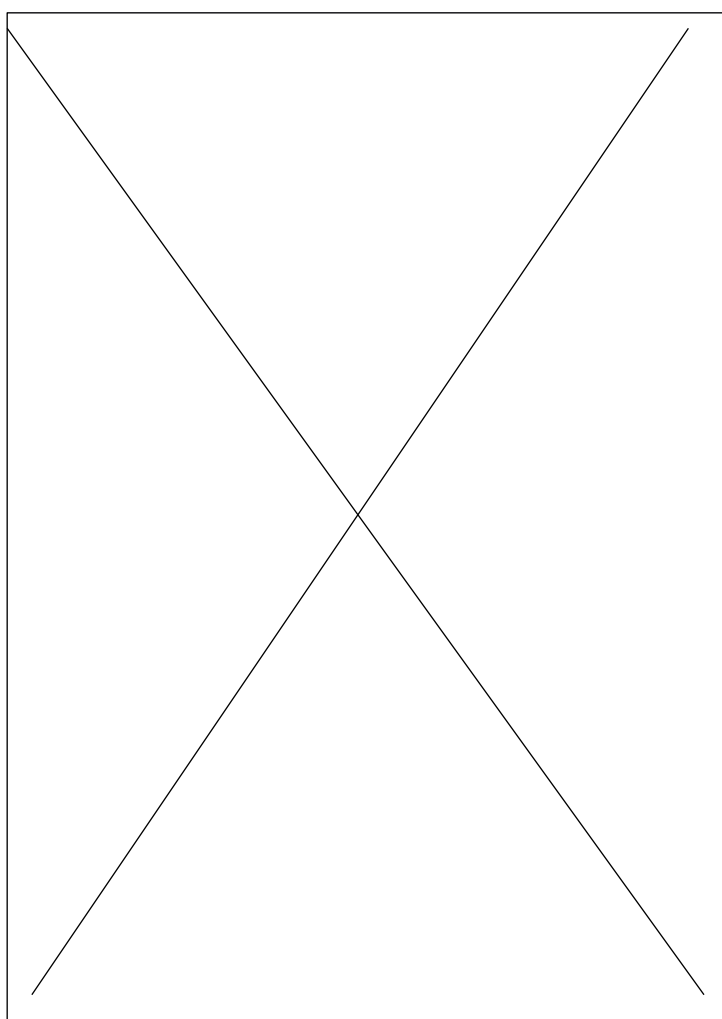


Figure 2.10 The front cover of the first edition of *Mrs Spring Fragrance* (1912).

---

<sup>188</sup> Allison Berg, *Mothering the Race: Women’s Narratives on Reproduction, 1890-1930* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2002), 79; Albert Edward Wiggam, *The Fruit of the Family Tree* (New York: Blue Ribbon, 1922), 280.

<sup>189</sup> Kitch, *The Specter of Sex*, 176.

<sup>190</sup> Kitch, *The Specter of Sex*, 176-178; Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 14-15.

<sup>191</sup> Pat Shea, “Winnifred Eaton and the Politics of Miscegenation in Popular Fiction,” *MELUS* 22, no. 2 (June 1, 1997): 22, DOI: <https://doi-org.uoelibrary.idm.oclc.org/10.2307/468132>.

To counteract “yellow peril” rhetoric in literature and politics in the early twentieth century, Sui Sin Far depicts the Chinese immigrants of the West Coast as moral and hardworking. Sui Sin Far, regarded as the first Chinese British American writer of fiction, is considered by Frank Chin as the “lone champion of the Chinese American real,” with her essays and portraits of Chinatowns “the only knowing and sympathetic writing on Chinese America of the time.”<sup>192</sup> The publication of her work in popular periodicals, many in San Francisco, rested heavily on how publishers saw her work as flowery doses of Chinese life. Lummis, the editor of *Land of Sunshine* (a Los Angeles magazine which published “local color” literature), published many of Sui Sin Far’s Chinatown sketches, but Dominika Ferens notes, he was solely interested in “short tales about Chinese ‘types,’ allowing no room for character development or psychological depth.”<sup>193</sup> The publisher of her short story collection *Mrs Spring Fragrance*, A.C. McClurg, was also aware of the profitability in the craze for the “oriental” during the colonial revival period. The decoration of the first edition of *Mrs Spring Fragrance* stresses how her work was advertised as a demure exploration of oriental life: a moon, a dragonfly, and lotus flowers illustrate the front cover, with the inside pages imprinted with delicate, Chinese-style paintings of a crested bird on a branch of bamboo, a branch of plum in flower, and the Chinese characters for Longevity, Happiness, and Prosperity (see fig. 2.10).

Interestingly, the texts analysed in this chapter are set in San Francisco and in or around Chinatown, while the publishers, including Forum Publishing Company and Frank A. Munsey, were based in New York. The only exception is A. C. McClurg, whose firm was based in Chicago. Despite New York being a nexus for U.S. publishing, these texts appealed to publishers situated away from the texts’ settings because difference becomes more fascinating with distance, and for magazines (especially regarding “yellow peril” fiction) the texts provided their local readers with the thrill of the mysterious, blended with the comfort of geographical remoteness.

---

<sup>192</sup> Frank Chin, “Come All Ye Asian Americans of the Real and Fake,” in *The Big Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature*, eds. Jeffery Paul Chan, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong (New York: Meridian 1991), 12.

<sup>193</sup> Dominika Ferens, *Edith and Winnifred Eaton: Chinatown Missions and Japanese Romances* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 87.

Despite the marketing of her work, Sui Sin Far published stories and sketches containing developed depictions of moral Chinese immigrants who often face devastating hardship. The third-person narration of her short stories enables readers to distance themselves from the plots' action, which can often be melodramatic, and to look upon the events and characters from a measured and reflective standpoint, as she pushes her readers to consider their own prejudices. The circulation of positive depictions of the Chinese and their trials was vital in the fight for inclusion, especially due to the nation's high literacy rate. In total, only 7.7% of the United States population aged 14 and over was illiterate in 1910 (this includes 30.5% of people in the "Black and other" category).<sup>194</sup> The literacy rate was complemented by a productive press: the *Overland Monthly* reported a circulation of thirty thousand in 1900, and seventy-five thousand by 1912.<sup>195</sup>

Except for passing references to her work in anthologies, no scholarship has been published on *Chinese Lily* by Jakobi. The investment of Jakobi in women's rights is evident in her literary work and the little that we do know about her. Jakobi fought for women and commanded an audience as a suffrage leader.<sup>196</sup> This chapter brings Sui Sin Far's and Jakobi's efforts together to document how they endeavoured to disprove the dominant narrative of "yellow peril" literature through representing the diverse lives of immigrant Chinese women. However, the profitable and popular genre of "yellow peril" literature was too pervasive to be defeated.<sup>197</sup> Portrayals of Chinese women as prostitutes and Chinese men as gambling opium-smoking fiends hugely appealed to white readers. Jakobi even harbours a stereotype of Chinese men in her play, with her sympathy appearing to lie only with Chinese women. Periodicals, as Rachel C. Lee argues, "[claimed] to be the mouthpieces of popular opinion, [and] depicted Asians as unfit for America's prospective society [...] as less evolved, as a mass of undifferentiated difference, as unclean, and, finally, as unknowable."<sup>198</sup> This

---

<sup>194</sup> *120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait*, ed. Tom Snyder (Washington: National Center for Education Statistics, 1993), 21.

<sup>195</sup> Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 408.

<sup>196</sup> "Literary Lights are Lined up for Votes," *New York Tribune*, January 11, 1914, 9.

<sup>197</sup> White-Parks, *Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton*, 112.

<sup>198</sup> Rachel C. Lee, "Journalistic Representations of Asian Americans and Literary Responses, 1910-1920," in *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*, ed. King-Kok Cheung (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 249.

chapter documents some texts which set out to unnerve their readers in a different way to “yellow peril” literature, as they employ tea-drinking in their texts to depict the humanity of Chinese women and the brutality of their exclusion.

## II. “Yellow Peril” Literature and *The Second Generation*

Before examining responses to “yellow peril” products and anti-Chinese sentiment, it is essential to explore how “yellow peril” literature served to alienate the Chinese, and in particular how the genre did so through tea-drinking. The white American writers who built careers as “‘expert’ ethnographers of ‘Oriental’ people and culture” in “yellow peril” literature had little to no interaction with the Chinese populace: they wrote on topics that would entertain readers rather than documenting reality.<sup>199</sup> In widely circulated periodicals, writers including Bret Harte, Jack London, and Camilla Kenyon, whom I discuss here, propagated portrayals of sly, uncanny, lazy Chinese men who were considered a threat to the livelihoods, lifestyles, and breeding of white Americans. Historian William O’Neill notes that for a periodical to remain popular it must “[articulate] the deep anxieties of the literate masses.”<sup>200</sup> Such a function is apparent in the publications Harte, London, and Kenyon wrote for in the early twentieth century, including *The Overland Monthly* (which in the early twentieth century had become the “organ” of San Francisco), *McClure’s Magazine*, and *Munsey’s Magazine*.<sup>201</sup>

All of these periodicals published works that presented the Chinese as dangerous and unassimilable. This is evident in “The Heathen Chinee” (1870) by Bret Harte published in *The Overland Monthly*, “The Unparalleled Invasion” (1910) by Jack London published in *McClure’s Magazine*, and “The Fighting Chinee” (1918) by R. K. Culver and “The Chambers of Tranquillity” (1922) by Clarence A. Locan and Lemuel L. De Bra, both published in *Munsey’s Magazine*.<sup>202</sup> Sui Sin Far in her essay “The Chinese in America” (1909) expresses

---

<sup>199</sup> Amy Sueyoshi, *Discriminating Sex: White Leisure and the Making of the American “Oriental”* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2018), 3.

<sup>200</sup> William O’Neill, *Divorce in the Progressive Era* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1967), 57.

<sup>201</sup> Sueyoshi, *Discriminating Sex*, 8.

<sup>202</sup> “The Heathen Chinee” was just published under the title “Plain Language from Truthful James.” Bret Harte, “Plain Language from Truthful James,” *The Overland Monthly*, September 1870, 287–288; R. K. Culver, “The Fighting Chinee,” in *Munsey’s Magazine*, February 1918, 145–149; Clarence A. Locan and Lemuel L. De Bra, “The Chambers of Tranquillity,” *Munsey’s*

her sorrow over the fact that the Chinese in white American culture, whether in negative or positive depictions of them, are scarcely more complicated than “wooden [pegs].”<sup>203</sup>

The Chinese in the United States were subjected to what Scott Wong calls “an organized campaign to defame them in prose and in illustrations.”<sup>204</sup> The campaign’s roots can be traced back to the late nineteenth century, when authors and publishers of “yellow peril” literature consistently portrayed the Chinese as a threat to the liberty and livelihoods of white American society.<sup>205</sup> The Chinese were commonly stereotyped as greedy and immoral tyrants, as an undefeatable horde of conquering immigrants, or as the carriers of diseases.<sup>206</sup> Though the literature marketed itself as necessary moral literature that exposed the evils of Chinatown to its white readership, it became consistently more sensational.<sup>207</sup> By the late 1920s, sensational fiction about Chinatowns stopped appearing in popular publications because the genre had exhausted its subject matter through each subsequent work needing to shock more to maintain its readership.<sup>208</sup>

Despite the decrease in the Chinese immigrant population after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the anti-Chinese movement in the late nineteenth century drove the Chinese “from the countryside [as they] sought protection and work in the city.”<sup>209</sup> The increase in Chinatowns’ populations helped fuel

---

*Magazine*, November 1922, 302-306; Jack London, “The Unparalleled Invasion,” *McClure’s Magazine*, July 1910, 308-316.

<sup>203</sup> Sui Sin Far, “The Chinese in America,” in *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings*, ed. Amy Ling and Annette White-Parks (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 234.

<sup>204</sup> Wong, “Cultural Defenders and Brokers,” 3.

<sup>205</sup> Wu, *The Yellow Peril*, 41; Karen A. Keely, “Sex Slavery in San Francisco’s Chinatown: ‘Yellow Peril’ and ‘White Slavery’ in Frank Norris’s Early Fiction,” *Studies in American Naturalism* 2, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 129-130, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23431248>; Jack London, “Yellow Handkerchief,” in *Tales of the Fish Patrol* (1906; The Floating Press, 2011), 93-108.

<sup>206</sup> Since the 1870s, the idea of the Chinese as covered in lesions, and images of “Chinese” “contagion and constitutional malaise,” were widespread. In 1900, the association of the Chinese with infection escalated to the false allegation by health officials that Chinatown was harbouring the bubonic plague. The necessity for segregation was further backed up when, in 1907, an outbreak of plague in San Francisco supported the characterization of the plague as an “Oriental disease” originating in Chinatown. Alexandra Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 20, 36, 37; Marilyn Chase, *The Barbary Plague: The Black Death in Victorian San Francisco* (New York: Random House, 2003), 14–137; Philip A. Kalisch, “The Black Death in Chinatown: Plague and Politics in San Francisco 1900–1904,” *Arizona and the West* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1972): 113–136, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40168068>.

<sup>207</sup> Wu, *The Yellow Peril*, 69, 162.

<sup>208</sup> Wu, *The Yellow Peril*, 162.

<sup>209</sup> Diane Mei Lin Mark and Ginger Chih, *A Place Called Chinese America* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt Pub. Co., 1982), 50.



sensationalist stories of the supposedly mysterious, sublime, and dangerous antics of the districts.<sup>210</sup> For instance, the journalist William Brown Meloney in *Munsey's Magazine* (1909) describes New York's Chinatown in the following way: "There it lies, unfathomed and unknown, [...] contemptuous, blandly mysterious, serene, foul-smelling, Oriental, and implacable [...] Within the boundaries of the three acres which it occupies [they] order their existence like rabbits in a warren."<sup>211</sup> On the other side of the United States, even after the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 which reduced the Chinatown to rubble, "yellow peril" literature continued, as seen in Arnold Genthe's memoir *As I Remember* (1937). In it Genthe describes how San Francisco's Chinatown was a maze of

dark alleys and courtyards rickety staircases led up to tenement hovels where the derelicts of the underworld found cover. The most sinister of these was the "Devil's Kitchen," an evil-smelling courtyard where drug addicts and suspicious characters of all sorts cooked on charcoal burners [...], and came out only at night to squat on doorsills or to pursue their insidious ways.<sup>212</sup>

The continued popularity of "yellow peril" literature stemmed from the genre's already large readership, as well as its being fuelled by unremitting anxieties about the Chinese. Furthermore, the spurt in Chinese immigration (due to Chinese "paper sons and daughters" gaining illegal entry into the United States as a result of the destruction of San Francisco's Chinatown's records after the earthquake) provided writers of the genre with increased public fear over Chinese immigration.

Five years after Sui Sin Far's *Mrs Spring Fragrance* was published, the continued alienation of the Chinese in the United States is presented through tea-drinking in the novelette *The Second Generation* (1917) by Camilla Kenyon. My upcoming analysis of the novelette illustrates the numerous ways fictional tea-drinking was employed in "yellow peril" literature to present anti-Chinese sentiment. Kenyon's text is the case-study example here because it presents many of the significations attached to tea within the "yellow peril" genre. The novelette was published in New York City's *Munsey's Magazine* and fulfilled the

---

<sup>210</sup> Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 247.

<sup>211</sup> William Brown Meloney, "Slumming in New York's Chinatown," *Munsey's Magazine*, September 1909, 819. Digitalised by *The Unz Review*, accessed June 18, 2019, <https://www.Unz.com/print/Munseys-1909sep-00818/>.

<sup>212</sup> Genthe, *As I Remember*, 33.

publication's aim to address the unnerving parts of city living.<sup>213</sup> The novelette should be read in the broader context of the magazine's interest in the lurid aspects of New York's Chinatown. For instance, in 1909 an article appeared in *Munsey's Magazine* titled "Slumming in New York's Chinatowns." The piece begins with a murder that shook New York City in 1909: the young aristocratic missionary Elsie Sigel, a girl committed to saving "heathen souls' from burning," was allegedly killed by her Chinese lover and found stored in a trunk in his room.<sup>214</sup> The article's continual references to her murder stress the danger of Chinatown and the unshakeable association of violent crime with Chinese immigrants. The length of Kenyon's novelette is also of note. The other articles and fictional texts published in the same issue average six and a half pages in length compared to Kenyon's forty-two pages. The substantial amount of room given to Kenyon's novelette suggests how the magazine saw the work as perfectly chiming with the publication's investment in crime stories.

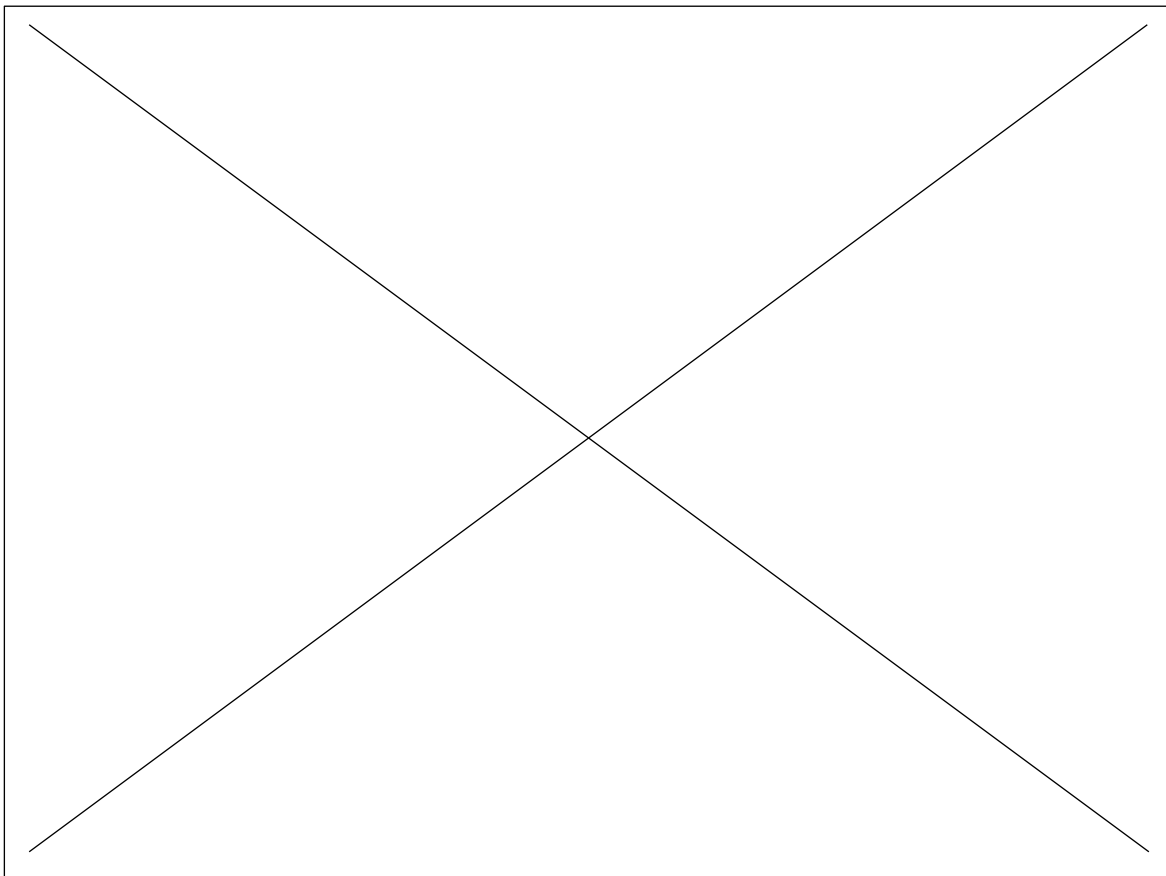


Figure 2.11 The titular illustration for *The Second Generation* by Camilla Kenyon, *Munsey Magazine*, March 1917.

<sup>213</sup> Esther Romeyn, *Street Scenes: Staging the Self in Immigrant New York, 1880-1924* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 5.

<sup>214</sup> Meloney, "Slumming in New York's Chinatown," 818.

*The Second Generation* depicts criminal activity in Chinatown and addressed the white slavery concerns of the time. The white slavery scare peaked between 1910 and 1913. At this time, American reformers linked white women being raped and sexually coerced into prostitution with organised vice; they stressed the need to close all brothels and to not tolerate prostitution.<sup>215</sup> In the novelette the white American youths of the story are put in danger due to their proximity to orientalist vice and their predecessors' naïve involvement in it. The title, I contend, stresses the text's focus on how the next generation must solve the mysteries left by the past generation to rid themselves of the crime their families have been tangled up in. *Munsey's Magazine* often placed a complementary short poem at the end of a longer piece of fiction. The decision to place a short and simple romantic poem as the next entry, "The True Lover" by Richard Le Gallienne, reinforces the novelette's concluding message: a young white couple in love, after solving the mysteries of the past, now have a bright future together.<sup>216</sup> Furthermore, the novelette has the saleable combination of a naïve white woman who is unknowingly threatened by the legacy of past crimes and a Chinese man; all these traits are captured in the titular illustration, as the young woman, Sylvia, is depicted as literally wrapped up in Chinatown's alienated culture and people, with the white man, most likely her deceased father, looking on in anger as he is unable to help (see fig. 2.11). Throughout the story, tea-drinking serves as a reminder of "white superiority," as well as portraying how close the danger and how innocuous the threat of Chinese immigrants can appear to be.

*The Second Generation* opens in the elite locale of white American Boston, where, the third-person narrator tells us, "genealogy" and New England blood that has not been "corrupted and attenuated by the alien strain" are what decide a person's worth.<sup>217</sup> One member of the patrician Barton family, Hiram, leaves to pursue adventure in San Francisco and, by cutting "himself off from his

---

<sup>215</sup> Mara L. Keire, "The Vice Trust: A Reinterpretation of the White Slavery Scare in the United States, 1907-1917," *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 1 (Autumn, 2001): 5, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3789262>.

<sup>216</sup> Richard Le Gallienne, "The True Lover," *Munsey's Magazine*, March 1917, 352. Digitalised by *The Unz Review*, accessed December 17, 2017, <https://www.Unz.com/print/Munseys-1917mar-00352/Contents/>.

<sup>217</sup> Camilla E. L. Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, *Munsey's Magazine*, March 1917, 309. Digitalised by *The Unz Review*, accessed December 10, 2017, <https://www.Unz.com/print/Munseys-1917mar-00309/>.

kin [he betrays] clan loyalty”; his mysterious death is consequently considered by his family a “retributory fate.”<sup>218</sup> More than a decade after his death, a “confirmed spinster” in the family, Anne Barton, meets her cousin, Hiram’s daughter Sylvia, for the first time in New York.<sup>219</sup> The women decide to go to the old family house in San Francisco to solve the murder. San Francisco’s Chinatown is depicted as a secretive and ominous neighbour to the old family house. They meet Gilbert Rolfe, a childhood friend of Sylvia’s and the son of Hiram’s old shipping business partner. Gilbert and Sylvia become romantically attached and eventually marry. An old family business acquaintance, Captain Ruggles, also aids in their investigation. The villain turns out to be the family’s new Chinese cook, Sam Loy.

The house in San Francisco illustrates the point made by Edith Wharton in *The Decoration of Houses* (1898) that the front door “should clearly proclaim itself an effectual barrier” and “while the main purpose of a door is to admit, its secondary purpose is to exclude.”<sup>220</sup> Wharton’s barrier was part of a rhetoric which built on the idea that economic, cultural, and racial security relies on the segregation of “unassimilable” immigrants. The movement of the novelette’s setting from New England to San Francisco places the subjects closer to China, and Hiram’s old house is an illusory oasis constantly endangered by the “yellow peril” threat, due to its location on the border of the “transplanted” China of Chinatown.<sup>221</sup> En route to the house Anne spies the border of Chinatown and gazes down streets of “crowded together dark, narrow houses, leaning above narrow ways thronged with strangely garbed, hurrying forms.”<sup>222</sup> The location of the house symbolises the vulnerability of the white American population on the edge of the alien, incomprehensible, “strangely garbed” Chinese community.

It is partaking in tea-drinking inside Hiram’s house (away from the murky, alien aspects of the Chinese), that offers a comforting respite from solving the murder. Sylvia and Gilbert are taking a walk around the garden when Anne calls them in for tea. The afternoon setting of the tea ceremony, the description of Sylvia’s voice as like “the love melody of a thrush in spring,” and the openness of the scene with movement inside and outside of the home, all conspire to separate

---

<sup>218</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 309.

<sup>219</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 329.

<sup>220</sup> Wharton and Codman, *The Decoration of Houses*, 103-107.

<sup>221</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 320.

<sup>222</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 320.

tea from the danger of the Chinese, who are constantly presented in dark, ominous, male, and restricted spaces. The romantic connection between Sylvia and Gilbert is apparent in her “bright flush” and adds to the already endearing aspects of the scene.<sup>223</sup> Their tea-drinking stresses the idea of white American superiority due to the openness and cleanliness of the scene; in contrast, the final confrontation with Sam Loy takes place in the vague “below” “darkness” of the house.<sup>224</sup>

To accentuate the superiority of imperial tea-drinking customs, and further reject Chinese immigrant culture, a comparison is set up between tea and a Chinese household god figurine. Though Chinatown was the centre of the U.S. tea trade during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, there is no mention of where the tea consumed by Anne, Gilbert, and Sylvia is purchased.<sup>225</sup> It was likely obtained from Chinatown due to the house’s proximity to the district; moreover, despite fears of the “rat-eating Chinamen,” Chinatowns were often known as the shopping areas with the “best selection of Oriental shops.”<sup>226</sup> The prospect of shopping in Chinatown was familiarised as a safe custom by articles, like one published in *New York Tribune* in 1916, stating that it is “perfectly safe” to buy food in Chinatown.<sup>227</sup> Despite this, the only item that we are told is purchased from Chinatown is a Chinese household god figurine.

Sylvia ignorantly buys the god. The Chinese shopkeeper is described as having “an air of oozy opulence” and eyes “cold [with an] impersonal malice like a serpent’s”;<sup>228</sup> as they leave the shop, the “venom of their gaze was aimed straight at the unconscious back of Sylvia Barton!”<sup>229</sup> Once they arrive home, Sylvia enshrines the god in the living room and says how “deliciously hideous [he is]! I shall make him offerings [...] and all who enter here shall be his worshippers—the god of ease and mirth!”<sup>230</sup> Anne reacts immediately,

---

<sup>223</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 330.

<sup>224</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 347-348.

<sup>225</sup> Genthe, *Old Chinatown*, 62.

<sup>226</sup> Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium*, 23; as seen in the rat poison advert “Rough on Rats,” which pictures a Chinese man eating a rat and banners the Chinese exclusion slogan, “They Must Go,” reproduced in Wenxian Zhang, *China Through American Eyes* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2018), 398.

<sup>227</sup> Jeannette Young Norton, “When Madame Goes Marketing in Chinatown,” *New York Tribune*, October 8, 1916, 38.

<sup>228</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 326-327.

<sup>229</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 327.

<sup>230</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 330.

commenting how “he looks more like a Chinese Beelzebub [and could] bring misfortune on the house!”<sup>231</sup> For Anne, the Chinese god presents the mythic, unchristian worship of the “heathen Chinese” compared to “good, stiff-necked [Calvinism].”<sup>232</sup> The ugliness and ill-fitted place of the god in the home space symbolise the perceived dangers of the “unassimilable” Chinese (including Sam Loy) and their culture. When asked by Sylvia what he thinks of the god, Gilbert replies that if it is an “ill omen” then they will defy it and all “grinning Chinese demons!”<sup>233</sup> In contrast, the tea has been stripped of its commercial journey to the house, of any connections to China, and of its imbrication with Taoist and Buddhist beliefs. In the novelette tea-drinking is a colonial revival custom that communicates the importance of racial segregation and Chinese exclusion.

To communicate this, tea must be separated from the Chinese in every way. In 1909 Lawrence Burt wrote an article entitled “Woman’s Love of the Exotic” in which he talks of Elsie Sigel’s death, the good Christian spirit of such women, and how easily women with “a strong love for the exotic [can] overstep race lines.”<sup>234</sup> Burt argues that women must be protected from their misjudgements and from being drawn “to a sort of mad degeneracy.”<sup>235</sup> This fear fuels anti-miscegenation law and inspires Kenyon to imagine Sylvia’s naïve interaction with the supposedly sinister household god. To eliminate the possibility of tea-drinking being a threat, unlike all other food and drink consumption, tea does not come into contact with Sam Loy. Instead of his “saffron hands”—an adjective that links him directly back to his “yellow” colour and easterly origins—preparing and serving tea, Anne and Sylvia are the only characters that brew and distribute the beverage.<sup>236</sup> Their demureness and beauty are highlighted when Anne “unearthed” an old teapot from the kitchen, and Sylvia takes the “place of hostess at the tea-tray” and in doing so is posed “to look her prettiest.”<sup>237</sup> The alienation of Chinese people and culture from tea ceremonies emphasises the hostile rejection of Chinese immigrants, and a desire to erase Chinese influence from U.S. tea culture.

---

<sup>231</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 330.

<sup>232</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 330.

<sup>233</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 330.

<sup>234</sup> Lawrence Burt, “Woman’s Love of the Exotic,” *Munsey’s Magazine*, September 1909, 832.

<sup>235</sup> Burt, “Woman’s Love of the Exotic,” 833.

<sup>236</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 332.

<sup>237</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 330.

In the novelette, fears over racial contamination latch on to women's bodies (as they are representative of the nation and its future generations), and women's consumption of tea is symbolic of the nation's anxiety over Chinese corruption. The fear of the Chinese being able to poison the white populace was exacerbated by the fact that many Chinese immigrants worked in restaurants and laundries, or as domestic servants. In 1900, one in four employed Chinese male immigrants were laundrymen.<sup>238</sup> These positions damaged their pride and sense of self-worth because in China such tasks were largely reserved for women. Sam Loy embodies the fear of built-up resentment towards white Americans due to domestic subservience. When Anne becomes suspicious of him—imagining that Sam might be a “highbinder” (a member of a Chinese gang dealing in crime, especially illegal immigration and prostitution)—she reprimands herself for subscribing to stereotypes. However, as he serves breakfast and she reads in her newspaper about the crimes in Chinatown, she cannot help but imagine her kitchen “as the setting of a direful tragedy.”<sup>239</sup> After days of watching Sam serve their food Sylvia comments on how Anne watches Sam “as if you suspected the poor heathen [of] concocting a plot to poison us all!”<sup>240</sup>

Despite Sam never brewing or serving tea, tea's location in many U.S. homes creates a place where it can figuratively present the white American race becoming tainted by Chinese blood, and the Christian morality of the United States disappearing under the influence of the “heathen Chinese.” The *Literary Digest* article “Teetotalism and Tea-Tippling” claims that, “when King Alcohol is finally dethroned” tea will be the new menace, because

the total number of tea-drinkers in the United States is about 16,000,000, an army of drug addicts whose number is increased annually by the addition of 425,000 new recruits.

[...] the American people are exchanging alcohol for tea. [...]  
[...] In equal quantities tea is decidedly worse than beer.<sup>241</sup>

During the early twentieth century there was a fear that, like alcohol and opium, tea was dangerously addictive and perhaps subject to adulteration.<sup>242</sup> A short story written in Ireland highlights the persistence and transnational location of this

---

<sup>238</sup> Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 93.

<sup>239</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 333-334.

<sup>240</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 338.

<sup>241</sup> “Teetotalism and Tea-Tippling,” *The Literary Digest*, February 22, 1919, 29.

<sup>242</sup> “Teetotalism and Tea-Tippling,” *The Literary Digest*, 29.

fear: "Green Tea" (1872), by Anglo-Irish writer Sheridan Le Fanu, traces how the protagonist, Reverend Mr. Robert Lynder Jennings, experiences progressively worse nightmarish visions that lead him to commit suicide. It is ruled by his friend and doctor, Martin Hesselius, that Jennings was gradually poisoned by the green tea he had been drinking to improve his work productivity. In Britain and Ireland during the Victorian period, it was believed that green tea was the most easily adulterated tea, and legitimate worries about toxicity and unfounded fears of green tea causing hysteria, insomnia, and fatal nerve damage circulated about the brew; tea adulteration became so common that tea was sometimes considered a bigger health risk than opium.<sup>243</sup> As Seren Charrington-Hollins states, "green tea had become the villain of the Victorian age."<sup>244</sup> Some of these fears, especially concerning tea's possibly dangerous adulteration, were shared in the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The potentially harmful effects of tea are hinted at when Sylvia serves Gilbert tea "in a manner to make a man forswear strong drink forever and wreck himself with tea instead of alcohol."<sup>245</sup> To drink tea in a western manner is to not be dependent on it; tea-drinking should be a ritualistic indulgence in colonial heritage, and a brief encounter with the tamed exotic. The "yellow peril" articles that circulated in magazines and newspapers about Chinatowns' brothels, opium dens, gambling, and tong fights propagated the idea that addiction and overindulgence were the weaknesses of the "yellow race." The concept of taking on Chinese traits persists in the United States' own conflicted set up between the colonial body and the tempting exotic which, with over exposure, will change a white American into a greedy, useless addict.

After an almost deadly confrontation between Sam Loy and Gilbert at the novelette's climax, "the first thing [Anne] did was to take to Sylvia's little grinning Chinese fiend from its altar on the chimneypiece and fling it out the window."<sup>246</sup> Once the household god has been disposed of, Anne "in homely fashion [...] brewed a cup of tea" for herself and Captain Ruggles.<sup>247</sup> Sam Loy has been chased off and tea's role in restoring the nerves of white people emphasises the

---

<sup>243</sup> Seren Charrington-Hollins, *A Dark History of Tea* (Great Britain: Pen & Sword History, 2020), 75-76, 100.

<sup>244</sup> Charrington-Hollins, *A Dark History of Tea*, 76.

<sup>245</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 330.

<sup>246</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 349.

<sup>247</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 350.



validity and innocence of white Americans. The position of tea in the white American home space is never questioned. Captain Ruggles, a sailor most likely used to strong tea, “concealed his feelings, and sipped his tea delicately, his little finger crooked at a genteel angle.”<sup>248</sup> The deception here, as Ruggles “conceals his feelings,” highlights the extent and levels of superior “whiteness,” as he is not from the same “New England” bloodline as Anne; however, he is still white, which grants him admittance to the tea table compared to “inferior” Chinese immigrants.

The novelette, perhaps unwittingly, also portrays how it is not possible to fully suppress tea’s Chinese heritage despite its colonial veneer. Tea’s acceptance into the house shows that despite the novelette’s effort to map out the “otherness” of the Chinese and their culture, the consumption of tea unwittingly admits such “otherness” to the white American home. The characters uphold the idea that tea and Sam Loy are opposites. However, the threat of Sam Loy is underestimated, and this can be read as reflected in the tea, as—though tea is consumed in comforting domestic spaces by white subjects—ultimately, *The Second Generation* shows that these white subjects are not safe from the “threat” of the “yellow peril”—whether that is in the form of Sam Loy or the apparently innocuous tea. Consequently, cultural exclusivity is not achieved, and the consumption of tea symbolises how vulnerable any form of exclusivity is. The idea of the threat being neither decipherable nor obvious is stressed through tea’s unquestioned acceptance into the white American home-space.

---

<sup>248</sup> Kenyon, *The Second Generation*, 350.

### III. “Crossing the Threshold” and Questioning Borders

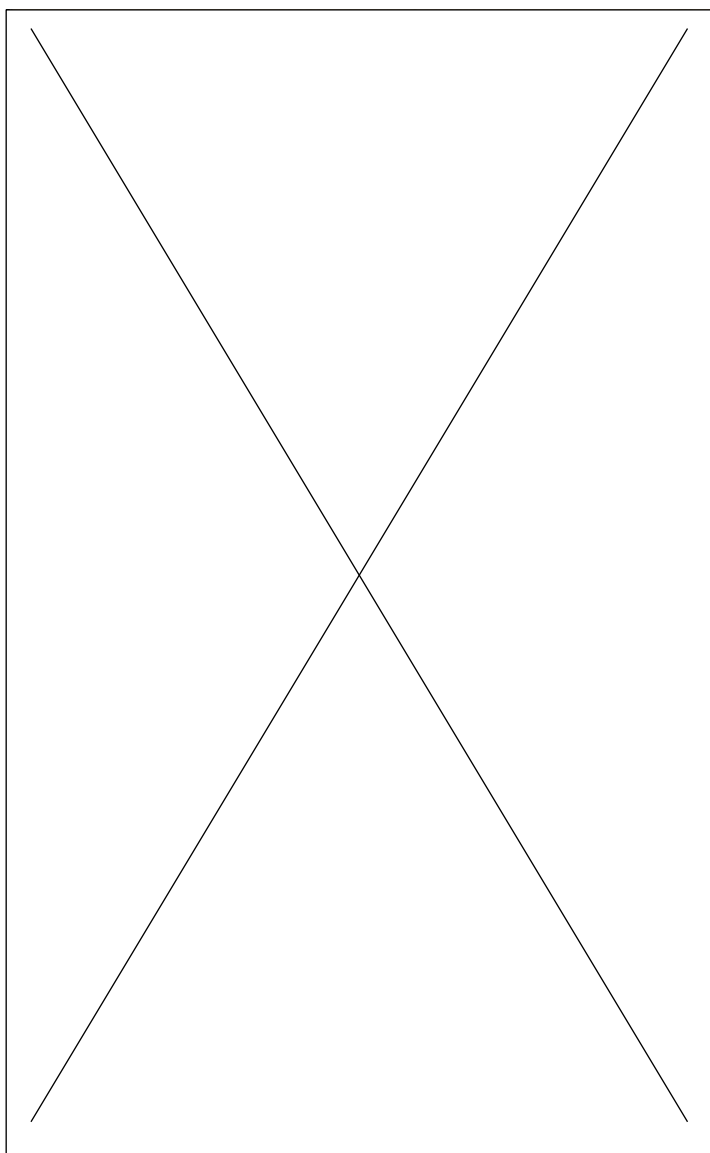


Figure 2.12 Nineteenth-century trade card for Union Pacific Tea Co. The trade card caption reads: “Melican Man he mus dlink Tea an den he get so fat like me.”

The division of space and the fear of the Chinese entering white American spaces are depicted in a late nineteenth-century Union Pacific Tea Co trade card (see fig. 2.12). The card portrays a Chinese man drinking tea with an Uncle Sam figure. Lenore Metrick-Chen concludes that “[this card’s gaunt and uncomfortable Uncle Sam’s face] is pinched as he awkwardly shrinks from the boorish intrusion of the Chinese man. The proximity of the two men, symbolic of the nations they represent, results in an encroachment into U.S. space.”<sup>249</sup> The presence of the Chinese is symbolised by an aggressive, dominant, and threatening intruder who

---

<sup>249</sup> Lenore Metrick-Chen, *Collecting Objects/Excluding People: Chinese Subjects and American Visual Culture, 1830-1900* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 201.

puts the well-meaning citizens of the United States, presented by Uncle Sam, at risk. The thick dialect of the caption supports the idea that the Chinese are largely unassimilable through linguistic barriers, as well as highlighting their insatiable greed represented through his bulk and excessive tea consumption. Interestingly, as an advert for tea, the Union Pacific Tea Co utilises fears around Chinese greed to express how American men need to be equally aggressive and demanding in order to protect their country; the card expresses how they can do so by drinking tea and symbolically entering into the centre of the card.

From the middle of the nineteenth century, fears surrounding Chinese immigration were communicated through visual and written representations of the Chinese invading U.S. spaces. In *The Rising Tide of Color Against World White Supremacy* (1920), eugenicist Lothrop Stoddard rhetorically imagines the Chinese as an oriental menace flooding into the United States. In patriotic defiance of a Chinese invasion, Stoddard quotes Californian Justice Burnett, who in 1909 stressed that the United States is the natural homeland of white Americans, a race that will not be “overwhelmed and driven eastward by an ever-increasing yellow and brown flood.”<sup>250</sup> To stop the Chinese from irreversibly “colouring” the Pacific coast, and tainting the nation’s white American population, social and private spaces operated by communicating clear differentiation by rigidly policing a “color line.”<sup>251</sup>

The term “color line” was initially used to refer to the segregation of white Americans and African Americans after the abolition of slavery. The formation of Chinatowns led to scholars applying this term to the geographical segregation of the Chinese in the United States.<sup>252</sup> Esther Romeyn notes that the inseparability of racial politics and spatial politics “is most evident in the concept of the color line, which has [...] enabled and justified the social and spatial distribution of power, wealth, access, and privilege.”<sup>253</sup> To depict the effects of geographical segregation on access, power, and home life, this section focuses on how the

---

<sup>250</sup> Theodore Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Colour Against World White Supremacy* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1920), 286; A. G. Burnett, “Misunderstanding of Eastern and Western States Regarding Oriental Immigration,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 34, no. 2 (September 1909): 41, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/000271620903400205>.

<sup>251</sup> Romeyn, *Street Scenes*, xxi.

<sup>252</sup> For instance, in Romeyn’s *Street Scenes* and in Soya Jung, *Left or Right of the Color Line: Asian Americans and the Racial Justice Movement* (U.S.: ChangeLab, 2012).

<sup>253</sup> Romeyn, *Street Scenes*, xxi.

colour line is exhibited and questioned around fictional San Franciscan Chinatown tea tables in “The Americanizing of Pau Tsu” and “Its Wavering Image” by Sui Sin Far.

The line between inclusion and exclusion presented by Sui Sin Far in her fictional domestic spaces had its real-world counterpart in the policing of urban spaces in the early twentieth-century United States. In the late 1890s San Francisco’s Board of Supervisors restricted the largest Chinatown in the United States to eight-square-blocks to hamper Chinatown’s growing population from expanding outside the quarter. Before the 1906 earthquake, it was one of two defined ghettos for the Chinese in the city, the other being the Barbary Coast. Unlike the Barbary Coast, which was unable to expand (hemmed in by the financial district and its position on the waterfront), San Francisco’s Chinatown was a “genuine ghetto” with “virtual autonomy” and clear borders due to racially restrictive housing regulations.<sup>254</sup> The designation of a restricted place for Chinese immigrants aided in Chinatowns becoming hyperbolized as a “wicked Orient,” transplanted from China, and separate from the rest of the United States. American “tourists” took voyeuristic tours of (mostly staged) opium dens, gambling dens, and brothels, and were told lurid stories about “tong murders” and “slave girls.”<sup>255</sup> While Chinatowns profited financially from white American tourism, the negative effects of the industry were its reliance on Chinatowns’ tight living quarters, lack of facilities, and “ghetto” status.<sup>256</sup> After decades of violent exclusion, San Francisco’s Chinatown in 1900 had been delineated as the “safe zone” for the Chinese. To journey beyond these borders put the Chinese at high risk of physical and/or verbal assault.<sup>257</sup>

The work of Sui Sin Far exemplifies what David Palumbo-Liu identifies as a prominent tendency in Asian American literature in the early twentieth century to “[attempt] to invent within their specific discursive spaces images of Asian America that both delineate its boundaries and envision particular modes of

---

<sup>254</sup> Philip J. Dreyfus, *Our Better Nature: Environment and the Making of San Francisco* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 71; Mark and Chih, *A Place Called Chinese America*, 49.

<sup>255</sup> Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 251; Ivan Light, “From Vice District to Tourist Attraction: The Moral Career of American Chinatowns 1880-1940,” *Pacific Historical Review* 43, no. 3 (August 1974): 367-394, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3638262>.

<sup>256</sup> Ronald Takaki, *Ethnic Islands: The Emergence of Urban Chinese America* (New York: Chelsea House, 1994), 53.

<sup>257</sup> Mark and Chih, *A Place Called Chinese America*, 50.

crossing them.”<sup>258</sup> In the crossing of thresholds Sui Sin Far creates, through tea, a space where ethnicities mix, or at least where Chinese immigrants are humanised and elicit sympathy through depictions of Chinese women partaking in tea-drinking. Though aesthetically the clothing, teacups and bowls, and tables may be different in Chinese or white American homes, the shared act of drinking tea, with its necessary investment in etiquette and attachment to cultural heritage, means that tea can create a mutually agreeable space where two worlds can meet or even merge. I analyse how interactions around tea ceremonies highlight the arbitrary nature of borders, and the racial prejudice against, and silencing of, Chinese women that unjustly deepened their exclusion.

Sui Sin Far peoples her stories with characters who are often part of the merchant class. This is evident in “The Americanizing of Pau Tsu,” first published in the short story collection *Mrs Spring Fragrance*. The story explores the unique opportunity given to the Chinese merchant class to create a home, because the small merchant demographic of Chinese immigrants was considered superior to Chinese labourer immigrants. Also, they “repositioned themselves as subjects of global trade rather than as loyal subjects of the Chinese motherland.”<sup>259</sup> Arguably, their lack of affiliation to China, their benefit to the U.S. economy, and their investment in acculturation for financial success, led to Chinese merchants being able to bring their wives and children to the United States.<sup>260</sup>

I use the term “acculturation” to refer to how Chinese Americans tried to gain acceptance in the United States through balancing their Chinese cultural heritage with an adoption of prevailing white American culture, religious beliefs, values, and language. By comparison, “assimilation” in this thesis refers to the actions taken by Chinese Americans to completely immerse themselves in white American culture and abandon their Chinese heritage. This section is concerned with culture’s role (for example, through customs and social interactions) in an individual’s efforts to obtain acceptance through acculturation or assimilation.

---

<sup>258</sup> David Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 43.

<sup>259</sup> Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*, 115.

<sup>260</sup> Shirley Hune, “Chinese American Women in U.S. History: Explaining Representations of Exotic Others, Passive Objects, and Active Subjects,” in *The Practice of U.S. Women’s History: Narratives, Intersections, and Dialogues*, ed. S. Jay Kleinberg, Eileen Boris, and Vicki L. Ruiz (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 171.

In “The Americanizing of Pau Tsu,” Wan Lin Fo’s San Franciscan merchant status enables his fiancée, Pau Tsu, to come and live with him. The sacrifice of Chinese heritage by many of the merchant class is evident at the beginning of the story when a white woman, Miss Adah Raymond, serves Wan Lin Fo tea. After she has handed him the cup he says how she has “inspired in [him] a love” for his betrothed in China, Pau Tsu. Lin Fo sees Adah “so good and so beautiful dispensing tea and happiness to all around” and he wishes to have someone in his house to do the same. To have his Chinese wife serve tea and act as Adah does would be perfect; he tells Adah that “when she comes I will have her learn to speak like you—and be like you.”<sup>261</sup> Lin Fo is partaking in a domestic western tea ceremony that lacks the decorative and formal aspects of a Chinese tea ceremony. This difference is shown to correlate with race, as this tea ceremony is performed in a white American’s house with a white woman as the server of it. His admiration for (and arguably his infatuation with) Adah reflects his willingness to give up his cultural identity and his fiancée’s, as he wishes Pau Tsu to serve tea and be just like a white American woman.

When Pau Tsu arrives and is taken to their apartment prepared by Lin Fo “in American style, [...] her birdlike little figure in Oriental dress seemed rather out of place at first.”<sup>262</sup> Pau Tsu is unimpressed, and as she unpacks she places her fans, vases, Chinese matting, carvings, and religious iconography of her forefathers all over the apartment. The rift between husband and wife is shown in home decoration, and unlike Lin Fo who hung in the bedroom the motto “when in Rome, do as the Romans do,” Pau Tsu harkens back to her lifestyle in China. She thinks of days “spent in the quiet retirement of a Chinese home [in] lute playing, in sipping tea and chatting with gentle girl companions.”<sup>263</sup> The home, and tea’s location in it for Pau Tsu, is one of comfort, intimacy, equality, and entertainment among women. The contrast between the two home locations tea occupies for Pau Tsu stresses the difference between belonging and marginality. Sui Sin Far contradicts a prevalent belief in the United States that “all Chinese

---

<sup>261</sup> Sui Sin Far, “The Americanizing of Pau Tsu,” in *Mrs Spring Fragrance* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1912; New York, Dover Publications Inc, 2013), 82-83. Citations refer to the 2013 edition.

<sup>262</sup> Sui Sin Far, “The Americanizing of Pau Tsu,” 83.

<sup>263</sup> Sui Sin Far, “The Americanizing of Pau Tsu,” 84.

marriage [is] a form of slavery.”<sup>264</sup> Pau Tsu’s dilemma highlights that the pressure upon Chinese immigrants to reject their heritage is the chief source of suffering for Chinese women in the United States, and not marriage. Chinese culture is depicted as liberating for Pau Tsu compared to the alien white culture her husband reveres. Sui Sin Far portrays how in China women partake in tea-drinking as a freeing and ancient custom surrounded by art and discussion. This is compared to the submissive Adah, who is watched and physically admired as she serves tea to her male guest. Thus, the true hardship of Chinese immigrant women is shown through Lin Fo’s attempt at assimilation; he prevents himself and Pau Tsu from making a “true” home, as his version of assimilation requires them to strip themselves of their cultural traditions, and to position themselves as performers of western customs to gain respect and acceptance from white society.

Pau Tsu might be considered lucky compared with some of her real-life counterparts. In Chinatown whole families lived in one-room dwellings, and the Alien Land Law prohibited the Chinese from owning land or leasing it for more than three years. Her relative comfort, however, is unable to counteract the pain stemming from the dismissal of her cultural identity. This is illustrated when Lin Fo “would engage [visitors] in bright and animated conversation. They had so much of common interest [...] But to Pau, pouring tea and dispensing sweetmeats, it was all Greek, or rather, all American.”<sup>265</sup> Here, Pau’s ability to interact with others and be more than an ornament is eliminated. She has been reduced to a decoration not because of her heritage, but because of what her husband desires of her and for her. The climactic moment of her neglect is when she develops a bad cough. Pau Tsu is shamed when her husband insists that she bare her chest for the doctor and “the modesty of generations of maternal ancestors was crucified.”<sup>266</sup> Her home has already been reduced to a space solely valued for public display purposes in an attempt to gain acceptance. Now her body has become part of the display. Pau Tsu, not her husband, values her heritage and seems to not support acculturation or assimilation for financial gain

---

<sup>264</sup> Sucheta Mazumdar, “Through Western Eyes: Discovering Chinese Women in America,” in *A New Significance: Re-envisioning the History of the American West*, ed. Clyde A. Milner II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 163–4.

<sup>265</sup> Sui Sin Far, “The Americanizing of Pau Tsu,” 85.

<sup>266</sup> Sui Sin Far, “The Americanizing of Pau Tsu,” 87.

or social acceptance. Unlike her husband she will not accept the idea deeply rooted in western culture that it is superior. She may partake in the “all American” tea ceremony, but she does not associate with it, and appears to find no value in her life without a home founded on essential moral and cultural belonging.

In “Its Wavering Image” (1912), also from the *Mrs Spring Fragrance* short story collection, Sui Sin Far employs a female protagonist to directly address the arbitrary racial and gendered signifiers faced by the silenced and ignored women of San Francisco’s Chinatown. The white journalist Mark Carson makes friends with the story’s protagonist “a half white, half Chinese girl,” Pan.<sup>267</sup> When he comes to visit Pan she gives him a tour of Chinatown. She enables Carson to step “across the threshold” and experience Chinatown behind the commercialised exterior.<sup>268</sup> Despite his unique opportunity to get to know the people of Chinatown, in the end he lives up to his reputation as “a man who would sell his soul for a story.”<sup>269</sup> He fails to embrace the intimate insight into the people of Chinatown a tea ceremony could have provided him with, and instead writes a “yellow peril” piece for his publisher. The story can be seen as one of Sui Sin Far’s implicit criticisms of the press and its production of “yellow peril” literature.

Carson’s arbitrary use of physical markers as a reflection of a person’s identity is shown when motive and environment affect his interpretation of people. Though Carson stresses that Pan is “white,” she conceives of her identity in relation to her surroundings. She identifies as Chinese because she was “born” in Chinatown, it’s her “home,” and the people “look upon [her] as their own.”<sup>270</sup> She also “always turn[s] from whites” and when Pan encounters white people she feels “strange and constrained, shrinking from their curious scrutiny.”<sup>271</sup> For Pan, her reaction to white people stresses how her racial identification is governed by acceptance within a community, while for Carson her race must be white to sanction his attraction to her.

During a tea ceremony in Chinatown, Carson’s treatment of Pan and the younger server emphasises the dangers of racial stereotyping. Carson is unable to look beyond his racialised expectations when

---

<sup>267</sup> Sui Sin Far, “Its Wavering Image’,” in *Mrs Spring Fragrance* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1912; New York: Dover Publications Inc, 2013), 49. Citations refer to the 2013 edition.

<sup>268</sup> Sui Sin Far, “Its Wavering Image’,” 49.

<sup>269</sup> Sui Sin Far, “Its Wavering Image’,” 49.

<sup>270</sup> Sui Sin Far, “Its Wavering Image’,” 49-51.

<sup>271</sup> Sui Sin Far, “Its Wavering Image’,” 49.



A little Chinese boy brought them tea and saffron cakes. He was a picturesque little fellow with a quaint manner of speech. Mark Carson jested merrily with him, while Pan holding a tea-bowl between her two small hands laughed and sipped.

When they were alone again, the silver stream and the crescent moon became the objects of their study.<sup>272</sup>

Carson's reaction to the boy presents how greatly his orientalist ideas and prejudices mar his perspective. The third-person narrator even appears to linguistically adopt his perspective at this point, with "a picturesque little fellow," appearing to sarcastically present Carson's patronising viewpoint. The fictional tea ceremony highlights the missed opportunity to look past superficial and physical signifiers of "otherness." Carson "jests" with the boy because the boy is not threatening, due to his youth, servitude, and fulfilment of the colonial image of the unempowered who will remain so with his almost unintelligible "quaint manner of speech." Colonial revival was not founded on, as Hoganson puts it, a newly acquired "profound understanding of the other nations and cultures," but on power, novelty, and an assumption of the superiority of "Europeanness."<sup>273</sup> Colonial customs were used to present the imperial might and superiority of western civilization. This Chinese tea ceremony provides Carson with a novel break from western customs, and his belief that he is the only complete representative of Europeanness provides him with an imperialist vantage point. His governance of the scene, evidenced through the narration's language, and his actions, are part of emphasising how "superior" he believes he is as a colonial customer in the "alien" environment.

Pan is the only character described drinking tea and, as she sips it, she is the observer of the scene. Diana Venessa Holford argues that

Pan's *small* hands create an image wherein she is linked metonymically with the small boy as another picturesque 'abject body'. The narration thus creates a sudden shift from a woman who has just demanded the right to name herself to the image of a silent woman placed in stereotypical posture.<sup>274</sup>

---

<sup>272</sup> Sui Sin Far, "Its Wavering Image," 51.

<sup>273</sup> Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium*, 56.

<sup>274</sup> Diana Venessa Holford, "Biracial/Bicultural Identity in the Writings of Sui Sin Far," *MELUS* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 176, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3185523>.

Judith Butler defines abject beings as “those who are not yet ‘subjects,’ but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject”;<sup>275</sup> abject beings are located in “those ‘unlivable’ and ‘uninhabitable’ zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the ‘unlivable’ is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject.”<sup>276</sup> But, on the contrary, I contend that Carson is too busy engaging with the boy to interpret the rest of the scene. Thus, the complicated subject, that of Pan, is dismissed.

Extensive scholarship has been done on the subversive nature of interracial relationships and how they “blurred social categories and spawned racial ambiguities as a challenge to white male supremacy.”<sup>277</sup> For Carson to feel powerful, as well as to legitimise his feelings as abiding within racial boundaries, Pan must be white. Thus, Carson is not putting Pan as an “abject body” beside the boy; instead, he sees her as a subject surrounded by abject beings whom he can write about. He ignores her altogether until there is a romantic interlude when they talk about something as far away as possible: outer space.<sup>278</sup> The potential of the didactic location tea opens up to remove barriers of prejudice is lost. Moments before the tea ceremony Carson verbally insists Pan is “white,” with Chinatown and its people “alien” to her “real self.”<sup>279</sup> After the tea ceremony Carson’s views have not changed: this is emphasised when Pan cries and he says “Pan! Those tears prove that you are white.”<sup>280</sup>

Tears are an exceptionally popular trope in sentimental fiction. They have been employed to reveal, as Sánchez-Eppler highlights, the “whiteness” of characters, with them embodying “the power [...] to change the condition of the human body, or at least, read symbolically, to alter how that condition is perceived.”<sup>281</sup> Carson’s conclusion on Pan’s whiteness points to the reductive nature of such a human experience being coded as “white.” The sentimentality of these tears lies in the narrative’s depiction of Pan’s confusion over her identity, and our expected sympathy for her in the face of Carson’s continual desire to

---

<sup>275</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993), xiii.

<sup>276</sup> Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, xiii.

<sup>277</sup> Sueyoshi, *Discriminating Sex*, 41; Moran, *Interracial Intimacy*, 31-33.

<sup>278</sup> Sui Sin Far, “‘Its Wavering Image’,” 51-52.

<sup>279</sup> Sui Sin Far, “‘Its Wavering Image’,” 51.

<sup>280</sup> Sui Sin Far, “‘Its Wavering Image’,” 52.

<sup>281</sup> Sánchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty*, 26.

control her racial identity. However, sentimental rhetoric, as Lauren Berlant notes, “constitutes a generic wish for an unconflicted world, one wherein structural inequities, not emotions and intimacies, are epiphenomenal.”<sup>282</sup> In this scene the tears hyperbolise Pan’s experience as a “woman’s one,” and arguably, side-line the play’s race-related criticisms.

The description of Pan receiving her tea bowl with two hands symbolises her openness to understanding, her hospitality—and in her consumption—her desire for knowledge. This interpretation is supported by Chinese cultural signification, as receiving and giving items with two hands is a custom deeply rooted in Chinese hospitality, and communicates a person’s undivided attention in that moment.<sup>283</sup> Pan is portrayed to be the character with the widest perception and openness to learn. This is stressed because she is the observer of the only described interaction during the tea ceremony; however, her infatuation has blinded her to Carson’s prejudice, which she interprets as fondness for the boy and is evinced in how she laughs along with Carson. She is shown not to be aware of how damaging the results of Carson’s limited appreciation of Chinese American culture will be. Carson is too busy jesting with the abjected boy to receive the tea ceremony and partake in a discussion that could disprove the stereotypes of popular “yellow peril” journalism.

---

<sup>282</sup> Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 21.

<sup>283</sup> Pardee Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant: A Story of Life in Chinese America* (New York: Council on Books in Wartime Inc., 1943), 302.

#### IV. Calling for a United Front against Patriarchy

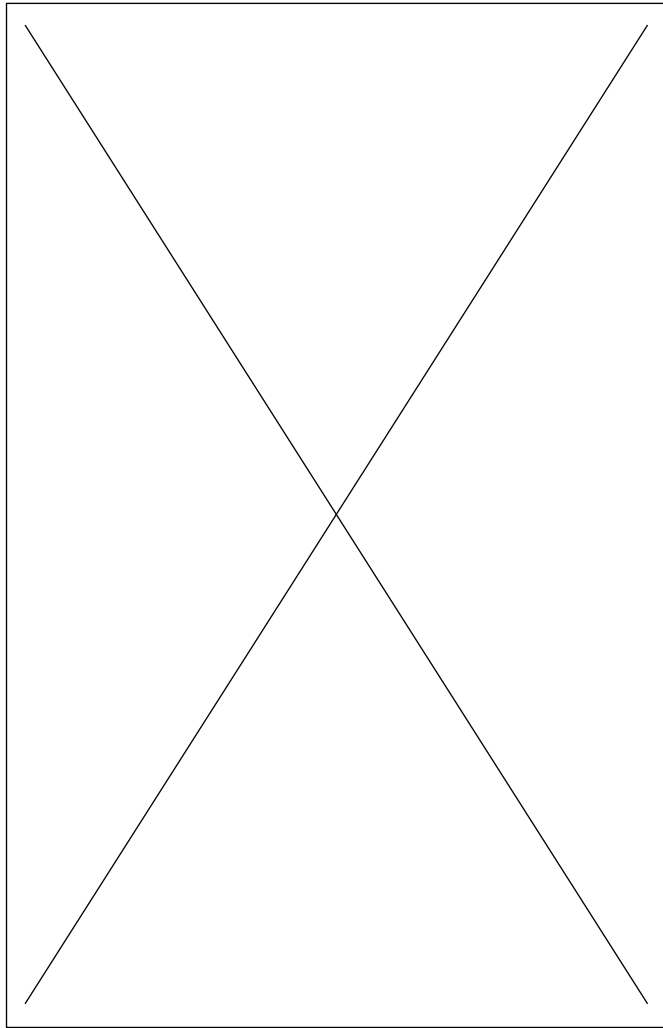


Figure 2.13 Nineteenth-century trade card by R. Hoyt for G. Rossler, a dealer in groceries, crockery, and glassware.

The image of the dangerous “Chinaman” coincided with the rise of women as consumers, and the subsequent profitability of “exotic” goods and commodities. The positions of the Chinese man and white female consumer often became interchangeable in advertisements, as seen in the nineteenth-century tea focused trade card for G. Rossler (see fig. 2.13).<sup>284</sup> This technique was used to foil Chinese masculine strength and abate oriental fears propagated by “yellow peril” editorial copy. Rachel Lee notes that the “American consumer could figuratively ‘own’ a part of the East, thereby defusing its threat.”<sup>285</sup> It aimed to make consumers, and chiefly women, feel powerful in a time of white slavery fears. The

---

<sup>284</sup> For more on this see Yuko Matsukawa, “Representing the Oriental in Nineteenth-Century Trade Cards,” in *Recollecting Early Asian America*, ed. Josephine Lee, Imogene L. Lim, and Yuko Matsukawa (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 211.

<sup>285</sup> Lee, “Journalistic Representations,” 255.

position of most Chinese men working in characteristically 'feminine' jobs, like in laundries and restaurants, also supported this aim. However, contrary to the objective of diffusing the Chinese threat through ownership of Chinese commodities and the feminisation of Chinese men, the interchangeable role-play between white women and Chinese men communicates the similar struggles Chinese immigrants and white women face under white patriarchy, including job market limitations and a lack of legal rights (for instance, the right to vote).

The feminisation of tea was employed to neutralise the idea of the Chinese as a threat, and it can be traced back to the Boston Tea Party. The Sons of Liberty, dressed as Indians, were documented by an eyewitness report as looking "brave and bold," and dissimilar to the effeminate tea sippers of the governor's company, who were located on Castle Island.<sup>286</sup> This moment, foundational to the formation of the United States, marks Chinese tea's consumption in a feminised—and therefore considered ineffectual—realm. In racist discourse, especially to support colonial power, Jan Pieterse notes that "darker peoples were thought of as 'female' [and] then, by way of feedback, females were re-coded in the image of 'others'."<sup>287</sup> This is evident in how, to keep the United States a "white man's territory," cultural texts were used to immobilise ethnic minorities and women through depicting their shared "inferiority." The depiction of Chinese as effeminate, and therefore "inferior," became prominent in the early eighteenth century.<sup>288</sup> Ascribing "inferior" characteristics to two subjugated groups made their oppression two-fold. Sui Sin Far and Jakobi use deadly tea ceremonies to display parallel and intersectional racist and sexist forms of oppression in the United States, how women are underestimated, and the sympathy and support women deserve in their fights for race and gender equality.

The idea of tea as a harmful substance is not new or solely located in anxieties about Chinese immigration in the U.S. In *A Debate Between Mr. Tea and Mr. Alcohol* (c.780-824), a text discovered in the Buddhist monastic library in the Dunhuang caves, Mr. Alcohol during a verbal joust retaliates against Mr. Tea by saying

---

<sup>286</sup> Frank, *Objectifying China*, 176.

<sup>287</sup> Jan Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (Massachusetts: Yale University Press, 1995), 220.

<sup>288</sup> Frank, "The Art of Tea," 36.

To drink tea is only to get backache. [If one] drinks too much, one will be sick in the stomach. If one drinks ten cups in a single day one's intestines will be like a drum. If one were to drink it for three years one would certainly have [the appearance of] a frog [suffering from] abdominal dropsy.<sup>289</sup>

Though this attack is exaggerated for dramatic effect, fears concerning the overconsumption of any substance, including tea, were present then, and continue to be present into the twenty first century.<sup>290</sup> The idea of avoiding the overconsumption of any product is espoused by Confucius in the adage "Hara hachi bun me" (eat until you are eight parts (out of ten) full). For over a millennium the Chinese have known that drinking too much tea, like alcohol, is damaging to the body.

White supremacists in the United States built upon the negative health rhetoric surrounding tea to present the line between the safe assimilation of some exotic substances and the terrifying infiltration of Chinese immigrants into the nation. The use of tea in anti-Chinese rhetoric can be traced back to the 1750s with the circulation of the fear, that through the consumption of tea, the drinker could "become Chinese and prone to indolent Chinese habits."<sup>291</sup> Sui Sin Far adopts the trope of tea as a lethal substance in "The Wisdom of the New," published in *Mrs Spring Fragrance*, to present how ideas about white American supremacy and Chinese inferiority "poison" minds against the Chinese and their culture.

The position of tea as a comforting domestic drink also made it the perfect murder weapon. Many infamous serial killers have used adulterated tea to kill their victims: for instance, the British serial killers Mary Ann Cotton (1832-1873) and Graham Young (1947-1990). Cotton put arsenic in her lethal tea concoctions, and Young put deadly nightshade and thallium in his poisonous tea. An American serial killer who also used adulterated tea was Lavinia Fisher (1793-1820). The combination of tea as a foreign substance, one that has been linked to murderous crimes, and paradoxically, as a brew located in the heart of the home, led to fiction profiting from presenting tea as a toxic brew. This is evidenced in Le Fanu's "Green Tea" (1872), the novel *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (1930) by American

---

<sup>289</sup> Tsu-lung Chen's translation, quoted in James Benn, *Tea in China*, 51.

<sup>290</sup> CBS San Francisco, "Woman Dies After Drinking Deadly Chinatown Tea," March 20, 2017, accessed May 30, 2018, <https://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2017/03/20/woman-dies-after-drinking-deadly-chinatown-tea/>.

<sup>291</sup> Frank, *Objectifying China, Imagining America*, 192.

writer Grace Zaring Stone, the works *Sad Cypress* (1940) and *A Pocket Full of Rye* (1953) by British writer Agatha Christie, and in the actions of British writer Sax Rohmer's villainous character Fu Manchu in the early twentieth century. Christie's and Rohmer's works were consistently popular in the United States throughout the twentieth century.

The sinister use of tea coexists alongside ancient and long-lasting beliefs in tea's abilities to cure illnesses and divine the future.<sup>292</sup> Tea is a cure, a poison, and a means to escape in "The Wisdom of the New." Tea, mixed with a poisonous substance, is the last resort available to a Chinese immigrant wife who has recently arrived in San Francisco with her son, and wishes to save him from western schooling. Instead of tea being toxic, it is the carrier of poison: consequently, the tea portrays how it is not the Chinese, but poisonous ideas about their inferiority, that causes a rejection of their cultural heritage. This pushes a mother to commit the ultimate sacrifice to protect her son from losing something she considers more important than life: his connection to his homeland and ancestors. The melodramatic and sentimental plotline appeals to readers' emotions—but diminishes the story's criticism of racism—as it asks for "woman to woman" sympathy, and ultimately, stresses how the emotionally exhausting and horrific situation Pau Lin finds herself in serves as a warning to patriarchy, as women, alone or united, are constantly underestimated.

When Pau Lin and her six-year-old son arrive in San Francisco, they are greeted by Pau Lin's husband Wou Sankwei, who has been living in the United States for seven years. Like Wan Lin Fo in "The Americanising of Pau Tsu," Wou Sankwei strives towards optimum financial gain, a goal which is aided by assimilation. Wou Sankwei plans on a western upbringing for his son—a plan he believes a woman, especially a "Chinese" woman, would not understand.<sup>293</sup> Thus, Pau Lin's oppression at the hands of her husband is intersectional. It is his rejection of Pau Lin's advice and opinions, and his derogatory view of her loyalty to Chinese culture, that lead to their son's demise. To save her son from the "wisdom of the new," Pau Lin gives her son a poisonous drink with the "dark dregs [telling] the tale."<sup>294</sup>

---

<sup>292</sup> Charrington-Hollins, *A Dark History of Tea*, 152.

<sup>293</sup> Sui Sin Far, "Wisdom and the New," in *Mrs Spring Fragrance* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1912; New York: Dover Publications Inc, 2013), 33. Citations refer to the 2013 edition.

<sup>294</sup> Sui Sin Far, "Wisdom and the New," 47.

An honour suicide or killing is conducted by a person to avoid the shame of their own or someone else's immoral action. Pau Lin is willing to carry out the latter to stop the shame of her son's westernization. From a western perspective the murder can be considered cold-blooded, with Christian doctrine espousing the view that murder of any kind is a sin. However, the depiction of Pau Lin and her motives rejects such a decisive judgment of her actions. Instead, the murder which is called an "accident," and the couple's subsequent journey back to China for Pau Lin's "health," show how there is no effort by the public to understand her motivations beyond her rejection of western norms.<sup>295</sup>

In her analysis of the story, Linda Grasso stresses the role of revenge in the murder: Pau Lin "displaces the anger she feels at her husband and her gendered plight [...] she uses her son as a weapon against her husband, thereby objectifying him in the same way he has objectified her, as 'an accessory'."<sup>296</sup> However, viewing the murder as a pitiless act, or as an act of revenge, ignores the evident love she feels for her son, as she "lavished affection" on him, and also side-lines the story's focus on the crippling effects of Americanisation.<sup>297</sup> The complete rejection of Chinese heritage causes Pau Lin to feel shame towards her husband and then her son. The importance of holding on to your heritage is stressed through tea carrying the poison that kills her son. The beverage links her son to the motherland and takes him away from the shame of Americanisation and back to the "wisdom" of his heritage. As a result, the tea emphasises how the killing is a pre-emptive honour killing, and the only option available to her within the patriarchal framework of society.

However, to limit our interpretation of the murder as an honour killing is also a mistake. His mother rejects western culture, but this is not the only reason for the son's death. Pau Lin is aware of conflicts amongst Chinese Americans concerning westernisation, and how her husband ignores the risks which accompany this transition. Pau Lin is informed by a neighbour that "the new religion" brings "trouble";<sup>298</sup> the mother of Chee Ping, who was baptized a Christian in the Mission, had her head "severed from her body" as soon as news

---

<sup>295</sup> Sui Sin Far, "Wisdom and the New," 48.

<sup>296</sup> Linda M. Grasso, "Inventive Desperation: Anger, Violence, and Belonging in Mary Wilkins Freeman's and Sui Sin Far's Murderous Mother Stories," *American Literary Realism* 38, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 27, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27747180?seq=1>.

<sup>297</sup> Sui Sin Far, "Wisdom and the New," 33.

<sup>298</sup> Sui Sin Far, "Wisdom and the New," 35.



of this event reached their community in China.<sup>299</sup> Though the mother declares after murdering her son that he has been “saved [...] from the Wisdom of the New,” it is not necessarily a complete rejection of western culture that she desired.<sup>300</sup> Instead, Pau Lin appears to have been pushed to choose between complete immersion in western thinking and culture—with immersion possibly leading to ostracization from the Chinese community and a state of alienation from both national and ethnic identities—or death. The subservient and delicate wife Wou Sankwei believed he was married to is willing to undercut him and lose her son to protect his link to China.

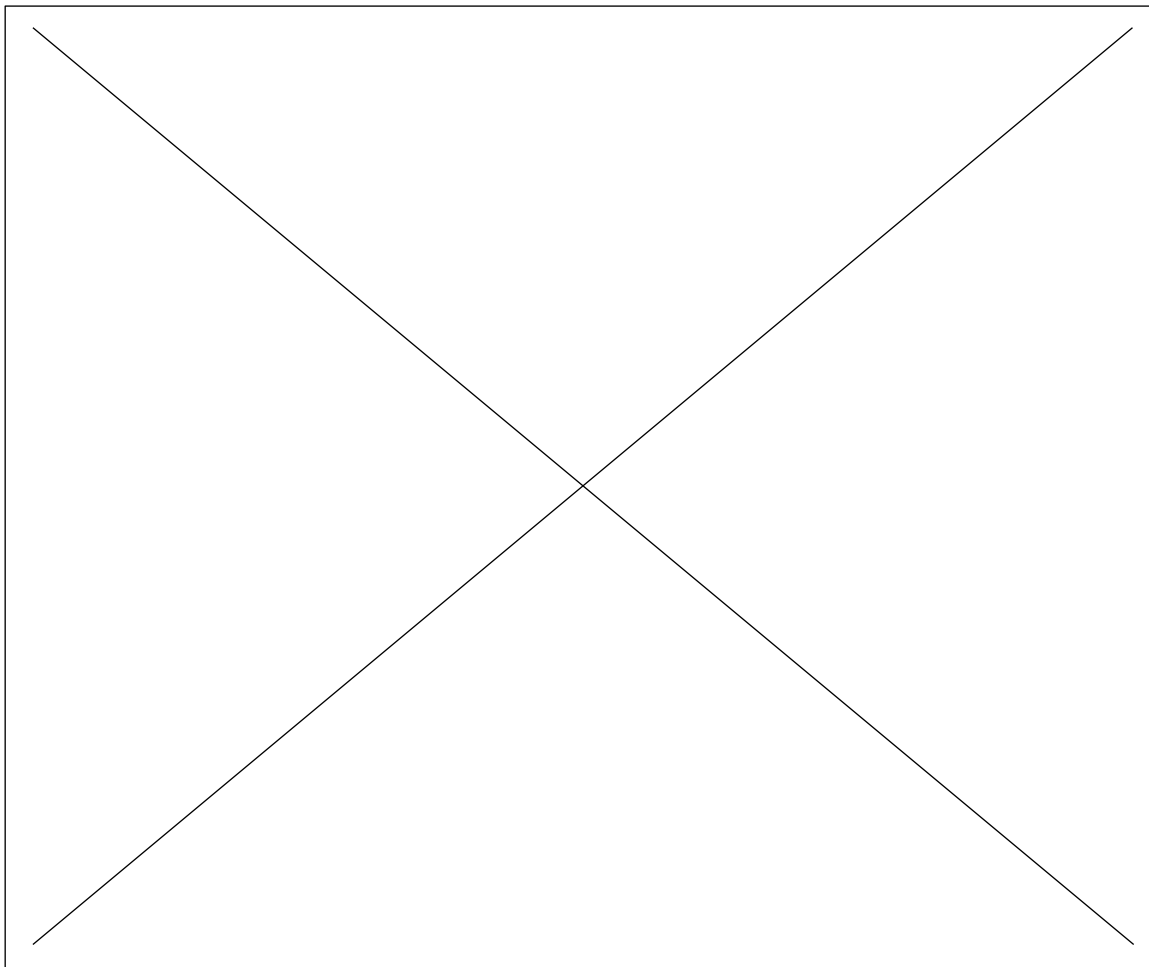


Figure 2.14 Nicholas Joseph Crowley, *Fortune Telling by Cup Tossing*, 1842, oil on canvas.

---

<sup>299</sup> Sui Sin Far, “Wisdom and the New,” 35.

<sup>300</sup> Sui Sin Far, “Wisdom and the New,” 48.

The toxic brew Pau Lin gives her son is symbolic of Wou Sankwei's dismissal of his wife and his general disregard for Chinese customs. Though the text does not say it is tea, "the empty cup with its dark dregs told the tale" appears to refer to fortune telling through tea leaves (tasseography).<sup>301</sup> The custom originated in ancient Chinese culture and was brought to Europe by nomadic gypsies in the 1800s; the custom was then developed and popularised in Britain, other Northern European countries, and countries occupied by them (see fig. 2.14).<sup>302</sup> Thus, tea indicates that it is "the wisdom of the new" that foretells his death. However, western culture is not presented as the poison; rather, Wou Sankwei's myopic loyalty to it is. The fact that dark dregs "tell the tale" indicates how the narrative and its plot are communicated through the dark dregs. As a result, the death of their son appears to be a foretold event, which adds to the story's melodramatic tone. Wou Sankwei's desire for acceptance has damaged his association with his Chinese heritage. However, his actions and punishment, due to the fortune-telling quality of the dark dregs, appear inevitable for a Chinese man striving for acceptance in the United States and ignoring the needs and opinions of his wife. Their son's death thus appears inevitable, and Pau Lin is portrayed as the deliverer of a foretold event caused by patriarchy and racism.

The last straw for Pau Lin is when Wou Sankwei cuts off their son's queue. The physical elimination of a deeply rooted Chinese signifier presents to Pau Lin the loss of her son both physically and spiritually. The queue became popular in Chinese culture during the period of the Qing Dynasty, and, among other things is symbolic of rebellion and identity in Chinese culture.<sup>303</sup> The cutting of the queue indicates how their son can either be Chinese or strive to be like white Americans but cannot be both. Pau Lin's motivation is to protect her son from losing his cultural identity. Pau Lin, unlike her husband, is aware that her son will never be accepted in the United States, and that the loss of his heritage will leave him spiritually stranded. Thus, it appears that Pau Lin decides to send her son back to China via the only route available to her.

---

<sup>301</sup> Sui Sin Far, "Wisdom and the New," 47.

<sup>302</sup> Sasha Fenton, *Tea Cup Reading: A Quick and Easy Guide to Tasseography* (Boston, MA/ York Beach, ME: Weiser Books, 2002), 3, 6; Caroline Dow, *Tea Leaf Reading for Beginners: Your Fortune in a Teacup* (Woodbury, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 2011), 4; Charrington-Hollins, *A Dark History of Tea*, 154, 155.

<sup>303</sup> Metzger, *Chinese Looks*, 36.

The need to unite women across ethnicity barriers to avoid tragedies is stressed in Jakobi's work, which led up to the suffragist movement's rhetoric moving away from describing Chinese woman as "fast-bound in sleep of centuries" of ancient culture, and instead produced images after the Chinese Revolution (post-1912) of Chinese women as at the forefront of female suffrage.<sup>304</sup> The eventual move towards achieving this is shown when, in 1911, California granted women the right to vote, and the *San Francisco Call* published a photograph of Tye Lueng (a second-generation Chinese woman) and labelled her as the first "Californian" woman to vote.<sup>305</sup> At this definitive time, when gendered limitations were being radically attacked and changed, the transnational heritage of tea-drinking enables fictional tea ceremonies to downplay racial distinctions and focus on uniting women to fight for women's suffrage.

Instead of depicting women as largely passive victims, the suffragist leader Paula Jakobi presents her protagonist in *Chinese Lily* as an authoritative figure who is an underestimated threat to patriarchy. In Jakobi's previous works "And Ye Gave Me a Stone" and "The Lodging-House," both published in 1915 in the socially and politically liberal New York magazine *The Outlook*, her commitment to representing the oppression of women and the poor is apparent.<sup>306</sup> Her literary output in 1915 goes against the work of many earlier suffragists, who utilised the unassimilable Chinese in their rhetoric to stress how white American women deserved the right to vote to help fortify white supremacy in an age of non-white immigration.<sup>307</sup>

*Chinese Lily* was published in *The Forum* in New York. The play abides by the spirit of the publication evident in its title: to provide a platform for authors to debate issues. Reform movements were a popular topic in the magazine, two of which—feminism and prison reform—are evident in *Chinese Lily*. The decision to write the piece as a play was arguably to literally give a voice to figures that have been silenced in other contemporary texts. Another reason could have been

---

<sup>304</sup> Chapman, "A 'Revolution in Ink'," 995; Solomon, *How We Won the Vote in California*, 71.

<sup>305</sup> "Tye Lueng, the first Californian woman to vote," *San Francisco Call*, May 19, 1912, 63.

<sup>306</sup> Paula Jakobi, "And Ye Gave Me a Stone," *The Outlook*, May 19, 1915, 151-152. Digitalised by *The Unz Review*, accessed April 25, 2018, <https://www.Unz.com/print/Outlook-1915may19-00151/>; Paula Jakobi, "The Lodging-House," *The Outlook*, April 21, 1915, 936-938. Digitalised by *The Unz Review*, accessed May 14, 2018, <https://www.Unz.com/print/Outlook-1915apr21-00936/>.

<sup>307</sup> Chapman, "Revolution in Ink," 980.

to present the play's topics as more politically and legally charged, as descriptions are replaced by direct actions and speech; this format pushes readers to consider their own verdict on the play's events.

There are two settings in the play, and Lily's literal and figurative entrapment in both presents the necessary fight for all women's empowerment regardless of racial identification: the laundry of a women's prison and a wealthy pimp's parlour in Chinatown. Lily is the character who links the two settings together, as the parlour is the location of a flashback which tells of the events which led to her current imprisonment. The negative set-up between two undesirable locations stresses the lack of choice Lily has as she chooses between being subservient to a pimp, Chin Tau, and seeing her daughter sold for sex, or suffering the consequences of committing murder. In the climactic scene when Lily makes her decision, tea serves to domesticate the "luxurious Chinese interior, [of the] incense-flooded" parlour.<sup>308</sup> Tea removes Lily from a limiting racial classification and makes her predicament elicit sympathy through her domestic servitude, her familial loyalty, and her wish to protect her daughter.

---

<sup>308</sup> Paula Jakobi, *Chinese Lily*, *The Forum*, November 1915, 558. Digitalised by *The Unz Review*, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://www.Unz.com/print/Forum-1915nov-00551/Commentary/>.

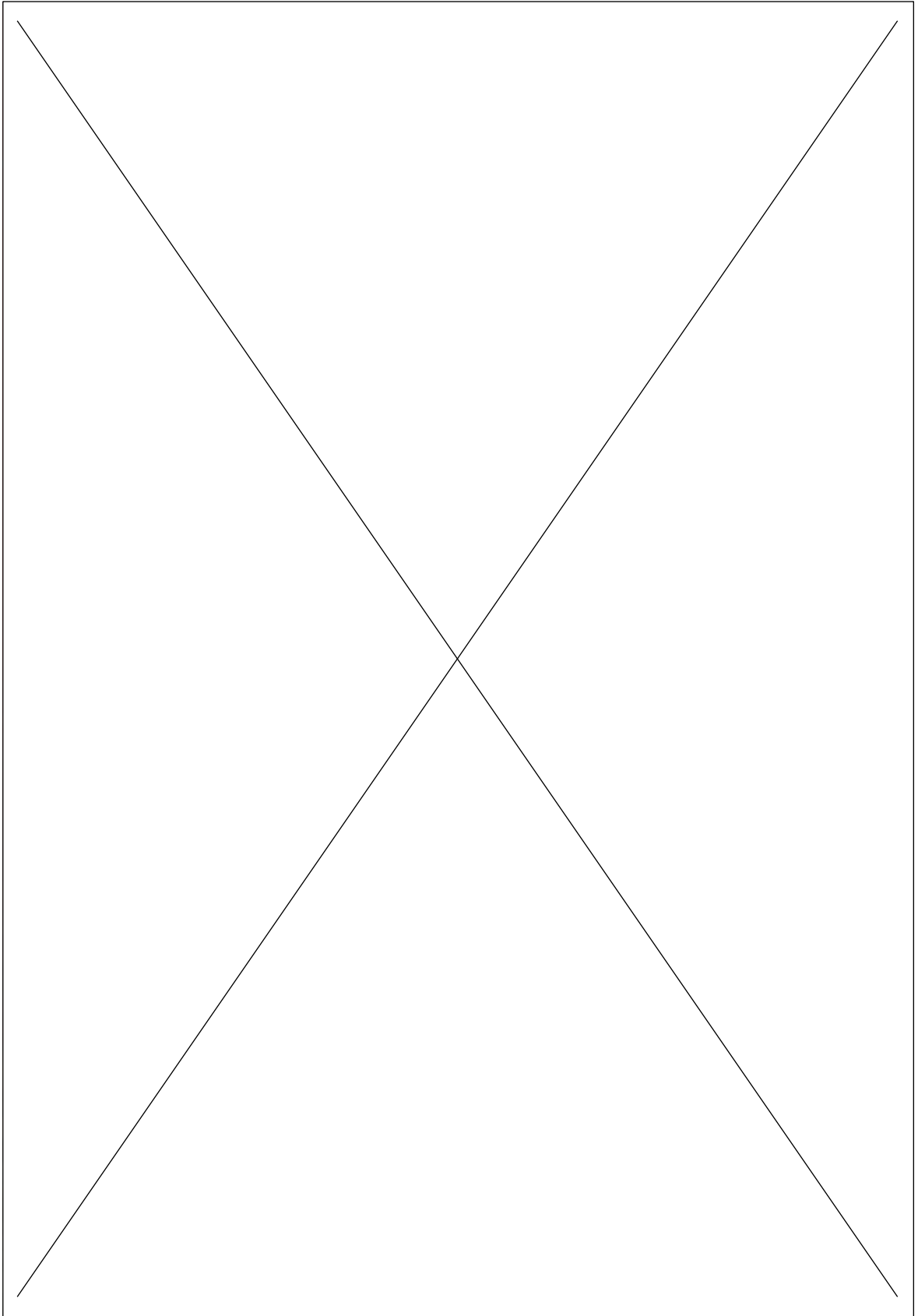


Figure 2.15 The front cover of *Detective Story* 5 no. 1, October 5, 1916.

Jakobi relies on orientalist tropes in her description of Chin Tau and his apartment: this is evident in the script's description of his room, and in his brief introduction as a "full-blooded Chinese [man] smoking a long opium pipe."<sup>309</sup> The "Chinaman" was a popular villain in domestic fiction, a figure depicted as a threat to innocent white women. Furthermore, this set-up plays on typical white American anxieties concerning interracial sexual relations. The lack of Chinese women as a result of exclusion led to a largely unfounded fear of "lustful Chinese bachelors harming white women."<sup>310</sup> This fear is evinced in detective fiction, as seen in "The Yellow Claw" by Sax Rohmer, published in the New York magazine *Detective Story* (see fig. 2.15). The front cover illustrates the Chinese man's sly, malevolent, predatory nature through the yellow hand, and a white woman put in danger by him. The emerging genre of detective pulp fiction traded hugely on this stereotype in the early twentieth century; this genre, and the iconic villain Fu Manchu, are discussed further in Chapter 2. Compared to the white female victim stereotype of "yellow peril" literature, here a *Chinese* woman must save herself from the threat posed by a Chinese man. Lily's name also suggests that there is a "whiteness" about her. Consequently, "yellow peril" fears attached to the Chinese are gendered as masculine. Moreover, tea as an accomplice to Lily's crime stresses the depiction of Lily as above all else, a *woman* in danger due to the brew's location in the domestic lives of Chinese and white American women. Race is side-lined for women and puts forward the question: if tea can be accepted into U.S. culture and commerce, then why can't Lily? The injustice of Lily's vulnerability and desperation as a Chinese woman trapped by U.S. sexist and racist social and economic limitations is what tea challenges the reader to consider.

To persuade Lily to sell her daughter to one of his brothel's customers, Chin Tau describes to Lily what they will do with the money they make, the eventual goal being to one day go "to other climes than this money-grubbing land. I will take thee over the seas to the lotos country where we will do nothing but love."<sup>311</sup> To this cheerful image Lily agrees with "everything," and to this response he says "Then, my Love, we will have tea."<sup>312</sup> Lily tricks Chin into thinking all is

---

<sup>309</sup> Jakobi, *Chinese Lily*, 558.

<sup>310</sup> Moran, *Interracial Intimacy*, 33.

<sup>311</sup> Jakobi, *Chinese Lily*, 562.

<sup>312</sup> Jakobi, *Chinese Lily*, 562.

well and decides that she must protect her daughter at all costs. This decision is evident in her horrified response to the idea of selling her daughter: the stage directions tell us that “her hands clench[ed],” “her body [grew] rigid,” and after Chin says the word “kill,” her eyes “blaz[ed]” as she “stare[d] at Chin Tau, fascinated.”<sup>313</sup> Lily utilises the domesticity of the tea ceremony to her advantage. The stage directions read:

*Lily prepares it on the small table near the couch. She stands behind Chin Tau to pour it. He raises his hand over his head and puts his arm around her neck. She bends over him. Suddenly she has an inspiration. As she bends she takes the end of his long queue in her hand. Rapidly she winds it round his neck and with superhuman strength strangles him. The action is so rapid he is taken completely off guard. As he is strangling, the lights lower.*<sup>314</sup>

Tea is temptingly placed in a location that could be domesticated by Lily; the drink also alludes to the possible future Lily could have in China if she followed Chin Tau’s plan; however, she is not interested in his plans. The image of the subservient woman serving tea accentuates how Chin Tau underestimates Lily. She uses his ignorance of her capabilities and motives by relaxing him with a domestic custom; she creates a situation where she has the advantage of surprise. Tea’s position as a custom that places women in servile positions is subverted.

---

<sup>313</sup> Jakobi, *Chinese Lily*, 561-562.

<sup>314</sup> Jakobi, *Chinese Lily*, 562.

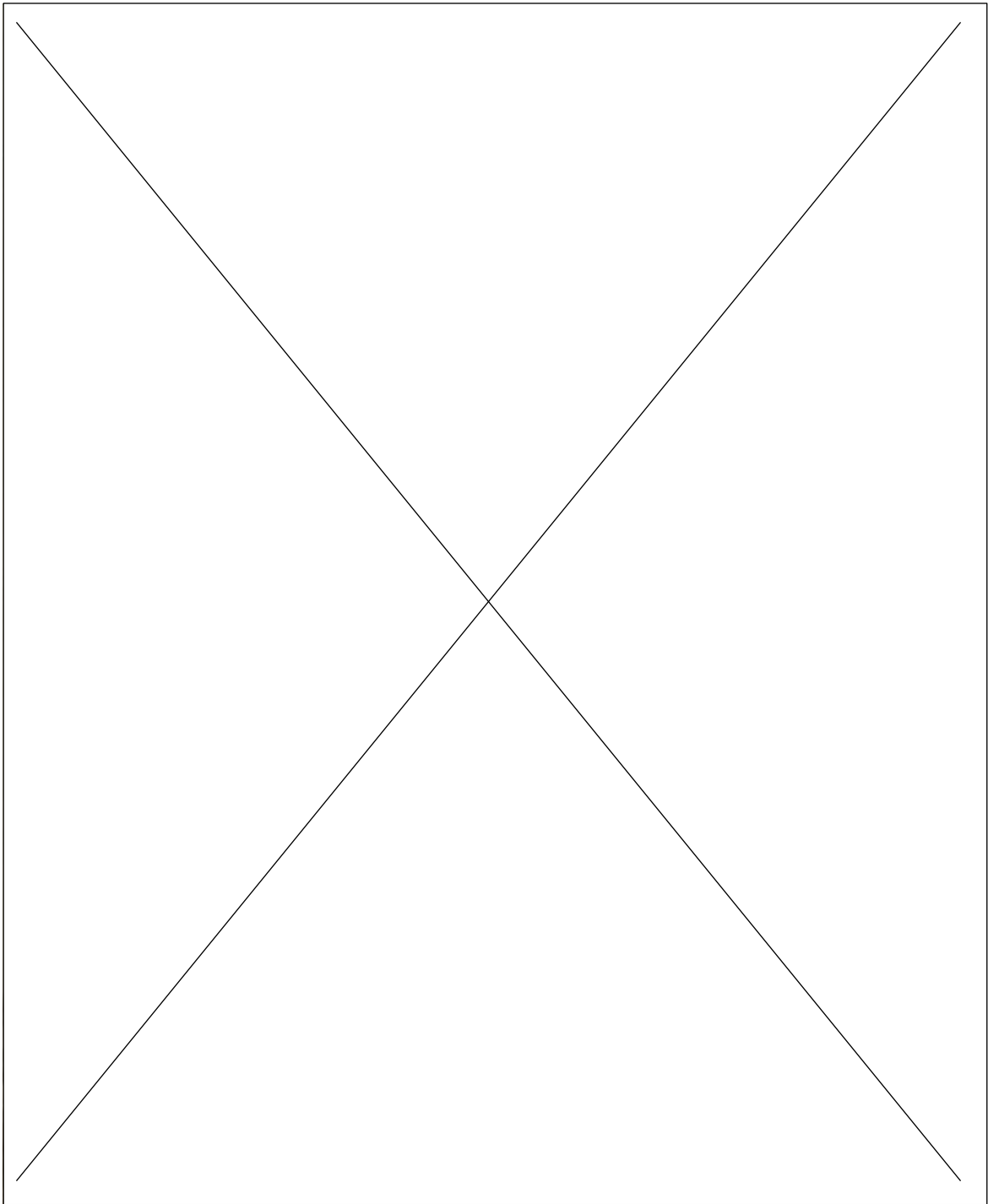


Figure 2.16 The front cover illustration of the satirical magazine *Puck*, October 1898. The caption at the bottom, “The Pigtail Has Got To Go,” plays on the popular anti-Chinese slogan “the Chinese must go.” The queue is used to represent Chinese culture as uncivilised as Lady Liberty cuts off the queue with “worn-out tradition” inscribed on the queue, and “19<sup>th</sup> century progress” inscribed on the scissors.

Chin Tau’s strangulation by his queue presents him as the ridiculed, cartoonish figure of “yellow peril” illustrations (see fig. 2.16). The queue was used throughout this period to represent Chinese men as foreign, feminine, and



unworthy of acceptance. Thus, his position changes from one of fear to one of mockery.<sup>315</sup> In melodrama the queue was “the key signifier of Chinese particularity” and feminised the Chinese male.<sup>316</sup> In 1901 the *Wasp* published a satirical illustration where the Chinese queue became an “American plait”; in it a white girl cuts off a Chinese man’s queue and attaches it to her head.<sup>317</sup> This trend continued, as seen in 1908 when the *New York Times* reported that a shipment of 1 tonne of queues were coming to the United States “to build up the pompadours of American girls.”<sup>318</sup>

The appropriation of the queue became a form of mockery and disdain.<sup>319</sup> However, the feminising role of the queue was arguably preferable in comparison to the popular presentation of Chinese men as beastly and evil. Thus, the queue makes Chin Tau appear effeminate and vulnerable. His feminisation through the focus on his queue and physical vulnerability portrays the idea that Chinese men are “inferior” to white men. The use of his queue to strangle him, and tea enabling Lily to do it, present how his loyalty to Chinese culture is his downfall. His queue marks his loyalty to his heritage, and, as such, a reason why he is heavily excluded from U.S. society and commerce; ultimately, this predicament leads him into his current profession and his subsequent strangulation. The positioning of a gendered performance through Lily serving tea, however, shows how arbitrary the division of roles and power is for genders. What should place her in a demure position gives her the opportunity to break away from expectations and seize power.

Jakobi’s ridicule of the white male clientele which supplies the demand for the immoral businesses of Chinatown is presented through the character of Count Romanoff, the man who wishes to buy Janey, Lily’s daughter. As his name suggests, his position plays on the villainous Eastern European Count figure in

---

<sup>315</sup> Peter Brook, “Melodrama, Body, Revolution,” in *Melodrama: Stage Picture Screen*, ed. Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook, and Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1994), 19.

<sup>316</sup> Sean Metzger, *Chinese Looks: Fashion Performance, Race* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2014), 28.

<sup>317</sup> “How a Chinese Queue Became an American Plait,” *Wasp*, December 21, 1901, quoted in Amy Sueyoshi, “Mindful Masquerades: Que(e)rying Japanese Immigrant Dress in Turn-of-the-Century San Francisco,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 26, no. 3 (2005): 85-86, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4137374>.

<sup>318</sup> “Tons of Pigtailed Here: Cargo to Build Up the Pompadours of American Girls,” *New York Times*, June 22, 1908, 4.

<sup>319</sup> Also seen on a nineteenth century trade card where a Chinese male figure is the shadow of a white woman, with her bonnet’s ribbon appearing like the queue, the card is captioned: “a queer shadow,” reproduced in Metrick-Chen, *Collecting Objects/Excluding People*, 214.

Victorian melodrama, a role archetypally played by Count Dracula. His name, Romanoff, also ties in with this idea of Eastern European power as it brings to mind the royal Russian House of the Romanovs. Therefore, the position of the Chinese as the villainous group is somewhat undercut by the inclusion of this equally caricatured figure. Furthermore, the melodrama creates comedic representations of villains involved in human trafficking and therefore lessens the gravity of Jakobi's political message about women's enslavement and punishment.

In prison, Lily meets a number of white prostitutes, many of whom she has worked with. Through reconnecting with these women, Lily lives up to the stereotype of the evil Chinese dragon lady and brothel owner.<sup>320</sup> However, social and economic limitations, not people, are shown to be to blame, especially regarding the actions of women. Lily comes face-to-face with her stereotyping when her daughter tells her how devastated she was when she found out that Lily "kept girls [and is] no good."<sup>321</sup> Tea highlights the similarities in women's oppression across ethnicities, and how circumstances, and not women themselves, are the creators of ill repute.

## Conclusion

The fear that tea was a dangerous substance should not be understated. The article, "Teetotalism and Tea-Tippling" (1919), also raised concerns that China might be making the United States a nation of "tea tipplers" to get revenge on them for introducing the cigarette to the Chinese just as China was "shaking herself free from slavery to the Indian poppy."<sup>322</sup> There were also concerns that tea was poisonous to the white American body. A couple of months after the publication of this article, the *Literary Digest* published an article called "Science and Invention: Dr. Wiley on Tea and Coffee Topers" (1910) which criticized the false and misleading information published about tea, specifically in *The Literary*

---

<sup>320</sup> The stereotype of the dragon lady is explored further in Chapter 4. Also see Linda Trinh Võ and Marian Sciachitano, "Introduction: Moving beyond 'Exotics, Whores, and Nimble Fingers,'" in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 21, no. 1-2 (January 2000): 7, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3347027>.

<sup>321</sup> Jakobi, *Chinese Lily*, 565.

<sup>322</sup> "Teetotalism and Tea-Tippling," *The Literary Digest*, 29.

*Digest*.<sup>323</sup> The article quotes several men, many in the tea industry and/or of British origin, who consider tea to be like any other substance, stating that nothing should be consumed in excess, and in a healthy amount tea is good for your constitution. To quell fears, the repeated message of the article was that, even if tea was bad for your health, not enough was consumed in the United States to inflict damage, with the British faring very well on the brew and consuming six times more per capita than the United States.

The mixed messages about tea, and the idea of limited consumption, align with racial fears surrounding the Chinese as an invading race that could taint the U.S. population if allowed. While Kenyon uses tea to present the inscrutable Chinese as a homogenised group, Sui Sin Far was concerned with individual Chinese subjects. In “Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian” she writes “Individuality is more than nationality. [...] I give my right hand to the Occidentals and my left to the Orientals, hoping that between them they will not utterly destroy the insignificant ‘connecting link’. And that’s all.”<sup>324</sup> Sui Sin Far and Jakobi in their work, set in domestic settings, depict tea to counteract its literary use to support white supremacy. Instead, the writers portray tea-drinking to create a location where sexism and racism are mostly side-lined and shown to be damaging, with the authors’ focus on narrating the story of Chinese women deserving of acceptance and a home.

Periodicals highlighted that the United States was not a place for the Chinese. Xiao-Huang Lin notes that “The writing of early Chinese immigrants is a record of plea and protest—a plea for tolerance and a protest against mistreatment and discrimination.”<sup>325</sup> Sui Sin Far and Jakobi include tea scenes in their fiction to contest the exclusion and demonisation of the Chinese women in the United States, and the strength to be found in white American women and Chinese women immigrants if they join together to fight against their exclusion from full participation in national life.

---

<sup>323</sup> “Science and Invention: Dr. Wiley on Tea and Coffee Topers,” *The Literary Digest*, November 19, 1910, 927.

<sup>324</sup> Sui Sin Far, “Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian (1909),” in *Before They Could Vote: American Women’s Autobiographical Writing, 1819–1919*, ed. Sidonie A. Smith and Julia Watson (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 418.

<sup>325</sup> Xiao-huang Yin, *Chinese American Literature Since the 1850s* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 11.

## Chapter 2

### Age of Exclusion II

#### “A Little Mystery, a Little Spice”: Tea in Pulp Fiction and Chinese American Autobiographies, 1924-1945

SerendipiTea in Manhasset, New York, won third place in the 2015 North American Tea Championships (known since 2017 as the Global Tea Championships) in the blended green tea category with their Charlie Chan Cha.<sup>326</sup> SerendipiTea describe this tea as “Light, aromatic, yet a presence without doubt. A little mystery, a little spice, citrus & cool mint make for a thriller experience to die for.”<sup>327</sup> The tea is named after the popular and effeminate fictional Chinese American detective, Charlie Chan, created by Earl Derr Biggers (b.1884, d.1933) in 1925. Biggers published six Charlie Chan novels between 1925 and 1932. These stories were quickly adapted for the screen; in total, forty-seven Hollywood films were produced between 1926 and 1949. The establishment of the People’s Republic of China, and the development of the Cold War, brought Chan’s fictional career as a beloved Chinese American detective to an end. The representation of Chinese Americans as good or bad depended troublingly on the relationship between China and the United States. As such, the escalating friction between communist China and the United States led to U.S. detective fiction turning its attention to scheming Chinese villains rather than the effeminate, ethnically tolerable crime-solver embodied by Charlie Chan.<sup>328</sup>

In Biggers’s second Charlie Chan novel, *The Chinese Parrot* (1926), tea-drinking presents Charlie Chan as effeminate and foreign, with the possibility of him being a “yellow peril” threat negated due to his association with tea. The description of Charlie Chan Cha as “a little mystery, a little spice,” draws on the detective’s popular legacy in the twenty first century, as he is associated with a commodity that provides a thrill, but which poses no undue threat as it is “little,”

---

<sup>326</sup> SerendipiTea, “Award Winning Teas and Tisanes,” accessed June 30, 2020, <https://www.serendipitea.com/product/CharlieChan.html>.

<sup>327</sup> SerendipiTea, “Award Winning Teas and Tisanes.”

<sup>328</sup> Yunte Huang, *Charlie Chan: The Untold Story of the Honorable Detective and His Rendezvous with American History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 269.

contained, and not a foreign threat because it is created and sold by a U.S. company. Furthermore, in the 1920s and 1930s, despite efforts to masculinise tea in the United States through advertisements, tea's growing association with domesticity and effeminacy continued.<sup>329</sup> The feminisation of Chinese men in literature, through commodities like tea, was used to undermine their masculinity, worth, and culture, as, during the first half of the twentieth century, femininity was associated with the concept of women being the *naturally* inferior sex.

In the 1970s, the on-going impact of Chinese American men's feminisation in U.S. culture was explored in Frank Chin's "feminisation thesis." Chin argued that the mainstream "white stereotype of the [Chinese man is] completely devoid of manhood. Our nobility is that of an efficient housewife" who is "womanly, effeminate, devoid of all the traditionally masculine qualities of originality, daring [and] physical courage."<sup>330</sup> Chin uses Charlie Chan and Fu Manchu as examples of the damaging and popular images of Chinese men lacking masculinity, with both characters part of the process David Eng calls "racial castration."<sup>331</sup> The feminisation of Chinese men in the twentieth century led to writers, including Pardee Lowe, rigidly expressing patriarchy in their writing in order to restore Chinese manhood; this literary approach was often to the detriment of women's rights and their fights for equality; as a result, Chinese American writers often found themselves having to "choose a side," and explore either masculinist or feminist concerns in their work.

In this chapter I analyse how scenes featuring tea in pulp fiction, specifically in the Charlie Chan novel *The Chinese Parrot* (1926), allow us to track the role of tea in the feminisation of Chinese men in U.S. culture. The chapter goes on to explore how, in response to this feminisation, the tea ceremonies in the Chinese American autobiographies *Father and Glorious Descendant* (1943) by Pardee Lowe (b. 1904, d. 1996) and *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1945) by Jade Snow Wong (b. 1922, d. 2006), explore masculinity, femininity, and what it means to be American. Lowe depicts the masculinity of Chinese American men and the

---

<sup>329</sup> Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*, 285

<sup>330</sup> Frank Chin and Jeffery Paul Chan, "Racist Love," in *Seeing through Shuck*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Ballantine, 1972), 68.

<sup>331</sup> Jeffery Paul Chan, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong, introduction to *The Big Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature*, ed. Jeffery Paul Chan, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong (New York: Meridian, 1991), xii; Eng, *Racial Castration*, 93.

patriarchy of Chinatowns through tea scenes. In response to patriarchal narratives, Wong uses fictional tea ceremonies to reject the process of oppressing women to prove Chinese American men's worth, and repudiates the view of women as the subservient, dependent sex—a position the brew has helped present in Chinese American and white American culture. Furthermore, Wong and Lowe highlight the “Americanness” of their parents through depictions of tea-drinking, and they dismiss the idea of the Chinese in the United States as a group open to ridicule due to the perceived countless differences between Chinese American and white American society.

Contrary to tea's location in masculine settings in Chinese culture, tea was used to feminise Chinese men in literature due to its signification as “feminine” in white U.S. society. For centuries U.S. literature had presented tea as capable of draining men of their masculinity. Two books located in eighteenth-century New England libraries, including Benjamin Franklin's library, warned against the ill effects of tea on masculinity:<sup>332</sup> *A Treatise on Tobacco, Tea, Coffee, and Chocolate* (1746) by Simon Paulli sees tea-drinking as, in effect, “bleeding” the drinker of masculine vigour;<sup>333</sup> *An Essay on Tea* (1756) by Jonas Hanway, also expresses a fear of tea's feminising properties, the unmanliness of the Chinese, and how, as a “WISE, ACTIVE, and WARLIKE nation,” the United States must reject tea.<sup>334</sup> Lowe writes against this prevailing narrative and presents tea scenes that serve to highlight the masculine strength, courage, and culture of the Chinese in the United States.

In the 1930s United States Tea Bureaus were set up as offices and information centres where tea traders and consumers could gain knowledge about tea—from its production and distribution to its history.<sup>335</sup> Research conducted by Elmo Roper and analysed by Earl Newsom (who opened the first Tea Bureau in New York City in 1936), found that many American men considered hot tea a “sissy's drink” in the late 1930s.<sup>336</sup> This idea can be traced

---

<sup>332</sup> Frank, “The Art of Tea,” 40.

<sup>333</sup> Simon Paulli, *A Treatise on Tobacco, Tea, Coffee, and Chocolate*, trans. D. Jones (London, 1746), quoted in Beth Kowalski-Wallace, “Tea, Gender, and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century England,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 23 (1994): 131-45, 136, DOI: 10.1353/sec.2010.0065. The text can be found in many American libraries, which suggests, as Frank points out, the likelihood of its popularity during the colonial period. Frank, “The Art of Tea,” 40.

<sup>334</sup> Jonas Hanway, *An Essay on Tea* (London: H. Woodfall, 1756), 213.

<sup>335</sup> Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*, 284.

<sup>336</sup> Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*, 284.

back to the 1750s, and was strengthened through colonial revival culture and the rise of tea rooms. Other Chinese customs and attire were also coded as feminine: for instance, in the press their queues were made equivalent to girls' pigtails and their pinyins were considered just like dresses.<sup>337</sup>

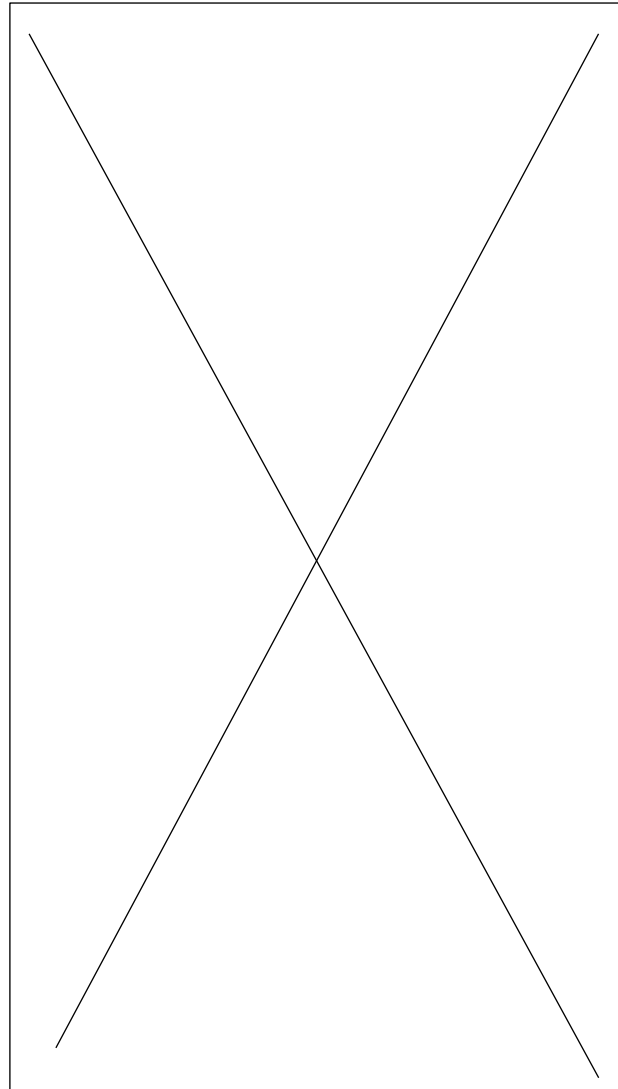


Figure 3.1 “Turn to Tea.” Tea Tells the World (London: International Tea Market Expansion Board, 1937), 7.

During the 1930s a main aim of U.S. tea business was to align tea with masculine identities, for instance, with American footballers and ideas of vitality and strength (see fig. 3.1).<sup>338</sup> The advert above was part of the U.S. “Tea Revives You” campaign led by Bill Esty, Earl Newsom, and their co-workers at the

---

<sup>337</sup> Metzger, *Chinese Looks*, 27; “Tons of Pigtails Here,” *New York Times*, 4.

<sup>338</sup> Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*, 285.

International Tea Market Expansion Board (ITMEB).<sup>339</sup> Esty was a top executive at the advertising firm J. Walter Thompson. The purpose of ITMEB, set up in 1935, was to find ways to globally promote the consumption of British and Dutch colonial teas grown in countries like India and Ceylon (now known as Sri Lanka).<sup>340</sup> They decided to try and work with and against U.S. tea-related prejudices. One way to do this in the United States, they thought, was to masculinise and modernise the brew in U.S. society. However, these efforts were largely in vain as the main clientele for tea in the United States continued to be women. The campaign did acknowledge their current marketplace, with most of their posters presenting tea as integral to a feminine British culture that bourgeois American women are visibly shown to appreciate.<sup>341</sup>

The position of tea as a feminine drink serves to aid in the feminisation of Chinese men. Part I outlines why and how Chinese men were feminised in this period, explores the treatment of Chinese American and Chinese immigrants during this time, and considers the genres present in this chapter. Part II focuses on the use of tea to help create the stereotype of the effeminate Chinese man in popular fiction during the 1920s; I analyse how Earl Derr Biggers in his second Charlie Chan pulp fiction novel, *The Chinese Parrot*, harnesses tea to feminise the detective. The analysis of Charlie Chan shows why, during the 1930s and 1940s, relocating the brew into locations of Chinese patriarchy in literature held particular significance. I then examine how Pardee Lowe responds to the feminisation of Chinese men in his autobiography *Father and Glorious Descendant*. Lowe reclaims and places tea in locations and social scenarios that present gender norms, or into all male locations to communicate the courage of Chinese men and the patriarchal structure of Chinese American society. In doing so, I argue that, through masculinising the beverage, Lowe creates Chinese male heroes and rejects the suffocating stereotypes of the Chinese villain or effeminate sidekick.

The process of masculinising Chinese men in literature rested heavily on characterising women as the submissive sex. Part III explores how Jade Snow Wong, in her autobiography *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, responds to how the

---

<sup>339</sup> Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*, 284.

<sup>340</sup> Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*, 268, 282, 284.

<sup>341</sup> Rappaport, *Thirst for Empire*, 285.



reclamation of Chinese masculinity relied on Chinese American women being understood as invisible, silent, and/or submissive. Lowe's descriptions of his mother's and wife's interaction with Chinese tea ceremonies provides an example of the rhetoric Wong rejects through her own autobiographical descriptions of tea ceremonies. I investigate how, through tea ceremonies, Wong presents the way women, both Chinese and white American, have been pushed into performing their perceived "natural" and submissive domesticity. She uses the brew to show that Chinese women deserve and desire the same freedoms white women were fighting for, such as the freedom to be financially independent and to work outside domestic settings (a cause explored in Sui Sin Far's "The Inferior Woman" analysed in Chapter 1). Fictional tea ceremonies are fundamental in the process of dismantling gendered restrictions, as they highlight women's shared battle for liberty across ethnic divides, and the independence of thought and ambition present in Chinese American women. To a great extent, therefore, this chapter extends the analysis of Chapter 1, arguing that through tea scenes in literature, Chinese American writers continue to present Chinese American women as worthy of acceptance and respect due to the characters' rejection of gendered expectations. However, this chapter differs from Chapter 1 by exploring the heightened feminisation of Chinese American men during the 1930s and 1940s, the presentation of tea scenes in Chinese American literature to depict the strength of Chinese American patriarchy, and the employment of tea ceremonies to express the challenges to cultural identity faced by second-generation Chinese Americans.

Throughout the twentieth century a popular idea in circulation was that second-generation Chinese Americans wanted to reject their heritage to become "fully American": an assimilation process which characterised all those embracing their Chinese heritage as alien and incompatible with U.S. identity. A WPA guide to San Francisco in the 1930s stated that "Old Chinatown watches with silent disapproval the departure of its youth and its children from the ancient customs."<sup>342</sup> The autobiographies of Wong and Lowe are considered to characterise this process of assimilation, as scholars, including Frank Chin, have designated them as authors who depart from their Chinese heritage, value white

---

<sup>342</sup> Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration, *San Francisco in the 1930s: The WPA Guide to the City by the Bay* (California: University of California Press, 2011), 222.

American culture above all, and strive to attain complete acceptance through being as culturally white as possible.<sup>343</sup> However, Part IV contends that Wong and Lowe do not uphold the concept of needing to alienate themselves from their heritage and the older generation to become “American.” Instead, I examine how they strive to discredit reductive stereotypes of Chinese Americans by providing autobiographical *proof* of their own and their family’s “Americanness”; they do this by emphasising the similarities between Chinese American and white American society, respecting their differences, and showing how Chinese and white Americans have an equal claim to individuality, hybridity, and a U.S. identity. Both authors depict this through tea—a shared cultural commodity used by white and Chinese Americans—to elicit understanding and admiration by portraying the accommodation for change, welcoming of cultural diversity, and respect between generations within the Chinese American community.

### I. The Leniency Era

Prior to investigating the texts central to this chapter, it is important to consider the position of the Chinese politically, economically, and socially within the United States during this era. In an age of continued misunderstandings on the part of white America about the Chinese, the Immigration Act of 1924 built upon the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1904 by further decreasing the number of Chinese immigrants permitted to enter the United States. The ongoing prominence of anti-Chinese sentiment in the nation is reflected in the Act’s repercussions: in 1924 more Chinese people left than entered the United States.<sup>344</sup> A resurgence in Sinophobia took place twenty-five years later when Mao rose to power in 1949. His chairmanship led to people of Chinese ancestry in the United States being categorised as potential communist threats. The house arrest and deportation of scientist Qian Xuesen is one example of the targeted mistreatment experienced

---

<sup>343</sup> Patricia Chu, “Chinatown Life as Contested Terrain: H. T. Tsiang, Jade Snow Wong, and C. Y. Lee,” in *Part II – The Exclusion Era, World War II, and the Immediate Postwar Era*, ed. Rajini Srikanth and Min Hyoung Song (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 158.

<sup>344</sup> Michael C. LeMay, *Guarding the Gates of Immigration and National Security* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2006), 23.

by Chinese Americans and Chinese immigrants during the McCarthyist “Red Scare” years.<sup>345</sup>

Though the period between 1924 and 1949 is bookended by intensified anti-Chinese sentiment, it is important to acknowledge the greater levels of tolerance experienced by Chinese Americans in the lead up to, and in the initial years following, World War II. Scholars have not studied the twenty-five years between 1924 and 1949 as a discrete period in Chinese American history. I have decided to name this period the “Leniency era” because the Chinese in the United States, though still subjected to legal exclusion, experienced levels of forbearance denied to their immigrant forefathers.

The new levels of tolerance enjoyed by the Chinese in the United States are reflected in the increased feminisation of Chinese men in U.S. literature. Chapter 1 investigates the representation of Chinese men in U.S. literature as exotic, villainous, and at times, effeminate. In this chapter, I explore the heightened feminisation of Chinese men in U.S. texts. The representation of Chinese men as ominous and mysterious is almost wiped out and largely replaced by feminised subjects; this process was enabled by the absence of Chinese women from representations in print culture, and the recasting of the archetypal East Asian villain as predominantly Japanese.<sup>346</sup> The continued lack of women in “yellow peril” fiction meant that Chinese men could not assert their presumed masculine superiority over the “inferior” sex; instead, they were pushed into the domestic positions women were supposed to occupy, and shown to be the antithesis of superior white masculinity. The array of silent Chinese male restaurant servers in pulp magazines such as *Argosy* were joined by effeminate detectives and cooks as prime examples of the new popular portrayal of the Chinese as characterising the “good,” but still alien, Asian. The emergence of the “Good Asian” resulted in a movement away from the “yellow peril” Chinese stereotypes of the early twentieth century, and a popularisation of the domestic effeminate Chinese male stereotype in the late 1920s to late 1940s. This transformation was supported by international relations and perspectives, with the Chinese population of the United States becoming a tolerated minority

---

<sup>345</sup> Peter H. Koehn and Xiao-huang Yin, *The Expanding Roles of Chinese Americans in U.S.-China Relations* (Oxford: Routledge, 2015), 211-212.

<sup>346</sup> Jachinson Chan, *Chinese American Masculinities: from Fu Manchu to Bruce Lee* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), 52.

because their ancestral land now shared the same enemy as the United States: the Japanese. Thus, as the writer Erika Lee notes, “Americans needed to unlearn their long-standing habit of viewing and treating all ‘Orientals’ [in] the same [alienated and unwelcoming way,] and instead distinguish the ‘good’ ones from the ‘bad’ ones.”<sup>347</sup>

The success of Pearl S. Buck’s novel *The Good Earth* (1931) reflects the growing sympathy and understanding felt towards the Chinese at this time. The novel, about a Chinese peasant and his wife who struggle through political upheaval, famine, human greed, and cruelty, was a bestseller in 1931 and 1932, won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1932, and played a pivotal role in Buck winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1938.<sup>348</sup> Additionally, her commendations complement the political motives of the United States, since the nation wished to portray friendly and sympathetic relations with the Chinese as Japan in the 1930s appeared to be a growing threat due to the country’s militarisation, expansionist policy, and invasion of China in 1937.

Set roughly between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, *The Good Earth* tells the story of Wang Lung and his family’s journey from rags to riches. There is physical and emotional suffering throughout the narrative, caused by many factors, including starvation, gluttony, sickness, and immorality (for instance, matrimonial betrayal). The characters in *The Good Earth*, like its Great Depression-era contemporary readers, desperately wanted financial security and abundant harvests. The similarities between the Chinese and the novel’s readers are stressed through the novel’s tea-drinking scenes. Buck’s novel provides an example of how impactful tea’s literary portrayals might be at this time. The procurement of tea in the novel is constantly attached to achieving financial stability. The protagonist, Wang Lung, repeatedly states that his aim is to make enough money to live in comfort, a condition which is characterised by having tea leaves to drink, for “if the earth were fruitful there would be tea leaves in the water.”<sup>349</sup> When his wife O-lan first arrives, discovering how comfortable their living situation is rests on her question

---

<sup>347</sup> Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History*, 254.

<sup>348</sup> Hilary Spurling, *Pearl Buck in China: Journey to The Good Earth* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 9, 193.

<sup>349</sup> Pearl Buck, *The Good Earth* (New York: John Day, 1931; London: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 3, 353. Citations refer to the 1997 edition.

“are there to be tea leaves in [the hot water]?” and Wang Lung wishes he could reply “certainly” but instead responds with the white lie “it makes [my father’s] cough worse.”<sup>350</sup> It is only later on, as their wealth accumulates, that tea becomes an everyday beverage which is symbolically at the centre of their being able to afford comfort in their home with the purchase of a “red clay teapot.”<sup>351</sup>

Tea also symbolises the morality of a character in *The Good Earth*: after Wang Lung commits adultery, he cannot drink the tea his wife has prepared for him.<sup>352</sup> Wang Lung’s inability to drink the brew emphasises how the tea in the home represents his wife’s sacrifices and her commitment to raising and supporting their family. In both cultures, tea is attached to comfortable domestic settings, with tea ceremonies communicating the assumed role of women as the chief creators of a home. The positioning of tea in the novel, during a time when in both nations securing a modest living and enjoying home comforts was a luxury, serves as a pivotal example of how Buck designed her Chinese characters to elicit sympathy from her readers.

The novel’s success, and the relatively informed perspective it supplied about the Chinese, did not mean that the popular portrayals of Chinese Americans in literature, visual culture, and film as brothel owners, drug dealers, and gang members disappeared; instead, the Chinese, who were presented in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as an invading horde threatening the breeding and livelihood of the white populace, were largely transformed into easily beaten menaces or comic sidekicks. In November 1935, the editors of the *Chinese Digest* (the first Chinese American newspaper in English) lamented that pulp magazines and Hollywood kept alive misconceptions of the Chinese as unassimilable through stories of “hatchetmen,” “vices,” “iniquity,” and “sing song girls”;<sup>353</sup> the editors exclaimed that “no people in America [were] more misunderstood than the Chinese.”<sup>354</sup>

The Chinese realised that no matter how many years they, or their family, had lived in the United States, this did not make them American in the eyes of the general public. As a result, the *Chinese Digest* promoted Buck’s depiction of

---

<sup>350</sup> Buck, *The Good Earth*, 25-26.

<sup>351</sup> Buck, *The Good Earth*, 57, 142, 143.

<sup>352</sup> Buck, *The Good Earth*, 176.

<sup>353</sup> “Why the Digest?,” *Chinese Digest*, November 15, 1935, 8; “Secrets of Chinatown,” *Chinese Digest*, November 22, 1935, 12.

<sup>354</sup> “Why the Digest?” *Chinese Digest*, 8.

the civilised, compassionate, and complex people of China, and tracked the filming, Chinese casting (though the main roles were filled by white actors), and 1937 release of the “super-spectacle” and “gigantic” film production based on the novel.<sup>355</sup> The film won two Oscars, one for best actress in a leading role which went to German-American-British actress, Luise Rainer, and the other for best cinematography, which went to German cinematographer, Karl Freund. Due to the success of the novel and film, the editors of *Chinese Digest* believed that they had seen a positive change in the white American treatment of the Chinese, and they hoped to soon be considered equal human beings, and as American as their white neighbours.<sup>356</sup>

Just over a month after the release of *The Good Earth* film, the *Chinese Digest* published a whole issue predominantly focused on the film. The issue featured a front page, numerous articles, and reviews all referring to the film.<sup>357</sup> The editors, however, stressed that just because the March 1937 issue is a “Good Earth number” it does not mean they “have succumbed to the fascination and glamour of Hollywood.”<sup>358</sup> Indeed, they were very aware of how Hollywood, and pulp fiction, had profited from bringing to the screen many insulting Chinese stereotypes including “Celestial bogey[s].”<sup>359</sup> Their chief reason why this issue is focused on the film, they state, is because they “recognize that the motion picture [...] will, like the novel, do an immeasurable amount of good in eliciting western understanding of and sympathy for China and the Chinese.”<sup>360</sup>

The term “celestial” was used widely in the United States to refer to Chinese immigrants from the “Celestial Empire” (an archaic term for the Chinese Empire).<sup>361</sup> The concept of the Chinese as an alien race was exacerbated by the word’s other use as an adjective to describe things relating to the sky, space, and the otherworldly. This is evident in the *Chinese Digest*’s mission statement:

KILLING A CELESTIAL: There are no people in America more misunderstood than the Chinese. [...] The pulp magazines and Hollywood

---

<sup>355</sup> “Filming of ‘Good Earth’ to Start Soon,” *Chinese Digest*, December 13, 1935, 5; “Entertains Californians,” *Chinese Digest*, November 22, 1935, 5.

<sup>356</sup> “Editorial Notes” *Chinese Digest*, March, 1937, 23; “Secrets of Chinatown,” *Chinese Digest*, 12.

<sup>357</sup> “Good Earth Number,” *Chinese Digest*, March, 1937.

<sup>358</sup> “Editorial Notes,” *Chinese Digest*, 23.

<sup>359</sup> “Why the Digest?” *Chinese Digest*, 8.

<sup>360</sup> “Editorial Notes,” *Chinese Digest*, 23.

<sup>361</sup> Collins English Dictionary, “Celestial Empire,” accessed October 22, 2019, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/celestial-empire>.

have served to keep this illusion [of the sleepy, opium smoking Chinese] alive. The “Chinese Digest” is fighting to kill this Celestial bogey and substitute a normal being who drives automobiles, shops for the latest gadgets, and speaks good English.<sup>362</sup>

By “fighting to kill” the celestial villain, the *Chinese Digest* set out to present the Chinese as “normal” people; however, the publication did not critique in its brief publication history—November 1935 to September 1940—the rising characterisation of Chinese men as effeminate comical entities in pulp fiction.

Since Chinese Americans were still considered aliens, but now friendly ones, a literary position opened up for a new popular Chinese figure. The character who burst onto the pulp fiction page, then onto the screen, was Charlie Chan. The Charlie Chan stories were originally serialized in *The Saturday Evening Post* during the early 1920s, then they were published as novels and made into films from the late 1920s onwards. Charlie Chan steps away from the drearily familiar “Chinatown despots, bloodthirsty tong hatchet men, sensual sing-song girls, or comical Oriental houseboys” and is a likeable, chubby, effeminate, tea-drinking detective who wins over his readers through his quaint manner.<sup>363</sup> In pulp fiction he inhabits a position used to affirm white patriarchy and heroism; as a result, he fits perfectly into the genre because, as William Stowe summarises, Golden Age detective fiction “politically, morally, and epistemologically [...] affirm[s ...] social structures, moral codes, and ways of knowing.”<sup>364</sup> The Golden Age of detective fiction was in the 1920s and 1930s. Charlie Chan, as an emasculated and perpetually alienated entity, was the perfect nonthreatening antithesis against which to depict the superiority of white American men and patriarchy.

Pulp fiction is a type of popular fiction. The name comes from the cheap paper made from pulpwood upon which the pulp texts were printed. Interestingly, as Lee Server highlights, the name has come to mean more than this in both a

---

<sup>362</sup> “Why the Digest?” *Chinese Digest*, 8.

<sup>363</sup> Xiao-huang Yin, “Writing a Place in American Life: The Sensibilities of American-born Chinese as Reflected in Life Stories from the Exclusion Era,” in *Chinese American Transnationalism: The Flow of People, Resources, and Ideas between China and America during the Exclusion Era*, ed. Sucheng Chan (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 217.

<sup>364</sup> William W. Stowe, “Critical Investigations: Convention and Ideology in Detective Fiction,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 31, no. 4 (Winter 1989): 570, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40754910>.

categoric and aesthetic [sense]: pulp as a genus of imaginative reading matter distinguished by mass production, affordability, an intended audience of common as opposed to elite readers, a dependence on formula and genre; and pulp as a literature aimed at the pleasure centers of the reader, primarily concerned with sensation and escape, variously intended to excite, astonish, or arouse.<sup>365</sup>

With their sensational plot lines, detective work, and larger-than-life villains, the Charlie Chan mystery novels fit well into the genre. The appeal to a wide audience and the large distribution of the texts enabled Charlie Chan to become a household figure and eventually, a Hollywood sensation.

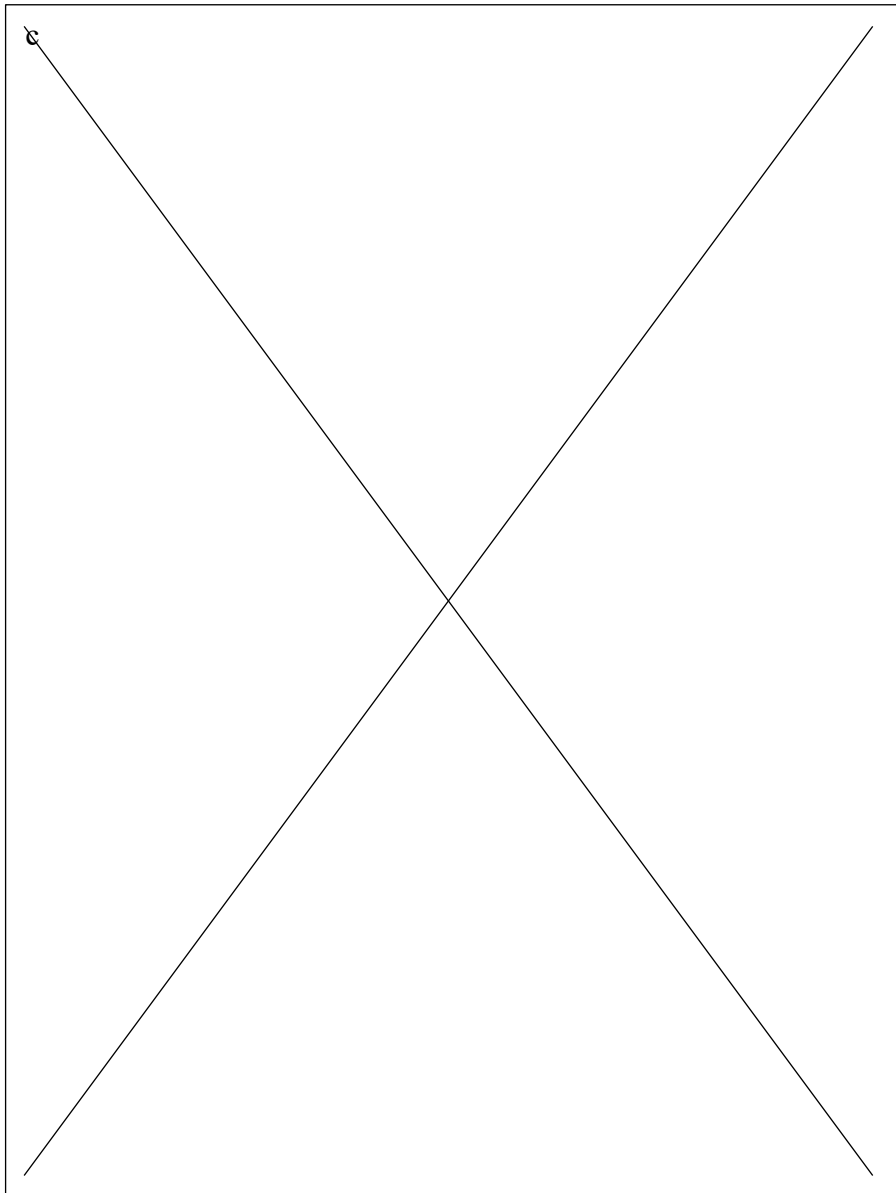


Figure 3.2 *Life's* "How to Tell Japs from the Chinese," December 22, 1941.

---

<sup>365</sup> Lee Server, introduction to *Encyclopedia of Pulp Fiction Writers*, ed. Lee Server (New York: Facts on Files, Inc., 2002), xi.



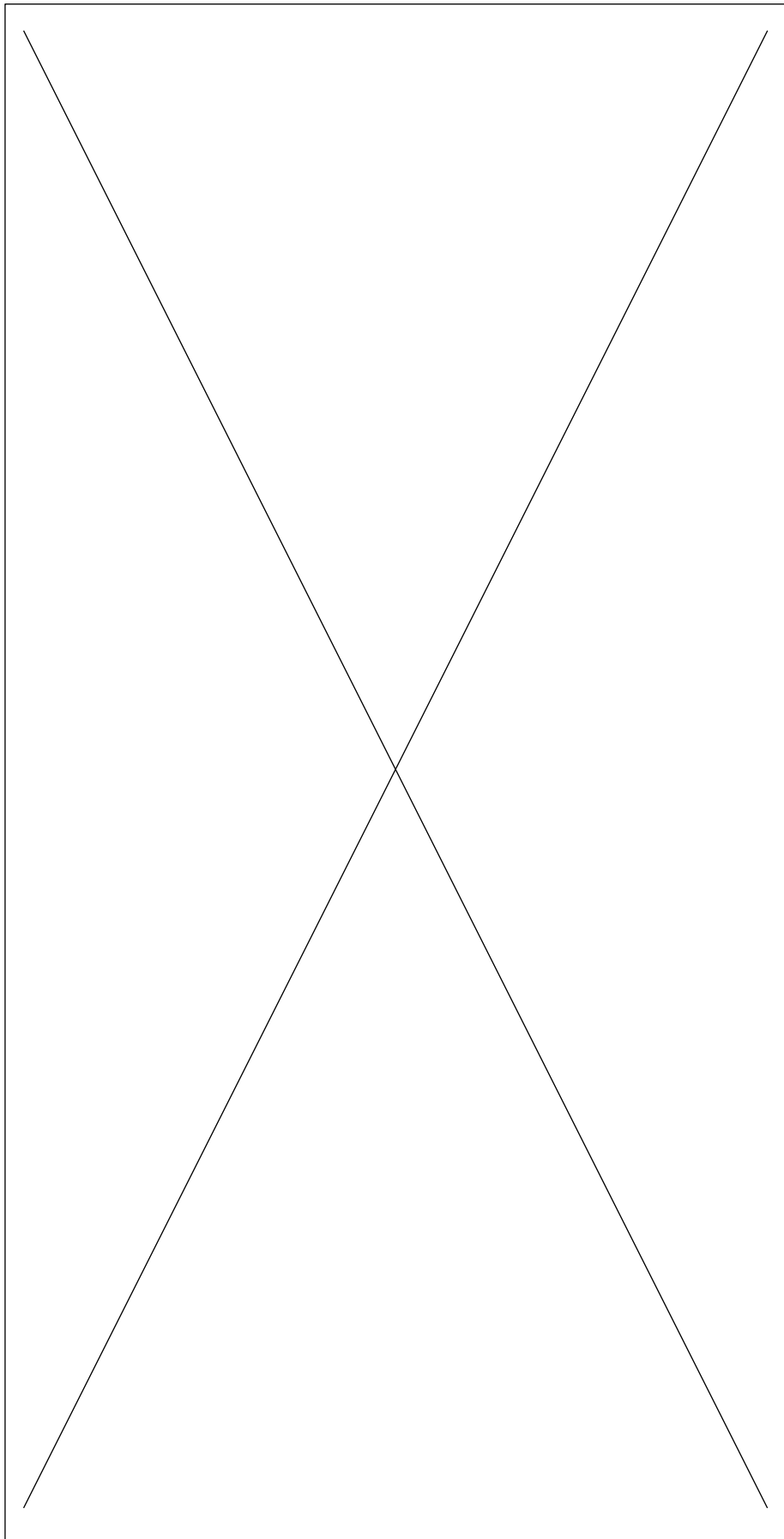


Figure 3.3 *Time's* "How to Tell Your Friends from the Japs,"  
December 22, 1941.

The abatement of the Chinese being considered an economic and social threat corresponded with the perception of Japan as an escalating danger to the United States throughout the 1930s. This culminated in 1941 with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The attack made Japan one of the nation's chief enemies. Thus, to an extent World War II led to a unity between the Chinese and white American populace over their shared enemies. Around 20% of the adult male Chinese population of the United States served in a branch of the U.S. military.<sup>366</sup> To present the change in attitudes towards homogenising East Asians, *Time* and *Life* magazines ran articles in 1941 that were guides to help readers physically distinguish between their Chinese "friends" and their enemy the "Japs."<sup>367</sup> *Life's* article annotates photographs: a photo of a "Chinese public servant" portrays the Chinese as feminine and western by having a "narrower face," "scant beard," and "lighter facial bones" with the caption reading that the "Chinese sometimes pass for Europeans"; this is compared to a pictured "Japanese warrior" who has a "flatter nose," "massive cheek and jawline," and a "heavy beard" (see fig. 3.2).<sup>368</sup> Similarly, *Time's* article lists the good and bad traits which will identify a Chinese or a Japanese man respectively (see fig. 3.3). The eventual Repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943, after the First Lady of China toured the United States, evidences the new levels of tolerance and respect felt towards the Chinese which characterised the 1930s and 1940s.

In some spheres, tolerance and respect were coupled with remorse for the century of exclusion experienced by the Chinese. One American congressman from Missouri stated in 1943 that, if it weren't for the attack on Pearl Harbour, the United States would not have "discovered the saintly qualities of the Chinese people."<sup>369</sup> The regret expressed by President Roosevelt and others, however, was fuelled by the knowledge that good relations with China would help the

---

<sup>366</sup> Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History*, 255.

<sup>367</sup> "How to Tell Japs from the Chinese," *LIFE*, December 22, 1941, 81. Reproduced on *Anthropology*, accessed July 3, 2019, <https://anthropology.net/2007/08/06/life-magazines-1941-article-how-to-tell-japs-from-the-chinese/>; "How to Tell Your Friends from the Japs," *Time*, December 22, 1941, 33. Reproduced on *Chicago Monitor*, accessed 12 April, 2019, <https://chicagomonitor.com/2012/08/how-to-tell-your-friends-from-the-japs-in-time-1941-vs-turban-primer-in-redeye-2012/>.

<sup>368</sup> "How to Tell Japs from the Chinese," 81.

<sup>369</sup> 78<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 1943, Vol. 89, Part 6, 8594, quoted in Shehong Chen, "Chinese American Experiences in a New England Mill City: Lowell, Massachusetts, 1876-1967," in *Remapping Asian American History*, ed. Sucheng Chan (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003), 21.

United States win the war and establish a secure peace.<sup>370</sup> Thus, the tactical manoeuvre of the Repeal Act only solved some racism issues in law. In the United States, the Chinese were still subject to social and economic discrimination because they were linked to China and not, particularly for second-generation Chinese Americans, to the country of their birth and citizenship.

The continued exclusion of Chinese Americans is documented by Pardee Lowe in his autobiography. After growing up with lofty ambitions and dreams of becoming President of the United States, Lowe narrates the anguish he felt when he realised that he would fail at numerous job applications because, despite his college education, the position would always be given to a white man over him.<sup>371</sup> The lack of opportunities available to educated Chinese Americans led to many considering a future in China; the main hindrances to this plan were that China was not their home, and that they were often not fluent in any Chinese dialect.<sup>372</sup> Thus, despite a growing appreciation for Chinese Americans in mainstream society, they were still considered foreign. This condition was exacerbated by Chinatown still being viewed as a place for American “tourists” to visit and see what the “orient” is like.<sup>373</sup> The continued alienation of Chinese Americans from business, social, and cultural circles outside of their own community meant that they were usually forced to keep to and rely on themselves.

In response to the continued marginalisation of the Chinese from the full benefits of U.S. national belonging, with Chinese women silenced or ignored and Chinese men emasculated in fiction, second-generation Chinese Americans found themselves with few, if any, Chinese American figures to look up to in U.S. literature. Unlike their forefathers, they found themselves at a crossroads, neither fully identifying with their Chinese cultural heritage, nor belonging to white American society which had provided many of them with their education. Thus, despite being fluent in English, and arguably more versed in U.S. history compared to their white American counterparts according to a study conducted along the Pacific Coast in the 1920s, second-generation Chinese Americans were prevented from assimilating due to their ongoing classification as foreign

---

<sup>370</sup> U.S. Department of State Archive, “Repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, 1943,” accessed April 12, 2020, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/wwii/86552.htm>.

<sup>371</sup> Pardee Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 184-186.

<sup>372</sup> Mark and Chih, *A Place Called Chinese America*, 92-93.

<sup>373</sup> Ivan Light, “From Vice District to Tourist Attraction,” 367-394.

due to their ethnicity.<sup>374</sup> In response, Chinese Americans wrote autobiographies to express the different aspects of their hybrid identities, to emphasise that they are as American as white Americans, and to depict, through shared cultural customs like tea, the similarities between white and Chinese Americans, and the right for Chinese Americans to have social, economic, and legal equality.

A similarity between Chinese American and white American society was the increased number of women entering into the workforce during the Second World War. The War left many job positions vacant, while others opened up to support the war effort. Women found themselves with a new sense of purpose as many began, for the first time, to be financially independent. For instance, many Chinese American women worked on airplane parts as part of the national defence programme.<sup>375</sup> Jade Snow Wong worked for the war effort as a typist-clerk at a shipyard which was part of the war production drive.<sup>376</sup> After the war many Chinese Americans, including women, were able to keep their jobs, which in turn inspired younger generations of Chinese American women to seek employment inside and outside Chinatowns.<sup>377</sup> The independence and freedom that Wong seeks throughout her autobiography, evidenced not only in the plot of her work but also in the titles of her chapters, is reflective of the new opportunities the War opened up for women in the United States.

Contrary to the work of Lowe, Wong, and other Chinese American authors, the widely-held assimilationist view was that the American born Chinese wished to identify with, and put on a pedestal, white American culture.<sup>378</sup> However, this theory ignores the anger of Chinese Americans and their consequent rejection of white American culture due to their exclusion from the mainstream job market, being refused service in restaurants and cafes outside Chinatowns, positioned as politically powerless, and segregated from white American society through

---

<sup>374</sup> William Carlson Smith, *The Second Generation Oriental in America* (Honolulu: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1927), 7.

<sup>375</sup> Dušanka Mišćević and Peter Kwong, *Chinese Americans: The Immigrant Experience* (Connecticut: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc., 2000), 142-145.

<sup>376</sup> Jade Snow Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (New York: Harper and Row, 1945, 1950; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978, 1989, 2019), 190-192. Citations refer to the 1989 edition unless specified otherwise.

<sup>377</sup> Mišćević and Kwong, *Chinese Americans*, 148.

<sup>378</sup> Chan, *Chinese American Masculinities*, 131.

education, land, and marriage laws.<sup>379</sup> This shared trial of exclusion experienced by the Chinese in the United States led to many concluding that, despite divisions between generations, their solidarity was foundational for survival and group identity. This is evident in how many Chinese Americans preferred living in Chinatown because, as one resident in the mid-1920s summarised, “[we] can live a warmer, freer and a more human life among our relatives and friends than among strangers.”<sup>380</sup>

In a climate of continued alienation, Chinese American writers turned to the autobiographical form to communicate their “Americanness.” The form particularly resonates with American readers due to its position at the nation’s foundations, with Indian captivity narratives and Benjamin Franklin’s acclaimed autobiography. Christianity and whiteness were coded into U.S. identity through these texts. Since the autobiography of Franklin, many important political, social, and cultural figures in the United States have published autobiographies to communicate the importance of their life’s work for the nation for generations to come, as seen in the autobiographies of Frederick Douglass and Zitkala-Sa. Furthermore, the nation’s ideology of individualism complements the autobiography’s focus on one person’s journey.<sup>381</sup> Ethnic writers have appropriated the form to disprove caricatures and stereotypes that have circulated in wider society, and also possibly to write themselves into the U.S. tradition of autobiography. As Rachael McLennan notes, the form has been used to “[valorise] the white male subject and his history” as a “self-made man,” and in the process “has often excluded members of various identity groups.”<sup>382</sup> Despite or because of this heritage, Chinese Americans, and other minority groups, have

---

<sup>379</sup> Gloria H. Chun, “‘Go West . . . to China’: Chinese American Identity in the 1930s,” in *Claiming America*, ed. K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 166.

<sup>380</sup> Anonymous, quoted in Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1988), 70.

<sup>381</sup> The philosophy of individualism is based on negative concepts of freedom. Isaiah Berlin distinguishes them from positive liberties—which promote interdependence and community—when he writes that they rely on an independence where “the wider the area of non-interference [from peoples] the wider [your negative] freedom”. This ideology is foundational to U.S. concepts of rights and freedom, and it is evinced in key political documents, including The Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” in *Four Essays on Liberty* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 121–123.

<sup>382</sup> Rachael McLennan, *American Autobiography* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 19, 20.

used and continue to use the autobiographical form as a vehicle for political rebellion and ethnic minority identity reclamation.<sup>383</sup>

The autobiographical form is difficult to define: as Linda Anderson notes, “The very pervasiveness and slipperiness of autobiography has made the need to contain and control it within disciplinary boundaries.”<sup>384</sup> Despite this, what is true, as McLennan notes, is that “Identity and authority are inextricably involved in the production and reception of any autobiography.”<sup>385</sup> In communicating their identity, and asserting authority over it, Chinese American writers have proclaimed the “Americanness” of their minority group. After Pardee Lowe and Jade Snow Wong, many Chinese American writers from the mid-twentieth century onwards, including Maxine Hong Kingston and Gus Lee, have used life writing to legitimise the Chinese *American* experience. By choosing to write memoirs instead of autobiographies, the writers have placed more emphasis on emotional journeys. Through using the shared cultural commodity of tea, authors can more easily present the adaptations and similarities between ethnic groups. I argue that Wong and Lowe use tea in their autobiographies to, seemingly in an objective manner, dismantle reductive stereotypes and portray Chinese Americans with hybrid identities which are principally “American.” In doing so, both authors highlight the discrepancies between U.S. doctrine and practice towards Chinese Americans.

Many critics have denounced the success of Wong’s and Lowe’s autobiographies. *Aiiieeeee!* (1974) and *The Big Aiiieeeee!* (1991) are two anthologies that have helped in the recovery, collection, and publication of Asian American literature. The editors of the anthologies—Jeffery Paul Chan, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong—stress that the autobiographies utilised the United States’ anti-Japanese sentiment in the 1940s to get published by positioning their texts as patriotic tales from a model minority.<sup>386</sup> Frank Chin goes further, stating that it is paradoxically only through “killing” their Chinese heritage that the autobiographies can present a model minority. In “Come all Ye

---

<sup>383</sup> As seen in: *Father and Glorious Descendant, Fifth Chinese Daughter, The Woman Warrior* (1976) by Maxine Hong Kingston, *Tea That Burns: A Family Memoir of Chinatown* (1998) by Bruce Hall, and *On Gold Mountain* (2009) by Lisa See.

<sup>384</sup> Linda Anderson, *Autobiography* (London: Routledge, 2001), 2.

<sup>385</sup> McLennan, *American Autobiography*, 4.

<sup>386</sup> Chan, Chin, Inada, and Wong, introduction to *The Big Aiiieeeee!*, xvi.

Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake” Chin declares that the autobiography is a solely Christian form of writing and that

Every Chinese American autobiography and work of autobiographical fiction since Yung Wing, from Leong Gor Yun and Jade Snow Wong to Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan, has been written by Christian Chinese perpetuating and advancing the stereotype of a Chinese culture so foul, so cruel to women, so perverse, that good Chinese are driven by the moral imperative to kill it. Christian salvation demands the destruction of all Chinese history: that’s the Second Commandment, children.<sup>387</sup>

Furthermore, Chin believes the difference between confession and autobiography is only length—as both are the outcomes of self-denial.<sup>388</sup> However, at the foundation of both of these texts is not the pushing away of the authors’ Chinese heritage, but instead the search for individuality as they realise that the support and cultural heritage of their parents is foundational to their happiness and sense of self. Victor Wong of San Francisco describes the process in the following way: “the funny thing is that after I consented to return to the culture I felt much better as a person. And much easier to live with. . . Much more quiet inside myself since I returned.”<sup>389</sup> They do not “kill” their cultural heritage as Chin proclaims, but instead wish to assert the Americanness of Chinese Americans; tea enables them to portray this through its adaptability and location in Chinese and white American culture.

In many ways this interpretation of their work aligns with George Hutchinson’s findings on autobiographies published in the 1940s. He investigates how ethnic writers strove to narrate their lives to make them relevant, not only to those from the same ethnic background, but for all human beings. When discussing Richard Wright’s *Black Boy* (1945) Hutchinson highlights that the aim of the text is to make readers “listen and come to a ‘human’ [Wright’s term] understanding of his experience and also of themselves.”<sup>390</sup> In many ways, Lowe

---

<sup>387</sup> Frank Chin, “Come all Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake,” in *The Big Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature*, ed. Jeffery Paul Chan, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong (New York: Meridian 1991), 11.

<sup>388</sup> Frank Chin, “This is Not an Autobiography,” *Genre* 18, no. 2 (1985): 121; Joan Chiung-huei Chang, *Transforming Chinese American Literature: A Study of History, Sexuality & Ethnicity* (Oxford: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2000), 78.

<sup>389</sup> Victor Wong, “Childhood II,” in *Ting: The Cauldron: Chinese Art and Identity in San Francisco*, ed. Nick Harvey (San Francisco: Glide Urban Center, 1970), 72.

<sup>390</sup> George Hutchinson, *Facing the Abyss: American Literature and Culture in the 1940s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 6.

and Wong write the autobiographies of, above all, people whose professional goals, family dynamics, and struggles for independence can be empathised with universally.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to completely reject Chin's argument, as in both autobiographies there is a romanticisation of San Francisco's Chinatown, and a pandering to white American readers through the inclusion of extensive descriptions and explanations of cultural practices. Furthermore, the title *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, and Lowe's subtitle, *A Story of Chinese Life in America*, highlight difference through differentiating their Chinese selves from the rest of the United States. Thus, with an aim of the autobiographies being to present Chinese American people as being, above all, *American*, there is a combination of assertion and submission in the style and tone of the writing: both writers appear proud of their heritage, but also somewhat cowardly in their approach, as they fail to strongly criticise Chinese American exclusion, and often present their culture as kitsch.

## II. Relocating the Dainty Brew: Reclaiming Chinese American Masculinity

The feminisation of Chinese men in the United States can be traced back to the early 1870s. At this time there was a rise in the number of literary and visual portrayals that presented Chinese men as weak and inferior by caricaturing them as feminine.<sup>391</sup> The "bachelor society" of Chinatowns aided in this process as the relative absence of wives and children meant that many men had to perform domestic tasks for their own upkeep. This, combined with restricted job prospects in "feminised" sectors, and the absence of family, led, as Lisa Lowe notes, to "Chinese male immigrants [occupying], before 1940, a 'feminised' position in relation to white male citizens."<sup>392</sup>

---

<sup>391</sup> This can be seen in trade cards from the period: for instance, one untitled trade card casts a Chinese male figure as a white woman's shadow, with his queue equivalent to her ribbon in the wind. Other trade cards emphasise the predominance of Chinese men doing what was characterised as "feminine" work: on one trade card for celluloid corset clasps from the nineteenth century Chinese men are in a laundry; one is holding up and admiring a corset, all the men have accentuated queues, earrings, tinted lips, blushing cheeks, neat eyebrows, and upturned, flirtatious, almond eyes. These trade cards are pictured in Metrick-Chen, *Collecting Objects/Excluding People*, 206, 214.

<sup>392</sup> Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, 11-12.



The stereotyped roles of the effeminate Chinese man are particularly evident in pulp crime fiction. From the late 1920s onwards, two seemingly opposite Chinese protagonists share a similar feminisation. The fictional detective Charlie Chan appears on the page and the Hollywood screen as a likeable, pudgy aide, while the Chinese villain, Fu Manchu, is a cunning and mysterious villain with a vixen-like physique, being both “lean and feline.”<sup>393</sup> Chan and Manchu lack a familial or work-place position of evident authority or leadership, and at every turn their creators depicted them as intelligent but fundamentally feminine in their meddling: they stir things up with their antics, but they are always beaten or crucially aided by white male heroes. The similarity in their positions highlights how, whether predominantly painted as a “good” or “bad” Chinese character, their ethnicity is presented to create a sense of “otherness” that cannot be fully trusted or accepted. The underlying similarity between these fictional characters is emphasised by Warren Oland, a Swedish-American actor, playing both Fu Manchu and Charlie Chan in Hollywood films.

Their effeminacy rested on its ability to be performed through cultural customs. This was easily achieved, as for centuries the decorative history in the United States had depicted *chinoiserie*, porcelain, tea, and other Chinese objects and customs as culturally exotic, and associated with the home and feminine interests.<sup>394</sup> The association of Chinese culture with white American feminine tastes is reflected in home decoration. Compared to the wealthy elite of U.S. society, in the seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, that had the money to afford “oriental styles,” from the late 1890s a broader section of the American public was able to accumulate and show off Chinese imports in their home and fashion choices due to importation from China becoming cheaper and more prolific.<sup>395</sup> Thus, home decoration and fashion were domains in which many women were able to express themselves and their cultured interests through oriental products.<sup>396</sup>

---

<sup>393</sup> Sax Rohmer, *The Insidious Dr. Fu-Manchu* (New York: McBride, Nast & Company, 1913), 25.

<sup>394</sup> Caroline Frank’s book *Objectifying China, Imagining America* goes into considerable detail about the influence of Chinese design and ornamentation on U.S. decorative style since the seventeenth century.

<sup>395</sup> Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium*, 19.

<sup>396</sup> Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium*, 13-56, 57-104.

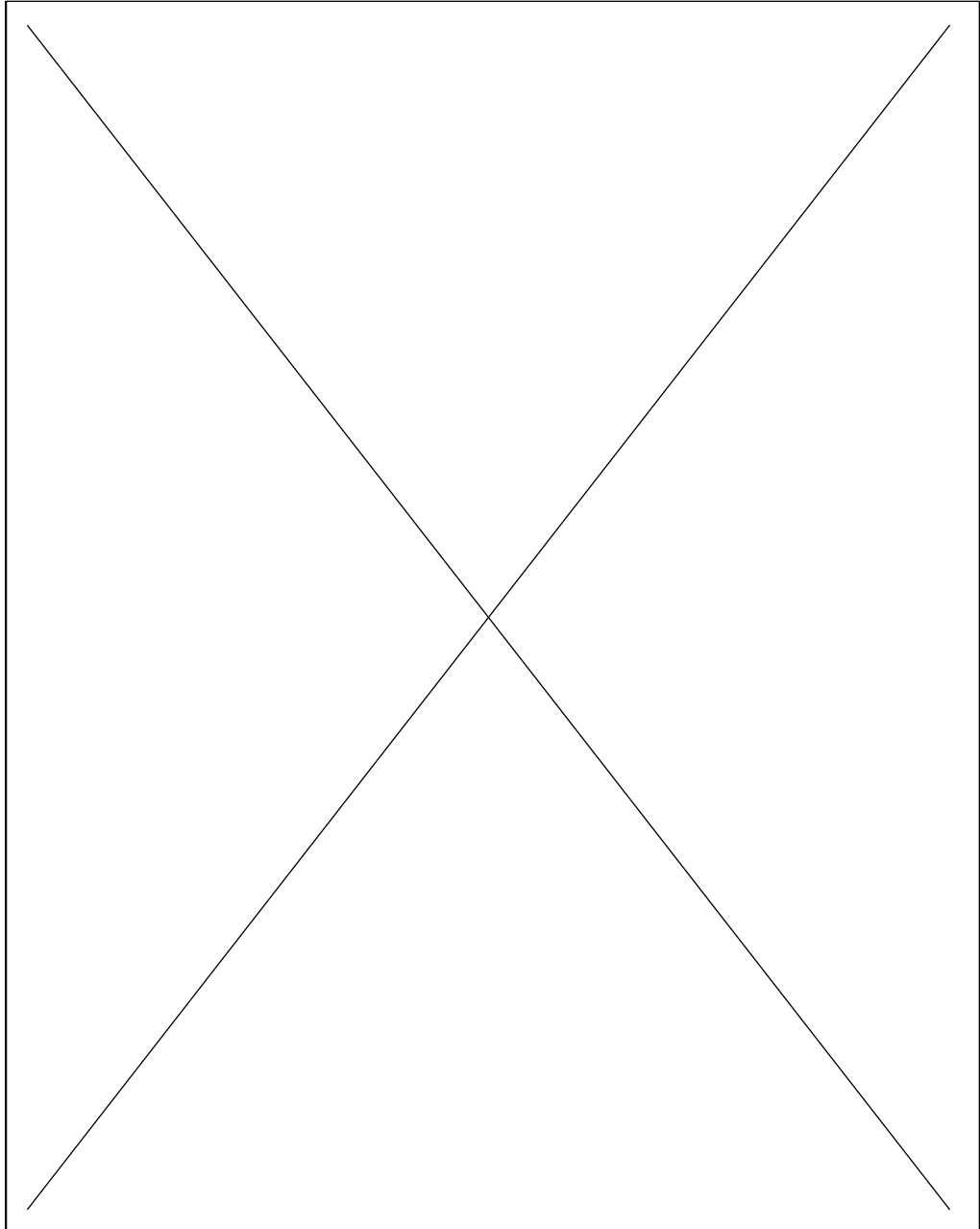


Figure 3.4 French film poster created by Jacques Bonneaud for “The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu” (1929) starring Warner Oland. This poster is inspired by a scene in the film where Fu Manchu puts poison into a cup of tea.

The West’s craze for *chinoiserie*, porcelain, and other Chinese products was far-reaching, with famous designers, including Paul Poiret, being influenced by Chinese designs in feathered hats and skirts, orientally embroidered dresses, and *chinoiserie*.<sup>397</sup> Also, the belief that tea-drinking is a female custom

---

<sup>397</sup> Colin McDowell, *McDowell’s Directory of Twentieth Century Fashion* (London: Century Hutchinson Ltd, 1987), 23, 222.

increasingly dominated perspectives of the brew as tearooms continued to be largely run by women for women.<sup>398</sup> As a result, since tea as a cultural commodity originates from China, authors could present Chinese men as either drinking or preparing tea to capture their stereotyped soft hands and reputed delicacy of manner. Even if they are a threat, as seen in the movie poster inspired by a moment in the film *The Mysterious Dr. Fu Manchu* (see fig. 3.4)—where the vengeful Fu Manchu poisons tea to give his victim—it is a threat that aligns itself with the ancient image of the cunning woman: a woman who uses her wiles and potions to deceive and cause mischief, but whose power is considered inferior to male power. This figure is repudiated in Sui Sin Far's "The Wisdom of the New" (1912) analysed in Chapter 1.

The second Charlie Chan novel, *The Chinese Parrot* (1926), is the first Charlie Chan novel where the detective is the main character, and as a result, this novel establishes his demeanour and characteristics for his subsequent literary and cinematic appearances. Charlie Chan's influence on U.S. ideas about the Chinese is incalculable. *Charlie Chan is Dead* (1993) is the title of a short story anthology edited by the Filipino writer and performer Jessica Hagedorn. It is an important source of contemporary Asian American literature, and the anthology was followed by a sequel *Charlie Chan is Dead 2* (2004).<sup>399</sup> The titles signify the collections' purpose to provide diverse and candid narratives about Asian American experiences by Asian American authors. The author of the first collection's preface, Elaine Kim, positively proclaims that "Charlie Chan is dead indeed, never to be revived. Gone for good his yellowface asexual bulk."<sup>400</sup>

Five years earlier, in 1988, Frank Chin did not take such an optimistic view of Chan's legacy. In his short story "Sons of Chan," he wrote about Chinese Americans who find themselves to be the "sons" of the detective because of the crippling effect of media depictions of ethnically Chinese men on Chinese American men: "God kicked Earl Derr Biggers in the head and commanded him to give us Chinamans a son, in almost His image. And Charlie Chan was born.

---

<sup>398</sup> Pettigrew and Richardson, *A Social History of Tea*, 194; Brandimarte, "'To Make the Whole World Homelike,'" 4-6.

<sup>399</sup> Jessica Hagedorn, ed. *Charlie Chan Is Dead 2: At Home in the World* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

<sup>400</sup> Elaine Kim, "Preface," in *An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction: Charlie Chan is Dead*, ed. Jessica Hagedorn (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), xiii.

And, in a sense, so was I.”<sup>401</sup> Chin highlights the lasting legacy of Biggers’s detective. Pardee Lowe, along with his successors, saw it as their responsibility to repudiate the weakness associated with Chinese American masculinity and create their own models to look up to.

In *The Chinese Parrot* Charlie Chan is sent to investigate the peculiar behaviour of a San Franciscan jeweller’s client. The title suggests that a Chinese character may mimic other characters because parrots can imitate human speech. Furthermore, the parrot in the story, through parroting the words of other characters, reveals the villain. He is called a Chinese parrot because he speaks English and Chinese, but in fact he is an Australian bird. Interestingly, language signifies the bird’s difference, presumably because it is the language of an alienated minority.

The plot begins with a precious pearl necklace being purchased by P. J. Madden from the jeweller Alexander Eden. The necklace originally belonged to Eden’s lifelong and esteemed client and friend Sally Jordon. Before delivering it to Madden’s rural Californian desert ranch, a demand that counteracts Madden’s previously insistent wish for it to be sent to him in New York, Eden wants to be sure that Madden had not been controlled, manipulated, or tricked in some way into making this change. Eden sends Charlie Chan and his son, Bob Eden, to the ranch to investigate. They meet a Chinese employee of Madden, Thorn, who turns out to be an exaggerated threat. The suspicion communicated by Chan and Eden surrounding Thorn’s hostile and secretive character is shown to be excessive as he is an accessory, and not a main villain, in the planned murder of Madden by a gang of white crooks: Shaky Phil, Gamble, and the mastermind of the plan, Delaney, a man who looks like Madden and wished to steal his fortune by replacing him. Once again, the Chinese are neither the chief heroes nor villains of the story, as they do not have the masculinity to fully be either. The white male supremacy of the wealthy is proven and protected against what can be considered a legitimate threat: other white men. The idea of the Chinese being a threat is removed, in part, through effeminising Charlie Chan in tea scenes.

Contrary to early twentieth-century U.S. “yellow peril” culture, Charlie Chan is an example of an accepted Chinese man in the United States. As author

---

<sup>401</sup> Frank Chin, “Sons of Chan,” in *The Chinaman Pacific & Frisco R. R. Co* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1988), 132.

Jachinson Chan summarises: “Charlie Chan symbolizes the American dream of success: a minority who is allowed to interact with a predominantly white American society, living a life of relative economic comfort, and raising a nuclear family.”<sup>402</sup> Chan also validates the correctness of the U.S. ideals he harbours: hard work, economic comfort, and family life. However, Chan’s place as a Chinese patriarch is never shown because his family is only fleetingly mentioned, and little background knowledge about him is provided. I concur with Sandra Hawley that, due to his family life only being mentioned in passing, he is accepted as a nonthreatening and physically effeminate aide—with his paradoxical corpulence and “light dainty step of a woman” helping to reduce him to this position, as he is neither strong nor imposing.<sup>403</sup> Thus, for the majority of his white American readers and viewers, he can be liked due to his comical and non-threatening feminisation. Chan is from Hawaii and is a Honolulu police detective; he only comes to the mainland for work, with half the novels set predominantly in Hawaii or Europe. As a result, he is not an impending threat because his home, and usually his work, are away from the mainland, and subsequently he can be disassociated from the popular long-lasting “yellow peril” image of the Chinese overtaking the United States through mass immigration onto the mainland.<sup>404</sup> Furthermore, Hawaii’s huge geographic distance from the United States (over 3,000 miles), emphasises Charlie Chan’s diminished risk as a threat due to his home life, which he always returns to, being far away.

Charlie Chan’s feminisation through tea-drinking is first seen when, the evening before Chan and Bob Eden are to depart for the desert, he has dinner on a stool at a lunch counter. Here, “he partook heartily of the white man’s cooking, and drank three cups of steaming tea.”<sup>405</sup> In folktales, as Carole

---

<sup>402</sup> Chan, *Chinese American Masculinities*, 51.

<sup>403</sup> Earl Derr Biggers, *The House Without a Key* (Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1925; New York, Bantam, 1974), 60. Citations refer to the 1974 edition; Sandra M. Hawley, “The Importance of Being Charlie Chan,” in *America Views China: American Images of China Then and Now*, ed. Jonathan Goldstein, Jerry Israel, and Hilary Conroy (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1991), 137.

<sup>404</sup> As seen in *Yellow Peril!: An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear*, edited by John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, where many anti-Chinese documents are amalgamated, including the cartoon titled “The Great Fear of the Period—That Uncle Sam May Be Swallowed by Foreigners. The Problem Solved,” on page 236. Also see “The American Gulliver and Chinese Lilliputians: SHALL THE LAST SPIKE BE DRIVEN?,” in *Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion, Meat vs. Rice, American Manhood Against Asiatic Coolieism, Which Shall Survive?* (Washington D.C.: The American Federation of Labor, 1902), frontcover.

<sup>405</sup> Earl Derr Biggers, *The Chinese Parrot* (Philadelphia: Curtis, 1926; New York: Bantam Books, 1974), 24. Citations refer to the 1974 edition.

Counihan highlights, and in (I contend) “yellow peril” texts, representations of excessive food and drink consumption usually refer to “destructive desires” and “incomplete socialization.”<sup>406</sup> His hearty enjoyment of the food and physical bulk position him alongside the stereotypical “yellow peril” image of greedy “Chinamen” who voraciously consume the wealth of the nation, and who would take over the United States through mass immigration and uncontrollable reproduction if given the chance.<sup>407</sup> However, with comic effect, this threat is reduced to one of a chubby man sitting on a stool, who has a delicate disposition shown by his consumption of a feminised brew. Chan’s consumption of tea metaphorically communicates how, even if he wanted to, he is unable to supplant white patriarchy due to his delicate, feminine disposition.

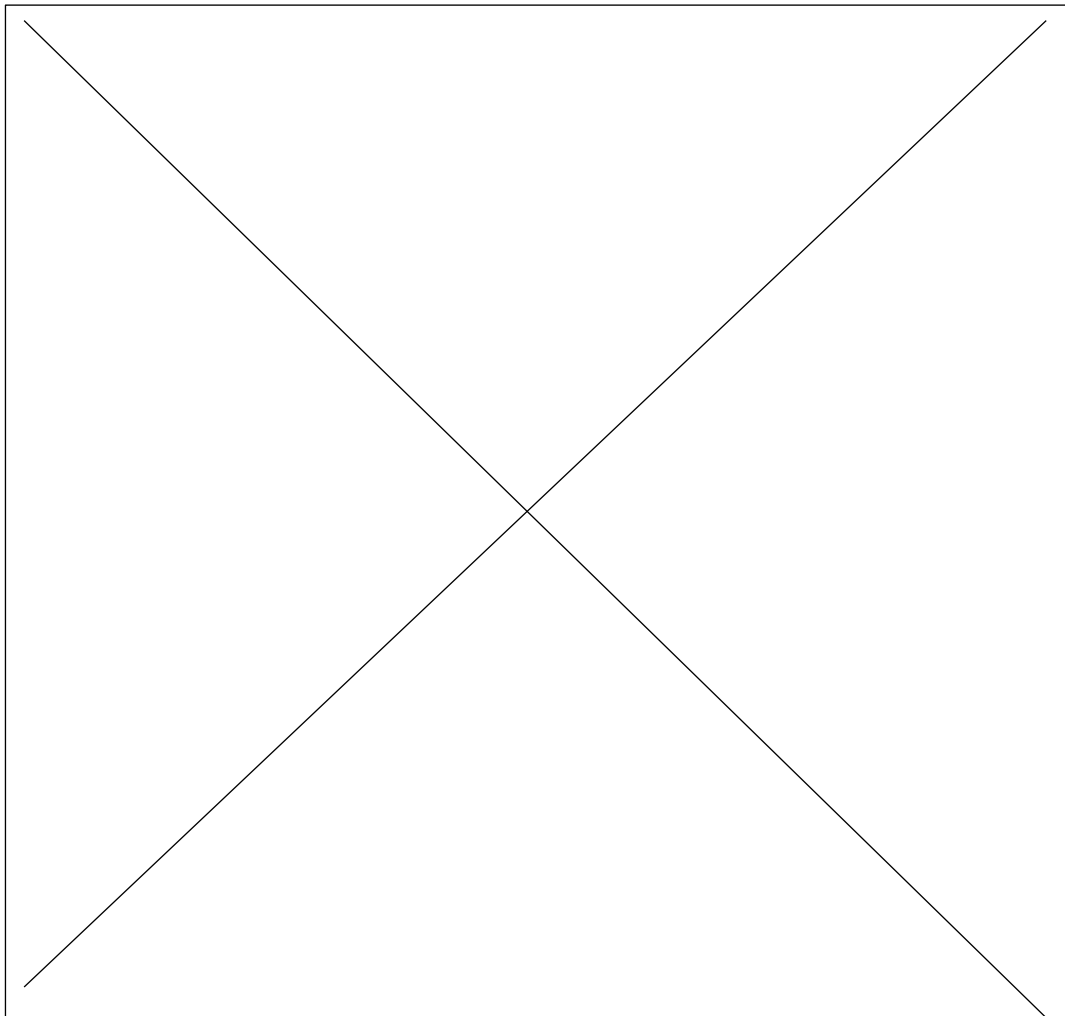


Figure 3.5 “Blaine’s Teas(e),” *Harper’s Weekly*, March 20, 1880, by Thomas Nast.

---

<sup>406</sup> Carole M. Counihan, *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning, and Power* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 21.

<sup>407</sup> See the coda for more on this “yellow peril” trope.

Chan comically deflates over sixty years of Chinese “yellow peril” narratives by choosing tea. The steam that rises from the tea stresses how the illusion of danger from his Chinese visage is just that, an image of mysticism which covers up his non-threatening disposition. Tea steam has previously been used by illustrators and writers to communicate the dangerous, secretive, illicit actions of Chinese men who were considered a threat, as seen in the illustration “Blaine’s Teas(e),” which uses the slogan “the Chinese must go!” (see fig. 3.5). In this cartoon the politician James Blaine has sat down to enjoy his *Evening News Telegraph* with some Chinese tea in a Chinese porcelain teacup. Wenxian Zhang highlights that Nast appears to be critiquing Blaine’s hypocrisy, as he collects Chinese cultural commodities but despises the people who made them.<sup>408</sup> Biggers upends this traditional “yellow peril” image. The removal of the potential “yellow peril” threat of Chan relies on positioning him as a paradoxically fat and dainty man. The fear attached to historical images of fat Chinese men metaphorically “consuming” the United States, or appearing from behind a mist/smokescreen, is transformed, in part, into a flabby sidekick to Bob Eden.<sup>409</sup> It must be noted that to some extent the threat is not entirely gone. I argue that part of the appeal of the “good” Asian is the ambiguity over whether his “yellow peril” roots will surface.

Chan’s choice of tea serves to further separate him from the white American masculine ideal when Bob Eden, the son of Alexander Eden who is sent on the mission with Charlie Chan, orders the special at the Oasis Café once he reaches Eldorado, the place of their investigation. The location’s name draws on the New World myth of a Latin-American city, named El Dorado, supposedly full of riches and gold. The name conveys the isolation of the setting, the possible secrets it harbours, and its separation from mainstream society. The special is “steak and onions, French fries, bread and butter and coffee.”<sup>410</sup> Eden sits at a counter waiting for his order between two people. He has very little room to move and has not been given a steak knife; when his order arrives, and after asking in vain for a steak knife, “Bob Eden resumed the battle, his elbows held close, his muscles swelling.”<sup>411</sup> There is a screech and his steak flies off the table and lands

---

<sup>408</sup> Zhang, *China Through American Eyes*, 376-377.

<sup>409</sup> See Jack London, “Yellow Handkerchief”; Also see fig. 2.12 page 84, and fig. 6.4 page 279.

<sup>410</sup> Biggers, *Chinese Parrot*, 37.

<sup>411</sup> Biggers, *Chinese Parrot*, 38.

in the lap of a blue-eyed actress who, by the end of the novel, is his bride-to-be. The “battle” to eat the steak, with his muscles swelling, is a sign of his virility and masculinity, and the steak symbolically lands on his prize.

His consumption of steak complements his coffee-drinking to further emphasise his masculinity. Roland Barthes in his essay “Steak and Chips,” delves into the ancient history and mythology that “derives from [steak’s] quasi-rawness.” Through consuming the meat, Barthes argues, one “assimilates a bull-like strength [which flows] into the very blood of man,” with “full-bloodedness [being] the *raison d’être* of steak.”<sup>412</sup> The violence associated with the blood of the steak, and the physical power with which it supposedly imbues its consumer, emphasise traits associated with the concept of masculinity in the Western world.<sup>413</sup> Only a few pages prior, Chan is sipping tea. Through the brew’s feminine position in U.S. society as a “sissy’s” drink, and its separation from the white American hero here who always drinks coffee, tea stresses Chan’s inability to be identified as a legitimate American man due to his feminine and “un-American” disposition. The third-person narrator’s neutral tone enables the scenes to appear to speak for themselves, but the positioning of these scenes (almost back-to-back) reveals how Chan is a tool used to accentuate the superiority and legitimacy of white American patriarchy.

To appreciate fully the contrast set up between coffee and tea in *The Chinese Parrot*, it is necessary to trace the association of patriotism and masculinity with coffee. In the eighteenth century coffee was coded as a masculine brew through its patriotic adoption in “masculine, commerce-centered” coffeehouses after the Boston Tea Party of 1773.<sup>414</sup> The association between coffee, patriotism, and masculinity continued into the twentieth century: during the 1930s and 1940s, the media argued that coffee benefitted a man’s physical and mental working ability.<sup>415</sup> This coding was particularly prominent during the Great Depression because, despite previous suffragist efforts to neutralise the drink, coffee continued to be known as a masculine drink, since it was presented as fuelling men hunting for jobs.<sup>416</sup>

---

<sup>412</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (London: Vintage, 1993), 62.

<sup>413</sup> Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 67-68, 84.

<sup>414</sup> Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*, 205, 207; Reitz, “Espresso” 10-11.

<sup>415</sup> Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*, 205, 207

<sup>416</sup> Pendergrast, *Uncommon Grounds*, 140; Reitz, “Espresso,” 12.



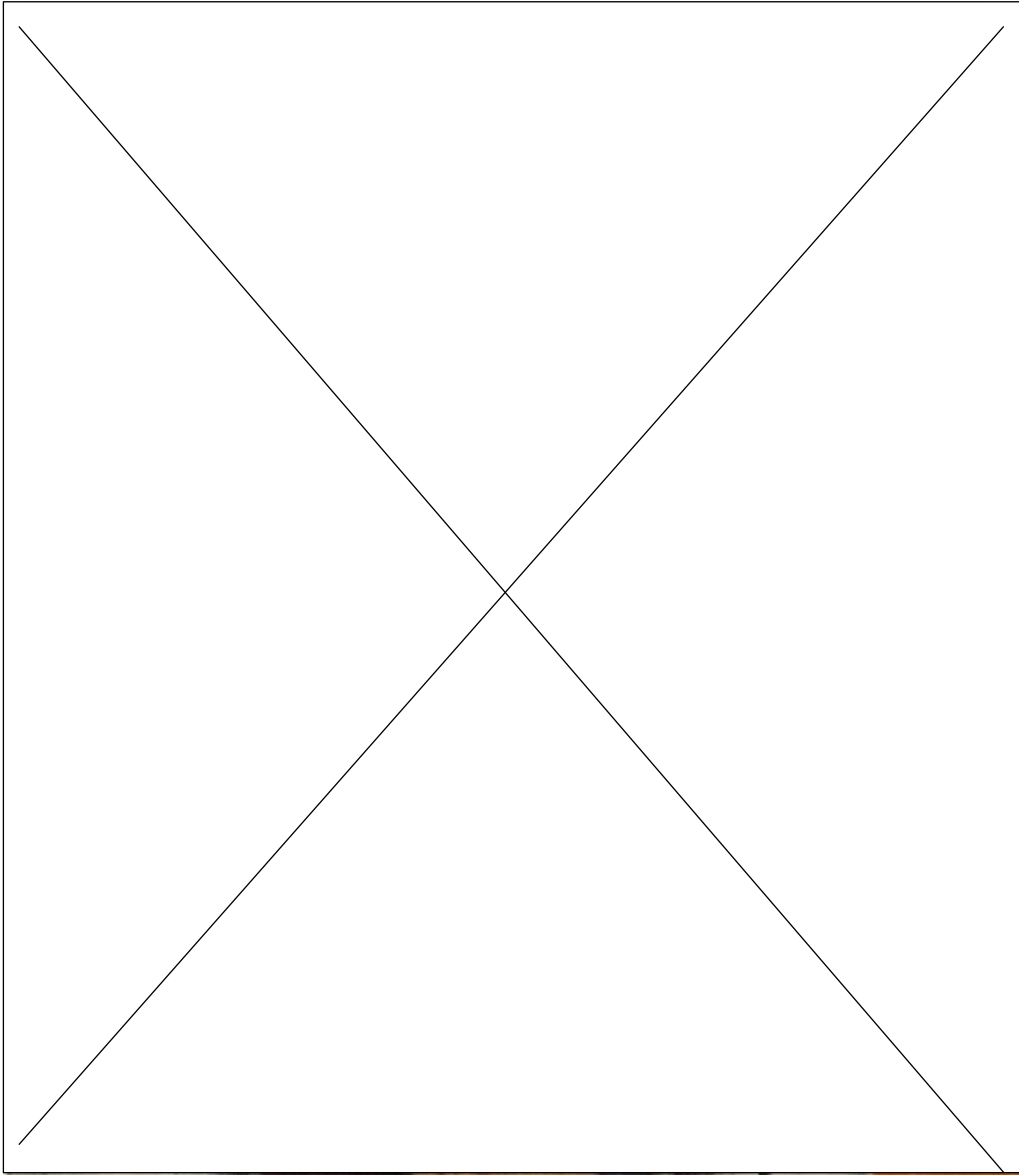


Figure 3.6 Photoplay's October 1926 front cover. Actress Alice Joyce is illustrated holding a cup of tea.

In contrast, advertisements in the first half of the twentieth century usually presented women as delicate tea drinkers, (their supposed physical frailty being) compared to the “stronger” male constitution needed to drink coffee.<sup>417</sup> Additionally, the continued attachment of tea to Britishness and femininity is evident on the front cover of *Photoplay* (one of the first U.S. film magazines), in October 1926 (see fig. 3.6). It pictures Alice Joyce graciously cocking her little finger and posing with a cup of tea. Next to her depiction it says, “The Secret Moral Code of the Screen.” The use of tea to characterise white femininity, morality, and gentility is stressed through Joyce’s white skin, delicate blush, and

---

<sup>417</sup> Reitz, “Espresso,” 10-11.

dainty demeanour. Joyce, often featured on the front cover of *Photoplay*, was one of the most respected and sought-after actresses of her time.<sup>418</sup> The tea evidently draws on the brew's colonial heritage, as Joyce drinks the tea in a European fashion by using a cup and a saucer with her little finger curled. In doing so, tea's colonial and imperial heritage is highlighted here to present the idea of white feminine refinement.

When Chan, after working hard on the investigation, finds himself with some time off, he decides "to relax to the extent of sandwiches and tea this noon."<sup>419</sup> The afternoon tea ceremony by this time had become strongly associated with women due to the belief that only housewives had the time to indulge in it.<sup>420</sup> Chan's "modest repast" and tea-drinking in the afternoon to relax codes his admirable western values as feminine and linked to Britain's imperial heritage instead of to an American masculine identity.<sup>421</sup>

Pardee Lowe grew up with Charlie Chan and other stereotypes of Chinese men. In his autobiography *Father and Glorious Descendant*, he criticises the representations of Chinese men surrounding him as a boy which served to define his masculine potential. When Lowe was eleven years old and "an inveterate reader of the blood-and-thunder tales glorifying such fearless men as Buffalo Bill [...and] American heroes [...] there came a day when [his] Father did assume a more forthright and manly role":<sup>422</sup>

One day a man came into Father's store and inquired for a kinsman. Father pointed to the back office. As they discussed family finances over their teacups, the words became heated, then bitter. Suddenly, the store was filled with shrieks as the visitor pulled out a pistol and fired twice. [...] Father's friend slumped to the ground, and the assailant fled into the street. [...]

Letting out a mighty roar of defiance, Father vaulted over the counter and charged into the street. As the gunman ran, so did Father. The street, usually as busy as a beehive, was strangely empty and silent. Having heard the shots, the general population, raised on the principle of discretion, had mysteriously scurried for shelter.

[...] Like an English Rugby player, Father clamped a flying tackle around the assailant's neck. As they rolled to the side walk together, witnesses from near-by stores and convenient stairways reported that Father

---

<sup>418</sup> Eve Golden, *Golden Images: 41 Essays on Silent Film Stars* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2001), 65.

<sup>419</sup> Biggers, *Chinese Parrot*, 171.

<sup>420</sup> Pettigrew and Richardson, *A Social History of Tea*, 169-170.

<sup>421</sup> Biggers, *Chinese Parrot*, 171.

<sup>422</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 89.

continued to roar with frenzy, “*Jahm Tow! Jahm Tow!*” (Shame! Shame!) My store! My store! You have ruined its reputation!”

By the time the Chinatown Police squad arrived on the scene, the murderer was already disarmed.<sup>423</sup>

Growing up, Lowe had experienced a disconnect between mass-produced images of white masculinity and his own racial heritage and identity. Here tea functions to highlight the heroism and civility of his father. Tea characterises the father’s shop as a cultured and sophisticated place. It sets the parameters for the manners and social interactions accepted within its walls. The visitor breaks these rules. When his father catches the criminal he roars, “(Shame! Shame!) My store! My store! You have ruined its reputation!”<sup>424</sup> This is all his father says during this scene. Instead of tea being a feminising drink, it captures the civility and values of the community and its business. The comparison of the father to an “English Rugby player” links him to British culture and white masculine strength. The first-person narration highlights the limited appraisal of masculinity Lowe is capable of, as he has been raised on images of white American masculinity, and so if his father is “manly” it must be because he is acting in a way that presents white masculinity.

The choice of an English rugby player rather than an American football player (as seen with Chan’s British tea ceremony) serves to remove the threat of the Chinese becoming interchangeable with the United States’ white American populace. Furthermore, it constitutes a rejection of white American models of masculinity and an embrace of white English masculinities. Lowe chooses to align Chinese Americans with white Englishmen because of the centuries of history and imperialism in China and England compared to the relatively new culture and society of the United States. As a result, Lowe could be said to be equating the civility and superiority of Chinese culture with English heritage in the United States.

There are no corrupt dealings at the back of the store and the father upholds strict moral values; he fears that this skirmish will ruin the reputation of his store, which is signified by the civilized brew. In “yellow peril” fiction the back of Chinatown stores and the dark alleyways are depicted as the locations where

---

<sup>423</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 89-91.

<sup>424</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 90.

drugs, prostitution, and crime fester.<sup>425</sup> Tea here distinguishes the morally upstanding, business-minded American hero from the fanciful Chinese villains of hidden and corrupt dens in “yellow peril” literature. However, Lowe does not entirely reject “yellow peril” literature as he does allude to corruption in Chinatown as the Chinese have been raised on the “principle of discretion,” especially, it appears, when faced with criminal activities. Furthermore, it appears that Lowe’s father becomes a hero in this scene through embodying Anglo sportsmanship and the white American heroism of the old western heroes, like Buffalo Bill. Consequently, masculinity in this scene appears to be tied to exhibiting traits associated with white men.

Though it is clear that Lowe caters for a white readership, with exotic descriptions of “dangerous” Chinatowns, he also celebrates the rich cultural heritage of his forefathers. Not long after the murder in his father’s shop the narrator explains how his father’s business (Sun Loy) was

more than just a bank or a post office, or a store. It was a temporary home to our kinsmen where they gathered nightly to seek escape from the strangeness and fierceness of their everyday world, and could recall happier days at home when they crowded the village inns and ancestral temples of Heong Sahn at noon and nightfall to drink tea and exchange gossip, or to listen to vagrant minstrels chant ballads of the glories of the “Sahm Kwok.” The three medieval kingdoms of Wei, Wu, and Shu, I was told, represented the most famous and popular period of Chinese history. Here was the Chinese counterpart of the Arthurian legend.<sup>426</sup>

Here, Lowe furthers the idea of the men of Chinatown being the knightly moral pillars of the community by comparing their culture to English history and customs. Tea is central to the environment associated with these male gatherings. The stories which they reflect on are told over the steam of tea, and once again are shown to have an English counterpart: Arthurian legends expound the upstanding moral qualities needed to be a worthy man. Countering the image of tea as a feminised brew, Lowe stresses the other side of tea’s heritage, one which speaks to the civility and decorum found in tea ceremonies and the men who partake in them. By looking at this aspect of tea, Lowe highlights the gentlemanly nature of Chinese men in the face of their historic and contemporary representations in “yellow peril” discourse. However, by measuring Chinese

---

<sup>425</sup> Arnold Genthe, *As I Remember*, 33.

<sup>426</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 94.

culture against an Anglo model, also seen through his use of tea, Lowe is fighting for acceptance through presenting the Chinese in the United States as “American” and worthy of acceptance because of how their beliefs and customs measure up to Anglo-American norms. The concept of worthiness is a troubling one, and must be examined, as the estimation of a person’s worthiness depends on the social norms, morals, and objectives of the time: proving “worthiness” has often entailed the rejection of a person’s minority heritage and an adoption of white American culture.

As his narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that Lowe desires to emphasise the strength and perseverance of Chinese men. His father is his chief example of a man who sacrificed a great deal, including an education, to find his way in the United States through connections and community values. Part of the reason his father attains a top position in society is the respect and trust he gains from the local community due to his “conciliation and arbitration services.”<sup>427</sup> People constantly come to him for advice and support, and he provides it as a “good listener” and as “the Nestor of [their] district.”<sup>428</sup> He is a pillar of the community and before his thirtieth birthday “was already accepted as one of Chinatown’s leaders.”<sup>429</sup> Lowe explains why:

Father always had the right answer.

But Mother had a better one. She always had food to beguile the weary and worried visitor. Tea to soothe his nerves, fried noodles [and other foods] to strengthen his inner man [...]. When the kinsmen left our home, he was a new man.<sup>430</sup>

The evocation of ancient Greece with “Nestor,” the Homeric Greek King of Pylos who was known for his wisdom and experience, and a woman “beguiling” men through victuals, aligns the Chinese family and community structure with the Homeric foundations of western civilization. In doing so, Lowe indicates the shared social structures present in Chinatown and wider U.S. society. As a result, it becomes evident that the patriarchal foundations of white American and Chinese American societies are rooted in ancient civilizations, where honour and patriarchy are foundational. By positioning tea in this scene, Lowe uses a custom

---

<sup>427</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 70.

<sup>428</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 71.

<sup>429</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 70.

<sup>430</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 71.

rooted in ancient Chinese culture to display how, due to the similarities between Chinese and white American cultural values and constructs, it is evident why white Americans took on the Chinese cultural custom of tea-drinking, keeping the cups, tea pot, and serving style similar: because it could be used to perform the shared gender roles and patriarchal system present in western and Chinese culture. Lowe emphasises the shared patriarchal structures through a shared cultural commodity and social custom.

The resemblance between Chinese and white Americans is accentuated through his father verbally advising the visitor, and the mother aiding them through food and drink. The shared gender structure of women positioned as the subservient, domestic, silent entities serving tea, and the men as verbal figureheads and decision makers of the family, is vividly portrayed. This is clearly shown through the use of tea, as it depicts the accepted image of women as the maker and provider of domestic comforts. Consequently, “proving” Chinese men’s masculinity is shown to rest on the affirmation of ideas of feminine inferiority and submissiveness.

Men do not need to distance themselves from tea to reclaim their masculinity. Instead, Lowe stresses how, as a consumer of tea, the visitor can become a “new man.” The consumption of the brew metaphorically represents how Chinese culture informs and endorses masculine identities. The tea further symbolises how Chinese culture has been wrongly limited to a domesticated area of female interest. When the narrator leaves to attend Harvard University his stepmother packs him a suitcase full of “special Chinese teas” to cure his nostalgia for home.<sup>431</sup> This scene continues to set up the image of the man as the consumer of tea, and the tea being a substance provided by women who are positioned as the source of homely sustenance. Lowe stresses how the consumption of tea is not a predominantly feminine act. The misinterpretation of tea in this way is shown to thrive only in false and limited interpretations of the brew through a westernised lens. In his autobiography, Lowe situates tea in domestic and business-related locations to communicate what he believes are the many worthy traits of Chinese American masculinity; however, their worthiness appears dependent on their similarity to white American masculinity.

---

<sup>431</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 253.

### III. Negotiating Gender Roles

Aside from the depictions of effeminate Chinese men, tongs, which are Chinese immigrant organisations and secret societies, inspired the portrayal of the Chinese as villainous due to their connections to criminal activities and gangs. But by the 1930s “the tong skirmishes which had sporadically plagued the streets of Chinatowns across the country were ended through peace pacts.”<sup>432</sup> This change was largely due to the altered demographic of Chinatowns: in 1910 the ratio of Chinese women to Chinese men in the U.S. was 1:9; by 1930 it had dropped to 1:3, and by 1940 it was 1:2.<sup>433</sup> Young families increased in number, and women and children became more visible members of the community.<sup>434</sup> It appears that, because of the increasing prominence of women and children in Chinatown, and the responsibilities family life entails, local demands for opium and prostitutes decreased.<sup>435</sup>

Despite this transformation in the familial constitution of Chinatown life, most fiction (including “yellow peril” fiction) continued to exclude Chinese women from its pages unless they were prostitutes or madams. Chinese men had already been typecast as villains or comical aides. The presence of Chinese wives and daughters would have complicated these stereotypes because their presence would have disrupted the characterisation of the lone, irresponsible men of Chinatowns’ “bachelor” societies. In this section I use Lowe’s representation of his wife to show how women were portrayed as submissive in order to highlight the masculinity of Chinese American men, then I look at how Jade Snow Wong in her autobiography rejects this formula, and instead focuses on her individual empowerment as a woman.

Lowe decided to accept the traditional gender roles of Chinese culture in his autobiography to prove Chinese male worth. By emphasising the patriarchy present in Chinese American society, Lowe presents what Raewyn Connell

---

<sup>432</sup> Mark and Chih, *A Place Called Chinese America*, 76.

<sup>433</sup> Bureau of the Census with the Cooperation of the Social Science Research Council, “Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957,” quoted in Light, “From Vice District to Tourist Attraction,” 376.

<sup>434</sup> Mark and Chih, *A Place Called Chinese America*, 76.

<sup>435</sup> Light, “From Vice District to Tourist Attraction,” 376-77; Mark and Chih, *A Place Called Chinese America*, 76.

identifies as the “social organization of masculinity,” in which hegemonic masculinity conforms to

the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.<sup>436</sup>

Lowe, by displaying transnational patriarchal structures, and consequently the masculinity of Chinese men on which this relies, aims to prove the worth and right of Chinese American men to be treated as valued members of society. Lowe does not concern himself with comparing different types of masculinity, nor consider how gender relations are contestable; instead, he presents a simplified version of the structure, in which Chinese and white American men are similar. This is portrayed when Lowe brings his white wife home to meet the family and she “served dainty cups of boiling tea” in traditional Chinese dress to everyone.<sup>437</sup> We can assume Lowe’s wife is white due to a combination of factors. She is labelled a “New Englander” and an “American” compared to his “Chinese” family, and while travelling to Chinatown Lowe experiences racial discrimination, which was his wife’s “first personal experience with racial prejudice in its extreme form.”<sup>438</sup> Some critics argue that Lowe preserved his wife’s anonymity and does not state explicitly her racial background in order to protect her from readers opposed to “miscegenation.”<sup>439</sup>

In this tea scene, Lowe displays the subordinate position of women, and the natural overlap of Chinese social structures with western ones, through a shared cultural custom. To stress the presence of hegemonic masculinity further, his “New Englander” wife “unintentionally [becomes] one of the models for Chinatown’s feminine etiquette, a preserver of its ancient traditions of social intercourse.”<sup>440</sup> Tea culture provides a space where gender roles can be enacted to support patriarchy and stress the legitimacy of Chinese patriarchy and masculinity.

---

<sup>436</sup> Connell, *Masculinities*, 67, 77.

<sup>437</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 230.

<sup>438</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 227-28.

<sup>439</sup> Yin, “Writing a Place in American Life,” 222.

<sup>440</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 231.



Michael Kimmel argues that hegemonic masculinity relies on racism, homophobia, and sexism so that “the masculinity that defines white, middle class, early middle-aged, heterosexual men is the masculinity that sets the standards for other men, against which other men are measured and, more often than not, found wanting.”<sup>441</sup> By marrying a white woman Lowe employs an effective way for a Chinese American man to assert patriarchal power on equal terms with white men (i.e., white men usually marry white women). The influence and legitimacy of Chinese American masculinity is shown to be equal to white masculinity, since Lowe’s marriage is portrayed as a happy and successful one. Furthermore, by letting us see his wife take part in a Chinese tea ceremony with ease, Lowe shows firstly how adaptations are natural and not a threat, and secondly that Chinese and white Americans have few differences between their familial or social structures. The similarities are evidenced in how the adaptations his wife needs to make are small due to the similar gender roles present in Chinese and white American communities. Thus, the familial and social structures are depicted to be so similar that sex and gender, not race, appear to position someone within a community.

His wife’s anonymity strengthens her narrative role as an all-encompassing representative of the old English heritage of New England and its colonial tea customs, along with the gender roles present in Chinese and white American society. It also serves to stress the similarities between white American culture and Chinese American culture, as seen earlier with the English rugby description and the comparison of the Arthurian legends to Chinese history. I contend that her anonymity casts her firmly as a symbol to communicate the similarities between white and Chinese American values, desires, and customs. His wife’s respect for, and ability to embody, traditional Chinese feminine virtues are looked upon as a blessing by her husband’s family, and are portrayed as a natural transference of her position from a submissive server in her paternal home to a submissive wife in her husband’s family home. In her transference of qualities from a white to a Chinese American home, female subordination and male patriarchy are not shown to be altered by race, since women are displayed

---

<sup>441</sup> Michael Kimmel, “Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity,” in *Theorizing Masculinities*, ed. Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 1994), 124.

as submissive, and men as dominant, in both groups. Lowe paints Chinese American society as American by using a shared cultural custom to show how a white woman from New England can fit into Chinese American society due to the similar gender positions, decorum, values, and patriarchy present.

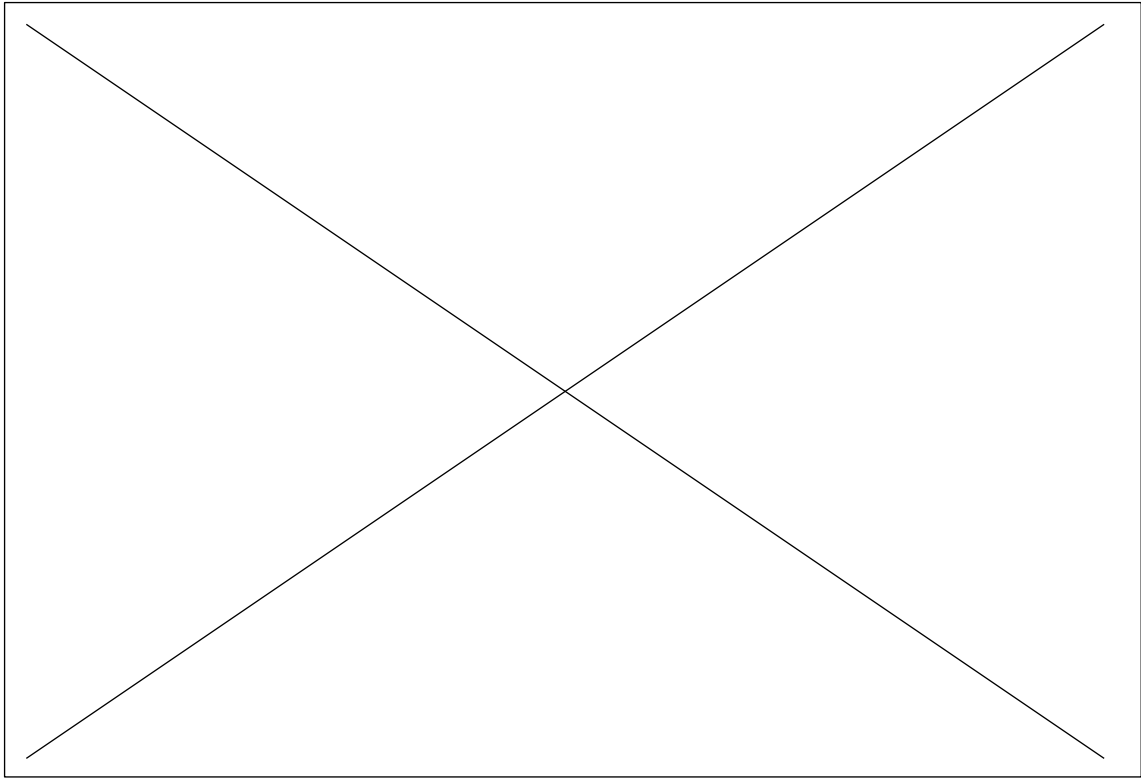


Figure 3.7 A photograph of the armed services edition of *Father and Glorious Descendant*.

Lowe's wife's silence and anonymity reflect the desire to limit women to domestic roles and spaces in Chinese American communities. Chinese immigrant women's education in and exposure to western ways conflicted with this desire. Furthermore, World War II provided many women with financial independence, since they were needed to work as part of the war effort. The armed services edition of Lowe's autobiography, a 14cm by 9.6cm paperback, fits perfectly into an army-jacket pocket (see fig. 3.7). His portrayal of women fulfilling dutiful and familial tasks in his text would have provided comfort to his masculine soldier readers, as his text reminds them of the lifestyle they were fighting to protect and to return to. The Armed Services Editions gave over

123,000,000 books freely to soldiers and sailors.<sup>442</sup> Most of the books were contemporary U.S. fiction. Though Lowe's text would have appealed to Chinese American servicemen, the decision to make it into one of 1,332 published titles is telling, and it is likely because the book reflects and rarely questions idealised U.S. values and opportunities. This was because during the 1940s (and even more so during the 1950s, with the spread of Communism nationally and internationally) it was vital to portray democracy and the "American way" as the right and just way to govern a nation.<sup>443</sup> Additionally, Lowe utilises this moment in history to legitimise Chinese Americans as U.S. citizens by presenting how they uphold and follow the same values.

Many Chinese women felt that the friction between the expectations put on them to be traditional housewives, and their association with white American culture and ideas of individualism and liberty, led them to be "marginal" women, belonging to neither nationality nor culture.<sup>444</sup> In 1926 a second-generation Chinese American girl, Janie Chii, wrote that

the second-generation Chinese girl [...] is a thing apart from her sister of the older generation who was bound by the traditions of many centuries. Freed from old restraints, yet hampered by many new problems which she meets in her daily living, she is still an uncertain quantity. Consciously and unconsciously she reflects the conflict within her caused by her Chinese heritage and American environment. She has broken her link with the East. She has not as yet found one with the West.<sup>445</sup>

Jade Snow Wong does not replicate this idea of "divided selfhood" in her autobiography *Fifth Chinese Daughter*. Chii's article was published in the Presbyterian women's journal, *Women and Missions*. The article reinforces the stance of western superiority present in *Women and Missions*, as she supports her minority's alienation by exoticizing Chinese women, and by presenting a U.S. identity as synonymous with whiteness.

Wong's work, by contrast, displays how Chinese American women can negotiate their heritage and experiences to attain their freedom. Maxine Hong

---

<sup>442</sup> Hutchinson, *Facing the Abyss*, 21.

<sup>443</sup> Yin, "Writing a Place in American Life," 215, 227; Lowe, "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity," 17.

<sup>444</sup> Ling, *Surviving on the Gold Mountain*, 100.

<sup>445</sup> Janie Chii, "The Oriental Girl in the Occident," quoted in *Unbound Voices: A Documentary History of Chinese Women in San Francisco*, ed. Judy Yung (California: University of California Press, 1999), 253.

Kingston credits *Fifth Chinese Daughter* with inspiring *The Woman Warrior*, and goes on further to state that Wong should be considered “the Mother of Chinese American literature.”<sup>446</sup> Wong’s autobiography was awarded the Commonwealth Club’s Medal for Non-Fiction in 1951; since then, the book has been translated into twelve languages, undergone many printings, and sold nearly half a million copies.<sup>447</sup> The awards and acclaim her autobiography has received highlight her controversial mainstream acceptance, for she has been labelled by some critics, including Frank Chin, as a traitor writing to please white readers.<sup>448</sup> In many ways, her lengthy explanations of Chinese customs, exotic descriptions of Chinatown, and upholding of white American culture support the expectations of her white readers. Her reception also indicates how Wong filled a gap in Chinese American literature, which is evident in her use of tea ceremonies, as she uses them to disprove the stifling stereotype of the silent Chinese American woman.

Her autobiography chronologically tells of the first twenty-four years of Wong’s life: growing up in San Francisco’s Chinatown, her time at Mills College, her financial independence and work ethic, and how she carves out a space for herself in Chinatown—a shop window where she can make and sell her pottery. She negotiates Chinese customs and the U.S. ideal of independence, practises freedom of choice, and advocates the acceptance of transnational identities. Wong’s creative act of pottery-making represents her mixed cultural lifestyle, as she adopts Chinese pottery methods to create ceramics and enamels that both minority and white American culture can appreciate and use in their distinct and overlapping customs. By classifying herself as the creator she is not bound to either group, and instead is portrayed as the mistress of her own cultural identification. This is portrayed in her autobiography through Wong’s consumption of tea, as through it she shows how she breaks away from the stereotype of the silent Chinese woman, and relentlessly insists on her rights, ambitions, and Chinese American cultural identity that white American society and her family ignore.

---

<sup>446</sup> David Wyatt, *Five Fires: Race, Catastrophe, and the Shaping of California* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 98.

<sup>447</sup> Judith Judson, “Child of Two Cultures,” *Washington Post*, July 2, 1989, D3.

<sup>448</sup> Chin, “Come all Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake,” 11.

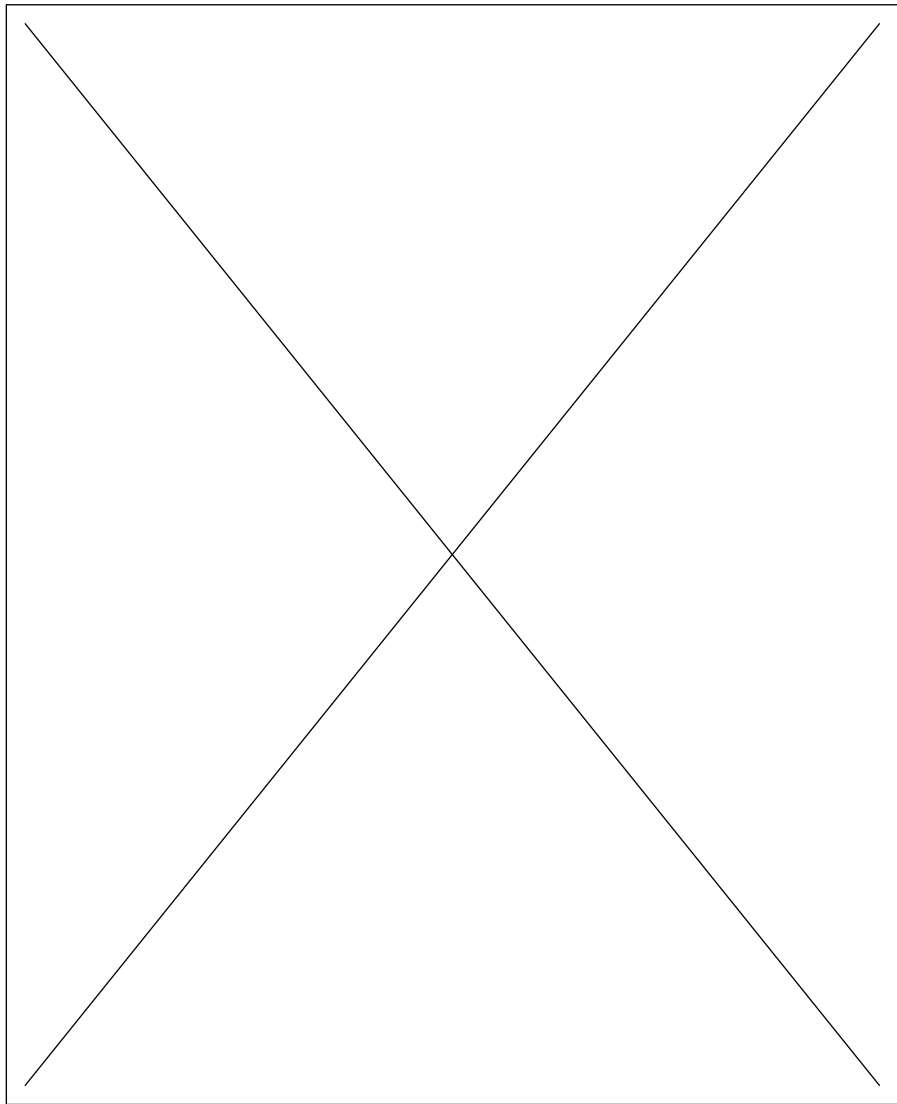


Figure 3.8 Jade Snow Wong, *Untitled*, mid-1950s, earthenware vase.

Despite the challenges she faced coming from a minority group, Wong's pottery was very well received. In 1947 New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) included two pieces of her pottery (two plates, enamel on copper) on their list of 100 Useful Objects of Fine Design.<sup>449</sup> The Metropolitan Museum of Art also acquired some of her work in the late 1940s for its permanent collection; it still houses one of her bowls.<sup>450</sup> Her cultural background was considered by reviewers and critics as foundational to her success.<sup>451</sup> For instance, in 1948

---

<sup>449</sup> The Museum of Modern Art, *100 Useful Objects of Fine Design 1947* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1947), no. 49.

<sup>450</sup> Wu, *The Color of Success*, 127; Jade Snow Wong, "Bowl," *The Met*, accessed June 18, 2020, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/488286>.

<sup>451</sup> Wu, *The Color of Success*, 127.

*Mademoiselle*, which presented her with one of its national Merit Awards (only given to 10 young women annually) notes that “Jade Snow Wong weighs the values in the formal patterns of her Chinese heritage with the enterprise of her American homeland.”<sup>452</sup> The praise she received was informed by her autobiography and her essays in *Common Ground* where she highlights her Chinese heritage’s impact on her work.<sup>453</sup> Furthermore, *Common Ground* was one of the main non-governmental publications in the 1940s focused on advocating cultural pluralism. Cultural pluralism refers to the existence of minority cultures and a dominant culture with which they can peacefully co-exist because they share the same values. Alongside Wong’s pottery, which gave her financial independence, tea is used in her autobiography to highlight the importance of women gaining autonomy and rejecting subservience.

Wong formulates such desires and opinions in her youth, yet she depicts archetypal feminine domestic submissiveness in a Chinese wedding tea ceremony. During the ceremony the bride, as tradition dictates, serves tea to all guests and stands on display as a “decorative, noneating, nondrinking, nonspeaking accessory to the wedding celebration.”<sup>454</sup> Later on, Wong uses this image to symbolically oppose this subservient position by not being timid during a tea ceremony with her parents and a suitor they want her to meet. She is not willing to dress in traditional Chinese clothing, and her hair covers her face because she refuses to dry it after washing it. Though she pours the tea and gives out the oranges “according to correct manner,” the informality of her appearance shocks and embarrasses her parents, and indicates her refusal to observe some traditions. However, it would be incorrect to say that it is only Chinese traditions she is dismissing. A traditional white American afternoon tea ceremony is also full of customs, with everything supposed to be “just so,” and with an organised hostess running a synchronised afternoon tea. Thus, Wong’s rejection and manipulation of the traditional tea ceremony symbolises how she insists that, although she identifies with white American and Chinese culture, she will adapt them and combine them to communicate her own cultural identity and values, which will not accept the subservient position assigned to women.

---

<sup>452</sup> *Mademoiselle*, quoted in Wu, *The Color of Success*, 127.

<sup>453</sup> Wu, *The Color of Success*, 127.

<sup>454</sup> Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 144.

Leslie Bow highlights that Wong “does not question the necessity of the [family] hierarchy as much as she does her place within it.”<sup>455</sup> Bow also stresses that Wong thinks equality should be earned through achievements on an individual basis.<sup>456</sup> I agree with Bow’s interpretation of *Fifth Chinese Daughter*. Wong evidently criticises the restrictions placed upon *aspiring* women in patriarchal societies by renegotiating her position as a woman within the family structure. This is evinced in her delivery of the tea ceremony, and how she uses it to respect Chinese courtesy and custom, but also to flaunt her departure from patriarchal governance. By performing the tea ceremony but refusing to behave subserviently and demurely, Wong highlights her rejection of the submissive position women are supposed to perform in Chinese and white American societies. By choosing and adapting the customs she identifies with, Wong reflects how she does not consider herself any less able or talented than her male contemporaries during a time when women were becoming more aware of their abilities within different workspaces.

However, her belief in equality and her confidence in her ability are not reflected in the lives of the other women in her autobiography. Her mother and grandmother rarely talk, her father makes most of the decisions without them questioning him, and in general the women in the autobiography follow the orders they are given by men. Though Wong represents the lives of many women, she does not fully consider the fortunateness of her own situation. The narrative presents the story of a self-made woman who fought for all the education and opportunities she received. Wong’s situation, however, also rests on her family’s tolerance of her ambitions, their support, and their relative financial security. The text hyperbolises Wong’s talent and ambition to the extent of casting her as an exemplary individual who shows that, if you have enough skill and willpower, you will reach your goals. This narrative undermines the sexist and racist oppression experienced by Chinese Americans in the United States who also had dreams and aspirations which, due to no fault of their own, failed to materialise.

---

<sup>455</sup> Leslie Bow, *Betrayal and Other Acts of Subversion: Feminism, Sexual Politics, Asian American Women’s Literature* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press), 80.

<sup>456</sup> Bow, *Betrayal and Other Acts of Subversion*, 80.

#### IV. Bonding over a Cup of Tea: Inter-generational Unity for Progress

If a Chinese American strongly associates with their minority culture, which is alienated from conventional society, then their dreams are often negatively impacted. Responding to the perceived mutual exclusivity of Chinese immigrant identity and U.S. national identity, scholars including Elaine Kim, erin Khuê Ninh, and David Li have framed their analyses of Chinese American literature around the concept of “cultural baggage.”<sup>457</sup> Their analyses criticise how the idea of culture being monolithic and static is abundant in Chinese American literature, with first-generation immigrants depicted as tenaciously clinging to the culture they left behind, and the second-generation shown to be ruthlessly rejecting links to what they consider as their backward heritage. This mode of analysis, when employed in studies concerning literature focused on or written by second-generation Chinese Americans, has produced criticism that interprets alterations and rejections of cultural customs as evidence of an insuperable chasm of moral and lifestyle differences between Chinese American children and their forefathers. For instance, Elaine Kim contends that *Father and Glorious Descendant* “glorifies the son, even to the point of rejecting the father” and that “while things Chinese are repulsive and unacceptable to Lowe, things American are irresistibly attractive. China is the symbol of backwardness, but America is the epitome of modernity.”<sup>458</sup> But this reductive binary between “Chineseness” and “Americanness” is not always borne out in the texts themselves. The reductive dichotomy Kim sets up here between the autobiography’s representations of Chinese and white American culture is a prime example of recurring critiques present in Chinese American literary scholarship.

David Li develops Kim’s critique when he condemns how the ethnic community in literature “is described in terms of social death, Asian parents are

---

<sup>457</sup> To read more about the different approaches to second-generation Asian American literature see: Sucheng Chan, “Race, Ethnic Culture, and Gender in the Construction of Identities among Second-Generation Chinese Americans, 1880s to 1930s,” in *Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities During the Exclusion Era*, ed. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 127-164; erin Khuê Ninh, *Ingratitude: The Debt-Bound Daughter in Asian American Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

<sup>458</sup> Elaine Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and their Social Context* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 61, 63.



depicted as unfeelingly oppressive and laughably ineffectual, and Asian American youngsters are celebrated for escaping the prison of ethnicity”;<sup>459</sup> this approach is not wholly inaccurate. There are certainly texts featuring plots that centre upon a second-generation child narrating their betrayal of their parents’ minority culture. Many have purposefully advertised themselves as doing this to encourage sales, as seen in the comedian Jimmy O. Yang’s autobiography’s title *How to American: An Immigrant’s Guide to Disappointing Your Parents* (2018). However, though many Chinese American texts do have a central narrative which concerns generational and cultural tension, interpreting Chinese American literature “exclusively in terms of the[se] master narratives,” Lisa Lowe warns, will obscure “the particularities and incommensurabilities of class, gender, and national diversities.”<sup>460</sup>

Many critics believe that it was Wong’s and Pardee Lowe’s rejection of Chinese heritage which secured their popularity when they were first published. The editors of *Aiiieeeee!* criticised these autobiographies for valuing white culture and customs over the “repulsive” Chinatown of their parents.<sup>461</sup> However, the tea-drinking in their narratives evidences how their popularity is rooted in the way they combine Chinese and white American cultural norms within their lives. As Christina Klein suggests, “in the 1940s and 1950s it was precisely the dual identity—the foreignness—of Chinese Americans that gave them value as Americans [and value in the literary market].”<sup>462</sup> Thus, their popularity—evidenced for Klein in sales, Wong’s cultural diplomacy tour, and Lowe’s armed services edition of his autobiography—was partially located in the desire at the time to fortify the nation and spread representations of how good democracy is.

In this section I investigate how Lowe and Wong depict tea ceremonies in their autobiographies to show the natural cultural changes and adaptations that take place within ethnic minorities; though this process is often painted in scholarship as rebellious, I stress how it is portrayed as a sign of their desire to

---

<sup>459</sup> David Leiwei Li, *Imagining the Nation: Asian American Literature and Cultural Consent* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 129.

<sup>460</sup> Lowe, “Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity,” 533.

<sup>461</sup> Jeffery Paul Chan, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada and Shawn Wong, “Preface to the First Edition,” in *Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*, ed. Jeffery Paul Chan, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2019), xxviii-xxix.

<sup>462</sup> Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (California: University of California Press, 2003), 240.

hold on to the foundational parts of their heritage, to remain close to their elders, and to form cultural identities influenced by their upbringing and education in the United States. I analyse how Wong and Lowe explore and legitimise Chinese American identities in their autobiographies because they represent how culture is not monolithic, static, or exclusive in their depictions of tea ceremonies.

By employing a commodity located in western and eastern cultures, the authors metaphorically depict how people's dispositions are formed by and become adapted to suit their environment. For Chinese Americans, their "foreignness" as non-white subjects is written on the body. In their autobiographies, Wong and Lowe reconceptualise "yellow" as a cultural matter, not a racial one. Tea is fundamental in portraying this process, and highlights a crucial question: if tea can be accepted as a cultural commodity in the United States, why then—when Chinese Americans believe in and uphold U.S. values, and consider many typical U.S. cultural customs as part of their cultural make-up—are they still considered outsiders? Furthermore, tea is deployed in both narratives to express the unity of the Chinese across generations as they face similar and unjust exclusionary laws and prejudices.

In *Father and Glorious Descendant* Lowe invokes the multi-generational experience of exclusion and familial ties through tea ceremonies. At the beginning of the text we find out that his father was educated by missionaries for only one month because of his demanding job as a sewing-machine apprentice. He was tasked with many things, including opening up the shop and "preparing the morning tea."<sup>463</sup> His role within the community, and becoming part of it as a maturing boy, are stressed through his preparation of the brew that will please his employers and will likely be served to the shop's customers. His father does not dismiss his education. Instead, he appears aware of the importance of being part of Chinatown's community, because as a Chinese man his future relied on his membership. Laws that hindered the ethnically Chinese in the United States from land ownership, "miscegenation," and naturalisation meant that ethnic solidarity was essential.

Lowe takes a different path to his father: he pursues education, a decision made possible by familial support and funded by a job he acquires in a Chinese restaurant. Despite their regular differences of opinion and life choices, father and

---

<sup>463</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 6.

son both desire acceptance within the United States and uphold their beliefs in the U.S. Constitution: this is reflected in his father naming all of his children after prominent U.S. politicians, and in Lowe dreaming of becoming President. The unity formed through their shared beliefs and desires is stressed when Lowe and his wife travel through California before ending up in San Francisco's Chinatown with the purpose of introducing his wife to his family. They stop at an auto camp on the way there and are denied lodgings, it is strongly implied, because of Lowe's race.<sup>464</sup> In California "miscegenation" was illegal throughout the exclusion era, and its presence anywhere in the United States could often lead to targeted abuse.<sup>465</sup> After these, and countless other racist experiences, Lowe realises the importance of Chinese American communities where he is welcomed.

In stark contrast to this abuse, once in Chinatown, Lowe and his wife are accepted and, "True to [his] own family tradition, [his family] had been extremely un-Chinese in their enthusias[tic welcome]."<sup>466</sup> The irony here is that the welcome associated with the United States is never experienced by Lowe and his wife in white American society, and the Chinese Americans, characterised as mysterious and reclusive, are the very "American" welcome party. The illusions of acceptance are slowly broken in these moments of contrast, while the realities of unjust exclusion become more and more apparent. The autobiography shows that Chinese Americans strove to practically uphold the ideals and personal goals of the United States despite their exclusion from obtaining many of them. The tea ceremonies in the text show how a person can identify with more than one cultural group, with ancestry an inadequate identifier of an individual's cultural background, nationality, or relationship with their elders.

The welcome financial support and acceptance of his marriage from the Chinese community and his family contrasts with the racist exclusion of larger society. Lowe's realisation of this contrast is portrayed at the end of the autobiography through a tea ceremony. Like his father at the beginning, Lowe realises the value of belonging to the Chinatown community and his family. On the eve of his father's sixty-sixth birthday there is a banquet of peaches to celebrate his "Great Birthday."<sup>467</sup> Lowe arises to serve his father tea "in

---

<sup>464</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 227.

<sup>465</sup> Yin, "Writing a Place in American Life," 222.

<sup>466</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 228.

<sup>467</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 296.

ceremonial fashion with both hands clasped around the tiny body of the cup.”<sup>468</sup> This Chinese ceremony is used to “ritualistically” symbolise “their filial devotion and loyalty,” as holding and passing tea cups in both hands symbolises in Chinese culture undivided attention and respect.<sup>469</sup> This is the last scene in the autobiography, and though many customs are Chinese there are mainstream U.S. influences presented through food: apart from the Chinese cuisine, the “American waffles with maple syrup, sugar doughnuts, and coffee” showed Lowe how “intermingled Chinatown’s customs had become.”<sup>470</sup> Lowe does not deplore the intermingling of cultural heritages; instead, this last scene depicts how naturally typical U.S. culture fits into and complements Chinatown life for each generation.

Lowe goes on to stress this point further as, during the tea ceremony, the narrator considers how his white American wife is accepted by the family, and acknowledges that white American and Chinese festivities are celebrated throughout the year within his family.<sup>471</sup> The tea ceremony in the closing scene of the autobiography emphasises the acceptance of white American culture into Chinese American communities, and their willingness to share their cultural products and customs, such as tea-drinking. Consequently, the scene stresses, through Lowe’s strained unity with his father, that natural generational gaps are initially worsened in Chinese American communities because of mainstream society painting their heritage as “un-American.” It is only when he bitterly accepts that he will never achieve his childhood dream to be President of the United States, and that to have access to “liberty for all” you must at least be white, that he reassesses the virtuous and forward-thinking traits of his elders and what it truly means to be American.

To emphasise her appreciation of the inclusive and respectful aspects of her Chinese heritage, Wong begins her author’s note with a maxim often quoted by her parents: “When you drink water, think of its source.”<sup>472</sup> The sources she thanks are the people who made her book possible. Thinking of the source of water, however, is firmly positioned in Chinese tea culture. In the acclaimed

---

<sup>468</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 302.

<sup>469</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 302.

<sup>470</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 297.

<sup>471</sup> Lowe, *Father and Glorious Descendant*, 308-312.

<sup>472</sup> Jade Snow Wong, “Author’s Note to the Original Edition,” in *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (Seattle: Washington University Press, 2019), xxxvii.

eighteenth-century Chinese novel, *A Dream of Red Chambers (Hongloumeng)* (1791) by Cao Xuequin, tea is drunk in a Buddhist nunnery by the protagonist Jia Baoyu and his retinue. While it is being served, the discussion focuses on the type of water used and how old it is. The nun, Admantia, takes two of the company away and serves them her own tea in precious vessels. Admantia is shocked when a discerning guest cannot detect the much higher quality of water that is used. She says: “Can you *really* not tell the difference? I am quite disappointed in you. This is melted snow that I collected from the branches of winter-flowering plum-trees five years ago.”<sup>473</sup> By beginning her author’s note with her parents’ maxim, I contend that Wong dextrously links back to her tea heritage in China. In doing so, Wong symbolically attaches herself to the rich cultural heritage which she respects as foundational in the formation of her identity. The maxim’s meaning is to show gratitude, and in using it Wong positively situates her heritage, and her knowledge of Chinese manners and philosophy, at the root of her own identity.

The water maxim recounted in the preface links Wong to China’s tea heritage and introduces Wong’s exploration of the foundational properties that distinguish an American from other nationalities: a belief in U.S. ideals. This is evinced in both autobiographies, as Wong supports the freedom of choice located in U.S. culture, and Lowe is invested in the United States’ free market and opportunities. However, despite their knowledge of and commitment to upholding these values, the racial designation of Chinese American as “other,” through appearance and culture destroyed their chances of being accepted as legitimate U.S. citizens. The link to tea’s diverse heritage from the beginning, coupled with the biological simplicity of water’s atomic formation, symbolises what naturally should be used to define an American: believing in the nation’s foundational principles.

Since all water, like tea, has a set constitution (H<sub>2</sub>O and *Camellia sinensis* respectively), Wong insists from the beginning of her book that at birth we are all the same, with our identity formed by our exposure to experiences and conditions. Wong communicates through her book that you can be an American with Chinese heritage, and that cultures are not static or mutually exclusive. In her opening description of Chinatown Wong mentions how “the same Pacific Ocean laves the

---

<sup>473</sup> Translation by James Benn in Benn, *Tea in China*, 1-2.

shores of both worlds.”<sup>474</sup> Wong looks at how both worlds interact, and especially how the culture of her elders has changed, expanded, and adapted, like tea, due to time and geography.

This is depicted when the narrator is very young and makes “her acquaintance with her first turkey” which her father “brought home one American holiday.”<sup>475</sup> Wong is left alone in a room with the turkey (which, at this point, is still alive) and it terrifies her; she is unable to shut her eyes without seeing the monstrous creature and she suffers from sweats. The turkey is a bird central to the feast table of Thanksgiving—a holiday based on a supposed dinner that took place between Mayflower pilgrims and the Wampanoag in 1621. The holiday brings people together to celebrate symbolically the annual harvest. However, the more accurate history of this idealised narrative is one of Native American plague and genocide. Therefore, the turkey highlights the difference between the image of tolerance and acceptance that the feast has come to signify, and the truth of the massacre and exclusion.

To cure the narrator of her fear, her grandmother conducts a Chinese ritual to “out the scare.”<sup>476</sup> Part of the ritual is to drink a “bitter and hot” “precious” tea.<sup>477</sup> After she has drunk the tea she is cured. This scene symbolically shows her realisation of the ugly truth of Chinese exclusion, and how she will never fully experience the rights laid out in *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (1791): rights to equality, property, security, and liberty guaranteed by the government. The Constitution states that the rights of a citizen can be removed if they conflict with political life. Positioning the Chinese as “alien” benefitted the American economy through cheap labour, scapegoating, and providing an “other” against which to position white American identity.<sup>478</sup> In this scene, the turkey symbolises the façade of U.S. acceptance—as the land of immigrants and the free—and the hypocrisy and prejudice often located behind the enactment of a Thanksgiving dinner, as Chinese Americans experience racist treatment and are often barred from full participation in national life.

---

<sup>474</sup> Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 1.

<sup>475</sup> Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 9.

<sup>476</sup> Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 10.

<sup>477</sup> Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 10.

<sup>478</sup> Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, 24-25.

The most consumed tea in the United States, introduced to the United States in the 1860s, is iced tea, which is sweet due to added sugar.<sup>479</sup> By the 1940s, more than two-thirds of the tea consumed in the United States had added sugar.<sup>480</sup> Wong's tea is a direct contrast with its Chinese cultural origins and its traditional "bitter" taste. The bitter taste comes partly from the "jade pendant, a piece of gold ore, and a pearl brooch" that her grandmother had let soak in the tea.<sup>481</sup> Jade in Chinese culture is symbolic of many virtues, including honesty.<sup>482</sup> Gold, in this context, can be seen to represent the dreams of the first wave of Chinese immigrants who went to Gold Mountain in search of fortune, and pearl in China symbolises good luck and protection.<sup>483</sup> "Gold Mountain" was the name given by Chinese immigrants to areas along the West Coast of the United States and Canada where gold had been found during the gold rush era. By putting these three products in the tea, the brew is metaphorically infused with the truth, virtues, dreams, and harsh realities of her ancestors' experiences. The tea provides Wong with "relief."<sup>484</sup> Though it may be hard to swallow compared to cooked turkey and sweet tea, Wong symbolically becomes aware of her heritage and community in the United States through the tea's own rich and mixed heritage, and it comforts her with the assurance that there is a support network and a community that believes in and practises its ideals.

Wong's desire to hold on to her cultural heritage, and to keep a tangible link to her upbringing, is evident when she leaves her family to go to university. She asks her mother how to cook Chinese recipes and hosts a Chinese dinner party. Her desire to want to share her culture, and also to be able to transplant some of it into her college life, displays her respect for and identification with her Chinese American heritage. Though she is asked to cook a Chinese meal for her guests, she does not feel any resentment about this. Instead, she embraces the occasion to share her heritage and to learn more about it as well.

The dinner Wong prepares is for visiting musicians at Mills College, and in the process of its preparation and the event itself her autobiography explores the

---

<sup>479</sup> Jan Whitaker, "Tea," in *The Oxford Companion to American Food and Drink*, ed. Andrew F. Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 582.

<sup>480</sup> Whitaker, "Tea," 583.

<sup>481</sup> Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 10.

<sup>482</sup> Ming Yu, *Chinese Jade* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 19-21.

<sup>483</sup> Dorothy Perkins, *Encyclopedia of China: The Essential Reference, China and its History and Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 379.

<sup>484</sup> Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 10.

construction of transnational identities. Deborah L. Madsen points out that this dinner “is not so much an Oriental versus Western occasion but rather is represented as becoming a multicultural event.”<sup>485</sup> After a Russian musician finds a Russian samovar he decides that he will use it to make “Chinese tea.”<sup>486</sup> The musician uses Wong’s mother’s cleaver to cut up the wood to heat the samovar. Wong comments on how this cleaver “split kindling to heat a Russian samovar, to help make Chinese tea for a party honouring a string quartet.”<sup>487</sup> The play *The Melting Pot* by Israel Zangwill, first performed in 1908 in Washington, popularised the term “melting pot” to refer to the assimilation of different European ethnicities in the United States.<sup>488</sup> The play stressed how European cultures could unite to form an overarching new U.S. culture. Here, Wong is displaying, through the shared cultural commodity of tea, that Chinese American culture can be considered as part of the United States’ cultural make-up, and that it should not be relentlessly attached to an orientalist view of China. She portrays how, through accepting a society based on cultural pluralism, cultures can benefit from one another. Wong asks for a reevaluation of legal and social exclusion through a globally appreciated and performed cultural custom.

## Conclusion

Jade Snow Wong and Pardee Lowe endeavoured to break away from the shackles of what Lisa Lowe calls the “national memory” which “haunts the conception of the Asian American, persisting beyond the repeal of actual laws prohibiting Asians from citizenship and sustained by wars in Asia, in which the Asian is always seen as an immigrant, as the ‘foreigner within’.”<sup>489</sup> To dismantle their designated outsider status, Wong and Lowe challenge the perceptions of Chinese communities as “bachelor societies” formed of sojourners prone to crime, by narrating their lives as children growing up in the family-oriented Chinatown of San Francisco. They accentuate the ambitions, morals, and familial

---

<sup>485</sup> Deborah L. Madsen, “The Oriental/Occidental Dynamic in Chinese American Life Writing: Pardee Lowe and Jade Snow Wong,” *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 51, no. 3 (2006): 351, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41158236>.

<sup>486</sup> Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 172.

<sup>487</sup> Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 172.

<sup>488</sup> Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 66.

<sup>489</sup> Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, 5.



and economic structures present in white and Chinese American families by describing their lives as part of large, multi-generational families. To communicate these similarities, Wong and Lowe place tea in their narratives to accentuate how the motivations, desires, and beliefs of their characters are American despite being racially designated as alien or, worse, as a “yellow peril” threat.

The proliferation of and damage wrought by “yellow peril” stereotypes were recently presented in an uproar concerning Charlie Chan movie repeats on U.S. television channels such as FOX. These showings still happen, much to the disdain of Chinese Americans, who have protested against what they consider to be movies which promote white male patriarchy by presenting its depicted opposite—the emasculated Chinese man.<sup>490</sup> Following on from Sui Sin Far, Jade Snow Wong and Pardee Lowe are two more Chinese American writers who contest popular Chinese stereotypes through their prose. Despite their important work, their autobiographies have been heavily criticised for apparently valuing white American culture over their Chinese heritage. Perhaps it is partly due to this criticism that both texts have largely been unstudied in the twenty first century. A recent edition of Jade Snow Wong’s autobiography, published by Washington University Press in 2019, might mark a shift in scholarship that will more sympathetically consider Wong’s contribution to Chinese American literature.

Difference is to be respected, not excluded. Recognising difference, however, does not lead these texts to be, as Madsen states, “apologetic [and to] assume a set of stable and fixed national, ethnic, and cultural differences.”<sup>491</sup> Instead, Lowe and Wong endeavour to show how national identities and cultures are not static or monolithic. I concur with Madsen’s conclusion that these texts “argue not so much for assimilation but for cultural pluralism and mutual tolerance.”<sup>492</sup> In the face of continued economic and social exclusion, both authors use tea’s shared cultural terrain to depict the U.S. values of Chinese Americans, and the benefits to be gained through an appreciation of ethnic minority cultures. Wong and Lowe emphasise the legitimacy and rightful inclusion of Chinese Americans—metaphorically presented through tea’s mixed heritage and acceptance—in predominantly white American job markets and society.

---

<sup>490</sup> Jinny Huh, *The Arresting Eye: Race and the Anxiety of Detection* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015), 115-116.

<sup>491</sup> Madsen, “The Oriental/Occidental Dynamic,” 345.

<sup>492</sup> Madsen, “The Oriental/Occidental Dynamic,” 345.

Though both autobiographies present and legitimise transnational identities, it is important to acknowledge that they also value and stress the importance of knowing the history behind their mixed heritage. In their autobiographies, though Lowe and Wong decided to change the narrative of exclusion and alienation into one of familiarity through tea ceremonies, both writers consistently portray the importance of understanding history in order to comprehend fully the reasons behind each character's physical and verbal contributions in tea gatherings. We can see this when tea ceremonies disrupt the restrictive signifiers of each gender and present the impact of stereotypes on cultural understanding. Wong and Lowe portray the need for a reevaluation of the similarities and faults in Chinese and white American society concerning gender roles, the limitations of masculine and feminine identifiers, the restraints on what is considered an accepted transnational identity in the United States, and the ambitions and conflicts which are shared between Chinese American and white American people. Wong and Lowe do this by positioning tea in spaces where its rich heritage can be used to display the impact of the United States' social, economic, and political structure on Chinese Americans.

## Chapter 3

### Looking for Answers and Drinking Deep: Confronting Masculine Anxiety during the 1950s and 1960s

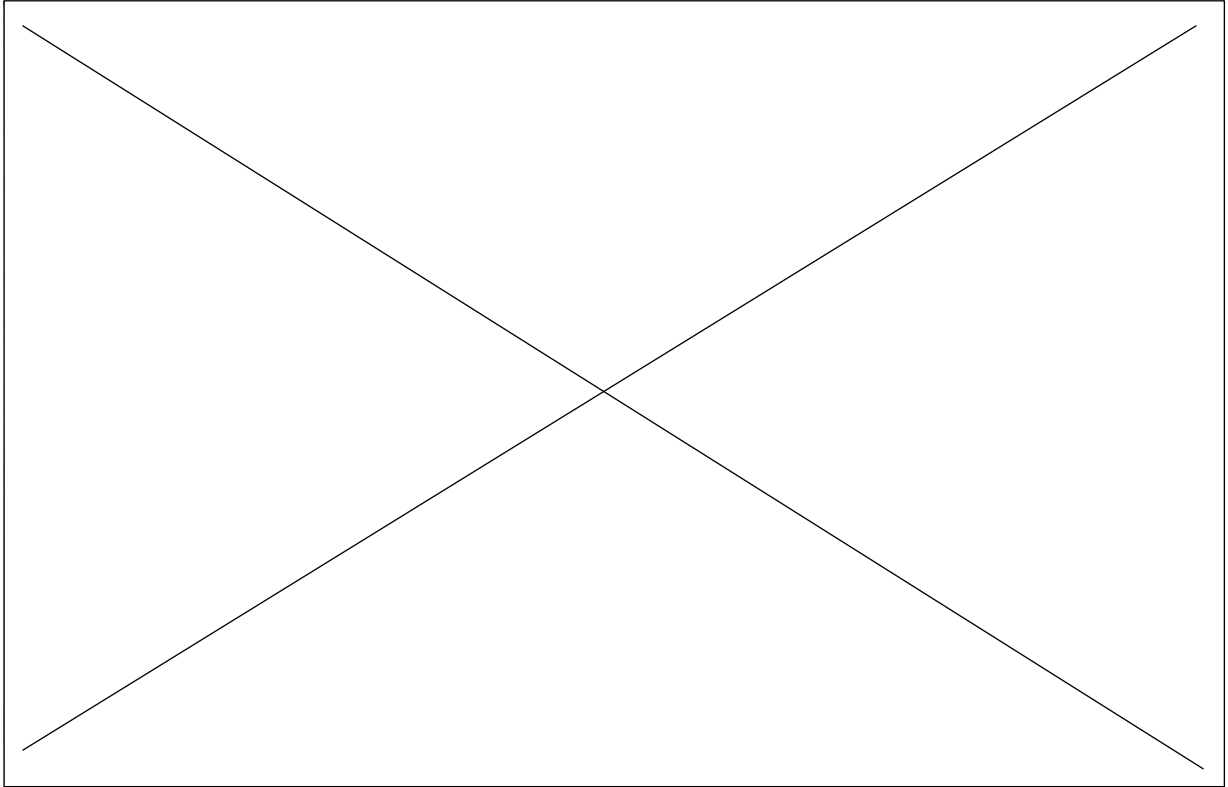


Figure 4.1 The 1958 front cover of the *Look* magazine issue titled “The Decline of The American Male.” Illustration by Robert Osborn.

Figure 4.2 A 1951 Tea Council advertisement in *LIFE* magazine.

The early Cold War period was a time of, as Iris Chang notes, “affluence, consumerism, and anesthetizing conformity.”<sup>493</sup> Advertisements presented “the company man cruising in his long-finned car to his job in the city, [and] the blissful housewife surrounded by gleaming new gadgets in her suburban kitchen,” as the ideal lifestyle for Americans.<sup>494</sup> However, there was a fear that the restrictive financial and familial structure of the suburban lifestyle led to the domestication of white men. Pierre-Antoine Pellerin points out that in the 1950s for many men

---

<sup>493</sup> Iris Chang, *The Chinese in America: A Narrative History* (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 256.

<sup>494</sup> Chang, *The Chinese in America*, 256.

“not only was wilderness threatened by (sub)urbanization, industrialization and modernization, but men themselves were thought to have been tamed and domesticated.”<sup>495</sup> Anxiety over U.S. masculinity gained the attention of many writers (e.g., Jack Kerouac) and intellectuals (e.g., Irving Howe): for instance, *LIFE* magazine labelled 1954 as the year of “the domestication of the American male.”<sup>496</sup> *Look* magazine’s *The Decline of the American Male* (1958) issue represents the continued fear that men were losing their freedom and inherent “power,” as they spent all of their energy making money for their wives to spend (see fig. 4.1). The front cover of the issue illustrates a man in a dull grey suit with wrinkled eyes that emphasise his long hours and office-based position. The wife’s pink nudity—note how her whiteness is marked through her pinkness—and wry smile portray her vitality and ability to control him like a puppet. The illustration is one of many misogynistic representations which suggested that women were running the home and “taming” men.

The U.S. tea industry was able to profit from the image of the efficient and prepared housewife. The Tea Council’s advertisements from the early 1950s highlight their focus on these women, as they were one of their biggest client groups. The Tea Council was formed in 1950 as a non-profit organisation to create partnerships between tea producers, packers, importers, brokers, and related industries.<sup>497</sup> It was also established to enable all members to promote tea in the United States through circulating material like adverts.<sup>498</sup> In a Tea Council advert from 1952, the husband is presented as reliant on the wife and her supply of tea to provide him with comfort. The brew represents the normalised role of the housewife’s responsibility to create a relaxing and restorative home. Unwittingly, the advert also depicts the fear surrounding the “taming” of men with their perceived dependency on women and the home comforts they can provide (see fig. 4.2). In figure 4.2 this is evident through the husband’s apprehensive fixation on the tea and the housewife’s gleeful expression at providing essential home comforts. Her larger stature due to her standing at the forefront of the

---

<sup>495</sup> Pierre-Antoine Pellerin, “Jack Kerouac’s Eco-poetics in *The Dharma Bums* and *Desolation Angels*: Domesticity, Wilderness and Masculine Fantasies of Animality,” *Transatlantica: American Studies Journal* 2 (2011): 3-4, <http://journals.openedition.org/transatlantica/5560>.

<sup>496</sup> “The New American Domesticated Male,” *LIFE*, January 4, 1954, 42; Pellerin, “Jack Kerouac’s Eco-poetics in *The Dharma Bums* and *Desolation Angels*,” 2.

<sup>497</sup> Tea Association of the U.S.A. Inc., “Explanatory Note,” accessed December 16, 2020, <http://www.teausa.com/14519/tea-council>.

<sup>498</sup> Tea Association of the U.S.A. Inc., “Explanatory Note.”

advert, and the husband finding his head between her arms outstretched in a scissor shape, physically symbolise her power when confronted by her husband's domestic needs.

This chapter primarily investigates how anxiety surrounding the perceived loss of masculinity during the 1950s and early 1960s is explored in fictional tea-drinking scenes in *The Flower Drum Song* (1957) by Chin-Yang (C. Y.) Lee (b. 1915, d. 2018), *The Dharma Bums* (1958) by Jack Kerouac (b. 1922, d. 1969), and *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1961) by Louis Chu (b. 1915, d. 1970). Tea-drinking is used by Kerouac to reject suburban norms and to create a white American masculinity inspired by Buddhism and homosocial spaces. On the other hand, tea-drinking in Lee's and Chu's novels is suggestive of a symbolic rejection of the expectations and restrictions placed upon Chinese American men's identity by conventional society and their elders; through fictional tea scenes Lee and Chu negotiate a new masculine hierarchy for Chinese American communities. U.S. masculinity is diverse, and during this period, as Clive Baldwin notes, "While certain attributes might have been expected of men, their lived experience was that of multiple and hierarchical masculinities."<sup>499</sup> All three writers depict marginalised, new, and conformist masculine traits occurring simultaneously, along with the trials and transformations faced by men as they search for and wish to embody "lost," elusive, and mythologised masculine characteristics. It is through tea that the racialised, culturally specific, "rebellious," idealised, and always patriarchal aspects of the masculine qualities the authors explore are either challenged or affirmed.

In relation to anxieties about masculinity during the 1950s and early 1960s, Catherine Jurca notes that a "male-authored and frequently male-focused body of literature [arose] that is obsessed with the meaning and value of home and community [and reacts to the new] domestically oriented male identity."<sup>500</sup> Part I investigates how fictional tea scenes explore home and community structures, and men's place within them, during this era. First, I examine how tea scenes depict the ideals of the U.S. nuclear family through advertisements and the musical film *Tea for Two* (dir. David Butler, 1950). The section goes on to

---

<sup>499</sup> Clive Baldwin, *Anxious Men: Masculinity in American Fiction of the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 3.

<sup>500</sup> Catherine Jurca, *White Diaspora: The Suburb and the Twentieth-Century American Novel* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), 11.

document how some authors subverted tea's association with domestication to present the damage wrought by conformity. I analyse how the novels *Rabbit, Run* (1960) by John Updike (b. 1932, d. 2009), *Revolutionary Road* (1961) by Richard Yates (b. 1926, d.1992), and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) by Ken Kesey (b. 1935, d. 2001) present how tea branches away from its representation as a drink that accompanies a contented heteronormative family, and instead highlights the negative familial and mental health impacts of the current social and economic system on men and women.

Part II investigates how Kerouac, in *The Dharma Bums* (1958), employs Chinese tea-drinking to reject fears over white American masculinity in an age labelled by W. H. Auden as the "Age of Anxiety," by Irving Howe as the "Age of Conformity," and by Gregory Corso as the "Hung-Up Age."<sup>501</sup> Tea is embedded in Buddhist practice and the history of China which Kerouac, and many of his contemporaries, studied and practised in their lives as a way to reject and transcend conservative society. Michael Davidson observes that for post-war writers like Jack Kerouac

If the Asian East offers an exotic alternative to the American East Coast, it does so through a complicated form of racial cross-dressing in which white males, by interacting with Asian culture, can reconfirm homosocial community and heterosexual authority.<sup>502</sup>

Kerouac utilises Chinese tea-drinking to reconfirm the "homosocial community and heterosexual authority" that Davidson identifies, as well as to actively reject white suburbia and foster an adventurous and independent spirit. His orientalist portrayals of the brew align with contemporary views of Buddhist tea practices being "un-American," and thus reinforce the reactionary and rebellious position of Buddhist doctrine and thought in the lives of his Beat Generation characters. Throughout the novel, the suburban domestic practice of tea-drinking is abandoned and replaced with spiritual services in the great outdoors which transform the characters into wandering "Chinese" persons both visually and

---

<sup>501</sup> Belletto points out that the Beat Generation had read Auden's text. W. H. Auden, *The Age of Anxiety* (1947; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Gregory Corso, "In This Hung-Up Age," *Encounter* 18 no. 1 (January 1962); Irving Howe, "The Age of Conformity," *Dissent* (1954). All three texts are quoted in Steven Belletto, *The Beats: A Literary History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 37, 382.

<sup>502</sup> Michael Davidson, *Guys Like Us: Citing Masculinity in Cold War Politics* (London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 79.

spiritually. In doing so, Chinese culture is portrayed as the antithesis of normative society and a tool for retaining a “manliness” which is under threat.

Kerouac’s novel is a roman-à-clef in which he employs first-person narration and a compositional technique of spontaneous prose: a writing style that is improvised and immediate compared to deliberate and edited forms of composition. As a result, the text’s events are presented as uncensored reflections on “real” occasions; however, the process of literary production, the malleability of memory, and the selection of certain episodes cannot be ignored. Kerouac’s ordering and choice of events, and orientalist descriptions, must be considered as purposeful, and presented as such, in order to be impactful.

The Chinese American community was also experiencing qualms over the masculinity of its younger generation of men. The continued portrayal of Chinese American men as effeminate in popular culture led to internalised racism and anxiety over their “manliness.” The arrival of many Chinese American women into the previously “bachelor societies” of Chinatown after World War II further aggravated concerns regarding the ability of Chinese American men to be “manly” partners and fathers. This is because decades of effeminate stereotyping had left many Chinese American men feeling inept as patriarchal figures.<sup>503</sup> It is evident in the work of male writers, whether Chinese American or white American, that what unites them during this period is a profound anxiety over the impact on masculinity of women’s perceived empowerment in the home sphere.

The arrival of many women into Chinatowns, the ongoing impact of exclusion on family formation, and the conflicting customs of Chinatown’s elders and white American society, created anxiety over Chinese American masculinity. Part III investigates how *The Flower Drum Song* by Lee and *Eat a Bowl of Tea* by Chu almost start from where Pardee Lowe left off in his autobiography (discussed in Chapter 2), for the young protagonists are presented as wanting to identify as “American” as they break away from the traditional, collective authority of Chinatowns’ social structures to strive towards “U.S.” familial goals and masculinity; they soon realise this is not the way forward, as their ethnic community identity is portrayed as vital to their sense of self. The trials faced by

---

<sup>503</sup> A topic explored in many of Frank Chin’s works including *The Confessions of a Number One Son: The Great Chinese American Novel*, ed. Calvin McMillin (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2015): Chin, “Sons of Chan.”

both Chinese American protagonists portray fears over whether they are “masculine” enough to be the head of a household. Both novels are set in Chinatowns decades before their publication. The third-person narratives of the novels enable Lee and Chu to illustrate the various types of people occupying Chinatowns during this period, and the far-reaching impacts of people’s actions. I contend that, through tea scenes, Lee and Chu explore the social conditions and resulting anxieties over gender and women’s expectations that hindered Chinese American men from easily forming heteronormative families and a sense of “masculine” worth. Importantly, both authors stress through tea scenes that, though escaping the bonds of Chinatown and their parents is desired, holding on to one’s heritage and minority community is imperative to creating and stabilising notions of Chinese American masculinity and self-worth.

Few Chinese American novels were published during the 1950s and 1960s. Those that were published are usually set in Chinatowns, despite many Chinese Americans moving into the suburbs during this period.<sup>504</sup> The decision to set their works in Chinatowns presents a general consensus in the Chinese American community that, despite the difficulties of harmonising minority culture with wider society, it is necessary to hold on to your ethnic minority heritage (symbolised in Chinatown) for individual and communal identity formation.

The writers central to this chapter are all male, partly because of the limited number of female Chinese American writers getting published at this time. It is only from the 1970s onwards that a much fuller portrait of Chinese American women’s experiences became accessible through published literary works by Chinese American women and about Chinese American women’s oppression, self-discoveries, resilience, and achievements. Regarding the patriarchal structure of Chinatowns, what is necessary to note, especially in Chu’s novel, is how scholars, including Ruth Hsiao, have critiqued the way women characters are not considered “beyond [their] exterior and [...] mechanical role in the plot.”<sup>505</sup> Hsiao argues that Chu’s handling of “female characters is still dictated by male

---

<sup>504</sup> Chang, *The Chinese in America*, 257, 260; Cindy I-Fen Cheng, “Out of Chinatown and into the Suburbs: Chinese Americans and the Politics of Cultural Citizenship in Early Cold War America,” *American Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (December 2006): 1081, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40068406>.

<sup>505</sup> Ruth Hsiao, “Facing the Incurable: Patriarchy in ‘Eat a Bowl of Tea,’” in *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*, ed. Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 162.



images of women.”<sup>506</sup> Though this is a broadly accurate assessment of Chu’s novel, the tea ceremonies in Chu’s and Lee’s narratives complicate the simplistic depictions of women by revealing their aspirations, emotions, sexist treatment, and the undeniable impact of their presence and demands on the traditionally “bachelor societies.”

A focus on male writers and protagonists has also led to an exploration of the crippling expectations placed on Chinese American men during this time. For Chu and Lee the severity of these pressures is presented around tea ceremonies, with their narratives set and published when San Francisco’s Chinatown recorded the highest suicide rate in the country: between 1952 and 1969, Chinese American men took their own lives at almost triple the rate of the national figure.<sup>507</sup> Kerouac is also chiefly concerned with masculinity: his use of tea to reject conventional lifestyles and live a dharma bum existence, exhibits the counterculture’s concerns about the domestication of American men, and the “need” to separate themselves from domestic spaces if their masculine identities are to be retained or salvaged. In all the texts analysed, women are depicted as either causing, aggravating, or highlighting the threatened masculine characteristics each text seeks to recuperate. It is not surprising then that a brew so strongly associated with women would be depicted in literature to highlight various forms of masculine anxiety.

## I. “The Touch of a Cup and Saucer”: Model Families and U.S. Suburbia

In the 1950s, the Tea Council was aware that tea was largely bought and consumed by women, and it wanted to broaden its market to appeal to men. The organisation hired a number of psychologists, including Ernest Ditcher, to find out why so many Americans hated tea.<sup>508</sup> Ditcher conducted hundreds of extensive interviews to find out what unconscious desires and prejudices impacted tea’s consumption in the United States. He found that tea was associated with the

---

<sup>506</sup> Hsiao, “Facing the Incurable,” 162.

<sup>507</sup> Chang, *The Chinese in America*, 268.

<sup>508</sup> Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*, 369.

home and feminine tastes, was known as “a sissy drink,” and was considered attached to cultures (English, Irish, and Canadian) that are categorically not American.<sup>509</sup> These opinions on tea also existed in the 1930s (see my analysis of Charlie Chan in Chapter 3). Ditcher also concluded that “the American youth is imbued with what may be called an ‘anti-tea’ attitude.”<sup>510</sup> Tea, he believed, was discovered through the Boston Tea Party and attached to a colonial history that he concluded the United States wanted to forget.<sup>511</sup> Furthermore, Dichter proposed that the rebellious association of tea with British control provides a convincing reason why a slang word for “cocaine” and “marijuana” is “tea.”<sup>512</sup> Tea then, as a brew that was considered in many respects feminine, domestic, “un-American,” and anti-establishment, provided authors with a locus where they could explore how societal expectations were seen to be stifling masculinity.

---

<sup>509</sup> Ernest Dichter, “Can We Build a New ‘Tea Culture’ in the United States?”: a summary of a speech delivered at the Annual Convention of the Tea Association of the USA in White Sulphur Springs, Virginia, September 20, 1955. Subject Files, Box 176, Dichter Papers, Hagley Museum and Archive, Delaware, quoted in Rappaport, *Thirst for Empire*, 369-370.

<sup>510</sup> Ernest Dichter, “How to Make People Drink Tea: A Psychological Research Study,” April 1951, Subject Files, Box 6, Dichter Papers, Hagley Museum and Archive, quoted in Rappaport, *Thirst for Empire*, 370.

<sup>511</sup> Rappaport, *Thirst for Empire*, 370.

<sup>512</sup> Rappaport, *Thirst for Empire*, 370

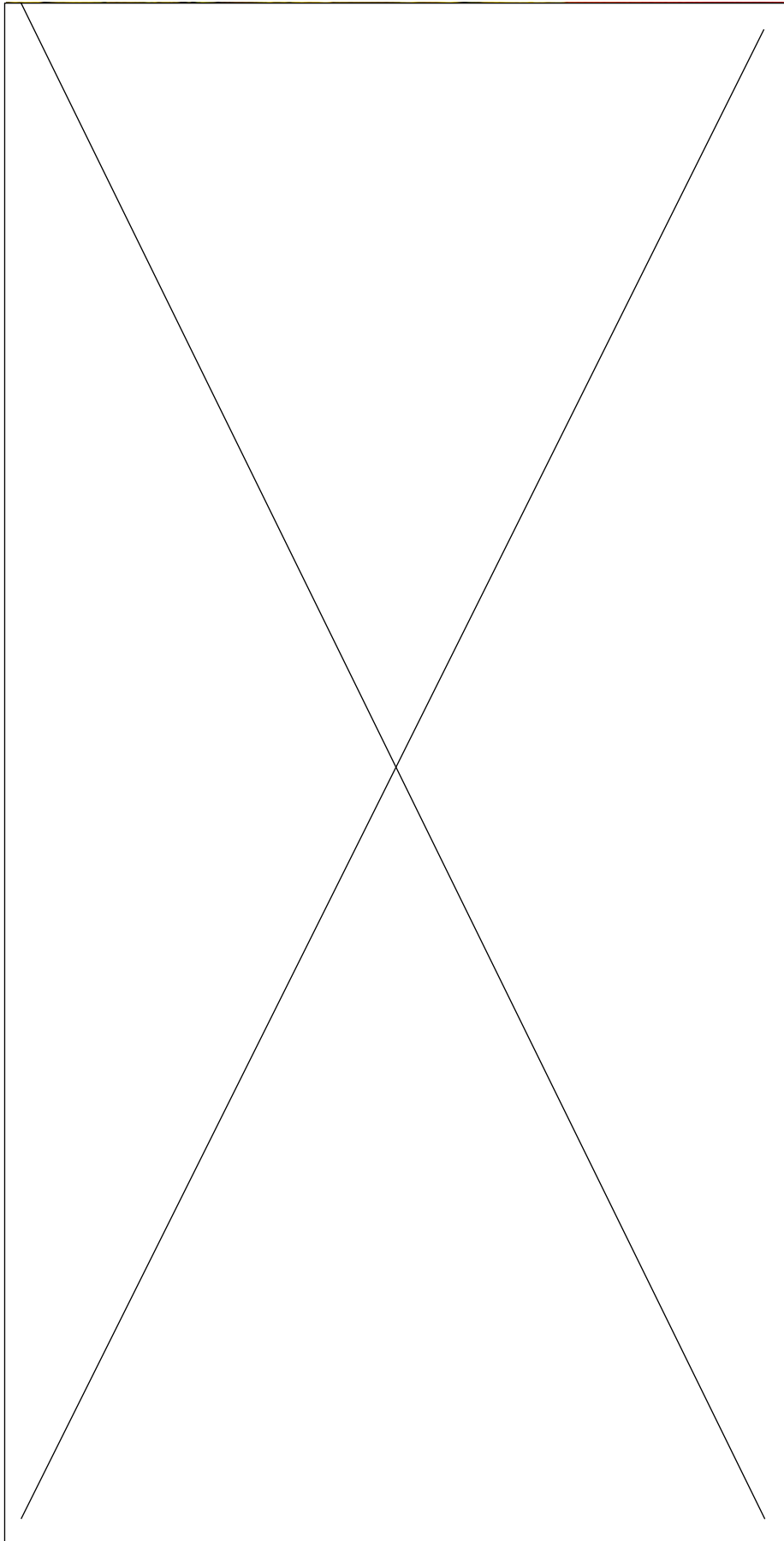


Figure 4.3 A 1952 Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company (A&P) tea advertisement in *Women's Day*.

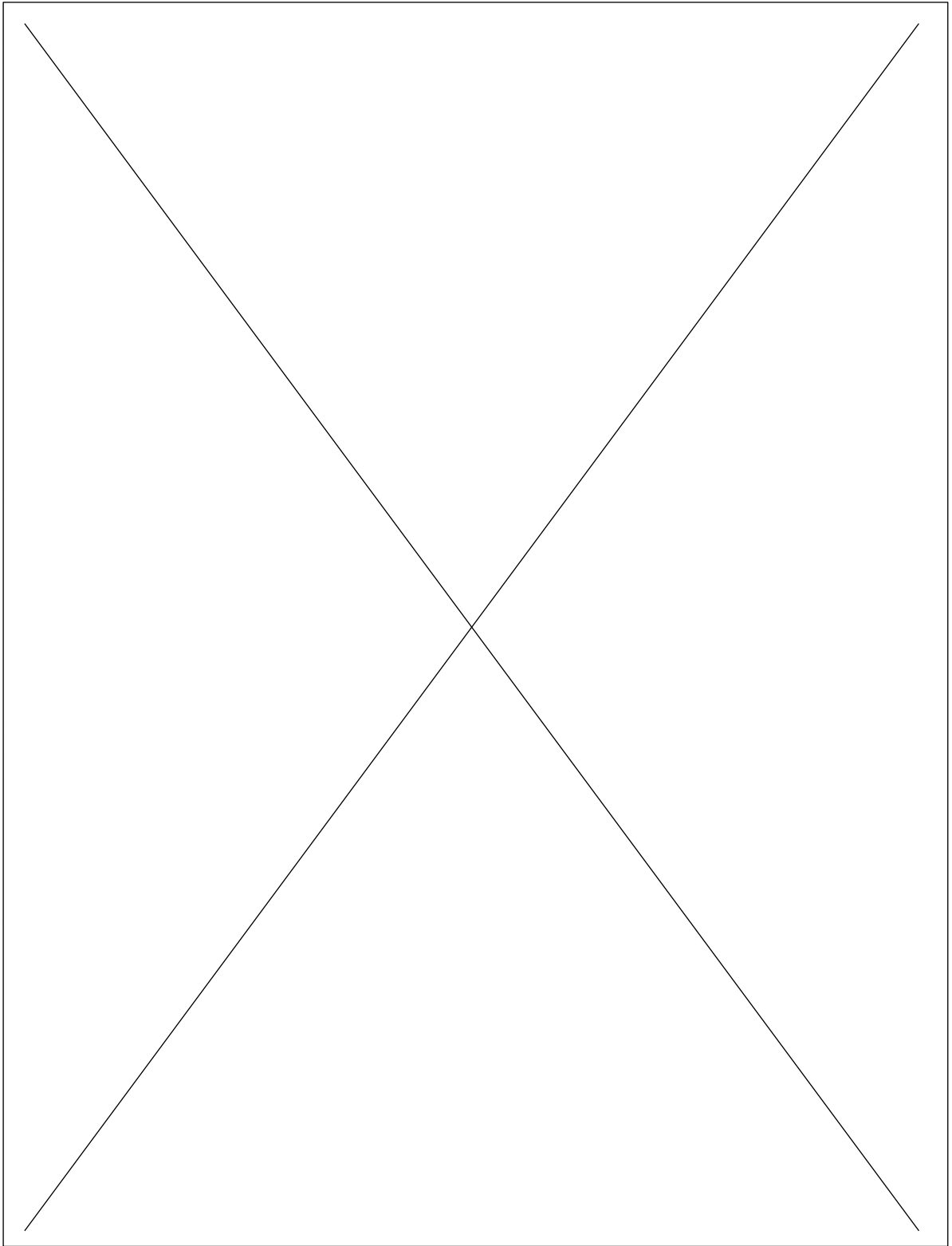


Figure 4.4 A 1951 Tea Council advertisement in *LIFE* magazine.

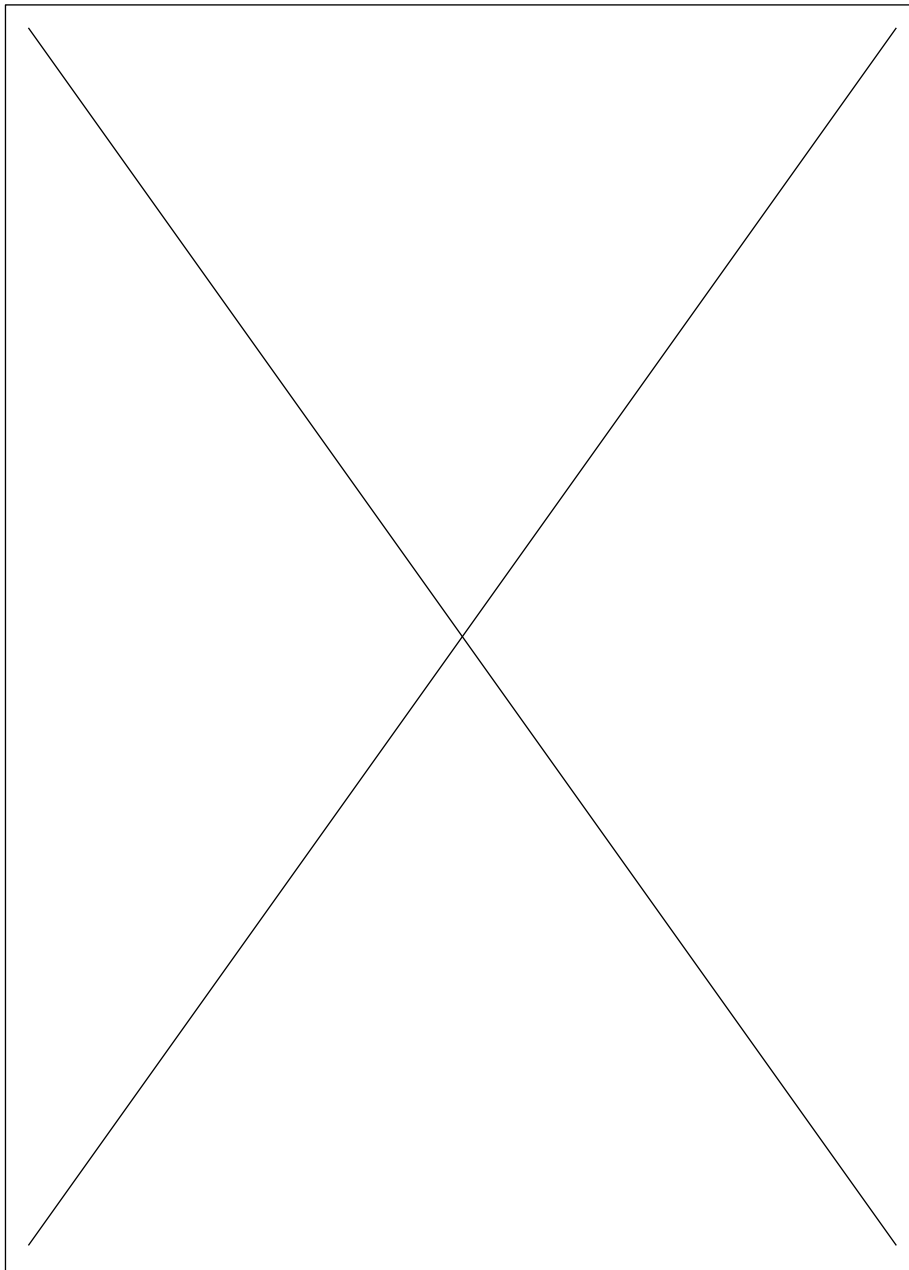


Figure 4.5 A 1952 Tea Council advertisement in *LIFE* magazine.

Since the clientele for tea in the United States was largely limited to women, the 1952 advert for the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company (A&P) presents the commercial competition between companies to please housewives (see fig. 4.3). Men were also present in advertisements and are shown to derive comfort from the brew in domestic settings (see fig. 4.2, 4.4 & 4.5). The Tea Council's advert in *LIFE* magazine in 1951 shows the role of the housewife in providing comfort through tea to a stressed and hard-working husband when he arrives home "under pressure" (see fig. 4.4). The intimidating cropped photo of his eyes above the tea suggests the hostility and competitiveness of the

workplace, and how tea is a crucial tool for the housewife as it can calm her husband down after a hard day's work. Interestingly, the Cold War espionage design of the advert masculinises the man as a force to contend with, instead of producing a more victimised representation of the tired working husband.

In analysing the Tea Council's adverts from the 1950s, it is evident that the focus was on portraying tea as a household staple for the wives to use to relieve the stress and fatigue of their husbands (see fig. 4.2, 4.4 & 4.5). Figure 4.5 reflects this focus as it outlines the positive effects of tea in producing a husband's pearly white smile, and the wife's role in making this happiness happen through her consumer choices. To make the brew appear suitable for men, the advert says in the bottom left-hand corner that "most men like [tea] on the 'hefty' side," and informs the reader how to make it strong, and therefore, "more manly." In the advert tea becomes synonymous with the expected "feminine" home comforts which enable the husband to relax, be happy, and consequently be a successful worker (depicted in the smiling, straight-backed driver in the bottom left-hand corner). "Aren't you glad you switched" presumably refers to coffee but also perhaps to alcohol. By setting up an either/or situation consumers are informed that they must choose between the traits advertised here—of glowing and healthy tea drinkers—or traits associated with coffee and alcohol drinkers, which are presumably less appealing.

The representation of tea as the domestic brew for a nuclear family is depicted in the U.S. musical film *Tea for Two* (1950), directed by David Butler. The main song, "Tea for Two," was originally composed by Vincent Youmans with lyrics by Irving Caesar in 1924 for the musical *No No Nanette* (1924).<sup>513</sup> Doris Day's and Gordon McRae's rendition of the song in the film *Tea for Two* popularises the song for a new generation, and through its staging, provides insight into the homeward bound and nuclear family aspirations of the 1950s.

Set during the Wall Street Crash of 1929, the film is centred on the protagonist Nanette (Doris Day), a New York heiress who dreams of a career in showbusiness. Her money-grabbing suitor, Larry (Billy De Wolfe), is a producer. The composer and pianist of the show, Jimmy (Gordon McRae), and Nanette fall in love; though she loses her money in the Wall Street Crash, it is implied that

---

<sup>513</sup> Alan Lewens, *Popular Song: Soundtrack of the Century* (New York: Billboard Books, 2001), 50.

Jimmy and Nanette find success in showbusiness and happiness by raising a family. The signature song, “Tea for Two,” with its history and idyllic depiction of the nuclear family, provides the audience with historic justification for making the formation of nuclear families a main objective.

*Time*'s review of the film highlights the script's nostalgic tone, as it notes how the film “sheds a Technicolor tear for the good old days of plus fours, prohibition and the stock-market crash [. . .] *Tea for Two* is at its best when concentrating on the old tunes of Vincent Youmans.”<sup>514</sup> The nostalgic quality of the film was an escape from the terror of the present with, by the end of the decade, two-thirds of Americans listing the prospect of nuclear war as the United States' most pressing issue.<sup>515</sup> The film positions the new ideology of domestic containment within “the good old days” to show how, if the self-contained family could provide security and happiness through the stock market crash and the Depression, then it must also be able to do so during the insecure 1950s.

Near the beginning of the film Jimmy wishes to play Nanette “Two for Tea,” but Larry calls “Tea for Two” a “weak number” and a “flop over,” which immediately contrasts with dominant masculinity and its association with stronger beverages.<sup>516</sup> Despite this, Jimmy plays “Tea for Two” and Nanette joins him at the piano. Compared to Jimmy at the piano, who is dressed in a light grey woollen suit and red tie, Larry is in a black suit and patterned dark tie and is fixated on drinking and pouring himself glasses of Scotch.<sup>517</sup> Larry's suit symbolises his business-oriented focus, compared to Jimmy's more colourful and social attire. Larry's alcohol consumption comically refers to the Prohibition era and supports the moral reasoning behind it, as he is an immoral character. The contrast between Jimmy at the piano singing about tea and Larry at the decanter—with the alcohol mockingly taken from him by Nanette's personal assistant—signifies the difference between the model family man and the degenerate one. The song goes:

I'm discontented with

---

<sup>514</sup> “The New Pictures,” *Time*, September 11, 1950, accessed June 27, 2019, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,813215,00.html>.

<sup>515</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 23.

<sup>516</sup> *Tea for Two*, directed by David Butler (1950; Los Angeles: Warner Bros., 2003), DVD, 18:51 to 18:56, 25:47 to 25:49.

<sup>517</sup> *Tea for Two*, 26:16 to 26:20, 30:00 to 30:31.

homes that I've rented,  
 So I have invented my own;  
 Darling, this place is a  
     lover's oasis,  
 Where life's weary chase  
     is unknown.  
 Far from the cry of the city  
 [...]

Picture you upon my knee;  
 Just tea for two and two  
     for tea  
 Just me for you and you for  
     me, alone.  
 Nobody near us to see us  
     or hear us,  
 No friends or relations on  
     weekend vacations.  
 [...]

Day will break, and you will  
     bake  
 A sugar cake for me to  
     take to all the boys to  
     see.  
 We will raise a family. A  
     boy for you, a girl for me.  
 Oh, can't you see how  
     happy life will be?<sup>518</sup>

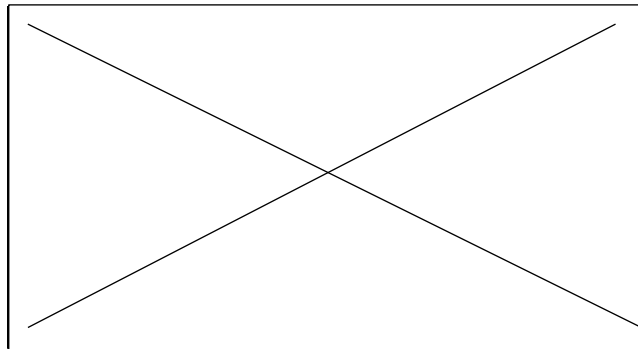


Figure 4.6 A still from the *Tea for Two* film trailer where Nanette and Jimmy sing “Tea for Two” as they are served tea on a quiet and spacious porch away from the crowds of the city.

The song opens with the dream of escaping the city and establishing your own home. The concept of “tea for two” fittingly portrays the lack of responsibility to entertain their friends or relatives in their suburban “oasis,” and to start their own perfectly nuclear family.<sup>519</sup> The enforcement of gender roles is exhibited in this song, as the wife is to sit on her husband’s knee—a symbol of female dependence and submission—and bake a cake for her husband and “all the boys to see.” Fundamentally, the tautological lines “just tea for two, and two for tea” provide rhetorical balance, and consequently, a sense of harmony and intimacy. It presents a sense of security, as the domestic brew symbolises the isolated completeness of the ideal young couple on the verge of familial fulfilment. Furthermore, the song foreshadows the ending when they have a nuclear family

<sup>518</sup> The lyrics were slightly reworked for the film, largely because Nanette joins Jimmy to sing it as a duet; instead of “you,” “I” replaces the pronoun when Nanette sings about her life and role: e.g., “I’ll awake to start to bake a sugar cake.” Lewens, *Popular Song*, 50; Butler, *Tea for Two*, 26:00 to 29:05.

<sup>519</sup> The role of isolation in the nuclear family model is explored further in May, *Homeward Bound*, 186.



of their own and sing the song together with their children.<sup>520</sup> Interestingly, at the end of the film Nanette's and Jimmy's family live in New York City. The song then, presents a dream to strive towards instead of always being an achievable reality; what is stressed is the nuclear family model as the perfect tool to achieve familial happiness and security.

Unlike *Tea for Two*, literature often turned against the prevalent 1950s suburban model and used tea in fictional suburban settings to do so. *Rabbit, Run* by John Updike is not only a criticism of suburban norms, it also emphasises the high stakes of abandoning it. In 1959 Updike wrote a derisive parody of *On the Road* (1957) titled "On the Sidewalk" (1959) for *The New Yorker*.<sup>521</sup> Later, in his Afterword for *Rabbit, Run*, Updike notes, regarding Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* that even "without reading it, I resented its apparent instruction to cut loose; *Rabbit, Run* was meant to be a realistic demonstration of what happens when a young American family man goes on the road—the people left behind get hurt."<sup>522</sup> Updike does not necessarily believe in a rigid understanding of man's role as a "breadwinner" and a "provider"; his focus is on how following the prescribed lifestyle and then choosing to abandon it, along with your wife and children, could prove disastrous.

The failing family man of the novel, Harry Angstrom, is a former high school basketball star who is trapped in a boring sales job and a loveless marriage. He attempts to escape his life in Mount Judge, a suburb of Brewer, a fictional city in Pennsylvania, in 1959. His abandonment of his alcoholic wife, Janice, leads him to be blamed for her actions when, in a drunken haze, she accidentally drowns their baby, Rebecca June, in a bathtub. The alcoholism of his wife and Harry's unfilled life contrast with a scene in which Harry enjoys the ambience of a perfect suburbia:

Sunshine quivers through the trees; [...] the maples planted between the pavement and curb embower them rhythmically; [...] the rush of motors,

---

<sup>520</sup> *Tea for Two*, 1:37:00 to 1:37:34.

<sup>521</sup> Ann Charters, "John Updike," in *Beat Down to Your Soul: What Was the Beat Generation?*, ed. Ann Charters (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 584; John Updike, "On the Sidewalk," in *Beat Down to Your Soul: What Was the Beat Generation?*, ed. Ann Charters (London: Penguin Books, 2001), 585-587.

<sup>522</sup> John Updike, "Afterword by the Author," in *Rabbit, Run* by John Updike (London: Penguin Classics, 2006), 268.

the squeak of a tricycle, the touch of a cup and saucer inside a house are sounds conveyed to him [...].<sup>523</sup>

Harry is walking along the pavement with Lucy Eccles, the attractive wife of the minister, after her husband's church service. This scene presents the suburban ideal as an unrealistic dream, with the sounds serving to represent the lack of tangibility in these idealised images of children playing on tricycles and the implied enjoyment of adults drinking tea indoors with their cups and saucers. Compared to the alcohol which fuels his first encounter and subsequent sordid affair with Ruth, and the alcohol which accompanies and usually aggravates his wife's unhappiness, postpartum depression, and cognitive confusion, tea symbolises, in its domestic association and sobriety, the allure and wholesomeness of the suburban ideal. However, the ethereal quality of the ideal presented here portrays how the goal was an unreachable dream for most, leaving many men, like Harry, feeling dissatisfied and a failure as an absent father with an unfulfilling job and loveless marriage.

Part of suburban living for many in the 1950s was churchgoing, not necessarily for reasons of devoutness: above all, the practice was central to community formation.<sup>524</sup> Updike critiques the concept of religion leading to suburban fulfilment through the lack of domestic bliss in the minister's home. Jack Eccles, the minister, is struggling with his faith and sees saving Harry as a project for him. Later on in the novel, he is in his library and drinking tea with his wife, Lucy; she conveys how angry and sickened she is that he can say he loves Harry and asks "Why don't you try loving me, or your children?"<sup>525</sup> Lucy believes Jack is afraid of loving people who may return the love; in response, "Jack picks his empty cup off the floor between his feet and looks into the center."<sup>526</sup> The custom of reading tea leaves is suggested here, and presents how lost and in need of guidance Jack is; his futile search for the idealised fulfilment of suburbia is symbolised by the empty and hard interior of the cup. Harry and Jack are both discontented and trapped in their lives in Brewer. The disconnect between reality and the happy nuclear family model presents the latter as a dream which causes

---

<sup>523</sup> John Updike, *Rabbit, Run* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960; London, Penguin Classics, 2006), 205. Citations refer to the 2006 edition.

<sup>524</sup> May, *Homeward Bound*, 25, 26.

<sup>525</sup> Updike, *Rabbit, Run*, 228.

<sup>526</sup> Updike, *Rabbit, Run*, 228.

immense suffering and feelings of failure as men strive to be loving and successful breadwinners. Thus, a hot cup of tea, symbolic of the suburban idealised lifestyle, is represented as forever out of reach for Jack and Harry despite how much they may wish to obtain it.

In a similar vein, *Revolutionary Road* by Richard Yates documents the unhappy marriage and lives of April and Frank Wheeler in Connecticut during the mid-1950s. In 1972, in an interview with DeWitt Henry and Geoffrey Clark for *Ploughshares*, Yates stated that the novel's title is supposed to be "an indictment of American life in the 1950s. Because during the fifties there was a general lust for conformity [...], by no means only in the suburbs—a kind of blind, desperate clinging to safety and security at any price."<sup>527</sup> In his critique of the nation's loss of revolutionary spirit during a period of widespread conformity, Yates draws on tea's association with domestic spaces. Mrs. Helen Givings, a resident of Revolutionary Road (who is an estate agent, wife to a frail, older husband Harold, and mother to a mentally ill son, John), is depicted making tea for her husband as she reflects on her life choices:

And hadn't she been silly? In the sense of calm and well-being that suffused her now, as she arranged the tea things on their tray, Mrs. Givings breathed a tolerant sigh at the thought of how silly, how wrong and foolish she had been in those years. Oh, she had changed [...] it seemed to be: a final bloom, a long-delayed emergence into womanliness.

[...] She set the tray gently on an antique coffee table whose surface was faintly scarred with glue, showing the places where it had split when John threw it across the room [...].<sup>528</sup>

Helen rejects and blinds herself to the traumas and messiness of life, including the severity of her son's mental health condition and his revealing criticisms of U.S. suburbia. In this scene the tea symbolises the domestic bliss she put off while enjoying her career, and she considers herself a fool for doing so. Her rhetorical question "hadn't she been silly?" followed by the routine arrangement of the tea evokes the levels of personally enforced ignorance she utilises, as she brushes aside her happy career and sees fulfilment in a lonesome, mechanical act she performs for her elderly husband.

---

<sup>527</sup> Henry Dewitt, Geoffrey Clark, and Richard Yates, "From the Archive: An Interview with Richard Yates," *Ploughshares* 37, no. 2/3 (Issue 3 Winter 1972; Fall 2011): 208. Citations refer to the 2011 edition.

<sup>528</sup> Richard Yates, *Revolutionary Road* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1961; London: Vintage, 2009), 156. Citations refer to the 2009 edition.

The making and serving of the tea links domesticity with womanliness: reductively, it is only when giving up her intense work hours that she can “bloom” and “[emerge] into womanliness.” During the 1950s, working women were considered a threat to patriarchy, and many believed that the “violation of [gendered roles] would cause sexual and familial chaos and weaken the country’s moral fiber.”<sup>529</sup> The restrictive association between femininity and domesticity is evinced in Helen’s tea ceremony. Furthermore, the contrast between gently placing the tea tray on the table, and the violence that once broke the coffee table which the tea covers up, symbolises how the tea ceremony and the performance of the domestic ideal it represents, is employed to cover up the horrors and discontentment of those like John, who feel trapped and uncomfortable within the conformity of U.S. suburbia.

The attachment of tea to suburban living, and the perfect image it is used to portray while concealing mental illness and providing an escapist idea of “normality,” is also explored in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* by Ken Kesey. The protagonist, Randle P. McMurphy, is a man who finds himself living in a psychiatric hospital. One day he asks the nurse in the ward to turn down the music because he wants to concentrate on his blackjack; when she refuses, he replies: “Can’t you even ease down the volume? It ain’t like the whole state of Oregon needed to hear Lawrence Welk play ‘Tea for Two’ three times every hour, all day long!”<sup>530</sup> McMurphy’s frustration, though mainly caused by the song’s repetition and volume, is also seemingly caused by the romanticisation of suburban living that the song signifies. Interestingly, Welk’s version is orchestral and McMurphy’s ability to name the bandleader and song title stresses how well-known the song was. He is told by the novel’s chief antagonist, Nurse Ratched, to consider the old men who wouldn’t be able to hear it if it wasn’t loud, and how they are unable to read or work puzzles; the music “from the loudspeaker is all they have.”<sup>531</sup> The suburban lifestyle the song depicts, and the placement of tea at the centre of it, highlights how the drugs and cigarettes consumed by the inmates represent their separation from the nation’s idealised model of the providing husband and father. The orchestral version’s lack of lyrics emphasises

---

<sup>529</sup> May, *Homeward Bound*, 117.

<sup>530</sup> Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1962; New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 102. Citations refer to the 1996 edition.

<sup>531</sup> Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, 102.

how distant a “normal” life is for them, as they cannot sing along to the lyrics, and at most, can hum to themselves.

## II. Heading Eastward: Jack Kerouac’s Escape from Conventional Society

An earlier criticism of “Tea for Two” is the short story “Tea for Two” (1948) by the Beat Generation writer John Clellon Holmes. It was published in *Neurotica*, a well-known outlet for Beat writers.<sup>532</sup> In Beat literature “tea” has two significations. It is either a brew used to connect characters with ancient Asian religious teachings, or it is a slang name for marijuana. The use of “tea” to refer to marijuana is observed in Kerouac’s novels *On the Road* (1957), *The Subterraneans* (1958), and *The Big Sur* (1962). The slang term is believed to originate from the plant leaves sharing similar preparation techniques—that is, being steeped in water—and due to their medicinal properties. The title of Holmes’s short story mocks the conservative values communicated in the popular song of the same name, as the tea enjoyed by the characters in the story is marijuana.<sup>533</sup> The story revolves around a Jazz musician, Beeker, and his encounter with an unnamed woman who comes into his club. She says to him: “Life is just some of your friends and some tea to you; but with me there has to be something else [...] I want to paint.”<sup>534</sup> Interestingly, tea in both its significations (as a drink and marijuana) is foundational as fuel and inspiration in the lives and literature of the Beat Generation.

In Beat literature tea-drinking and marijuana consumption present a rejection of the suburban turn of the 1950s which was partially driven by momism. Philip Wylie coined the term “momism” in his book, *A Generation of Vipers* (1943), to refer to what he saw as housewives ruling the family and society, with an epidemic of mothering leading to a decline in masculinity as sons were becoming tied to their mothers’ apron strings. Jonathan Paul Eburne notes how, along with Wylie, J. Edgar Hoover stressed the importance of the father and state to

---

<sup>532</sup> Belletto, *The Beats*, 55.

<sup>533</sup> Belletto, *The Beats*, 55.

<sup>534</sup> [John] Clellon Holmes, “Tea for Two,” *Neurotica* 1 Issue 2 (Summer 1948), 43.

counteract the influence of mothers over the younger generation.<sup>535</sup> Fears of momism and the domestication of American men were exacerbated by the rigidity in life choices within white-collar work and the suburban lifestyle. Lewis Mumford in his book, *The City in History* (1961), depicts the suburbs as

a multitude of uniform, unidentifiable houses, lined up inflexibly [...] inhabited by people of the same class, [...] witnessing the same television performances [. . .].

[...] Those who accept this existence might as well be encased in a rocket hurtling through space, so narrow are their choices, so limited and deficient their permitted responses.<sup>536</sup>

In *The Dharma Bums*, written between 26 November and 7 December 1957, Kerouac rejects the straitjacket of suburban living to embrace a homosocial, rootless existence on open roads, vast mountains, and in hedonistic social locations. In doing so, he pursues a masculinity tied to the legacies of the American frontier, of men largely free from familial obligations and proving their manliness through settling new lands. Kerouac relocates tea into these settings, with a firm attachment to his Buddhist beliefs, to depict a clear alternative to suburban living in the age of white flight.

*The Dharma Bums* is considered Kerouac's "Buddhist shrine" and in Ginsberg's opinion a "brilliant Buddhist exposition."<sup>537</sup> Kerouac's fiction was mostly autobiographical, and *The Dharma Bums* is a roman-à-clef in which Kerouac documents the early development of the Beat movement. The focus of the novel is on the relationship between the narrator Ray Smith (Kerouac's fictional persona) and Japhy Ryder (modelled on the poet Gary Snyder). Snyder was instrumental to Kerouac's introduction to and practice of Buddhism. The novel documents Kerouac's, and in general, the Beat Generation's conflicting lifestyles; at times they are presented as Buddhists who study, mountaineer, hitchhike, and drink tea, and at other times they are depicted as living in cities and immersed in jazz clubs, alcohol, drugs, and parties. As a roman-à-clef, combined with Jack Kerouac's spontaneous prose-writing style, the novel

---

<sup>535</sup> Jonathan Paul Eburne, "Trafficking in the Void: Burroughs, Kerouac, and the Consumption of Otherness," *Modern Fiction Studies* 43, no. 1 (1997): 63, DOI: 10.1353/mfs.1997.0005.

<sup>536</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1961), 486, 512.

<sup>537</sup> Benedict Giomo, "Enlightened Attachment: Kerouac's Impermanent Buddhist Trek," *Religion & Literature* 35, no. 2/3 (Summer-Autumn 2003): 182, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40059920>; Allen Ginsberg, introduction to *Visions of Cody*, by Jack Kerouac (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), x.

presents itself as documenting lived experiences in an uncensored way; thus, tea consumption in the novel has added authority as a custom that is part of a physical and living culture. However, as Steven Belletto stresses when studying Beat literature, it is “essential to foreground questions of representation, to recognize that however much real life inspired and informed literary production, their achievement rests finally in the nature of this production.”<sup>538</sup> Therefore, the desire to place tea within a Buddhist context in Kerouac’s work is telling, as it signifies the brew as primarily Asiatic and a way to escape the anxieties surrounding white American masculinity.

The idea of westward expansion, and the array of western films circulating in the 1950s, exemplified traditional masculinity as embodied in the frontiersman who conquered lands and “tamed” nature. Ryder says “frontiersmen are always heroes and were always my real heroes and will always be.”<sup>539</sup> Ryder’s wild character causes Alvah (Ginsberg) to call him “a great new hero of American culture.”<sup>540</sup> Smith (Kerouac) agrees and replies “I think he will end up like Han Shan.”<sup>541</sup> Han Shan was a Buddhist monk and poet of the Taoist tradition in the ninth century; he did not believe in violence or conquering lands and is an honoured bodhisattva. In Mahayana Buddhism, the form Kerouac was most invested in, bodhisattvas are people able to reach nirvāna but delay doing so because of their wish to help others.<sup>542</sup> The combination of non-violent Buddhist doctrine with the frontier lifestyle seeks to prioritise the development of white American masculinity after westward expansion through spiritual advancement.

---

<sup>538</sup> Belletto, *The Beats*, 4.

<sup>539</sup> Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums* (New York: The Viking Press, 1958; London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2007), 83. Citations refer to the 2007 edition.

<sup>540</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 29.

<sup>541</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 29.

<sup>542</sup> John Bowker, “Bodhisattva,” in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), accessed May 12, 2019, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780192800947.001.0001/acref-9780192800947-e-1132>.

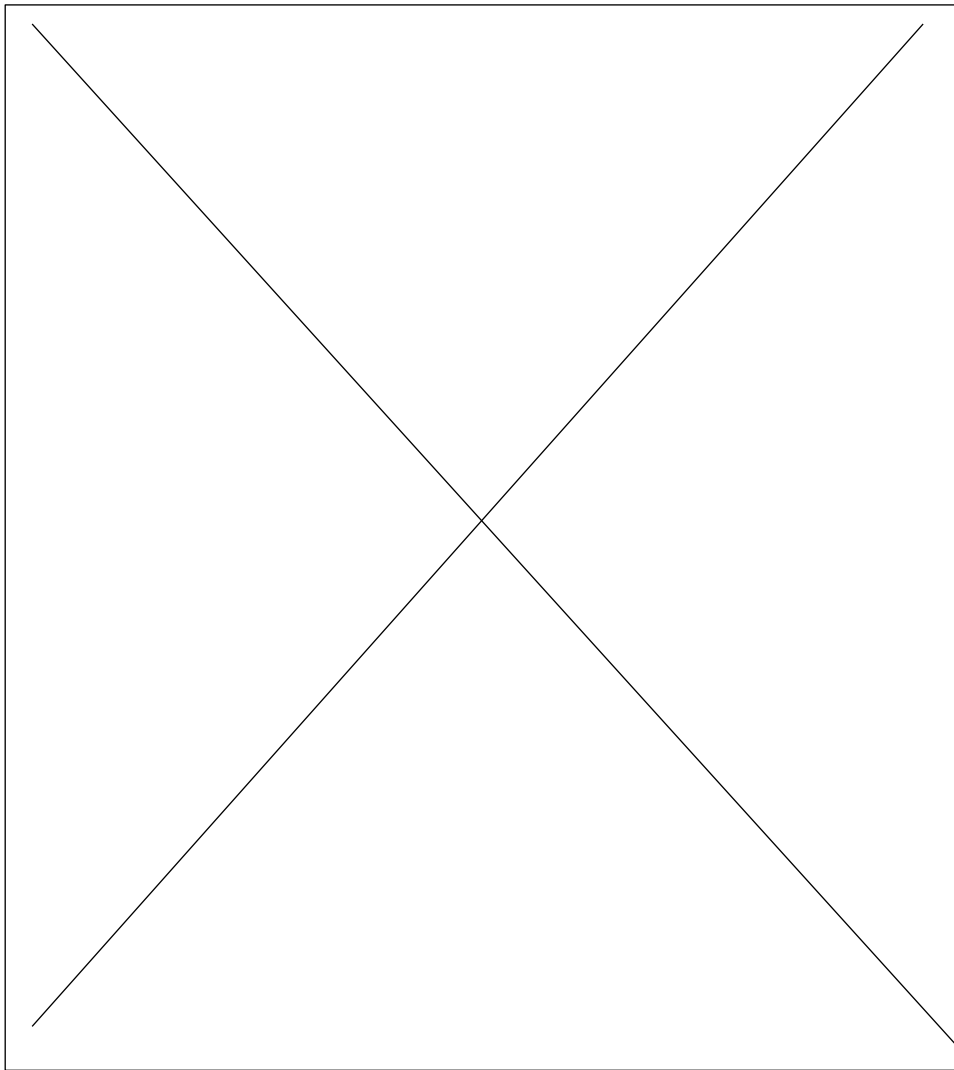


Figure 4.7 A photograph taken by John Cohen of Jack Kerouac in a Chinese Restaurant in Chinatown, New York, 1959.

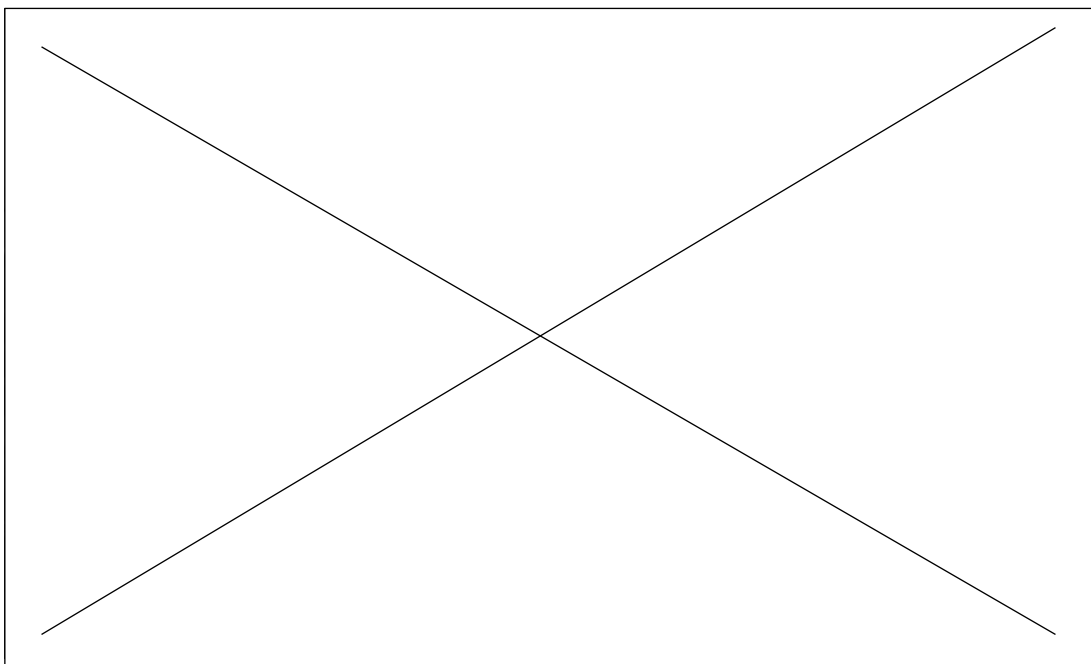


Figure 4.8 A photograph taken by John Cohen of Kerouac, Lucien Carr, and Ginsberg singing in Chinatown, New York, 1959.



Figure 4.7 is the front cover of Penguin's modern classics 2007 edition of *The Dharma Bums*. In what appears to be a spontaneously taken photo, Kerouac's facial expression—a mixture of perturbed confusion and concentration—symbolises how through the cultural appropriation of Buddhism, and customs related to its practice such as tea-drinking, Kerouac searched for a masculine identity not restrained by responsibility between 1954 and 1956.<sup>543</sup> When this photo was taken Kerouac was enjoying a Chinese meal in New York's Chinatown with friends including Allen Ginsberg and Lucien Carr, as seen in another image taken by John Cohen that night (see fig. 4.8). In figure 4.7 he appears isolated, which reflects what his acclaimed biographer Ann Charters notes, that Kerouac discovered Buddhism at a time when he felt “most lost and alone,” and Buddhism provided “philosophical consolation for the disappointments in his life.”<sup>544</sup>

Tea, a brew central to Buddhist practice, has been used for centuries to find answers through enhancing meditation and the practice of reading tea leaves; Kerouac's baffled expression while contemplating his tea here symbolises his use of tea in life and in his literature, as it enabled him to further immerse himself in Chinese culture, philosophy, and religions as a means to separate himself from conventional society and search for a new way to embody an adventurous and independent masculinity. However, it cannot go unsaid that Kerouac employs white privilege in his appropriation of Chinese culture. Though his roots were French Canadian, his comfortable, middle-class upbringing and family home afforded him certain privileges and a support network to fall back on after his adventures. Furthermore, Beat Generation writers, especially those that were not scholars of East Asian languages and cultures, often merged aspects of Asian cultures together or misappropriated them, as seen in Kerouac's practices, and the Beat Generation publication *Yugen* (correctly spelt as *Yūgen*), which is named after a concept in traditional Japanese aesthetics.

Numerous studies have considered religion and alcohol in Kerouac's work, but no studies have been conducted on tea-drinking and its role in portraying the

---

<sup>543</sup> Carl Jackson, “the counterculture looks east: beat writers and asian religion,” *American Studies* 29, no. 1 (1988): 56, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40642254>.

<sup>544</sup> Ann Charters, *Kerouac* (London: Picador, 1978), 180.

position of Buddhism in Kerouac's life and works.<sup>545</sup> The Chinese Americans in the novel are often undeveloped characters, with the ancient Chinese sages only referred to in admiration as an orientalist ideal. Adopting Chinese cultural customs was particularly rebellious during the Cold War. The Chinese, due to Mao's chairmanship and being physically dissimilar from Americans of European descent, were easily identified and labelled as a communist threat comparable to that of the Soviet Union.<sup>546</sup> Though the counterculture was against status quo contemporary U.S. society, their ethos and aims were inspired by chauvinistic ideas concerning white masculinity and legendary retellings of frontiersman. Consequently, Kerouac in a countercultural and neo-colonial fashion, and sadly not from a more enlightened perspective about race and race politics compared to the majority of society, uses Chinese culture in an effort to resurrect the masculinist identity of brave American explorers and frontiersman.

The term "Beat" was first applied to the Beat Generation by Kerouac and derives from the adjective "beatific." In interviews and talks Kerouac's efforts to explain the term often confused the public's understanding of it.<sup>547</sup> However, in his novel *Desolation Angels* (1965), Kerouac provides an explanation of the term: "it's the beat in the heart, it's being beat and down in the world and like oldtime lowdown and like in ancient civilizations the slave boatman rowing galleys to a beat and servants spinning pottery to a beat."<sup>548</sup> As seen here, it is in the appropriation of "otherness" through the slave boatman, and (regarding this chapter) through Chinese culture, that the Generation often created alternative lifestyles.

Kerouac and his fellow Beat Generation writers formed, as Robert Ellwood notes, "the spiritual underground" of the early Cold War United States.<sup>549</sup> However, it was not until 1958, through the publication of texts like the Zen special in the *Chicago Review* and *The Dharma Bums*, that the public became aware of

---

<sup>545</sup> See: Thomas R. Bierowski, *Kerouac in Ecstasy: Shamanic Expressions in the Writings* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2011), 15, 36; James Fisher, *The Catholic Counterculture in America, 1933-1962* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 242.

<sup>546</sup> Omar Swartz, "Buddhism as Critical Lens: 'The Dharma Bums' as Social Criticism," *The AnaChronisT* 13 (2008): 104-105.

<sup>547</sup> Charters, *Jack Kerouac*, 269.

<sup>548</sup> Jack Kerouac, *Desolation Angels* (New York: Coward McCann, 1965; London: Penguin Classics, 2012), 127. Citations refer to the 2012 edition.

<sup>549</sup> Robert Ellwood, *The Fifties Spiritual Marketplace: American Religion in a Decade of Conflict* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 160-163.

the Beat Generation's investment in Asian thought.<sup>550</sup> The rising popularity of the movement with its anti-establishment mentality invited critique from numerous publications, including *LIFE*, and from national security figures like Hoover.<sup>551</sup> Norman Podhoretz's 1958 article titled "The Know-Nothing Bohemians," published in the *Partisan Review*, is one of the most well-known condemnations of the Beat Generation. In his article Podhoretz claims that the Beats worshiped "primitivism," were "hostile to civilization," and that the movement was "a revolt of the spiritually underprivileged and crippled of soul," with their work "an affirmation of death."<sup>552</sup>

One aspect of the movement which could easily be attacked was the "legitimacy" of their Asian beliefs and practices. In the late 1950s Alan Watts, the philosopher, Eastern theology scholar, and author of the popular book *The Ways of Zen* (1957), said that Jack Kerouac had "Zen flesh, but no Zen bones yet" because Watts believed he did not "sustain" his beliefs.<sup>553</sup> Kerouac adamantly rebuked this claim.<sup>554</sup> My study is not concerned with evaluating how legitimate the religious beliefs of any member of the Beat Generation were; comprehensive studies on this topic have already been conducted by scholars including P. J. Johnston, Alan Miller, and Stephen Prothero.<sup>555</sup> I am concerned with how Kerouac extracted Buddhist and Taoist teachings from their long histories and presents them through depictions of tea-drinking to revitalise white American masculinity.

---

<sup>550</sup> Jackson, "the counterculture looks east," 53, 56; "Religion: Zen: Beat & Square," *Time*, July 21, 1958, accessed June 26, 2019, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,868663,00.html>.

<sup>551</sup> Eburne, "Trafficking in the void," 53; Ted Morgan, *Literary Outlaw: The Life and Times of William S. Burroughs* (New York: Henry Holt, 1988), 289; Paul O'Neill, "The Only Rebellion Around," in *A Casebook on the Beat*, ed. Thomas Parkinson (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1961), 232, 255.

<sup>552</sup> Norman Podhoretz, "The Know-Nothing Bohemians," *Partisan Review* 25 (Spring 1958): 316.

<sup>553</sup> Paul Krassner, *Confessions of a Raving, Unconfined Nut: Misadventures in the Counterculture* (Berkeley, California: Soft Skull Press, 2012), 56.

<sup>554</sup> Krassner, *Confessions of a Raving, Unconfined Nut*, 56.

<sup>555</sup> P. J. Johnston, "Dharma Bums: The Beat Generation and the Making of Countercultural Pilgrimage," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 33 (2013): 165-179, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/bcs.2013.0022>; Alan L. Miller, "Ritual Aspects of Narrative: An Analysis of Jack Kerouac's 'The Dharma Bums'," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 9, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 41-53, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44398661>; Stephen Prothero, "On the Holy Road: The Beat Movement as Spiritual Protest," *The Harvard Theological Review* 84, no. 2 (April 1991): 205-222, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1509800>.

In Buddhism “dharma is the doctrine, the universal truth common to all individuals at all times, proclaimed by the Buddha”:<sup>556</sup> this truth can be realised by followers through stages that lead to nirvāna.<sup>557</sup> For Kerouac, “Dharma Bums” are religious wanderers, perhaps journeying on freight trains like Ray Smith, who are in search of “Dharma.”<sup>558</sup> By using the word “bums,” Kerouac shows how he combines his Eastern studies and lifestyle with his American lifestyle. As Ann Douglas points out, bums “summoned up the Depression images of [Kerouac’s] boyhood [that he] loved” of men travelling “with nothing but a paper bag for luggage,” free from the constraints of curfews, business attire, and suburban obligations.<sup>559</sup> Consequently, the title symbolises the dual condition of the characters in the novel, as their Eastern beliefs and practices make them outsiders, but fundamentally their identities rest on them being *American* men who free themselves from the emasculating constraints of conventional society.

Kerouac presents the practice of tea-drinking as central to becoming a dharma bum. Tea is foundational to Buddhist culture. It is believed that Bodhidharma, the founder of Zen (a school of Mahayana Buddhism), angrily cut off his eye-lids when he failed to stay awake in a vigil; the eye-lids fell to the ground and from them sprouted tea bushes that were used by him and thereafter by students of Zen to stay awake.<sup>560</sup> A legend also has it that Prince Siddhartha’s (Buddha’s) eyelashes, just before weariness overcame him during a vigil, fell into a cauldron of hot water which produced tea for him; another version of the tale has it that leaves sprang from a tea bush, and by chewing them he remained awake.<sup>561</sup> In any case, tea’s association with meditation and Zen date back to the origins of Buddhism. This relationship continued, as Buddhist monks in the eighth and ninth centuries were considered to be one of the main driving forces behind spreading tea throughout the Chinese Empire to combat the people’s

---

<sup>556</sup> Matt Stefon ed., “Dharma,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed June 4, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/dharma-religious-concept>.

<sup>557</sup> John Bowker, “Dharma,” in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), accessed May 12, 2019, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780192800947.001.0001/acref-9780192800947-e-1954>.

<sup>558</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 8.

<sup>559</sup> Ann Douglas, introduction to *The Dharma Bums*, by Jack Kerouac (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2007), xix.

<sup>560</sup> John Griffiths, *Tea: A History of the Drink that Changed the World* (London: André Deutsch, 2011), 260-61.

<sup>561</sup> Griffiths, *Tea*, 260-261.

consumption of alcohol.<sup>562</sup> The monks were considered to be missionaries by their contemporaries.<sup>563</sup>

Tea-drinking is a custom used by people to help them reach many of the goals of Buddhism and Taoism. This process can be traced back to Lu Tong's poem, "Seven Cups of Tea" (795-835) which is, James Benn points out, full of Taoist imagery. Here are the poem's most quoted lines:<sup>564</sup>

The first bowl moistens my lips and throat.  
The second bowl banishes my loneliness and melancholy.  
The third bowl penetrates my withered entrails,  
Finding nothing there except five thousand scrolls of writing.  
The fourth bowl raises a light perspiration,  
As all the inequities I have suffered in my life  
Are flushed out through my pores.  
The fifth bowl purifies my flesh and bones.  
The sixth bowl allows me to communicate with immortals.  
The seventh bowl I need not drink,  
I am only aware of a pure wind rising beneath my two arms.  
The mountains of Penglai, what is this place?  
I, Master of the Jade Stream, ride this pure wind and wish to return  
.....home.<sup>565</sup>

Tea's role in Chinese culture and belief systems as a transformative elixir which rejuvenates, soothes, and cures its drinker of emotional and physical distress is evident. In this poem tea enables the drinker to journey to the Taoist paradise of Penglai. Kerouac, by positioning tea within his novel as a restorative and purifying substance, emphasises the desires of the characters to purify their bodies and minds to be free from the restrictive structures of society.

A moment that changed everything for Kerouac occurred in 1955 when he met the intellectual mountain poet and Buddhist practitioner Gary Snyder: a student of Asian culture and languages at Berkeley and a reader of Japanese and Chinese.<sup>566</sup> He played a vital role in Kerouac developing his Buddhist thoughts and practices. As Keith Hull points out, the novel represents this relationship dynamic: Smith is restless and rootless as he struggles to combine and find stability in his spiritual beliefs, while Ryder feels content and secure in

---

<sup>562</sup> Benn, *Tea in China*, 42.

<sup>563</sup> Benn, *Tea in China*, 42.

<sup>564</sup> Benn, *Tea in China*, 14-15.

<sup>565</sup> Translated by Benn in Benn, *Tea in China*, 14-15.

<sup>566</sup> Johnston, "Dharma Bums," 175.

his combination of wild-western lore and Asian culture, and thus provides a bedrock that Smith can drift to and question for guidance.<sup>567</sup>

When the two first met, Snyder was translating the work of his “hero” Han Shan.<sup>568</sup> This moment is captured in *The Dharma Bums* when Smith goes to Ryder’s shack in Berkeley where “his belief in the simple monastic life” is depicted through his “Japanese wooden pata shoes,” straw mats, and books: “some of them in Oriental languages, all the great sutras, comments on sutras, the complete works of D. T. Suzuki and a fine quadruple-volume edition of Japanese haikus,” as well as “an immense collection of valuable general poetry.”<sup>569</sup> In this setting, Japhy is sitting and translating Han Shan’s poem “Cold Mountain” with a “little tin teapot and porcelain cup steaming at his side.”<sup>570</sup>

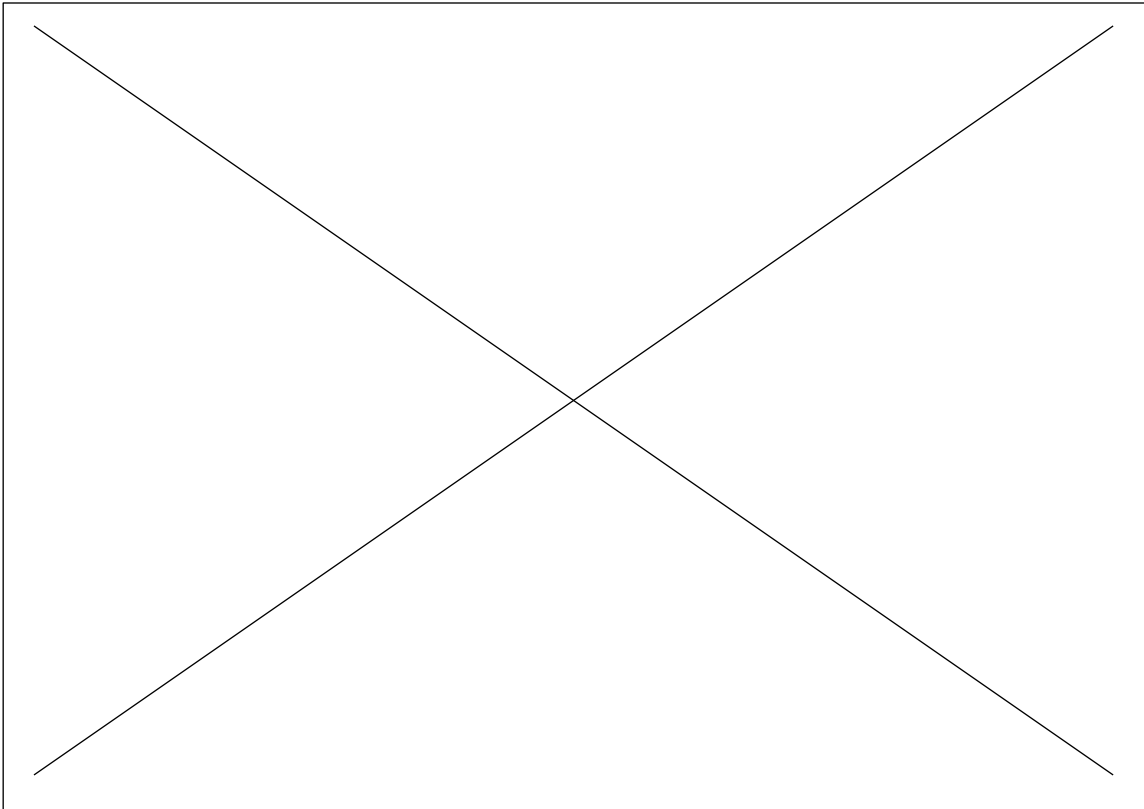


Figure 4.9 Gary Snyder, wearing a Kimono, and sitting and drinking tea in a traditional Japanese manner, Berkeley, 1956.

---

<sup>567</sup> Keith N. Hull, “A Dharma Bum Goes West to Meet the East,” *Western American Literature* 11, no. 4 (Winter 1977): 321, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/wal.1977.0014>.

<sup>568</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 19, 22.

<sup>569</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 18-19.

<sup>570</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 19.

Even though the tea-drinking is in a domestic location, it is presented as one of many physical elements used to create an “oriental” setting where Japhy can translate a poem about a Chinese mountain. A photograph taken around the same time Kerouac and Snyder first met portrays the extent Snyder’s lifestyle was influenced by East Asian culture (see fig. 4.9). His adoption of Asian cultural customs, art, and literature is evident in the photograph. Furthermore, Snyder looks straight into the camera’s lens. His unabashed gaze communicates an air of solitary contentment, a condition Smith desires. In *The Dharma Bums* tea is being used to fuel his translation, and thus is presented with one of its principal Buddhist purposes: to keep its drinker alert. Physically, Ryder is described as “strangely Oriental-looking,” with eyes twinkling “like the eyes of old giggling sages of China.”<sup>571</sup> The combination of his beliefs, lifestyle, and East Asian appearance in this moment portray him as an outsider in the United States. The homogenisation of diverse Asian cultures, however, cannot be overlooked: throughout the novel Kerouac alludes to various Asian cultural customs with little attention paid to their specific origins.

Japhy’s outsider status is shown to be beneficial, since he is presented as surrounded by silence and intellectual stimuli. Consequently, he can explore the horizons of his mind as he will not be harangued by domestic or corporate influences. The tea used here is a direct contrast to the Tea Council’s adverts, for Ryder is reliant on nobody and only looks after himself, which in many ways builds upon the masculinity popularly associated with wild west lore. Furthermore, it is not surprising that Kerouac appears to idolise a masculinity built upon this white American heritage: in 1959, thirty-five western films were broadcast weekly on national television—with eight out of ten of the top ten shows being westerns.<sup>572</sup> Instead of nostalgically idolising frontiersman on screen, Kerouac presents a countercultural way of pursuing this admired and celebrated myth of white American masculinity through ancient Chinese thought and customs. The independence, at the root of American masculinist myth, is presented as now available through non-conformity, with Buddhist customs providing the self-reflective personal growth and individuality it needs. Furthermore, the exclusivity

---

<sup>571</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 12-13.

<sup>572</sup> Manuel Luis Martinez, *Countering the Counterculture: Rereading Postwar American Dissent from Jack Kerouac to Tomás Rivera* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 74.

and sense of superiority presented by figures like Snyder, as they distinguish themselves from the majority of U.S. society through their knowledge and practice of Asian culture and beliefs, complements the exclusivity and sense of isolation attached to the legacy of frontiersman.

In another Buddhist scene in the novel, on their trek up to the Matterhorn Peak, in Sawtooth Ridge, California, Ryder, Smith, and Morley (based on John Montgomery) comment on the silence of the mountains and Japhy mentions that to him “a mountain is a Buddha. Think of the patience.”<sup>573</sup> In Chinese Buddhism mountains are associated with pilgrimage and the four heavenly kingdoms. The setting is a direct contrast to their city lives, and the peaceful setting is combined with the consumption of tea:

Japhy got out the tea, Chinese tea, and sprinkled some in a tin pot, and had the fire going meanwhile, [...] I myself'd gotten the water from the stream, which was cold and pure like snow and the crystal-lidded eyes of heaven. Therefore, the tea was by far the most pure and thirstquenching tea I ever drank in all my life, it made you want to drink more and more, it actually quenched your thirst and of course it swam around hot in your belly.<sup>574</sup>

Here, the “bums” commune with nature by using the wood and water around them to make the Chinese tea. The purity and religious imagery surrounding its ingredients make it the brew of their Buddhist lifestyle. Chinese tea-drinking is invested in obtaining the highest quality of water possible to brew the tea in; this is seen in historical Chinese literature, and ties Kerouac’s sensations and actions with ancient Chinese beliefs and practices.<sup>575</sup> Furthermore, his bodily experience evokes a sense of physical vitality and awareness. That the tea is “pure” depicts the mountainous setting as also the most reinvigorating, and a place to rediscover masculinity. Furthermore, Kerouac states that the tea makes you “want to drink more and more,” indicating the necessity to escape conventional society, and to embrace their countercultural lifestyle; only then can they realise the extent of the damage society has wrought.

Ryder says “frontiersmen are always heroes and were always my real heroes and will always be.”<sup>576</sup> If the frontiersman defined the United States through expansion and discovery, then Kerouac is showing a rediscovery of this

---

<sup>573</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 58.

<sup>574</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 58-59.

<sup>575</sup> Benn, *Tea in China*, 1-2.

<sup>576</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 83.



foundational U.S. masculine identity through a spiritual enlightenment, mediated through tea in an unregulated space where physical excursion and relative isolation can lead to a rediscovery of traditional white American masculinity. By describing the tea as the “most pure and thirstquenching,” Kerouac is legitimising a life away from society. Tea has been considered a purifying drink for centuries, as seen in the Chinese poem “Seven Cups of Tea” (795-835). Kerouac builds upon this heritage and presents tea as a tonic to restore the body and mind of the drinker. It is here that tea helps Smith on his journey as he seeks to find out how he can “cast off the evils of the world and the city and find my true pure soul.”<sup>577</sup>

After their trek, fuelled by tea, they come down the mountain like “Chinese lunatics.”<sup>578</sup> Japhy says to Smith on their trip: “Now you understand the Oriental passion for tea [...] Remember that book I told you about, the first sip is joy, the second gladness, the third is serenity, the fourth is madness, the fifth is ecstasy.”<sup>579</sup> Japhy is referring to the Japanese book *The Book of Tea* by Okakura Kakuzō (1906).<sup>580</sup> Snyder’s particular interest in Japanese beliefs and culture is evinced in his adoption of Japanese tea-drinking habits, attire, and manners (see fig. 4.9). Though it is a Japanese book, and Japhy and Smith differ in their Buddhist leanings, tea’s centrality to Buddhism and its origins in Chinese culture are evident despite the homogenisation of different Asian cultures and traditions in the novel.

Japanese tea culture originates from China, and knowledge of tea and its practices are believed to have been first introduced to Japan between c. 700-800.<sup>581</sup> The origins of tea culture in China, and its presence in Japanese culture are evident in how the ideas communicated by Japhy stem back to China, as seen in Lu Tong’s poem, “Seven Cups of Tea.”<sup>582</sup> The origins and drinking of the brew in the mountains exhibit how their Buddhist lifestyles are attainable in the mountains, far away from regular society. For Kerouac, it is a clear choice: either rediscover a mythologised U.S. masculinity through living like Chinese monks

---

<sup>577</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 132.

<sup>578</sup> Kerouac *The Dharma Bums*, 74.

<sup>579</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 58-59.

<sup>580</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 20.

<sup>581</sup> George L. van Driem, *The Tale of Tea: A Comprehensive History of Tea from Prehistoric Times to the Present Day* (Boston: Brill, 2019), 154.

<sup>582</sup> Benn, *Tea in China*, 15.

and bodhisattvas (people on the path to Buddhahood) in secluded, often mountainous places, or to remain city-dwelling artists who drown their pain with alcohol. Domestic heteronormative locations are avoided and replaced with homosocial ones. Compared to the consumption of alcohol, which is largely consumed for pleasure or as an emotional crutch, the consumption of tea enables the drinker to connect with the wilderness and with their own “wild” masculinity, which requires spiritual and bodily purification, and an awakening free from the constraints of society.

The purity and relief from pain to be found in Buddhist practice is metaphorically compared to the corrupting nature of conventional U.S. society which provides drunken periods of respite. We see this distinct contrast when Ryder, Smith, and Morley climb up the Matterhorn Peak and Ryder mentions how he is “bringing tea, [because] you always want a good cup of hot tea under those cold stars.”<sup>583</sup> Buddhist monasteries are often located on mountains, or in rural locations, so that monks can separate themselves from society and find peace and tranquillity in nature. Tea here characterises the inner comfort and sense of self that can be found when you are able to think clearly, commune with nature, and pursue Buddhist teachings away from the corruption and pressures of ordinary society; it is in the mountains that the men are free to explore and harness their masculinity.

A comparison between alcohol and tea stresses the importance of Buddhism in developing masculine selfhood. In a small rural shack “Japhy brewed more tea on his noisy gasoline primus and gave us added cups with almost a silent oriental bow. It was quite different from the night of the poetry reading.”<sup>584</sup> The poetry reading had audience members carrying and dispersing “three huge gallon jugs of California Burgundy” and Alvah “wailing his poem ‘Wail’ drunk with arms outspread.”<sup>585</sup> The silence of the “bow” and the ability to hear the gasoline primus are contrasted to the city life of bars and alcohol. Smith can never truly resist alcohol, as like Kerouac, when back in society, he drinks excessively. In the novel the two brews are often nationalised despite Kerouac appearing to endorse transnational cultural identities. One brew is drunk on mountains or in

---

<sup>583</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 33.

<sup>584</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 23.

<sup>585</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 15.

quiet places where the characters can imagine they are in Chinese environs or monasteries; the other is drunk in cities and at large social gatherings where intoxication is used, in part, as a tool to cope with social anxiety. Here, the stark contrast between tea and the idealised Buddhist China of a thousand years ago and the reality of alcohol in U.S. cities accentuates the extent society needs to change to enable men to be adventurous, independent, untied from responsibilities, and consequently, to lead a life worthy of their patrilineal legacy, or akin to that of frontiersman and men travelling “with nothing but a paper bag for luggage.”

After their climb, once they arrive in Bridgeport, California, they go to a restaurant and Smith has “a glass of port.”<sup>586</sup> Afterwards they go to a liquor store and buy “a bottle of muscatel.”<sup>587</sup> After arriving back to “civilisation” they go back to their usual ways. In Buddhism, alcohol is prohibited because of its tendency to cause tiredness and illness, and to affect one’s mental capabilities.<sup>588</sup> Kerouac aligns Chinese culture and beliefs with idealised images of isolation and enlightenment; Chinese tea-drinking is shown not to fit in to U.S. society, and as they drive “back to San Francisco drinking [alcohol] and laughing and telling long stories” they are modifying their lifestyle so that they can cope with, and to some extent fit back into, U.S. society. In a similar vein to John Updike’s *Rabbit Run*, tea is linked to idealisations, whether of suburban life or bucolic landscapes, while the alcohol they consume, often destructively, is located in their “real” lives.

Through Chinese tea-drinking Kerouac emphasises his own feelings of alienation within U.S. society, as it is through tea-drinking that Smith finds moments of peace. However, through using tea Kerouac unwittingly compounds the alienation of Chinese Americans through signifying the “otherness” of their beliefs, heritage, and practices. Their cultural heritage is presented as inseparable from ancient China, rural settings, and is placed within a largely homogenised viewpoint of East Asia; as a result, Chinese cultural heritage is racialised and displayed as unassimilable and irreconcilable with the ideological conditions of the United States. The racialisation of the novel’s tea elucidates the continued exclusion of the Chinese, as Kerouac feeds into this narrative by using

---

<sup>586</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 79.

<sup>587</sup> Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*, 80.

<sup>588</sup> Benn, *Tea in China*, 11.

Chinese tea-drinking as a rebellious act to rediscover masculinity. It appears Kerouac purposefully rejects the domestic tea of U.S. suburbia because it was attached to the fear that most American men were robbed of their autonomy during the 1950s.

Allen Ginsberg dedicated "Howl" (1956) to Kerouac and prophetically called him the "new Buddha of American prose."<sup>589</sup> Kerouac's venture into Buddhism only lasted a few years: after 1960, Kerouac's interest in Buddhism "declined precipitously" before he refocused his attention on the Catholicism of his upbringing.<sup>590</sup> However, Ginsberg's prophecy becomes true in the 1960s when, for the counterculture the Beat Generation made Buddhism accessible: Susan Kayorie points out that Kerouac's version of Buddhism is "so basic to the counter-culture that [it] no longer seem[s] counter-cultural at all, but familiar and as American as apple pie."<sup>591</sup> Though Buddhism may have become familiar, Kerouac's novel evinces how Chinese heritage was not considered assimilable in the United States. Kerouac seizes upon alienated Chinese culture to rebelliously reject suburban culture and strive towards an environment where men can rediscover supposedly lost and threatened traits of white American masculinity. Identification with "otherness" relied on clear definitions of what was and what was not "American," and Kerouac depicts the rebirth of white U.S. masculinity through a process that exacerbates the alienation of the ethnically Chinese American population due to aspects of their culture being employed as part of the countercultural movement.

### III. Forming New Families in Old Chinatowns

Published in the late 1950s and early 1960s by Chinese-born Americans, *The Flower Drum Song* by C. Y. Lee and *Eat a Bowl of Tea* by Louis Chu represent the conditions of Chinatowns and their families between World War II and the Immigration Act of 1965. In both novels the elders, who have lived the majority of their lives in the "bachelor societies" of Chinatowns, wish to govern the careers and marriages of their children. *The Flower Drum Song* presents Chinese-born

---

<sup>589</sup> Allen Ginsberg, dedication in *HOWL and other poems* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1956), 3.

<sup>590</sup> Jackson, "the counterculture looks east," 59.

<sup>591</sup> Susan Kayorie, "The Ten Precepts of Zen in Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums*," *Moody Street Irregulars: A Jack Kerouac Magazine*, Issue 28, 1994, 20.

women as “traditional” and therefore the ideal wives for Chinese American men. In Chu’s novel, a Chinese-born woman wishes to take advantage of what is on offer in the United States and to be more autonomous. Rape takes place in both novels; through the rape scenes, and the novels’ events generally, Lee and Chu explore the power dynamics present within a unique period of Chinese American history, when pressures from elders and the new expectations of women cause Chinese American men to feel, at times, powerless. The third-person narration in both novels enables intimate insight into the unique challenges of the period for all members of the community. The narration considers the experiences, emotions, and interactions of many characters and eliminates the possible bias of a first- or second-person narration. As a result, the novels invite readers to form their own opinions on the narrative’s events.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 eliminated quotas based on race or nationality, and coincided with the creation of a new political terrain upon which, as Li Shu-Yan notes, the political and vocal “Asian American consciousness” of the late 1960s and 1970s emerged.<sup>592</sup> Lee and Chu capture a unique period before Chinese Americans demanded more recognition as members of U.S. society, and when immigration laws surrounding World War II created many challenges for Chinese male inhabitants coming of age in New York’s and San Francisco’s Chinatowns. Lee and Chu document how, unlike their white male counterparts, Chinese American men had to contend with the changing demographics of Chinatown, and their representation as effeminate in U.S. culture.<sup>593</sup> The decision both writers made to set their novels in Chinatowns two decades earlier presents their shared desire to capture a moment in Chinese American history when Chinatowns were still considered the most safe and homely place for Chinese Americans to be.

The young men of Chinatowns during this period struggled to identify themselves with Chinese or white American masculinity, as they often harboured and/or respected qualities in both. The struggle to create their own masculine identity was aggravated by four major Acts that reshaped Chinese American communities during the mid-1940s. When the Chinese Exclusion Repeal Act of

---

<sup>592</sup> Li Shu-Yan, “Otherness and Transformation in *Eat a Bowl of Tea and Crossings*,” *MELUS* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 99, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/468122>.

<sup>593</sup> As seen in the popular literary and Hollywood characters of Charlie Chan and Fu Manchu: both characters are analysed in Chapter 2.

1943 was passed, over half of the Chinese in the United States were foreign born. However, under the new legislation, including the National Origins Law of 1943, most became eligible for citizenship.<sup>594</sup> It is at this time that, as citizens with rights, the struggle for family unification and creation gained impetus, and the younger generation experienced pressure to form heteronormative family structures within Chinatowns.<sup>595</sup>

This goal was supported by the War Brides Act of 1945, which enabled the admission of alien dependants of American veterans. In total, 13,499 Chinese American men were drafted or enlisted in the U.S. Armed Forces, equivalent to 22% of the Chinese American adult male population.<sup>596</sup> The Act enabled the wives and children of Chinese American veterans to finally join their male relatives in the United States. Additionally, the Fiancées and Fiancés of War Veterans Act of 1946 enabled the admission of future dependants.<sup>597</sup> Then in 1946 the Chinese American Wives of American Citizens Act permitted the admission of Chinese wives outside of the quota.<sup>598</sup> The demographic changes these laws enabled led to Chinese American men grappling to form a new patriarchy in Chinatowns, as women were once more a permanent familial fixture in their communities.

During World War II, China was the United States' ally against Japan, and during the Cold War the United States wanted to appear tolerant and accepting of different ethnicities; as a result, these laws were passed and sustained.<sup>599</sup> However, despite the changes taking place, L. Wang concludes that, in the two decades following 1945, "the exclusion of the Chinese remained essentially in effect."<sup>600</sup> Post-war Japan became the United States' "junior partner," and the People's Republic of China, as Robert Lee notes, "became its principal enemy" as the main Asian communist threat.<sup>601</sup> The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950,

---

<sup>594</sup> Miščević and Kwong, *Chinese Americans*, 139.

<sup>595</sup> Xiaojian Zhao, *Remaking Chinese America: Immigration, Family, and Community, 1940-1965* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>596</sup> Victor G. and Brett de Bary Nee, *Longtime Californ': A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown* (California: Stanford University Press, 1986), 154-55; Mark and Chih, *A Place Called Chinese America*, 97-98.

<sup>597</sup> Zhao, *Remaking Chinese America*, 25.

<sup>598</sup> Zhao, *Remaking Chinese America*, 1.

<sup>599</sup> Zhao, *Remaking Chinese America*, 1-3.

<sup>600</sup> Wang, "Roots and Changing Identity of the Chinese in the United States," 189.

<sup>601</sup> Robert G. Lee, "The Cold War Origins of the Model Minority Myth," in *American Studies Now: A Critical Reader*, ed. Jean Yu-wen Shen Wu and Thomas C. Chen (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 262.

and China's involvement from 1951, further aggravated relations between the U.S. and the People's Republic of China.

Chinatowns were declining in number and population size, as young Chinese Americans did not want their futures to be haunted by Chinatowns' history of exclusion and bachelorhood, nor to live in the towns' often rundown buildings which lacked flushing toilets and central heating.<sup>602</sup> The dispersal out of Chinatown is evident when a nationwide study recorded twenty-eight cities with Chinatowns in 1940, compared to sixteen cities in 1955.<sup>603</sup> Lee and Chu narrate in their novels the tension between the younger generation—who were able to marry and live with their wives and children, and who strove to live conventional U.S. lifestyles—and the older generation, who, having adapted to living without their wives or children, staunchly remained loyal to codes of conduct that no longer existed in China or worked in the United States.

The change in demographics wreaked havoc on the “bachelor” community structures as women demanded recognition and men sometimes doubted their worthiness as romantic partners of “pure” subjects from China;<sup>604</sup> the women were seen as untainted by internalised racism or the limits of exclusion, which had often led to irresponsible and immoral “bachelor” lifestyles that often included gambling and frequenting brothels.<sup>605</sup> Fictional tea ceremonies symbolically represent how this difficult terrain was negotiated as young Chinese American men strove to attain nuclear families but, partly due to their self-doubt, experience sexual assault or adultery in the process. Importantly, Chu and Lee highlight through imaginary tea scenes how, despite huge community alterations and forcefully rejecting inherited feudal Chinese ways, the younger generation must realise the continued importance of ethnic community solidarity in the creation of a new Chinese American patriarchy.

*The Flower Drum Song* by C. Y. Lee is set in San Francisco's Chinatown during the late 1930s.<sup>606</sup> The novel is centred on Master Wang, a wealthy sixty-three-year-old Chinese man who “escaped” China partially due to the social and

---

<sup>602</sup> Chang, *The Chinese in America*, 257, 260; Cheng, “Out of Chinatown and into the Suburbs,” 1081.

<sup>603</sup> Chang, *The Chinese in America*, 260.

<sup>604</sup> Jinqi Ling, “Reading for Historical Specificities: Gender Negotiations in Louis Chu's *Eat a Bowl of Tea*,” *MELUS* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 41, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/467852>.

<sup>605</sup> Ling, “Reading for Historical Specificities,” 41.

<sup>606</sup> Andrew Shin and C. Y. Lee, “‘Forty Percent Is Luck’: An Interview with C. Y. (Chin Yang) Lee,” *MELUS* 29, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 85, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4141820>.

financial changes communists were instigating in Hunan, his province.<sup>607</sup> The plot focuses on Master Wang's hunt for a wife for his son Wang Ta, and Wang Ta's romantic escapades and dilemmas. Unlike its adaptation first as a musical (1958, by Rogers and Hammerstein) then as a film (1961, dir. Henry Koster), Lee's novel has not been celebrated or recovered by scholars. The musical was created to entertain the masses as a commercial hit and was first performed on Broadway before it went on a national tour;<sup>608</sup> the success of the tour probably led to its film adaptation. In 2008, the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress noted the film as particularly "culturally, historically, or aesthetically" significant.<sup>609</sup> But the novel itself, though initially a *New York Times* bestseller, had, by the 1990s, disappeared from mainstream and Asian American consciousness.

Undoubtedly the novel's dismissal, as David Hwang notes, is partly because of the musical's success, which removed the novel's critique of the on-going impacts of exclusion, and inserted songs which proclaimed the United States to be the land of liberty and opportunity for all.<sup>610</sup> The on-going side effects of exclusion were an absence of established familial structures in Chinatowns and the continued presence of the "bachelor" culture, which included gambling and illicit business. The aim of the musical as an ideological commodity of the Cold War era was to entertain, to portray the United States as a beacon of opportunity and as racially tolerant compared to communist nations, and to show the transformation of "the Oriental from unknowable exotic to assimilable ally" if those Asian nations were democratic and/or allies of the United States;<sup>611</sup> its aim was not to present the United States' issues regarding race relations, or to educate on the effects of exclusion. The novel suffered from the musical's legacy, which is evident in the scathing criticism it has received from the Asian American community by scholars including Sau-ling C. Wong, Jeffrey J. Santa Ana, and

---

<sup>607</sup> C. Y. Lee, *The Flower Drum Song* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957; Harmondsworth, Penguin, 2002), 5. Citations refer to the 2002 edition.

<sup>608</sup> Chang-Hee Kim, "Asian Performance on the Stage of American Empire in Flower Drum Song," *Cultural Critique* 85 (Fall 2013): 1, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/culturalcritique.85.2013.0001>.

<sup>609</sup> Library of Congress, "Cinematic Classics, Legendary Stars, Comedic Legends and Novice Filmmakers Showcase the 2008 Film Registry," December 30, 2008, accessed July 14, 2018, <https://www.loc.gov/item/prn-08-237/2008-entries-to-national-film-registry-announced/2008-12-30/>.

<sup>610</sup> David Hwang, introduction in *The Flower Drum Song*, by C. Y. Lee (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002), xv.

<sup>611</sup> Kim, "Asian Performance on the Stage," 7.



Elaine Kim; they believe the novel relies on “stereotypes” of “exotic and fey ‘Orientals,’” and portrays Chinese Americans as “unreasonable” and “unmanly.”<sup>612</sup> It is true that Lee’s novel provides its reader with a tour of Chinatown by explaining cultural particulars for a non-Chinese readership; however, his novel also presents the unjust impact of exclusion on Chinese American men.

The effect of its reception is seen in the early 1980s when scholars, including Frank Chin, were compiling an Asian American literary canon: Lee’s novel, the first known novel published by a Chinese American—which is a feat worthy of consideration in itself—was omitted.<sup>613</sup> The musical simplifies Wang Ta’s chief love interests into the fierce “dragon lady,” the innocent “lotus blossom,” and the unrequited love of an independent motherly figure. Furthermore, the musical removes the novel’s controversial rape scene; a scene which is likely another reason why the novel hasn’t been recuperated by scholars. Tea-drinking in the novel presents the issues and perils faced by Chinese American men striving to obtain nuclear family structures after over half a century of exclusion.

One issue addressed by Lee is the situation of the Chinese American women of Chinatown who, through their rareness and adoption of white American courting ways, exhibit power over their male suitors. This is observed when Wang Ta, a Chinese-born American, takes Mary, a girl he is infatuated with at the start of the novel, out for dinner. Mary is “an American-Chinese girl, born in Stockton” and a student of Music at City College. At the dinner

Wang Ta swallowed hard [and with] his voice trembling [built up his courage to ask her] ‘Will you marry me, Mary?’

The waiter brought in the dishes. Mary sipped her tea and waited until the waiter had left. ‘I’m already engaged [...]’ she said, lowering her beautiful eyes.

Wang Ta stared at her, then he swallowed again.<sup>614</sup>

The calm response of her composed tea-drinking and delivery of heart-breaking news contrasts with Wang Ta’s awkward and nervous demeanour. She admits

---

<sup>612</sup> Kim, *Asian American Literature*, 107; Sau-ling C. Wong and Jeffrey J. Santa Ana, “Gender and Sexuality in Asian American Literature,” *Signs* 25, no. 1 (Autumn 1999): 183-184, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3175619>.

<sup>613</sup> Hwang, introduction to *The Flower Drum Song*, xiv-xv; Ryan Tacorda, “Constructing Chinese American Identity through Film and Theatre: ‘Flower Drum Song’ as Ingroup Narrative and as Counterstory,” *UCLA Asian Pacific American Law Journal* 118 (2004): 119.

<sup>614</sup> Lee, *The Flower Drum Song*, 17.

that she never thought he was serious, that lots of men had taken her out, and she then avoids a question on whether she has kissed these other men too. Tea is often portrayed in Chinese literature as “an emblem of courtship and love or as a ritualistic affirmation of intended marriage.”<sup>615</sup> In traditional settings, intended brides and grooms are not in a position to negotiate or decline. Their marriages are arranged by their parents and matchmakers. This tradition is evinced later in the novel when Master Wang, a symbol of imperial China in his dress, manners, and values, discusses and makes decisions about his son’s future matrimony; as he talks to his sister-in-law he “poured himself a cup of tea from his Kiangsi teapot [and] blew and sipped his tea” as she awaits his non-negotiable responses.<sup>616</sup> The power dynamics are reversed here as Mary, an American girl by birth, dictates whom she sees and when she sees them, while Wang Ta is portrayed as the inexperienced and naïve jilted date whose customs are “alien” in the United States.

Mary appears collected and authoritative around the traditional courting brew. Chinese American courtship rituals are shown here to be complicated by how traditional Chinese courting customs are made redundant, as women have attained the power to choose whom they see and marry, especially when the woman is born or raised in the United States. However, the courting is also complicated, as the older generation insists on practising old customs to assert their position as leaders of the community. Wang Ta represents the young men who find themselves stripped of power and located between these two forthright forces who are shown to assert authority over their life choices and others; a condition symbolised through tea ceremonies.

The anguish caused by the rise in female independence due to the scarcity of Chinese women in the United States, and their Americanisation due to their adoption of U.S. values and customs, is seen only a few pages later when Wang Ta sees his friend Chang for a tea lunch. During the lunch Chang says to Wang Ta that he doesn’t

blame the local-born Chinese girls for their reluctance to associate with us. What have we to offer them? Nothing [compared to American born boys who have more stable careers]. What I have got that they haven’t got is probably my Ph.D degree, which cannot be eaten, like a loaf of bread. But

---

<sup>615</sup> Ling, “Reading for Historical Specificities,” 50.

<sup>616</sup> Lee, *The Flower Drum Song*, 160-161.

there are a lot of things that they have got and yet I haven't got—cars, television, family properties, youth—things too numerous to name!<sup>617</sup>

Chang highlights how new Chinese immigrants struggle to court American-born Chinese girls because of their generally low incomes. The women are, in part, scapegoated for Wang Ta's and Chang's feelings of inadequacy, as the latter are unable to support the popular consumer aspirations of American-born Chinese women. Both Chang and Wang Ta are Chinese-born, and due to this, they are not as "American" as their American-born counterparts, who have easier access to jobs and established family businesses. The American-born Chinese women are shown to want a consumer lifestyle, where they can afford the luxuries of their white American counterparts.

In response to Chang's comment on what local Chinese boys have to offer, Wang Ta replies "guess you are right," and stares "gloomily at the asters in his tea."<sup>618</sup> This scene draws on the Chinese history of fortune-telling through tea-reading, and the development of the custom in Eastern Europe and Britain from the eighteenth century onwards, as Wang Ta accepts his fate, a fate which is symbolically influenced and ensnared by Chinese traditions and western expectations.

Later in this conversation, after Chang has cautioned him against women who are mercenary or opportunists looking for a good time, Wang Ta "picked out an aster from the tea and crushed it between his fingers [and said] 'But sometimes you just can't control love.'"<sup>619</sup> The representation of Wang's heavy-hearted state is symbolised by the tea's crushed aster. In Greek mythology the aster is a symbol of love and is sacred to Aphrodite, while in Chinese culture the aster is symbolic of beauty and charm.<sup>620</sup> By crushing the tea's aster he is shown to accept his loveless fate without female charm because he appears powerless and in the middle of both civilisations, as Mary, who is shown as Americanised through her liberal dating habits, symbolises the West, and his father, who is loyal to traditional Chinese culture, symbolises the East.

---

<sup>617</sup> Lee, *The Flower Drum Song*, 22.

<sup>618</sup> Lee, *The Flower Drum Song*, 22.

<sup>619</sup> Lee, *The Flower Drum Song*, 23.

<sup>620</sup> Steve Olderr, *Symbolism: A Comprehensive Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (North Carolina: Jefferson, McFarland & Company, Inc., 2012), 22.

Both are able to govern their consumption of tea and tea ceremonies unlike Wang Ta, who is initially unable to find his way in the United States as he lacks full access to opportunities, and his father's traditional ways prove unsuitable for the new generation in a changing society. Since tea is a traditional Chinese courting drink, Wang Ta is shown to be living within a drastically changing society and at first he defeatedly accepts his loveless, single fate as agency is located anywhere but in his hands.

Lee does not depict all women as in a position of romantic power. In one case, a woman's desire for the love of a man and a family leads her to commit a sexual offence. Helen Chao is a forty-one-year-old woman who is a seamstress and is suffering from unrequited love. We do not know for certain if she was born in China or the United States. She is not discussed in scholarly work on the novel, and in the musical she is reduced to an attractive sisterly figure whose love for Wang Ta does not lead to deadly consequences. I contend that her actions as described below, which have been excised from adaptations of the novel, are vital in depicting the harrowing and long-lasting effects of exclusion on men and women. I am specifically concerned with how, through the representation of Helen and tea, Lee portrays the extent to which the presence of Chinese women fuels anxiety over Chinese American masculinity.

What leads to Helen's moral and mortal downfall is her unrequited love for Wang Ta. She is so desperately in love with him that she gets him drunk and then gives him tea to elevate some of the alcohol's drowsing effects; she "brought him a cup of hot tea, fed him with the spoon [and this leads to him feeling] deliriously happy and lazy and carefree."<sup>621</sup> Lee employs the long-established fear of adulterated tea, also seen in "The Wisdom of the New" by Sui Sin Far.<sup>622</sup> After he drinks the tea, Helen proceeds to take sexual advantage of him in his semi-conscious state. Their intercourse is not labelled as rape in the novel, but the lack of consent given by Wang Ta and his semi-consciousness means that, for many twenty-first century readers, it reads as a rape scene. Tea, so heavily laden with ideas of romance and marriage, in this scene symbolises Helen's desperation for both. It also suggests the extent to which Chinese American women have

---

<sup>621</sup> Lee, *The Flower Drum Song*, 77.

<sup>622</sup> A short story analysed in Chapter 1.

acquired power at the expense of their male counterparts, since she fully governs the tea ceremony and their interaction.

The normative and domestic aspects of her desires are symbolised by tea being a staple domestic drink in Chinese and white American households; the advances in teabag manufacturing in the United States led to tea-brewing becoming easier and quicker, and tea consumption in home spaces increased accordingly.<sup>623</sup> However, the use of tea to render Wang Ta weak accentuates the fear at this time of women potentially toppling Chinese American patriarchy. Helen portrays the threat of the new women of Chinatown asserting power, even sexually, within the original bachelor societies. Helen's western name and independence also indicate to us that she was likely born in the United States. Therefore, the fear of losing control over Chinatowns as women enter with their own expectations is presented as a physical threat—particularly from American-born Chinese women. This threat directly attacks notions of manhood, as men have “proved” their masculinity and dominance through violence and physical strength for thousands of years.

Wang Ta is not attracted to Helen and sees her as a dear friend he can talk to. After their night together Wang Ta goes to Helen's for dinner; when he says it's time for him to leave Helen says “You can go after a cup of tea. [...] You must taste my Black Dragon tea with the aster flowers.”<sup>624</sup> As the water boils Wang Ta feels uncomfortable and tries to leave again but Helen begs him to stay as “The tea will be ready in a moment.”<sup>625</sup> She then proceeds to ask him to marry her. He declines the offer, and after a heated and desperate discussion he leaves. The undrunk tea with the asters symbolises how Helen's dream to be loved and to feel beautiful will not be fulfilled. Her name's association with Helen of Troy also indicates how her affiliation with western culture will not be fruitful due to her physical dissimilarity with the woman prized for her beauty in Greek myth. The asters present how each person harbours the desire for love and beauty, and how these dreams can prove to be unattainable for Chinese Americans of either sex due to the influence of exclusion and westernisation on their customs and family formation.

---

<sup>623</sup> Smith, *Drinking History*, 56.

<sup>624</sup> Lee, *The Flower Drum Song*, 89.

<sup>625</sup> Lee, *The Flower Drum Song*, 90.

Despite the changes facing Chinatown, the community is not shown to be coming to an end, as the novel concludes with the promise of a happy marriage between Wang Ta and a “fresh off the boat” loyal and obedient Chinese woman Mei Li. Unlike Mary and Helen, Mei Li’s Chinese name signifies the importance of tradition, and the oppressive desire for female subordination as she represents the desired traditional and grateful Chinese wife who has not been exposed to western culture. What the novel presents through tea is the long-lasting obstacles exclusion causes the community to face as it strives to attain normative family structures by balancing heritage with Americanisation within Chinatowns, while addressing anxieties over Chinese American masculinity.

*Eat a Bowl of Tea* by Louis Chu starts where *The Flower Drum Song* ends: at the beginning of a marriage. Chu’s text, unlike Lee’s, has been revered by Asian American scholars (including Frank Chin, Shawn Wong, Jeffery Paul Chan, and Lawson Fusao) for its candid portrayal of Chinatown life, its focus on masculine concerns, and for its literal rendering of New York Chinatown’s dialect.<sup>626</sup> The novel opens by narrating the lives of Ben Loy, the protagonist, and his wife of two months Mei Oi, on “the quiet of [an] early morning” in Manhattan’s Lower East Side in the late 1940s.<sup>627</sup> The novel was originally published by the independent publisher Lyle Stuart Inc., which was known for publishing controversial books, including *The Sensuous Woman* (1969) by Terry Garrity (controversial for its time as it explicitly explored women’s sexuality). *Eat a Bowl of Tea* was not well received by its contemporary critics, and only after Chu’s death in 1970 did his work become revered as a pioneering text of Asian American literature.<sup>628</sup> In the 1970s critics like Jeffery Chan labelled Chu as “Chinese-America’s first novelist,” and completely disregarded the existence of C. Y. Lee.<sup>629</sup>

The history of New York’s Chinatown is shown to affect the newlyweds in the most intimate of ways. The lack of women and children in Chinatown due to sixty years of exclusion, the false promise of return Chinese immigrants make to

---

<sup>626</sup> Wong and Ana, “Gender and Sexuality,” 190; Chan, Chin, Inada, and Wong, introduction to *The Big Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature*, 17.

<sup>627</sup> Louis Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (New York: Lyle Stuart Books, 1961; reprinted in 2002), 9. Citations refer to the 2002 edition.

<sup>628</sup> Jeffery Paul Chan, introduction to *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, by Louis Chu (New York: Lyle Stuart Books, 2002), 1-4.

<sup>629</sup> Chan, introduction to *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 4.

their families, and the immoral and irresponsible gambling and spending of their earnings are symbolically shown to rob Chinatown of its virility. This is observed when at a young age Ben, born in China, joins his father who is already in New York, and grows up in Chinatown's "bachelor society"; the town is shown to maintain redundant patriarchal values, and visiting prostitutes is the norm. As a result of this upbringing, Ben suffers from sexual impotence caused by guilt and familial pressure. At the beginning of the novel Ben solely blames his impotence on his "foolish, impetuous, stupid past" when he slept with prostitutes.<sup>630</sup> However, as the novel unfolds, many psychological causes and fears over patriarchy become apparent. His move to San Francisco with Mei Oi at the end of the novel, and his drinking of medicinal tea there, cure his impotence.

Chinatown is portrayed as a community cut off from its life source. Moreover, Natalie Friedman notes that Chu explores "an explicit link between the risks and upheavals of immigration and the complexities of marriage and intimacy."<sup>631</sup> I am concerned with how Chu deploys tea to symbolise how healthy Chinese American families can eventually be created by addressing conditions which negatively impact conceptions of Chinese American masculinity including, distance from Chinese heritage, the authority of Chinatown's leaders, and the position of Chinese women in Chinatown.

The oppressive authority held by Chinatown's elders and the parental generation is exhibited during a traditional matchmaking tea ceremony. Wah Gay and Mei Oi's father, Lee Gong, are good friends who live in Chinatown and arrange for their children to be married. Their commands are followed and Ben travels to China to meet and marry Mei Oi. When they first meet, they go to the Three Star Tea House in China for what they call "a drink of tea."<sup>632</sup> Tea is ordered for seven as they are joined by his mother, the matchmaker, and some of Mei Oi's female relatives. The performance of a formal meeting tea ceremony, the use of a matchmaker, and the initial orchestration of their union by their male relatives, depicts the practising of old customs with a younger generation devoid of agency. Throughout the service Mei Oi is demure and quiet, and when asked by Ben where she went to school "she began staring blankly into her tea cup, as

---

<sup>630</sup> Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 12.

<sup>631</sup> Natalie J. Friedman, "Adultery and the Immigrant Narrative," *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S.* 34, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 71, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mel.0.0036>.

<sup>632</sup> Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 50.

if studying her own reflection.”<sup>633</sup> Throughout the service her relatives and the matchmaker answer for her except on this one occasion when she says, while “keeping her eyes on the cup,” that she is going to Wah Que School of English.”<sup>634</sup> Everything appears to go to plan as the formalities of the courtship take place in the United States and China under the governance of elders.

Her demureness and fixation on the tea symbolise how she is following custom; the only time Mei Oi talks is when she is looking directly into the tea, an action which foreshadows the role of the brew, later on in the novel, in communicating her agency when she goes against the promises of her marriage and commits adultery. The act of looking for her reflection indicates how Mei is searching for her individual desires which are contained within the parental expectations symbolised by the rim of the cup. At first, she appears to wish to abide by these rules. However, it is also evident that Mei Oi, and the dominant women of the tea table (like her aunt) who govern the conversation, are not as demure as their male relatives in Chinatown believe them to be. Once Mei Oi is in the United States she pursues her own desires, which is vital in showing the outmoded, unsustainable society of New York’s Chinatown which does not take into account female aspirations: she wishes to get a job, make independent choices, and to break away from Chinatown’s control. By breaking away from the old patriarchal structure of Chinatown, Mei Oi symbolises the changes taking place within the district and the impact of these changes on gender relations. Interestingly, unlike *Flower Drum Song*, which presents a Chinese-born woman as an ideal wife because she is demure and subservient, *Eat a Bowl of Tea* presents the Chinese-born wife as demanding and as having her own aspirations. Mei Oi’s rebellion and the rigidity of the elders’ commitment to tradition emphasise the two forces Ben finds himself contending with as he tries to create for himself a patriarchal identity which respects tradition and suits the evolving lifestyle of Chinatowns in the late 1940s.

The meeting tea ceremony also sets up how the novel recognises, as Saul-ling Wong notes, “that ‘Chineseness’ and ‘Americanness,’ much like ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity,’ are not essences but historically conditioned, communally

---

<sup>633</sup> Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 51.

<sup>634</sup> Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 51.



shared, and psychologically motivated constructs.”<sup>635</sup> Mei Oi is willing to perform her gendered position as long as Ben fulfils his role within the marriage: as a provider and the father of her children. Chu shows how the gender roles present in white American society are apparent in Chinese marriages when Mei Oi and Ben have their traditional Chinese wedding tea ceremony:

Mrs. Wing Sum, who was not many years older than the bride, now accompanied Mei Oi for the tea ceremony. On a little round service tray, the older woman carried ten cups filled with tea, first to the head table. Mei Oi stood next to her, holding her folded fan up to her chin.

“Drink tea, sirs,” announced Mrs. Wing Sim, extending the tray to the center of the table. The guests rose, each picking up a cup of tea and sipping it. The cups were then put back on the tray. Most of them were still nearly full. Little red envelopes began dropping onto the tray beside the cups. Ben Loy’s aunt, Mrs. Wang Wah Lim, was ready with a brown paper bag to receive the red envelopes. She had flown in from Chicago especially for the party.

[Afterwards the men smoke cigars].<sup>636</sup>

Traditional gender roles are communicated through women being the servers of tea, the bride being demure and silent, and the men being the recipients of the tea and in charge of providing the money inside the red envelopes. When the cups are refilled and passed out, Mei Oi is greeted with the same refrain, “Heh heh, next year we will drink again,” to which Mei responds by raising “her fan a little higher.”<sup>637</sup> The remark implies the celebration of their first-born child, and Mei Oi’s reaction signifies her innocence and virginity, both of which are expected of her and are implied about her by Ben when the novel opens as he calls her “So full of innocence and the purity of youth.”<sup>638</sup> Mei Oi is performing her gendered role within the courtship and marriage; it is later, when Ben Loy cannot fulfil his role because of his impotence, that the lack of consumption of tea represents anxiety over the autonomy of Chinese American patriarchy in an age of huge demographic and social change.

It is not until later in the novel that Mei Oi briefly attains agency to pursue her nonmarital desires. This comes about in what seems a strange, indeed perverse way: before she has an affair with her rapist she is raped by him and

---

<sup>635</sup> Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, “Ethnicizing Gender: An Exploration of Sexuality as Sign in Chinese Immigrant Literature,” in *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*, eds. Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 119-120.

<sup>636</sup> Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 75.

<sup>637</sup> Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 75.

<sup>638</sup> Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 9.

feels like “a prisoner in her own home.”<sup>639</sup> Though she decides to pursue an affair with him it is short lived. Within the novel’s moral universe, Mei Oi’s sexual relationship with Ah Song is presented as succumbing to the perverse sexual morality of Chinatown. It is important to note that what is framed as seduction in the novel is actually a rape: she does not accept his advances and she repeatedly asks him to stop. It is only through being “tainted” that she is eventually “cured” of her independent desires and Ben Loy is “cured” of his impotence. In both cases, expectations and ideals must be shattered to live happily within the new conditions of Chinatowns. In particular, the novel presents how Mei Oi, and Chinese American women in general, must be stripped of their own dreams of independence (financial or otherwise) to facilitate the formation of the new patriarchy of Chinatowns. It is perhaps because of the problematic gender politics that the novel has not aged well.

Ah Song is the “lone wolf” of Chinatown, and he is a foil to Ben as he tries to seduce Mei Oi.<sup>640</sup> He visits Mei Oi at her apartment, while Ben is at work, and says to her “brew me a cup of tea, and I’ll leave.”<sup>641</sup> Mei Oi is desperate for him to leave and follows his commands. As she makes the tea in the “white-enameled pot,” Ah Song tells her of how his mother is left alone, and how he lives in a big mansion with servants, and every “once in a while she glanced back at the pot” but she also “unwillingly [...] followed his every word and gesture [...] comparing] her present existence to that of mistress of a mansion.”<sup>642</sup> Mei Oi still insists he should leave, but once she has poured out the tea into his cup he exclaims to her “I love you!”<sup>643</sup> He then forces himself on her despite her pleas for him to stop, and while this happens “In the kitchen the white-enameled pot stood mute and unused, the lone cup of tea on the table forgotten and untouched.”<sup>644</sup> In the novel, this sexual encounter is not called a rape which, in itself, points to the powerless position of women, as they are in many ways treated like pawns within a patriarchal powerplay.

The tea ceremony is abandoned, and, though Mei Oi symbolically keeps her eyes on the tea pot and tea when brewing and serving it, in the end she is

---

<sup>639</sup> Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 97.

<sup>640</sup> Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 222.

<sup>641</sup> Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 97.

<sup>642</sup> Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 97.

<sup>643</sup> Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 98.

<sup>644</sup> Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 99.

taken away from it by Ah Song. This marks the end of the dreamed-of trouble-free family Mei Oi and Ben were striving towards. Initially Mei Oi saw the United States as opening up “a whole new panorama of fertile fields” in life; the novel implies that her husband’s impotence (a sign she interprets as him not loving her), her lack of employment or female friends in a marginalised community, and the desperation of a predominantly male community for female company and free sex, leads her first to be forced into abandoning the tea ceremony and the morals attached to it. Mei Oi continues her moral abandonment as she decides to have an affair with Ah Song, who represents the older generation and its “bachelor” lifestyle. Mei Oi’s affair highlights how Chinatown is struggling to move on from its “bachelor” heritage as she rejects family loyalty and embraces Chinatown’s reputation of sexual perversity. Ben symbolises a generation of Chinese men who wish to break away from the corruption and autocratic system of Chinatown, but in the process struggle to find their position as patriarchal figures, a struggle evidenced through Ben’s impotence, as the penis is universally symbolic of masculine strength and vitality.

The personification of the pot as it stood “mute” evokes the moral judgement at the centre of Chinatown’s community. Its “mute” condition can be interpreted as characterising the disapproval and resignation of the Chinatown community because, after sixty years as a “bachelor society,” the moral side effects of this legacy on the younger generation are starting to show. As Ruth Hsiao points out, “the fall [in the novel] begins with the decline of family after decades of male emigration and harsh realities in the new land.”<sup>645</sup> The tea remains untouched as the morals and expectations communicated in the wedding tea ceremony are not kept, and unlike the brew which retains its moral standing she is “touched” and thus, the novel presents how she is affected by Chinatown’s immoral ways. Evidently, archaic and oppressive ideas about a woman’s worth are employed. The rejection of tea’s consumption represents how Mei Oi is initially forced to reject tradition due to Chinatown’s toxicity. Mei Oi is presented as the victim who is “ruined” by her rape. Then, Chu portrays how the affair enables Ben to believe he is worthy of Mei Oi. At first, he viewed Mei Oi, as Jinqi Ling notes, like “an incarnation of the respectable Chinese wife,” which is

---

<sup>645</sup> Hsiao, “Facing the Incurable,” 153.

evinced in the wedding tea ceremony.<sup>646</sup> After his discovery of the affair he views her as a woman he is worthy of once she has sinned. This approach to establishing worth endorses self-deprecation and portrays how decades of exclusion has led to internalised racism, with Chinese Americans left seeing themselves as lesser beings than the Chinese of China.

After generations of Chinese immigrants being denied the ability to form nuclear families, Mei Oi's desire for affection and children highlights the damning "bachelor" legacy of Chinatown. Chinatown is initially shown to be a toxic location for families, since its gambling, prostitution, and other "bachelor society" ways are portrayed as creating a barren place. Disconcertingly, the narrative is at first similar to the "yellow peril" literature that focused on hyperbolising Chinatown's sinister elements. However, the novel emphasises the strict codes of conduct enforced within Chinatowns, which allay any fears about dangerous vice, and the ending does not endorse the abandonment of Chinatowns, as they will need to adapt to the changing times because they are shown to be at the heart of Chinese American communities and masculine identities.

The importance of balancing the rejection of Chinatown's authority and holding onto one's cultural heritage is portrayed through Ben's tea medicine. It is not until they move to San Francisco and Ben drinks tea there that his impotence is cured. In San Francisco, Ben goes to a new doctor who tells him to "eat a bowl of tea," a medicine that comes from the annals of traditional Chinese medicine, and to "come back in about three hours [when the tea will be ready]."<sup>647</sup> Ben continues to see the doctor for many weeks for he would "do anything to regain his vigor. The thick, black, bitter tea was not easy to swallow."<sup>648</sup> Furthermore, in San Francisco Ben and Mei Oi both feel liberated "from the stern supervision of the parental eye," and this enables the "blossoming of a new romance."<sup>649</sup>

Jinqi Ling suggests that tea does not carry the "symbolic burden as the author's proffered 'cure' for the ills of the United States' Chinatown communities."<sup>650</sup> I agree that on its own it does not; however, tea does represent

---

<sup>646</sup> Ling, "Reading for Historical Specificities," 41.

<sup>647</sup> Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 244; Geoffrey Kain, "Refracted Identity(ies) in Louis Chu's 'Eat a Bowl of Tea': Insularity as Impotence," *MELUS* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 194, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3185524>.

<sup>648</sup> Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 246.

<sup>649</sup> Chu, *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 246, 248.

<sup>650</sup> Ling, "Reading for Historical Specificities," 48.

the importance of maintaining ties to one's heritage. Chu does not present a complete abandonment of Chinese culture as necessary to cure Ben; if anything, this could worsen his condition. Tea, which is deeply rooted in Chinese culture and medicine, portrays the importance of remembering the past to develop from it, and performing culture for community identity and moral integrity. I agree with Cheng Lok Chua that "the bitterness of the tea aptly suggests the gall of his portion [...] Ben Loy's draining [of] this bitter cup, his acceptance of [...] his cuckoldry, strengthens him to transcend and free himself from the dead weight of past traditional restraint and vengefulness."<sup>651</sup> However, the idea that Ben can free himself from the "dead weight" does not address the origin of this weight in Chinese exclusion, nor how it cannot be so easily shaken off. The tea is a draught which, in its bitterness, highlights the importance of remembering and accepting the past and its culture. The tea contributes to Ben curing his impotence, and thus, as a symbol of culture, highlights the importance of heritage and ethnic identity if the new generation is to achieve its goals and produce a new patriarchal order.

On Ben's and Mei Oi's decision to move to San Francisco, Jeffery Chan notes that "it is no coincidence that Chu sends Ben Loy and Mei Oi to San Francisco for Ben Loy to reclaim his virility, his paternity, and his wife. [...] He is a Chinese-American remaking a covenant with [...] the city where Chinese-America first began."<sup>652</sup> The tea, combined with their relocation, communicates the importance of remembering history and practising legitimate minority cultural customs which have a home and an "origin" in the United States. Chu does not see the abandonment of heritage as necessary or beneficial; instead, he highlights through tea the importance of growth within communities and culture, and how, despite exclusionist treatment, the growth of healthy families and masculinist identities depends upon cultural identification and belonging. Therefore, in an era when many Chinese Americans wish to move out of Chinatowns and assimilate into white American society, Chu writes a story that places, at the centre of success, strong minority cultural ties.

---

<sup>651</sup> Cheng Lok Chua, quoted in Jinqi Ling, *Narrating Nationalisms: Ideology and Form in Asian American Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 70.

<sup>652</sup> Chan, introduction to *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, 5.

Fundamentally tea symbolises heritage: as Geoffrey Kain argues, in the novel “the key to personal and cultural virility lies in both ‘drinking deep’ from the source of one’s ethnic origins while also forging and celebrating a new identity in this newly discovered home, free from the declining dynamism that may be attributed to cultural isolationism.”<sup>653</sup> It is through tea that characters “drink deep,” with its role as an ancient medicine and domestic brew attached to forming a living culture open to adaptation and development. Ruth Hsiao notes that the novel not only restores “the ruffled, old-order social hierarchy, but it also suggests the birth of a new age patriarchy”;<sup>654</sup> this is evinced through tea, since (though it is abandoned by characters) it is part of Ben’s cure as it revives his virility. Afterwards, he begins to assert the head-of-the-household role he was unable to play at the start of the novel, a position which aligns the new patriarchy of Chinatown with the patriarchy of post-World War II white American society.

## Conclusion

The novels that have been analysed in this chapter illustrate some of the anxieties and pressures associated with masculinity in the United States in the post-World War II period. Before Kerouac’s commercial success during and after the 1960s, he transplanted China’s ancient culture to produce a lifestyle which rejected the conservative, suburban norm of Cold War American society. The masculinity Kerouac admired was one of individualism located in homosocial locations, free from domestic or feminine influences. Tea, with its heritage in Buddhism as a cleansing and meditative brew, and in the United States as an “un-American” drink, enabled Kerouac to symbolically reject mainstream U.S. society and focus on homosocial self-discovery and spiritual development.

Compared to the isolated rural locations in *The Dharma Bums*, in *Eat a Bowl of Tea* and *The Flower Drum Song* the geographical congregation in San Francisco’s Chinatown emphasises the role heritage plays in Chinese American men ascertaining their masculinity. The formation of families is shown to rely on Chinese American men realising their masculine dominance and worth. Chu’s tea medicine, and Chu’s and Lee’s use of tea to portray the shifting agency and ideals

---

<sup>653</sup> Kain, “Refracted Identity(ies) in Louis Chu’s ‘Eat a Bowl of Tea,’” 196.

<sup>654</sup> Hsiao, “Facing the Incurable,” 152.

within Chinatowns, depict the difficulties faced by Chinese American men as they must conquer their insecurities. Ling notes that “Ben Loy’s failure to live a married life [is] a generic metaphor for the social ‘emasculatation’ of the Chinatown bachelor society [as it maintains] the forms but not the substance of their culturally inherited male roles.”<sup>655</sup> Though, as Ling, notes, the patriarchy maintains its form but not its substance. Chu and Lee stress through fictional tea-drinking that Chinese American men must establish their own masculine identities: ones that balance an appreciation and practice of their Chinese heritage with their continually transforming and Americanised lives.

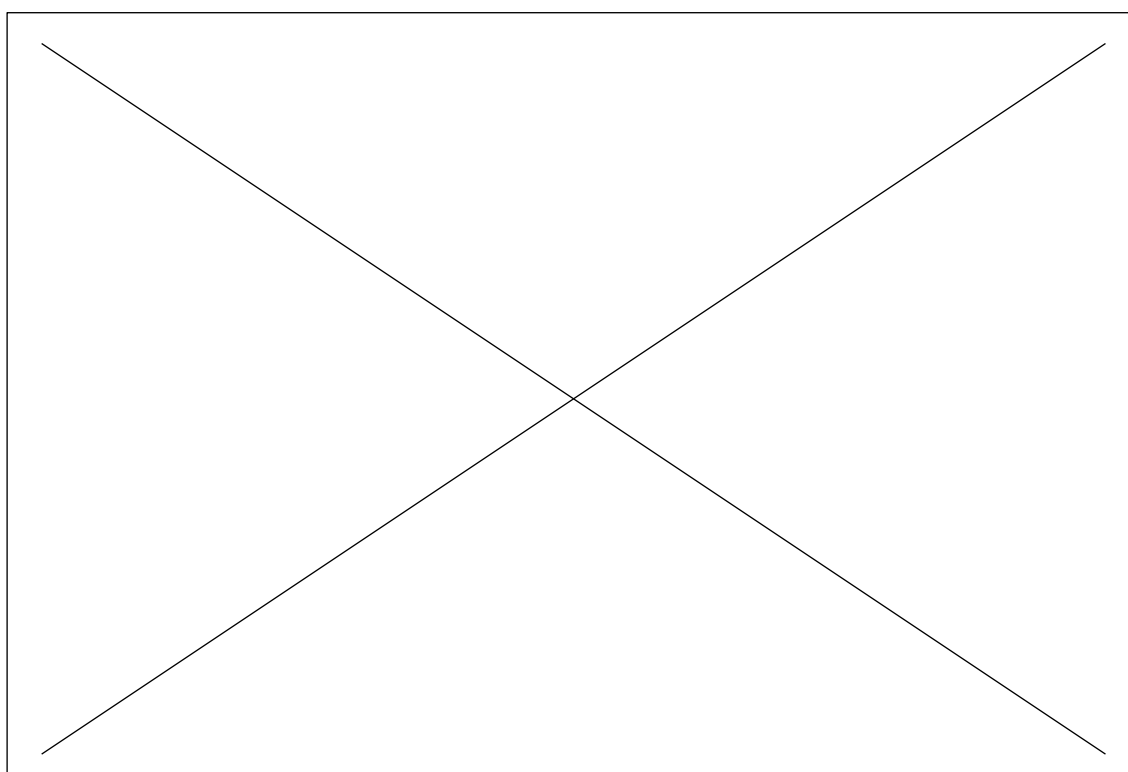


Figure 4.10 Photograph posted on the official brucetea Instagram account, “New BruceTea bottles! We’re loving this new #SuperPowered look!” December 9, 2016.

Figure 4.11 Photograph posted on the official brucetea Instagram account, “Enjoy!” September 23, 2016.

One legacy of exclusion which impacted Chinese American men’s sense of masculine worth is their feminisation in U.S. culture. The feminisation of Chinese American men has led to a continued effort in U.S. culture to rewrite this

---

<sup>655</sup> Ling, “Reading for Historical Specificities,” 41

narrative. In the 1970s martial arts became popular in the United States largely due to the martial artist and actor Bruce Lee. Lee, through five feature-length films in the early 1970s, popularised Chinese martial arts in the United States, and for many disproved over a century of emasculating Chinese American stereotypes. David Hwang celebrates Lee for creating “a new archetype in the West [...] The Asian-American male hero”;<sup>656</sup> he fills in a void that Pardee Lowe, C. Y. Lee, Louis Chu, Frank Chin, and others saw as hindering the development of Chinese American boys’ self-worth and masculinity.

His daughter, Shannon Lee, in 2015 created “Bruce Tea”: a range of iced tea drinks with a basis of tea, honey, ginseng, and royal jelly. In a promotional video for the product she states how she created the business to give people “A piece of my father’s actual practice. My father used to drink tea all day long. He would put in his tea certain supplements that he really believed would help him, nourish his mind, body, and spirit, and sustain his energy levels throughout the day [both mentally and physically].”<sup>657</sup> Shannon capitalises on her father’s legacy as an undefeatable opponent to sell “natural energy.”<sup>658</sup> The iced drink marks a movement away from the Chinese heritage of the brew, and from Bruce Lee’s own documented consumption of hot tea (when on set he stored it in a thermos), and a move towards changing the product to meet the dominant taste of the U.S. public:<sup>659</sup> over 85% of the tea consumed in the United States is iced.<sup>660</sup> Furthermore, Bruce Tea’s basic recipe is made up of 21g of sugar with no other labelled nutritional value.<sup>661</sup> The nutrition and hot temperature of Bruce Lee’s actual tea is traded in for a more commercially viable product.

---

<sup>656</sup> David Hwang, quoted in Daniel McDernon, “How Bruce Lee Exploded a Stereotype with a One-Inch Punch,” *New York Times*, January 25, 2017, accessed August 17, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/25/movies/bruce-lee-movies.html>.

<sup>657</sup> Bruce Lee, “Bruce Tea – Royal Jelly Ginseng & Honey – Blend by Bruce Lee.” Youtube video, 2:25, 15 June 2015, 0:18 to 0:36, accessed August 22, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJgt0x-vLT4>.

<sup>658</sup> Lee, “Bruce Tea – Royal Jelly Ginseng & Honey.”

<sup>659</sup> John Little, ed., *Bruce Lee: The Art of Expressing the Human Body* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 1998), 170.

<sup>660</sup> Pettigrew and Richardson, *A Social History of Tea*, 217

<sup>661</sup> Walmart, “Bruce Tea JKD Ginseng Royal Jelly & Honey, 15 fl oz,” accessed September 12, 2020, <https://www.walmart.com/ip/Bruce-Tea-JKD-Ginseng-Royal-Jelly-Honey-15-fl-oz/103703816>.



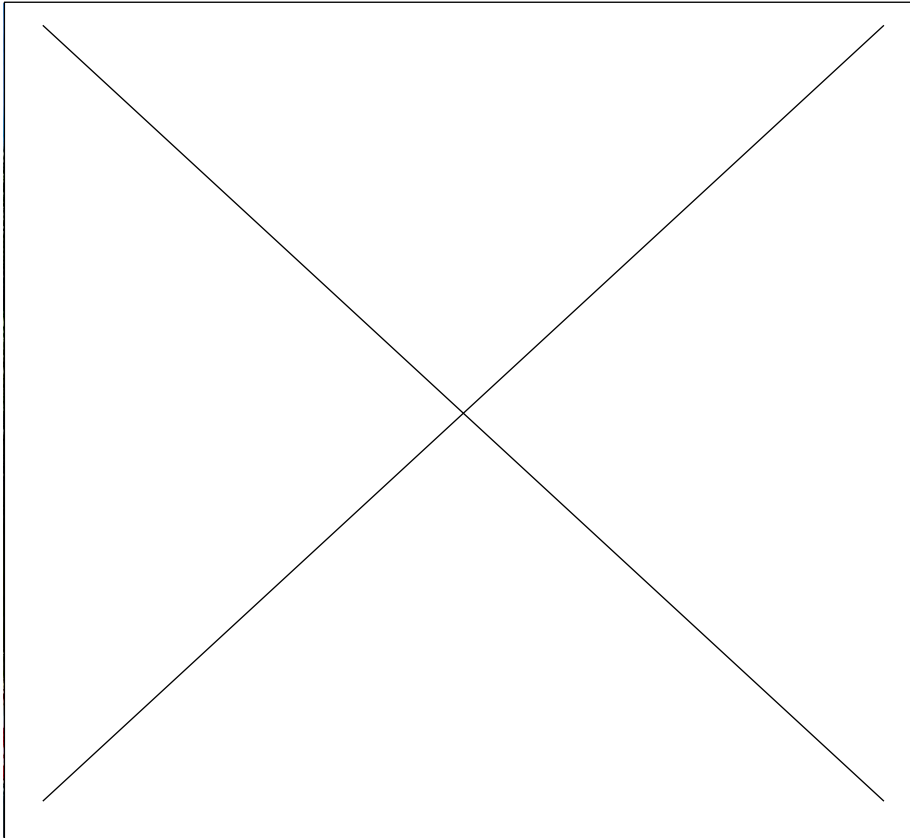


Figure 4.12 Photograph posted on the official brucetea Instagram account, "Good energy, fresh air," September 29, 2016.

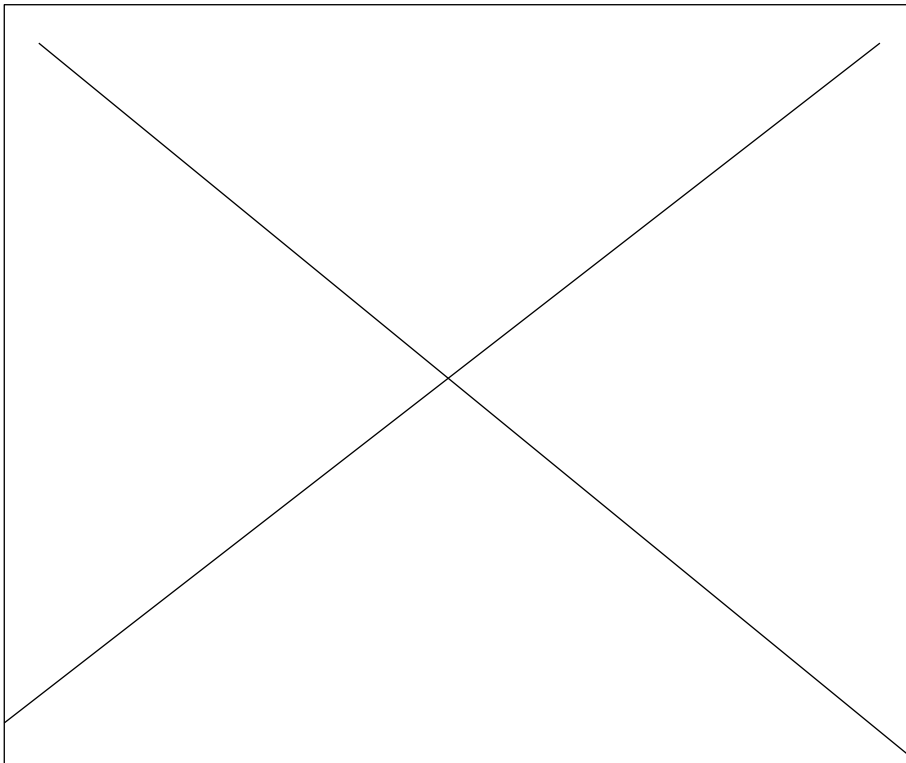


Figure 4.13 Jackie Chan endorsed green tea from Xel Pharmaceuticals.

The combination of martial arts, a celebrated and fit Chinese American man, and tea (which has been a health drink in China for centuries, and in the United States from the 1960s onwards) popularises tea as a therapeutic drink that can unleash the full extent of one's physical and mental strength. The idea of "good" and "natural energy," combined with the silhouette of Bruce Lee's kick on labels and advertisements, illustrates strength as coming from within, and consequently endorses the idea that the stereotype of masculine physical prowess is "natural" and present in Chinese American men: all it needs is to be unleashed. The Chinese American masculine role models wished for by Chinese American men throughout the mid-twentieth century become evident in the U.S. martial arts and tea industry, even if the legacy is skewed to please the consumer market (see fig. 4.11, 4.12 & 4.13).

Key to the advertisement of Bruce Tea is the idea of health. Shannon Lee was not the first person to see the merits of combining tea with the martial arts. In 2005, Xel Pharmaceuticals signed a contract with Jackie Chan, the martial artist, actor, and health advocate, to endorse their green tea range.<sup>662</sup> In the labelling of the tea, Jackie Chan is depicted as physically strong and mentally calm in his Chinese martial arts white jacket. The adjectives of "natural" and "fresh" on the labelling once again stress the idea of unleashing one's potential.

Despite the diversity of masculine identities present during the mid-twentieth century, the idea that gender identity was based on biological signifiers was widespread. In their work Kerouac, Chu, and Lee present women as ideally subservient, domestic, and sexually dominated by men. Kerouac's work focuses on homosocial relationships, in part to escape from the fears of momism and the domestication of men; when women are portrayed he generally provides reductive and fleeting descriptions of them. Kerouac's focus on men evidences a belief that women's influences must be rejected in order to fully realise masculine potential. In a similar vein, Chu and Lee portray the importance of reinstating a patriarchal order to form happy families, communities, and men of importance. Though all three writers react to the fear that women are taming, and thus destroying, masculine identity and purpose, Lee and Chu depict the importance

---

<sup>662</sup> Jackie Chan's Tea, "Company Profile," *Tea Tech*, accessed September 14, 2020, <http://www.teatech.com/about.php>; Jackie Chan's Tea, "Welcome to Jackie Chan's Tea House," *Tea Tech*, accessed September 14, 2020, <http://www.teatech.com/store/>.

of traditional family structures in community and identity formation. Tea, as a domestic, spiritually significant, medicinal, and ancient brew symbolises in the novels the need to negotiate tradition and gender politics in order to reinvigorate and prioritise the formation of dominant masculinities.

## Chapter 4

### “The Flavor Always Comes Back”: Mother-Daughter Relationships in Fiction by Chinese American Women, 1976-2000

The subtitle to Maxine Hong Kingston’s ground-breaking *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* (1976) illustrates the aim of many Chinese American women writers during the last quarter of the twentieth century as they strove to recover, reclaim, and narrate the lives of their foremothers. In doing so, the authors endeavoured to empower and inspire younger generations of women. The development of Asian American feminism and political activism in the 1980s and 1990s served to invigorate the drive for literature that narrates the histories and stories of Chinese American women. Two other texts which reflect the historical focus of Chinese American women’s literature are the biofictional novel, *Thousand Pieces of Gold* (1981) by Ruthanne Lum McCunn, which depicts the life of the Chinese American pioneer Polly Bemis, and the first extensive history book on Chinese American women, *Surviving Gold Mountain* (1991) by Huping Ling: both texts bring to print the physical and emotional trials, heroism, and sacrifices of Chinese American women.

In 1984 Elaine Kim argued that the economic and social mobility of Chinese American women has been impeded by their portrayal as China dolls, “exotic aliens, or sex sirens” on radio, on TV, and in genres stretching from children’s literature to pornography.<sup>663</sup> The Chinese American feminist movement shared many of the goals of white second-wave American feminism, including economic and social equality; however, Chinese American feminists sometimes resented how second-wave feminism was largely written by and focused on the socio-political position of white women. This frustration is evident in *Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire* (1997), a collection of essays and interviews by Asian American artists, writers, and activists. The collection as a whole expresses the vexation felt towards the whiteness of U.S. feminism,

---

<sup>663</sup> Elaine H. Kim, “Asian American Writers: A Bibliographical Review,” *American Studies International* 22, no. 2 (October 1984): 41-42, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41278723>.

documents a variety of topics relating to Asian American women's lives, and chronicles the history of the Asian American feminist movement. The term "Asian American" came into circulation in 1968 to unite Asian minority groups in the United States for political action. As the title of the collection suggests, in the late 1990s Asian American women from across the Asian American diaspora continued to unite to focus on undermining and/or reclaiming stereotypes (such as the "dragon lady"), and to create empowering narratives for Asian American women which are informed by matrilineal histories of strong, resilient women.

In the next two decades after *The Woman Warrior* was published, the importance of maternal intergenerational understanding became a central theme in Chinese American women's writing. Additionally, new editions of *Fifth Chinese Daughter* (1945), published in 1978 and 1989 by the University of Washington Press, with illustrations by Kathryn Uhl, mark a moment of recovery. In the *New York Times'* review of the novel *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991) by Amy Tan, Robb Forman Dew notes, of the novel's structure, that

Winnie persuades her daughter to visit [...] serves her [...] a cup of tea, and for the next three hundred pages or so relates the story of her life while Pearl sits at her mother's kitchen table.<sup>664</sup>

As noted here, tea in Tan's novel, as well as in the work of Kingston, Eleanor Wong Telemaque, and Mei Ng, is an important mother-daughter ritual which creates a space where women can express themselves; furthermore, tea-drinking is also used to convey women's fears, secrets, desires, and cares. In *The Kitchen God's Wife* Winnie says to Pearl that she can reuse the Chinese tea that she gives her because "the flavor always comes back."<sup>665</sup> The tea, I contend, symbolic of matrilineal history, presents the invaluable emotional and cultural gains to be made through strong mother-daughter relationships. In this chapter I investigate how, in *It's Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota* (1978) by Eleanor Wong Telemaque (b. 1934), *China Men* (1980) by Kingston (b. 1940), *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) and *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991) by Tan (b. 1952), and "This Early" (1995) and *Eating Chinese Food Naked* (1998) by Ng (b. circa 1966), tea

---

<sup>664</sup> Robb Forman Dew, "Pangs of an Abandoned Child," *New York Times*, June 16, 1991, accessed July 14, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/06/16/books/pangs-of-an-abandoned-child.html>.

<sup>665</sup> Amy Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1991; Hammersmith: Flamingo, 1992), 56. Citations refer to the 1992 edition.

is employed to depict the importance of homosocial spaces in the exploration and establishment of Chinese American women's self-worth, compassion, sexual preferences, and cultural belonging.

Following on from Kingston, Tan has been presented as independently ushering forth the Asian American literature renaissance of the 1990s.<sup>666</sup> Tan, however, has highlighted the many other writers who were part of this process, including Gish Jen and David Louie Wong.<sup>667</sup> Mei Ng, a New Yorker who graduated from Columbia University in 1988 with a degree in Women's Studies, was also part of this renaissance.<sup>668</sup> Apart from one essay by Wenying Xu, limited scholarly work has been conducted on Ng's only novel *Eating Chinese Food Naked*. Xu questions why Ng's novel has not been widely read or studied; Xu wonders, "Could it be that its bisexuality is deeply disturbing? [...]. The lack of scholarly work on *Eating*, I believe, is one example of our jittery uncertainty about fluid sexualities and our discomfort with Ruby's sexual appetite."<sup>669</sup> I concur with Xu. Furthermore, I suggest that the novel's interest in fluid sexuality has distracted readers from observing the popular topic of mother-daughter relations, as maternal bonds play a foundational role in Ruby's self-exploration and journey towards accepting her sexual and cultural identity.

In part I of this chapter, I outline a series of archetypes/stereotypes concerning Chinese American women in the U.S. imaginary; I do this to present the limited roles and attributes Chinese American women were associated with within prevailing U.S. society, and to consider the representations Chinese American feminists fought, and continue to fight, against. Then, in part II, I explore how, through tea-drinking, maternal care is portrayed as foundational to accruing intergenerational understanding and self-worth in *It's Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota* by Telemaque, and in *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Kitchen God's Wife* by Tan; I briefly discuss Telemaque's novel, as the section focuses primarily on Tan's novels.

Physically and emotionally, mothers have been supposed to cure ailments in U.S. and Chinese culture for centuries. In the 1920s Daniel Kulp noted that,

---

<sup>666</sup> Janice C. Simpson, "Fresh Voices above the Noisy Din," *Time*, June 3, 1991, 66-67.

<sup>667</sup> Ben Fong-Torres, "Can Amy Tan Do It Again?" *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 12, 1991, B4.

<sup>668</sup> Silvia Schultermandl, "Mei Ng," in *Voices from the Gaps* (Minneapolis: Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2009): 1, <http://hdl.handle.net/11299/166291>.

<sup>669</sup> Xu, *Eating Identities*, 159.

despite the presence of a doctor in a rural village in the Guangdong Province, “most curative effort is exercised by the housewives themselves [...] the women go out into the fields and on the hills to collect medicinal herbs with which they manufacture salves and medicines.”<sup>670</sup> For centuries American mothers have been expected to adroitly heal small physical wounds and care for their children’s psychological health. If a child “goes off the rails” or fails to maintain “normalcy” by achieving certain benchmarks, as Paula Caplan explores in *Don’t Blame Mother: Mending the Mother-Daughter Relationship* (1989) and Judith Warner in *Perfect Madness: Motherhood in the Age of Anxiety* (2006), then the mother is to blame.<sup>671</sup> Despite their vital and often domineering role in society and the family unit, in Chinese American literature the silence of mothers is palpable until the last quarter of the twentieth century. Part II pays particular attention to how tea ceremonies stress the importance of maternal narratives in the development of self-worth and mutual care.

Part III investigates how tea scenes represent the impact of homosocial spaces, and maternal relations, on the formation of Chinese American feminine desire and sexuality in *China Men* by Kingston, and “This Early” and *Eating Chinese Food Naked* by Ng; a brief consideration of Kingston’s work is followed by an extended examination of Ng’s texts. From Sui Sin Far to Maxine Hong Kingston, tea recurs in Chinese American literature as a means to negotiate heterosexual relationships that are sometimes “domestic” and romantic, and sometimes exclusively erotic and transactional, in nature. Kingston and Ng explore the oppression of Chinese American women caused by the combined forces of inherited Chinese traditions, U.S. racism, and heteronormativity. The texts I examine depict how desires are created and restricted. Kingston and Ng trouble the stereotype of the “feminine” server and drinker of “delicate” tea to present the passionate and metaphorically overflowing desires of their female protagonists. Moreover, homosocial tea ceremonies are depicted as a

---

<sup>670</sup> Daniel Harrison Kulp, *Country Life in South China: The Sociology of Familism*, vol. 1 (Taipei: Ch’eng-wen Publishing Company, 1966), 60.

<sup>671</sup> Paula J. Caplan, *Don’t Blame Mother: Mending the Mother-Daughter Relationship* (London: Routledge, 2000); Paula J. Caplan, “Don’t Blame Mother: Then and Now,” in *Maternal Theory: Essential Readings*, ed. Andrea O’Reilly (Ontario: Demeter Press, 2007), 592-600; Judith Warner, *Perfect Madness: Motherhood in the Age of Anxiety* (United Kingdom: Vermilion, 2006).

fundamental activity in the development of a daughter's sexuality and emotional awareness.

In another review of the *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Penny Perrick comments: "Whether by a quirk of literary fate or because it is their psychological destiny, Chinese American women seem to have won the world rights to the mother/daughter relationship."<sup>672</sup> The truth in this statement is reflected in the success of Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston as authors, for they are internationally acclaimed bestselling authors, and were arguably the two most prominent Chinese American authors of the late twentieth century. Kingston has been subjected to more academic attention while Tan is more commercially renowned.<sup>673</sup> Perrick's review, however, also highlights how these mother-daughter narratives entertain white readers to the extent of perhaps catering to their tastes through plot devices, language choices, and exoticized or simplified depictions of Chinese American culture.

While the work of Tan and Kingston has been met with commercial and/or critical acclaim, their work has been controversial within certain Chinese American intellectual circles. Their reception is considered here because an understanding of their writing methods and intentions enables an appreciation of the symbolic weight of their tea scenes. Chin and other critics have deemed their writing to be perilous to Chinese American understandings of their heritage, and to the reception of Chinese Americans by larger society. They have criticised, among other things, their mistranslations of Chinese words and phrases (including a misogynistic metaphor for "traitor/whore"), the distortion of historical facts, and the lack of context around feminist objections to Chinese culture (a culture, historically, that has arguably been more classist than sexist).<sup>674</sup> Many critics have sprung to their defence, stating that their works are fictional and that myths are forever evolving.<sup>675</sup> Criticism over the authenticity and possibly

---

<sup>672</sup> Penny Perrick, "Daughters of America," *Sunday Times Book Review*, July 14, 1991, 6.

<sup>673</sup> Helena Grice, *Maxine Hong Kingston: Contemporary World Writers* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 4.

<sup>674</sup> Benjamin Tong, "Critic of Admirer Sees Dumb Racist," *The San Francisco Journal* (May 11, 1977): 20; Chin, "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and Fake," 1-93; L.A. Chung, "Chinese American Literary War: Writers, Critics Argue Over Portrayal of Asians," *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 26, 1991, D4; Elliott Butler-Evans, "Strategies of Self-Fashioning in Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*," quoted in Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, "'Sugar Sisterhood,' 195; Yin, *Chinese American Literature since the 1850s*, 235.

<sup>675</sup> Cheung, King-Kok. "The Woman Warrior versus *The Chinaman Pacific*: Must a Chinese American Critic Choose between Feminism and Heroism?," in *Conflicts in Feminism*, ed.



misleading nature of their work is partially due to the burden placed on minority writers to document the truth at the expense of artistic representation.<sup>676</sup> Kingston and Tan appear to value imagination over fact, a choice that has led to the blurring of fact and fiction by uninformed readers.<sup>677</sup>

*The Woman Warrior* does not fit into a particular genre. Sidonie Smith classifies Kingston's text as a fantasy autobiography.<sup>678</sup> The text mixes together various Chinese immigrant aspirations, the realities of Chinese American experiences, Chinese myths, and family history. Due to the nature of Kingston's writing, the enduring feud between Chin and Kingston has concentrated on what is, and what is not, considered "authentic." In the 1970s and 1980s, Asian American identity politics focused on eliminating racist depictions and providing positive alternatives.<sup>679</sup> The editors of *The Big Aiiieeee!* (1991) labelled Kingston's work, along with Tan's, as "fake" and orientalist to pander to white readers.<sup>680</sup> Chin sees Kingston's work as coming from the Chinese American Christian literary tradition of Jade Snow Wong and Pardee Lowe, which is apologetic in tone for their difference, and esteems white American society and culture.<sup>681</sup>

A key condition of most of the literature published during this period is that it is, as Helena Grice calls it, "after China."<sup>682</sup> Many of the authors never went to China, or only went as adults and spoke little or no Mandarin or Cantonese.

---

Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller (New York: Routledge, 1990), 234-251; Ben Xu, "Memory and the Ethnic Self: Reading Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*," *MELUS* 19, no.1 (Spring 1994): 14, DOI: <https://doi-org.uoelibrary.idm.oclc.org/10.2307/467784>; Shirley Geok-lin Lim, "The Tradition of Chinese American Women's Life Stories: Thematics of Race and Gender in Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter* and Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*," in *American Women's Autobiography, Fea(s)ts of Memory*, ed. Margo Culley (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 252-67; Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, "Necessity and Extravagance in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*: Art and the Ethnic Experience," *MELUS* 15, no.1 (March 1988): 3-26, DOI: <https://doiorg.uoelibrary.idm.oclc.org/10.2307/467038>.

<sup>676</sup> The impact of this pressure on the work of minority writers is explored in Ali, "The burden of representation"; Morrison, "The Site of Memory"; and Woo, "Maxine Hong Kingston."

<sup>677</sup> Yin, *Chinese American Literature since the 1850s*, 243.

<sup>678</sup> Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 159.

<sup>679</sup> Hogue, W. Lawrence, "The Emergence, Renaissance, and Transformation of Multicultural American Literature from the 1960s to the Early 2000s," *symploke* 26, no. 1-2 (2018): 182, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/710012>.

<sup>680</sup> Chin, "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and Fake," 2-3, 28-29, 49; Chan, Chin, Inada, Wong, introduction to *The Big Aiiieeee!*, xv.

<sup>681</sup> Chin, "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and Fake," 13, 29.

<sup>682</sup> Helena Grice, "The beginning is hers': The Political and Literary Legacies of Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan," in *China Fictions/English Language: Literary Essays in Diaspora, Memory, Story*, ed. A. Robert Lee (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), 45.

Kingston acknowledges how in *China Men* she wants to “compare China, a country I made up, with what country is really out there.”<sup>683</sup> Though the research many of these writers undertook must be acknowledged, so must their U.S. perspectives.<sup>684</sup>

Kingston in her 1982 essay “Cultural Mis-Readings by American Reviewers” outlines how her work should be received. She states that the hyphen in “Chinese-American” should be removed as it provides equal weighting to both sides. Instead, she says, “Chinese American” should be adopted, as it communicates, above all else, being a U.S. citizen.<sup>685</sup> Regarding her work, Kingston sees herself as mostly inspired by U.S. writers, and communicates her annoyance at reviewers who ignore the “Americanness” of her work.<sup>686</sup> Kingston also stresses in an interview with Paula Rabinowitz that “I think my books are much more American than they are Chinese. I felt that I was building, creating, myself and these people as American people.”<sup>687</sup> Tan has also stressed that she is an American writer above all else.<sup>688</sup> *The Woman Warrior* is, as Madsen points out, “characterized by a complex interplay of Chinese and American discourses, Orientalism versus Occidentalism. [...] Kingston gives us live monkey brains on the one hand and fast-food burgers on the other.”<sup>689</sup> The complexity of Kingston’s narrative layering and adaptation of myths (which she says are not Chinese but ones “transformed by America”), relate to the experiences and perspective of an American girl of Chinese ethnicity.<sup>690</sup>

In *The Woman Warrior*, the sexism of Chinese culture is revealed through a mixture of autobiography and rewritings of Chinese fairy tales: in one story a woman is even pushed to commit filicide and suicide due to having a baby out of

---

<sup>683</sup> Kingston, *China Men* (London: Picador, 1981), 89.

<sup>684</sup> Amy Tan, *The Opposite of Fate: A Book of Musings* (New York: Putnam, 2003), 260.

<sup>685</sup> Maxine Hong Kingston, “Cultural Mis-Readings by American Reviewers,” in *Asian and Western Writers in Dialogue: New Cultural Identities*, ed. Guy Amirthanayagam (London: Macmillan, 1982), 63.

<sup>686</sup> Shelley Fisher Fishkin, “Interview with Maxine Hong Kingston,” in *Conversations with Maxine Hong Kingston*, ed. Paul Skenazy and Tera Martin (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), 166-167.

<sup>687</sup> Paula Rabinowitz’s article “Eccentric Memories: A Conversation with Maxine Hong Kingston,” quoted in Edward D. Graham, “Chinese-American Women Writers,” in *Oriental Prospects: Western Literature and the Lure of the East*, ed. C. C. Barfoot and Theo D’haen (Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1998), 253.

<sup>688</sup> E. D. Huntley, *Amy Tan: A Critical Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1988), 39.

<sup>689</sup> Deborah L. Madsen, “Chinese American Writers of the Real and the Fake: Authenticity and the Twin Traditions of Life Writing,” *Canadian Review of American Studies* 36, no 3 (2006): 269, DOI: 10.1353/crv.2007.0005.269.

<sup>690</sup> Kingston, “Cultural Mis-Readings by American Reviewers,” 57.

wedlock. Chin attacks Kingston for what he sees as an exaggeration of the misogynistic attitudes of Chinese culture. Despite the importance of rehabilitating Chinese American masculinity in the wake of over a century of negative stereotypes and feminisation, Chin's masculinist aim often neglects or trivialises women's narratives, as seen in the male voices selected to be included in *Aiiieeeee!*, and the denunciation of many Chinese American women writers in the introduction.

The sequel, *The Big Aiiieeeee!*, contains only Chinese American women writers who were dead at its time of publication. Chin has accused Kingston, and other writers, of selling out to white feminism by misrepresenting Chinese history and pandering to U.S. publishers who "went crazy for Chinese women dumping on Chinese men."<sup>691</sup> However, Chin's desire to recover masculine authority aligns him with, as Kim suggests, other Chinese American men who, being "Deprived of the rewards of patriarchal legitimacy, [...] have responded by attempting to reassert male authority over the cultural domain and over women by subordinating feminism to nationalist concerns."<sup>692</sup> The women writers in this chapter have combined memory, family history, imagination, and historical research to narrate a matrilineal heritage which speaks to a younger generation of women negotiating their sense of self and cultural belonging.

Chinese American feminists throughout the last quarter of the twentieth century found themselves divided as the feminism of ethnic minority groups was often presented as clashing with, and jeopardising fights for, racial equality. I examine how Telemaque, Kingston, Tan, and Ng portray through tea the gains to be made towards gender and race equality when women create spaces to share stories, show care, experience culture, and freely delve into their sexuality.

## I. Stereotypes of Chinese Women in the U.S. Imaginary

In this section I will briefly explore a series of stereotypes in the U.S. imaginary concerning Chinese American women because it is important to consider the literary backdrop upon which Chinese American women writers found themselves

---

<sup>691</sup> Chin, "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and Fake," 27.

<sup>692</sup> Elaine H. Kim, "'Such Opposite Creatures': Men and Women in Asian American Literature," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 29, no. 1 (Winter 1990): 73, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.act2080.0029.001:10>.

writing. They often find their roots in exclusion laws which restricted Chinese wives and daughters from coming to the United States in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. As a result, despite only 28% of Chinese immigrant women being prostitutes by 1880 (compared to 79% in 1870), the Chinese prostitute has been a common stereotype from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.<sup>693</sup> Their sexuality was classified as a deviant sinful fetish for white American men. From the mid-nineteenth century, physicians stressed that interactions between Chinese prostitutes and white Americans expedited the transmission of diseases like leprosy and syphilis.<sup>694</sup> This fear continued to be prevalent into the early twentieth century, with public health officials, writers, and politicians linking physical diseases and “miscegenation” with moral degradation, as they perceived in the sexual deviance, vice, and untraditional domestic structures of Chinatown, the ingredients to infect and destroy the physical and moral wholesomeness of white American families.<sup>695</sup>

These ideas continue to impact the representation of Chinese American women, as seen in the dragon lady character of Ling Woo, played by Lucy Liu in David E. Kelley’s U.S. series *Ally McBeal* (1997-2002). Woo is presented as cold, ruthlessly ambitious, well-versed in sexual practices, and skilled at manipulating the desires of men for her own gains.<sup>696</sup> The “dragon lady” stereotype has been employed in U.S. texts for over a century. Since the 1930s, the “dragon lady” stereotype of a strong, calculating, mysterious, sexual, and frightening East Asian

---

<sup>693</sup> Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2021), 85; Sucheng Chan, “The Exclusion of Chinese Woman, 1870-1943,” in *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943*, ed. Sucheng Chan (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 97.

<sup>694</sup> Nayan Shah, “Perversity, Contamination, and the Dangers of Queer Domesticity,” in *Queer Studies: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, ed. Robert J. Corber and Stephen Valocchi (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003), 121, 124, 125; Sander Gilman, “AIDS and Syphilis: The Iconography of Disease,” in *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*, ed. Douglas Crimp (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 87-107; Mary Spongberft, *Feminizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

<sup>695</sup> Shah, “Perversity, Contamination, and the Dangers of Queer Domesticity,” 121-122, 129; Kim, “‘Such Opposite Creatures,’” 68; Workingmen’s Party of California Anti-Chinese Council, *Chinatown Declared a Nuisance!* (San Francisco: Workingmen’s Party of California, 1880), 4-5; Dr. M. P. Sawtelle, “The Foul Contagious Disease: a Phase of the Chinese Question,” *Medico-Literary Journal* 1, no. 3 (November 1878): 8.

<sup>696</sup> Celine Parreñas Shimizu, *The Hypersexuality of Race: Performing Asian/American Women on Screen and Scene* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007), 87; Tracey Owens Patton, “‘Ally McBeal’ and her Homies: The Reification of White Stereotypes of the Other,” *Journal of Black Studies* 32, no. 2 (November 2001): 229–260, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3180962>.

woman has dominated ethnically Chinese women's representations in U.S. culture. Anna Mae Ong's film career, especially as the main character in *Daughter of the Dragon* (1931), marks the escalating popularity of this Asian stereotype.

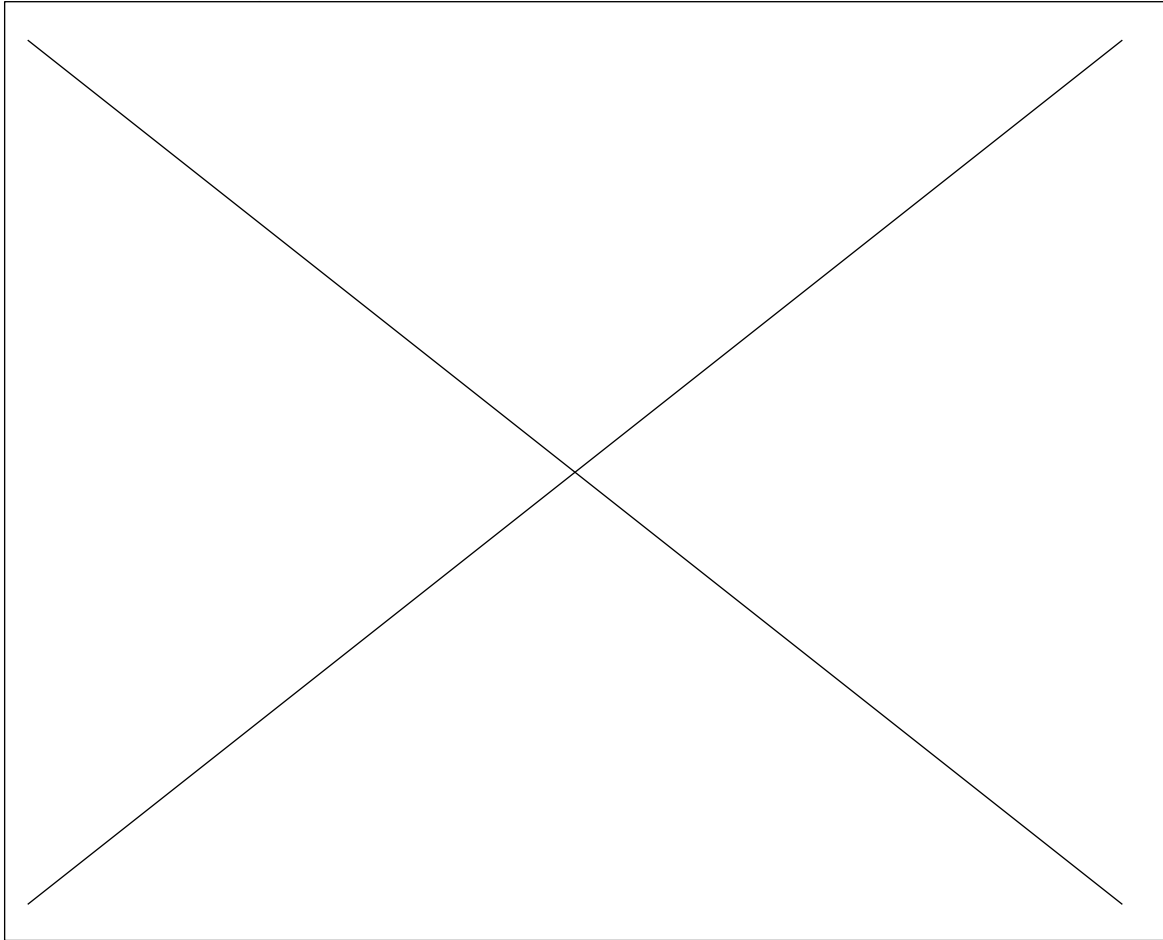


Figure 5.1 Title page illustration from "Steal No Man's Shadow" by Walter C. Brown: "They would only let him peep at her through the devil screen, but still she seemed to smile," *Argosy Weekly*, May 13, 1939, 72.

Due to the perpetuation of the myth in "yellow peril" literature that nearly all Chinese immigrant women were prostitutes, the representation of Chinese women that are not inspires awe in male characters due to their depicted rarity. In the short story "Steal No Man's Shadow" (1939) by Walter C. Brown, we see the development of this narrative in the mid-twentieth century. The rarity of "pure" women in Chinatown is stressed through the arrival of Ming Yan, the treasured relative of a Chinese immigrant. When she arrives, Chinese men pay with silver

to peek at her from behind a devil screen (see fig. 5.1).<sup>697</sup> As seen in the title page illustration for the story, Ming Yan is exoticized through her depiction as a woman from far-off lands: a condition emphasised through the décor (and what appears to be a Chinese teacup and pot placed on the side table in the front right-hand corner), her clothing, and her demure posture as she looks at the tea set. This voyeuristic display leads to Chinese male fascination due to a lack of “pure” and “untouched” Chinese women in Chinatown. Furthermore, she elicits fantasies of an idealised homeland for a diasporic community because she symbolises, culturally and domestically, all that they have left behind in China. The Chinese-style teacup and pot on the side table also appear to characterise the far-away domestic spaces of China. The folding screen (an ancient Chinese invention), interestingly called a “devil screen” in the story—presumably to further alienate and denigrate Chinese American culture—equally divides the illustration between Ming’s room and the voyeur’s position. Moreover, the devil screen serves to emphasise the division between the fantasy that Ming symbolises (of an idealised or exoticized China) and the reality of a “devilish” Chinatown.

For contemporary readers, the scene can provide voyeuristic satisfaction from the perspective of the coloniser. Julia Kuehn notes how, since the start of colonial culture, encounters between the coloniser and the colonised have been framed by a racialised desire.<sup>698</sup> A racialised desire often pairs desire for with fear of the unknown, as seen in representations of Chinese women. Ming Yan’s reduction to a submissive sexual figure is achieved through her virginity, governance by men, and silence. All three conditions further her position as a voyeuristic object as she is depicted as a rare, dependent, and out of reach prize which creates an illusory woman that can inspire imperial fantasies of power and possession.<sup>699</sup>

As depicted in “Steal No Man’s Shadow,” Elaine Kim notes that “Asian women are only sexual for the same reason that Asian men are asexual: both exist to define the white man’s virility and the white race’s superiority.”<sup>700</sup> This is

---

<sup>697</sup> Walter C. Brown, “Steal No Man’s Shadow,” *Argosy Weekly*, May 13, 1939, 73-74. Digitalised by *The Unz Review*, accessed May 24, 2018, <https://www.Unz.com/print/ArgosyWeekly-1939may13-00072/>.

<sup>698</sup> Julia Kuehn, *A Female Poetics of Empire: From Eliot to Woolf* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 43.

<sup>699</sup> Walter Brown, “Steal No Man’s Shadow,” 74.

<sup>700</sup> Kim, “Such Opposite Creatures,” 70.

also evinced in Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly* (1904), which is an adaptation of a short story by John Luther Long of the same title. Published in 1896 by the generally conservative publication, *Century Magazine*, the story concerns a Japanese woman, Cio-cio-san, who falls in love with and "marries" a U.S. naval officer, in a ceremony she naïvely believes is binding and sacred. Then, after a three-year absence he returns to Japan, bringing his new American wife with him. The aim of their visit is to take the son he had with Cio-cio-san back to the United States. The heartbreak leads to Cio-cio-san committing suicide. David Hwang's play, *M. Butterfly* (1988), is based on Long's story and the experiences in the 1960s to 1980s of a French diplomat, Bernard Boursicot, and his lover, the Peking opera singer and spy, Shi Pei Pu.<sup>701</sup>

Hwang states that he saw in the opera "a wealth of sexist and racist clichés" which he set out to expose as dangerous and false.<sup>702</sup> In fact, the opera offers a stinging critique of the sexist, militaristic, and imperialist American officer: many who grasp Puccini's dramaturgy would find this critique to be wilfully wrongheaded. However, the global success of the musical *Miss Saigon* (1989) serves to legitimise (to some extent) Hwang's concerns further as *Miss Saigon*, also an adaptation of the short story "Madame Butterfly," is set in Vietnam in the 1970s. The substitution of Japan, China, and Vietnam in these productions emphasises the circulation and homogenisation of the submissive and dependent Asian woman stereotype. Hwang's play depicts M. Butterfly's revenge and his autonomy, which are executed through sharp rebuttals in dialogue and queerness. The play, set in China, serves to reveal the orientalist fantasy behind the continued portrayal of the submissive orientalist woman. In the play the Chinese opera singer and protagonist, Song Liling (who is a cross-dressing man and spy for the Chinese government), plays Madame Butterfly in a production of the opera. After the opera, Song is approached by the French diplomat René Gallimard. He states how moved he was by the "pure sacrifice" and beauty of the story. In response Song says

---

<sup>701</sup> Joyce Wadler, "The True Story of M. Butterfly; The Spy who Fell in Love with a Shadow," *New York Times Magazine*, August 15, 1993, 30, accessed July 4, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/08/15/magazine/the-true-story-of-m-butterfly-the-spy-who-fell-in-love-with-a-shadow.html>; "Shi Pei Pu," *The Telegraph*, July 3, 2009, accessed July 4, 2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/5735335/Shi-Pei-Pu.html>; Encycloaedia Britannica, eds., "Shi Pei Pu: Chinese Opera Singer and Spy," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed July 4, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Shi-Pei-Pu>.

<sup>702</sup> David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly* (Dramatists Play Service Inc., 1988), 86.

It's one of your favorite fantasies isn't it? the submissive Oriental woman, and a cruel white man.

GALLIMARD. Well, I didn't quite mean...

SONG. Consider it this way: what would you say if a blonde homecoming queen fell in love with a short Japanese businessman? [and] when she learns that he had remarried she kills herself. Now I believe you would consider this girl to be a deranged idiot, correct? But because it is an Oriental who kills herself for a Westerner — ah! — you find it beautiful.<sup>703</sup>

In Song's response there is an exploration of how race and sexuality inform each other. As Ian Bernard puts it, "race is always already sexualized as sexuality is always—already raced."<sup>704</sup> Furthermore, Nikki Sullivan notes that in this scene Hwang portrays "the ways in which a particular colonialist public fantasy can structure [...] the imperialist subject's [...] desire for what bell hooks describes as 'a bit of the Other'."<sup>705</sup> The intersectionality of race and gender in determining ethnic identity makes Song's representation always linked to her sexualised race. What's more, Song troublingly admits that the "Oriental" women "have always held a certain fascination for you Caucasian men [...] It is always imperialist. But sometimes...sometimes it is also mutual."<sup>706</sup> Sullivan notes that this idea of reciprocity has been used to justify mistreatment, but that the scene also enables the viewer to see Song as something more than a sexual object.<sup>707</sup> Therefore, the interaction does not remove the fascination, but instead highlights the awareness of the subject and, perhaps, the reciprocation of interest. Moreover, if the fascination is mutual then so is the subjectification.

---

<sup>703</sup> Hwang, *M. Butterfly*, 18.

<sup>704</sup> Ian Bernard, *Queer Race: Cultural Interventions in the Racial Politics of Queer Theory* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2004), 2.

<sup>705</sup> Nikki Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 62.

<sup>706</sup> Hwang, *M. Butterfly*, 22.

<sup>707</sup> Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, 62.



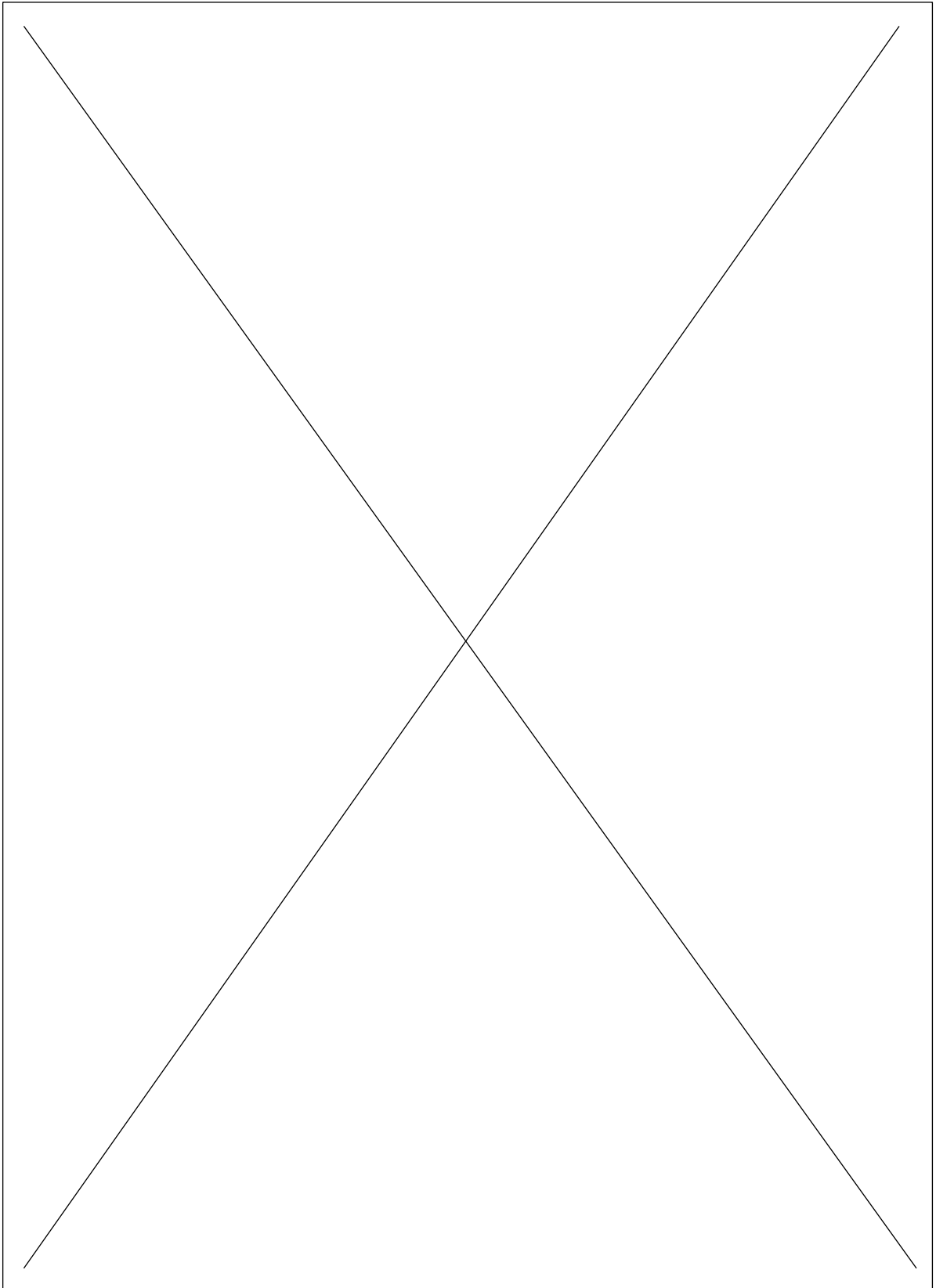


Figure 5.2 Robert Carter, "The Real Yellow Peril," *New York World*, June 21, 1909.

If one stereotype was the submissive “Oriental” woman, then another was the dangerous woman embodied by prostitutes and brothel owners thriving in corrupt Chinatowns throughout the early twentieth century.<sup>708</sup> Their ability to prosper and survive in Chinatowns is contrasted in media outlets to the innocent, fragile, white women who fall victim, and often die, in Chinatowns. The representation of white women needing protection from sinful Chinatowns was narrated through the sensationalised death of Elsie Sigel, an aristocratic missionary who was found dead in a trunk in New York’s Chinatown in 1909.<sup>709</sup> The media used her death to stoke the fires of “yellow peril” literature and art (see fig. 4.2).<sup>710</sup> Many decades later we see this in the film *Chinatown* (1974), directed by Roman Polanski, when a wealthy white woman is shot dead by her father in Chinatown. The film is indebted to the film noir genre of the 1940s in which “the Orient” was often portrayed as a danger/threat. This crime can supposedly be overlooked, since Walsh, the main character’s assistant, says near the end of the film to his boss, private detective Jake (played by Jack Nicholson), “Forget it, Jake. It’s Chinatown.”<sup>711</sup> Polanski appears to challenge stereotypes because Chinatown is only the setting of the crime: its legacy of vice and deviance appear to have made it into a location where the death of an innocent person, often a white woman, is an unremarkable event. Contrastingly, popular literature concerning Chinese American women has presented them as either “oriental” slaves or corrupt prostitutes and madams if they manage to survive in the United States.

## II. Redefining the Limits of Maternal Nurturing

Before the last quarter of the twentieth century only, a handful of Chinese American women writers were published, including Sui Sin Far, Jade Snow Wong, and Chuang Hua. It is perhaps due to the limited amount of published

---

<sup>708</sup> Many short stories published during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century portray these women as evil dragon ladies, as seen in: Bassett Morgan, “Jade Bells,” *Argosy Weekly*, January 5, 1935, 91-113.

<sup>709</sup> This murder is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 1.

<sup>710</sup> Mary Ting Yi Lui, *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery: Murder, Miscegenation, and Other Dangerous Encounters in Turn-of-the-Century New York City* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>711</sup> *Chinatown*, directed by Roman Polanski (1974; Los Angeles: Paramount Pictures, 2008), DVD, 02:03:05 to 02:03:10.

literature by Chinese American women, and the prevalent stereotypes of Chinese American women, that a literary space was created. Chinese American women have striven to fill this space with their writing in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Many have examined the role of their largely undocumented matrilineal heritage in the development of girls' and women's identities.

Part of the popularity of Chinese American mother-daughter narratives is that they gesture towards universality: the conflicts, worries, and affection expressed are often not culturally specific. However, though this universality has been popular with their readership, tea within the narratives highlights certain diasporic conditions: for instance, connections to a homeland, the immigrant sacrifices present within their relationships, and how they shape for themselves distinct Chinese American maternal relationships and women's identities.

In the first half of the twentieth century, Chinese American women's fiction often lacked a mother's storyline. Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter* is centred on presenting an ambitious, intelligent, and hard-working woman who strives for financial independence. The talent and success of Wong is painfully contrasted to the very little we are told about her mother, who doesn't object to her husband's wishes and opinions, and for the most part remains silent. The disconnect between the mother and daughter is palpable: Wong, perhaps unwittingly, depicts traditional Chinese women (like her mother) as indistinguishable from their domestic role and unworthy of narration due to them not harbouring a belief in U.S. individualism. Furthermore, the lack of opportunities afforded to her mother is not explored in any depth; the autobiographical form highlights the limited attention or time Wong gives towards understanding or appreciating her mother—with their different culturally defined outlooks displayed as damaging their relationship.

Leslie Bow, in her introduction to the 2019 reissue, of the autobiography, comments on how Wong's mother is not differentiated from her father's first wife as she steps straight into her shoes, and even adopts her name.<sup>712</sup> Whether due to exclusion and becoming a "paper wife," or as a show of patriarchy, the mother's identity is never explored; if she were a "paper wife," her position in the United States would have been illegal and facilitated through fraudulent papers, and

---

<sup>712</sup> Leslie Bow, introduction to *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, by Jade Snow Wong (Seattle: Washington University Press, 2019), xxi-xxiii.

Wong may not have wanted to put her mother at risk by revealing any compromising facts.<sup>713</sup> Nevertheless, her silence and submission symbolise her respect for patriarchy and subsequently express her desire for Wong to follow in her domestic footsteps. In one scene Wong disappoints her mother by not correctly serving tea and oranges to a possible suitor; with her wet hair, inappropriate clothing, and brash manner, Wong causes her mother to lose “all patience” and dismiss her from the formal gathering.<sup>714</sup>

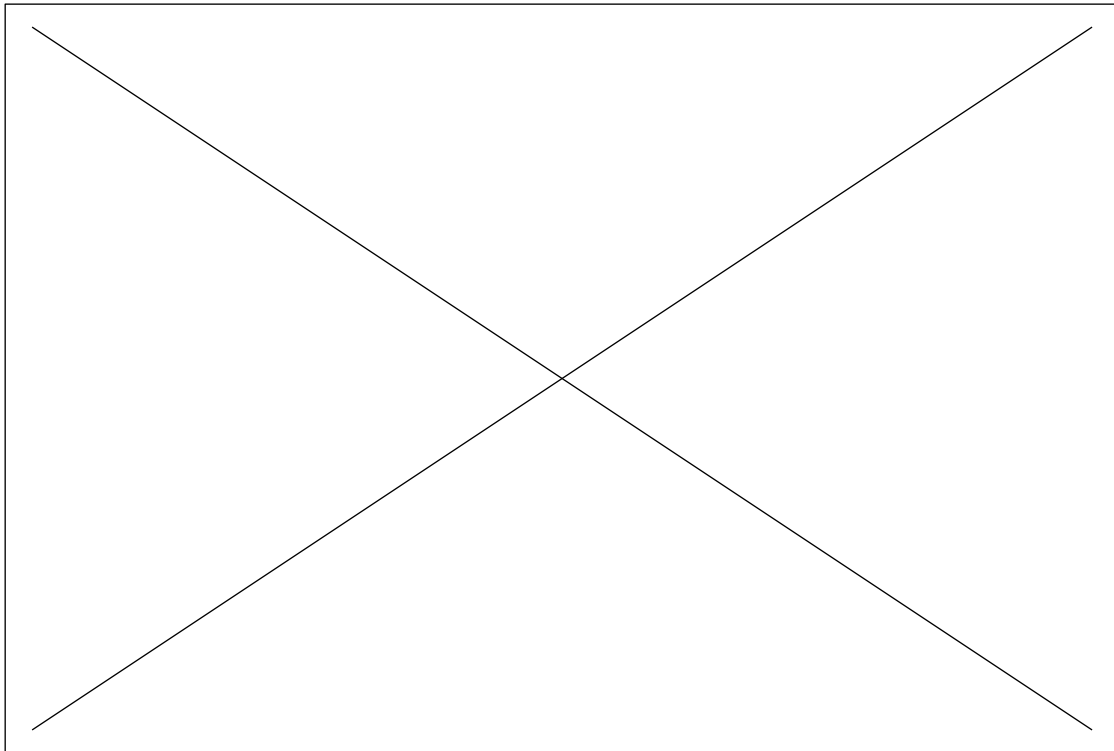


Figure 5.3 Kathryn Uhl's illustration of the courting tea ceremony in *Fifth Chinese Daughter*.

The 1978 edition of the autobiography has an illustration by Kathryn Uhl which captures this moment visually (see fig. 5.3). As a result, the encounter is stressed as a noteworthy one, with the mother's anger evident in her subtle frown. The autobiography focuses on her mother harbouring tradition and Wong, as a young American, breaking away from its sexist limitations. As a result, very few

---

<sup>713</sup> The term “paper wife,” husband, son, or daughter arose after the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. The earthquake destroyed all Chinatown's immigration files. Due to this, many previously illegal immigrants could create fraudulent documents “proving” their American citizenship, and therefore enable their families to emigrate and gain admittance into the United States.

<sup>714</sup> Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 231.

meaningful interactions take place between the mother and daughter; this is arguably to the detriment of both, as Wong always strives to separate herself from her mother's subservience through education and financial independence, with little attention given to the character of her mother, and what her mother could teach or share with her.

A similar disconnect between mother and daughter is evinced in *It's Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota* by Eleanor Wong Telemaque. This young adult novel has received minimal critical attention. It was submitted to publishers in 1978, but was not published at this time due to the race of the main male love interest being Chinese and not white; the idea of a Chinese American man being attractive and sought after did not appeal to the publishers. Telemaque, an activist for civil rights, refused to change the race of her character and self-published her novel in 2000.<sup>715</sup> In 2007 Telemaque published a memoir based on her State Department questioning during the McCarthy era, titled *The Sammy Wong Files: Confessions of a Chinese American Terrorist*. For the memoir she jointly won, with Jessica Hagedorn, the first Manhattan Borough President Award for Excellence in Literature.<sup>716</sup>

The second half of the twentieth century saw a sharp rise in the popularity of young adult fiction. The publication of *The Outsiders* (1967), by S. E. Hinton, marks the beginning of more literature actively being published for teenagers about teenagers. By then, the teenager had already become a cultural phenomenon, with Hollywood contributing to the craze by producing films like *Rebel without a Cause* (1955), directed by Nicholas Ray and starring James Dean.

*It's Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota* is set in the early 1950s in a small town on the Iowa-Minnesota border during the summer when Chingaling, the American-born Chinese narrator, turns seventeen years old. Her father and uncle own a restaurant called the Canton Café, which serves Chinese American food, including chow mein, alongside many other Euro-American culinary favourites like steaks. The text presents some stereotypes, including a gambling uncle who

---

<sup>715</sup> Joanne Brown, *Immigration Narratives in Young Adult Literature: Crossing Borders* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2011), 16.

<sup>716</sup> Wenying Xu, *Historical Dictionary of Asian American Literature and Theater* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2012), 264.

is constantly riddled with sexually transmitted diseases.<sup>717</sup> Telemaque's representation of a relationship between a Chinese mother and an American-born Chinese daughter emphasises the culture and perspectives that can be lost in translation, which can lead to alienation and resentment within the relationship.

In a similar vein to *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, the mother holds on to tradition and wishes to see her daughter married through traditional customs, including having a go-between. Her daughter, by contrast, sees herself as American and goes against her mother's expectations. Chingaling claims that "One would think that being Chinese, I would be sweet and quiet. [...] But [...] I am vicious."<sup>718</sup> The youthful angst presented in this statement is seen throughout the text through Chingaling's first-person narration; she constantly disagrees with her parents and believes herself to be alienated from them. Her alienation manifests through associating with white American culture: for instance, she indulges in "yellow peril" ideas and imagines the Canton Café's Chinese cooks' bedrooms as places of "gambling and illicit traffic with women."<sup>719</sup>

The cultural divide between mother and daughter proves to be cataclysmic for their relationship. Chingaling rhetorically asks herself "Why does she force her alien world on me?"<sup>720</sup> Throughout the text it is evident that her mother misses China and wishes to go back there. Politically, by setting the novel in the early 1950s, Telemaque captures the moment when China became Communist and Chinese Americans saw the homeland they either aspired to return, to or mimic in the United States, disappear. For her mother, as a result, holding on to her China becomes a form of conservation and familiarity in a changing world. Chingaling believes her mother to be "a witch. That [is] why she refused to go to an American church."<sup>721</sup> Also, "She kept an ancestral table. The porcelain kitchen god smiled down at us from a shelf in the kitchen. God of fertility and of family."<sup>722</sup> Chingaling's attitude expresses the painful disconnect between herself and her Chinese heritage. Importantly, the kitchen god represents the value the mother

---

<sup>717</sup> Eleanor Wong Telemaque, *It's Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (self pub., Xlibris Corporation, 2000), 10-11.

<sup>718</sup> Telemaque, *It's Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, 16.

<sup>719</sup> Telemaque, *It's Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, 78.

<sup>720</sup> Telemaque, *It's Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, 28.

<sup>721</sup> Telemaque, *It's Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, 26.

<sup>722</sup> Telemaque, *It's Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, 26.

places on family and tradition, a condition the daughter does not try to understand.

The mother is far from traditionally docile. Her words are the first ones in the novel. Chingaling begins: “As long as I can remember, my Chinese mother said: ‘If you have a rice shop, you can send money back to China.’”<sup>723</sup> This opening comment emphasises her mother’s attachment to China. Furthermore, Chingaling sees her mother as fixated on her nephew, Ren-ren, and bringing him to the United States, as well as believing “her mother would rather be in Hong Kong.”<sup>724</sup> In many ways, Chingaling feels neglected by her mother whose interests mainly lie elsewhere.

The detachment between mother and daughter, and the suffering it creates, is expressed through tea ceremonies. When Auntie Tong (an old family friend) comes for tea, the mother asks Chingaling: “Please get us some tea. Hot. And aren’t you going to say hello to your Auntie Tong?”<sup>725</sup> For the rest of the tea ceremony Auntie Tong tells her mother that she must learn English, that her husband lives in the past, and that it is time for Chingaling to be wed. Her mother overly respects her friend’s views, and Chingaling remains quiet until she says “I don’t want anybody to pick a husband for me. I am a modern girl.”<sup>726</sup> Though it may appear that Chingaling is making a feminist stance, she doesn’t identify strongly with any cultural customs. She only identifies with the ones that prove to be beneficial for her at the time. For instance, when a boy does come along that she fancies, an arranged marriage to him doesn’t seem like a bad idea. Therefore, Chingaling, as a second-generation Chinese American, sees culture as a lifestyle choice: with customs to be picked and chosen at will. However, her mother embodies the idea that culture is something you are born into and should dutifully respect.

Her first suitor, Lok-fat, is not to her liking. He is lecherous and much older. When she meets him her mother “anxiously” asks Chingaling to “get a tray [...] Tea is good with sweetmeats.”<sup>727</sup> In a similar fashion to Wong’s traditional courting tea ceremony in *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, the mother desires a good first

---

<sup>723</sup> Telemaque, *It’s Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, 9.

<sup>724</sup> Telemaque, *It’s Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, 68.

<sup>725</sup> Telemaque, *It’s Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, 30

<sup>726</sup> Telemaque, *It’s Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, 36.

<sup>727</sup> Telemaque, *It’s Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, 38.

meeting. She boasts about her daughter and offers the suitor “another cup of tea and an orange.”<sup>728</sup> The mother and daughter never share the reasons, or emotions, behind their actions with each other due to an inability to understand each other. The tea ceremonies symbolise the cultural divide between the mother and daughter, and the burden of the unfulfilled expectations they put on each other.

Despite Chingaling’s rejection of Chinese tradition, she says how her mother is her “responsibility.”<sup>729</sup> In doing so, she adopts the filial responsibility which is placed on younger-generation Chinese Americans to look after their elders. Nevertheless, as the tea ceremonies suggest, the novel charts the daughter’s rejection of her mother as a role model. This is evident in the title of the text and the mother not learning English, holding on to Chinese customs, and being called by the father “crazy” on numerous occasions.<sup>730</sup> In the end, the father has his way and Chingaling goes to college. On the last page Chingaling says “It’s crazy to stay Chinese in Minnesota.”<sup>731</sup> Her words unite her with her father as she dismisses her mother’s ideas and influence.

Though there is a clear rejection of the mother’s preferences and hopes, Bingo, the Chinese-born love interest of Chingaling, highlights the beauty of a “dying out” generation who grew up in China, have roots in a particular village, and follow Confucian teachings.<sup>732</sup> “We will never see their likes again” he says, and in doing so provides a mature and experienced perspective which Chingaling currently lacks.<sup>733</sup> In Telemaque’s novel, tea portrays the boundaries between a mother and daughter who come from different places, the mother from China and her daughter from Minnesota, and neither adopts nor wishes to consider the other’s world. By capturing this disconnect, Telemaque presents the separation which will lead to writers recuperating in fiction their previously side-lined and misunderstood matrilineal heritage.

In the 1980s, in the wake of *The Woman Warrior*, more Chinese American women writers actively narrate the lives of mothers, and in so doing, breach the divides presented in earlier fictional Chinese American mother-daughter

---

<sup>728</sup> Telemaque, *It’s Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, 39.

<sup>729</sup> Telemaque, *It’s Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, 70.

<sup>730</sup> Telemaque, *It’s Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, 48.

<sup>731</sup> Telemaque, *It’s Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, 102.

<sup>732</sup> Telemaque, *It’s Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, 101.

<sup>733</sup> Telemaque, *It’s Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, 101.



relationships. The healing of their relationship is often reliant on the narration of the mother's life. This is seen in *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) by Amy Tan. In the novel, An-Mei Hsu (a Chinese American mother) reflects on her mother's life in early twentieth-century China and how "everybody knows that suicide is the only way a woman can escape a marriage and gain revenge, to come back as a ghost and scatter tea leaves."<sup>734</sup> This mythic fear that women will come back and haunt bad husbands or masters with unlucky tea leaves is dispelled in the novel when we find out that An-Mei's mother commits suicide to "kill her own weak spirit so she could give me [An-Mei] a stronger one."<sup>735</sup> Instead of fuelling patriarchal fears about mysterious hyperfeminine female power through tea, Tan reveals the women in history who have been hidden behind gross fears and misconceptions, as well as the strength, and sometimes sacrificial nature, of mother-daughter bonds.

Tan's second novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, explores the same theme by depicting tea ceremonies to present the importance of valuing one's health: a condition which is shown to be irrevocably tied to appreciating your matrilineal cultural heritage. Tea, which is considered medicinal and domestic, highlights issues regarding the limitations placed on women within domestic spaces, and stresses how women must value themselves to heal the whole self: a concept which is embedded in Chinese medicine.<sup>736</sup> The novel is focused primarily on Winnie's narration of her life to her daughter, Pearl, a married mother of two. Winnie is a Chinese immigrant who fled to the United States in the 1940s to escape her abusive husband and war-torn China. At the beginning of the novel, the relationship between the mother and daughter is strained. It is their journey from silence to understanding that leads Pearl to open up to her mother about her multiple sclerosis. Partaking in tea together is tied to Winnie's and Pearl's psychological healing. I am focusing here on how tea is employed to trace Winnie's position as a healer in Pearl's journey, from her negative feelings and her rejection of her Chinese heritage to a new openness and unashamed practice

---

<sup>734</sup> Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1989; London: Vintage, 1998), 234. Citations refer to the 1998 edition.

<sup>735</sup> Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*, 240.

<sup>736</sup> Alfred Wang, "Lu Hsun and Maxine Hong Kingston: Medicine as a Symbol in Chinese and Chinese American Literature," *Literature and Medicine* 8 (1989): 2, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/376700/pdf>.

of it which enables Pearl to heal emotional wounds and possibly help with her physical ailments as well.

Near the beginning of the novel Winnie serves Pearl tea. Through this connective act of love, the Chinese heritage Pearl is trying to rid herself of is shown to be foundational to her health. The focus in the scene is on valuing one's own health, which is shown to irrevocably rely on Pearl appreciating her Chinese heritage and coming to know her mother:

I take a few quick sips. "This is really good." And I mean it. I have never tasted tea like this. It is smooth, pungent, and instantly addicting.

"This is from Grand Auntie," my mother explains. "A few years ago she bought it for herself. One hundred dollars a pound."

"You're kidding." I take another sip. It tastes even better.

"She told me, 'If I buy myself the cheap tea, then I am saying my whole life has not been worth something better.' So she decided to buy herself the best tea, so she could drink it and feel like a rich person inside."

I laugh.

My mother looks encouraged by my laughter. "But then she thought, If I buy just a little, then I am saying my lifetime is almost over. So she bought enough tea for another lifetime. Three pounds! Can you imagine?"<sup>737</sup>

Though Winnie and Pearl joke about the price and amount of tea, and the reasoning behind its purchase, the fact that Grand Auntie was "frugal" and invests in expensive tea communicates the value she places upon herself, the life she has lived, and the cultural beliefs she holds.<sup>738</sup> Winnie, in consuming this tea and sharing it with Pearl, also expresses her connection to traditionally Chinese cultural and medicinal thought. It is not until the end of the novel that Pearl tells her mother about her multiple sclerosis. The discussion of tea and health here combine to reflect not only on our knowledge of Pearl's diagnosis, which she is keeping from her mother, but also on her mental health and the role of culture in it. Though this is evidently a nurturing scene, tea also serves to highlight the interdependence of valuing oneself and one's culture. The pleasure Pearl gains from the "addicting" tea accentuates the absence of self-care from her life; moreover, she appears to have starved herself of her cultural heritage, which she "needs," as her background is part of who she is. The fact that Pearl has "never

---

<sup>737</sup> Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, 51.

<sup>738</sup> Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, 52.

tasted tea like this” emphasises her initial alienation from her mother and the culture Winnie embodies.

At the beginning of the novel Pearl considers herself more American than Chinese. She shares the attitudes of many participants in the “Roots Program,” which was founded by Chinese American historian, Him Mark Lai, in 1991, in partnership with the Chinese Culture Foundation in New York, the Chinese Historical Society of America, and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office in Guangdong province.<sup>739</sup> The program is designed to combat the shame, and sometimes self-imposed ignorance, Chinese Americans experience regarding their heritage by allowing them to learn about their ancestral heritage, and to visit their ancestral villages in China.<sup>740</sup> Pearl, like many participants in the program, shows an understanding of China as either a villainised or an exoticized “other,” which is deemed incompatible with an “American” identity.<sup>741</sup>

Pearl’s white American husband, Phil, sees Pearl’s relationship with her family as “driven by blind devotion to fear and guilt.”<sup>742</sup> These feelings are also present regarding her Chinese heritage, as Pearl strongly associates Chinese culture with her family and her difficult relationship with her mother. Pearl’s and Phil’s nuclear family appears to be devoid of Chinese culture. When the family attend the Buddhist funeral of Great Auntie, Pearl feels out of place and uncomfortable with Chinese funeral practices, and when Winnie interacts with her grandchildren they initially crave U.S. fast food and are unsure what traditional Chinese dishes are and how to eat them.

After having tea with Winnie, Pearl and her family drive home. Before they leave, Winnie gives Pearl some of Grand Auntie’s tea and states: “Don’t need to use too much. Just keep adding water. The flavor always comes back.”<sup>743</sup> Tea metaphorically presents culture as nourishing. After being given the tea they drive home. Pearl remembers

---

<sup>739</sup> Lia Zhu, “Americans seek Chinese roots,” *China Daily*, April 8, 2019, accessed March 13, 2018, <http://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201904/08/WS5cab60e3a3104842260b5024.html>.

<sup>740</sup> Andrea Louie, “Searching for Roots in Contemporary China and Chinese America,” in *Chinese Americans and the Politics of Race and Culture*, ed. Sucheng Chan and Madeline Y. Hsu (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 195-196.

<sup>741</sup> Andrea Louie, *Chineseness Across Borders: Renegotiating Chinese Identities in China and the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 19.

<sup>742</sup> Tan, *The Kitchen God’s Wife*, 15.

<sup>743</sup> Tan, *The Kitchen God’s Wife*, 56.

the care package my mother gave us. It is stowed at my feet. I look in the bag. Inside are a few tangerines, a roll of toilet paper, a canister of Grand Auntie's tea, and the picture of my father that I accidentally knocked over last month. The glass has been replaced.

I quickly hand Phil a tangerine, then turn toward the window so he does not see my tears. I watch the landscape we are drifting by: the reservoir, the rolling foothills, the same houses I've passed a hundred times without ever wondering who lives inside. Mile after mile, all of it familiar, yet not, this distance that separates us, me from my mother.<sup>744</sup>

As seen in *Fifth Chinese Daughter* and *It's Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*, oranges are paired with tea. Like tea, oranges originate from China. In Chinese culture, oranges are a traditional symbol of good fortune and wealth, and they are given to friends and family as a sign of appreciation:<sup>745</sup> the idea of connecting to your heritage through food and drink is therefore emphasised. The tea-drinking fuels Winnie's and Pearl's conversation and joking about Grand Auntie's tea, and this moment is enjoyed to the extent that Pearl ends up being surprisingly sad that they have to leave.<sup>746</sup> The tea, along with the oranges, represents the importance of investing in one's physical health, as well as the importance of caring about one's mental health, for Pearl realises in this moment that the metaphorical distance between herself and her mother, along with her troubled relationship with her heritage, causes her psychological pain. The need to use only a little bit of the tea, as "the flavor always comes back," symbolises the ability of Pearl to regain the heritage she has rejected and to improve her relationship with her mother if she wishes, since both are represented as constant support structures which are capable of coming back and even improving.

It is at the end of the novel, after Winnie has told her life story to Pearl, that Pearl reveals her diagnosis of multiple sclerosis which the doctors say that they can do nothing to cure. In response

there was no stopping [Winnie]. She glared at me. "How can you say this! 'Nothing you can do'! Who told you this? How can you think in this way? What do you call this disease again? Write it down. Tomorrow I am going to Auntie Du's herb doctor. And after that, I will think of a way." [...]

I was going to protest, to tell her she was working herself up into a frenzy for nothing. But all of a sudden I realized: I didn't want her to stop. I was relieved in a strange way." Or perhaps relief was not the feeling.

---

<sup>744</sup> Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, 57.

<sup>745</sup> Serene Chow, "The cultural significance of mandarin oranges," *Monash University*, accessed February 5, 2020, <https://www.monash.edu.my/news-and-events/trending/the-cultural-significance-of-mandarin-oranges>.

<sup>746</sup> Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, 52.

Because the pain was still there. She was tearing it away—my protective shell, my anger, my deepest fears, my despair. She was putting all this into her own heart, so that I could finally see what was left. Hope.<sup>747</sup>

Throughout the novel, making and serving tea is shown to fuel and punctuate the storytelling, as seen when Winnie says to Pearl, “Now let’s go in the kitchen and make some tea. And then I will tell you how Peanut [Winnie’s cousin] changed my luck for the new year.”<sup>748</sup> Tea is presented in the novel as emotionally healing, for it accompanies Pearl’s gradual embrace of her heritage and her mother’s narrative. Winnie’s plan to consult with an herb doctor near the end of the novel reinstates the impact of family and heritage in providing hope, especially for a woman like Winnie, who has left an abusive husband, fled a war-torn home, and emigrated to a new place. The image of Chinese medicine here is side-lined to let the focus fall on Winnie’s attitude (she consistently takes charge of her own life and happiness) and evidencing an unshakeable sense of self-worth which is represented not as negatively self-centred but as positively assertive. Her self-worth is not instilled by Chinese cultural norms, since traditionally women are presented as inferior and subservient to men, nor by U.S. society, as Chinese Americans are racially mistreated. Self-worth is instilled through mother-daughter relationships, and an acknowledgement and appreciation of matrilineal heritage. As a result, Winnie’s character, through tea, stresses the importance of valuing and taking care of oneself as an (at least psychologically) independent woman who appreciates herself.

### III. Desire and Devotion: Legitimising Women’s Sexuality

How people perceive their worth is unavoidably influenced by how others identify and treat them. *China Men* by Maxine Hong Kingston, a short story sequence, recounts Chinese settlement in the United States, and the experiences of men in Kingston’s family, some true and some fictional. The title was chosen by Kingston to transvalue the term and to represent the difference between how Chinese immigrant men viewed themselves compared to the racist term “Chinamen.”<sup>749</sup> The original title was going to be *Gold Mountain Heroes*, but due to the number

---

<sup>747</sup> Tan, *The Kitchen God’s Wife*, 401-402.

<sup>748</sup> Tan, *The Kitchen God’s Wife*, 74, 120, 399.

<sup>749</sup> Yin, *Chinese American Literature since the 1850s*, 238.

of books published that year with the same words in their titles it was changed.<sup>750</sup> Kingston retained the original title by writing it in a seal in Chinese on the cover page and at the start of every chapter.<sup>751</sup> Following on from *The Woman Warrior*, *China Men* is where Kingston shows respect to her immigrant forefathers and their pioneering spirit without losing sight of her foremothers' struggles. Tea is used to present gender inequality, as the desires of women were generally considered inconsequential in Chinese and Chinese American culture in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Kingston focuses on the marginality of the first Chinese men to emigrate to the United States, and in so doing reveals parallels between their oppression and that of Chinese women in both countries.

Kingston portrays the importance of homosocial spaces for women in the opening story "On Discovery." The story describes the feminisation of a man, Tang Ao, who is looking for Gold Mountain. Instead, he arrives at Women's Land where, "During the months of a season, they fed him on women's food: the tea was thick with white chrysanthemums and stirred the cool female winds inside his body."<sup>752</sup> Here, Kingston highlights how some differences between men and women are constructed because stereotypically feminine sensations are awakened in his body. Women's Land (as the name suggests), is run and largely occupied by women. As an imaginary land in North America thousands of years ago, where "there [were] no taxes and no wars," it allows Kingston to build upon ancient mythologies and histories of women running their own lands. Though women are presented as able to rule, matriarchy is depicted in an essentialist way, since women are shown to be fundamentally different to men: they are portrayed as peaceful, invested in food and drink, and concerned with maintaining beauty regimes. Thus, in the absence of men, stereotyped feminine behaviours which have been used to subjugate women are presented as "natural" conditions of their sex. The forms of oppression placed on women to look a certain way, and to eat certain foods, are now inflicted on Tang Ao, as they bind his feet, pierce his ears, epilate his skin, and give him tea. Consequently, despite the essentialist approach, Kingston does stress through the tale that our positions within society

---

<sup>750</sup> Yin, *Chinese American Literature since the 1850s*, 238.

<sup>751</sup> Yin, *Chinese American Literature since the 1850s*, 238.

<sup>752</sup> Kingston, *China Men*, 10.

are largely governed by how gender is interpreted and enforced, and how, through unity and narration, women can strive towards equality.

The chapter titled “The ghostmate” is an adaptation of a renowned Chinese ghost story.<sup>753</sup> In Kingston’s version, a young man is wandering “along a mountain road far from home.”<sup>754</sup> During a storm he is lured into the home of an attractive woman, and he ends up staying with her for an unspecified, but substantial, amount of time. In the end he leaves her, and only then do we find out that she is a ghost. The image of Chinese women as the hyperfeminine ensnarers of men is reversed, as they are presented as imprisoned within political and social systems that subordinate them and see them as nonentities.

The Chinese genre of literature, ch’uan-ch’i tales, to which stories like “The ghostmate” belong to, was well-liked during the Tang and Sung Dynasties of China; the texts are known for their tales of desire.<sup>755</sup> The ghostmate is attractive through her appearance—she is “the most beautiful woman he had ever seen”—and because of the care she is able to give him.<sup>756</sup> When he arrives, she places him by the fire in new clothing while “The tea steeps. How lucky am I, he thinks; a stranger is owed no more than a drink of water.”<sup>757</sup> Then “She pours tea and gives him the tiny cup with her own hands. He accepts it carefully so that his fingers do not oafishly touch hers. He feeds like an aristocrat.”<sup>758</sup> The tea presents the comfort and special treatment afforded to her guest whom she desires for his company emotionally and sexually. They also symbolise the brief moments that in particular Gold Rush male Chinese immigrants had, of solace and care away from their often taxing and life-threatening work of building railway lines or in the mines.<sup>759</sup>

---

<sup>753</sup> Yunte Huang, *Transpacific Displacement: Ethnography, Translation, and Intertextual Travel in Twentieth-Century American Literature* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 152.

<sup>754</sup> Kingston, *China Men*, 76.

<sup>755</sup> Shu-mei Shih, “Exile and Intertextuality in Maxine Hong Kingston’s *China Men*,” in *The Literature of Emigration and Exile*, ed. James Whitlark and Wendell Aycock (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 1992), 69.

<sup>756</sup> Kingston, *China Men*, 77.

<sup>757</sup> Kingston, *China Men*, 77.

<sup>758</sup> Kingston, *China Men*, 78.

<sup>759</sup> For further information on the working conditions of Chinese railway workers and miners I recommend the following books: Sue Fawn Chung, *In Pursuit of Gold: Chinese Americans Miners and Merchants in the American West* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011) and Gordon H. Chang, *Ghosts of Gold Mountain: The Epic Story of the Chinese Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019).

Eventually, the tea and comfort emasculate him, and he becomes restless within the home doing traditionally feminine tasks such as embroidery. When he decides to leave, the woman, in her desperation to stop him from leaving, opens her robe to “[enclose] him against her naked body, reminding him how unwifely her breasts and thighs are, how helplessly her body works as he touches it.”<sup>760</sup> Instead of a narrative that depicts him as drugged or manipulated into staying, the man enjoys the comforts of being with her before he departs. Her sexuality is used to disparage her as she fails to embody patriarchal ideas of wifely subservience. Furthermore, the feminine position he believes he embodies by performing “feminine” tasks like embroidery, is representative of how Chinese immigrants, especially in the early twentieth century, were forced into doing traditionally “feminine” work, and were often presented as feminine in white American culture.<sup>761</sup> Unlike the ghostmate, however, he symbolically has the power to alter his position, with her desires and wants left unfulfilled.

The chapter ends with the sentences: “The young husband returns to his family. The hero’s home has its own magic. Fancy lovers never last.”<sup>762</sup> Here, I argue, tea presents, through its comfort and nurturing capacity, the domestic ways in which women are expected to provide devotion and care, despite being in return, likely left emotionally and sexually unfulfilled if they are not part of a traditional family structure. Kingston presents the temptress figure as the opposite of dangerous, and as often being a victim of patriarchy and male desire. Furthermore, her isolation from other women, compared to “On Discovery,” serves to highlight the necessity of unity for women’s liberation sexually or otherwise.

In the 1990s Lisa Lowe commended the work done in the 1970s and 1980s by feminist writers including Kingston, Tan, and Amy Ling, as well as others including Jeffery Paul Chan, Frank Chin, and Shawn Wong. However, she states that the debates over identity politics have shifted, and according to Lowe “we can afford to rethink the notion of ethnic identity in terms of cultural, class, and gender differences, rather than presuming similarities and making the erasure of particularity the basis of unity.”<sup>763</sup>

---

<sup>760</sup> Kingston, *China Men*, 81.

<sup>761</sup> Cheung, “*The Woman Warrior versus The Chinaman Pacific*,” 235-36.

<sup>762</sup> Kingston, *China Men*, 83.

<sup>763</sup> Lowe, “Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity,” 548.



One area where difference, instead of similarity, became more evidently explored was women's sexuality.<sup>764</sup> Lesbian literature became a more recognised genre from the late 1980s onwards, with many feminist and/or lesbian anthologies predominantly publishing the work of white women. Due to their limited publishing opportunities, and the exclusion of lesbians from feminism, Asian Americans started to publish their own lesbian literature in feminist anthologies of work by Asian American and women of colour. Titles include *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology* (1989) published by the non-profit CALYX (one of the oldest feminist presses in the country), *Between the Lines* (1987) which was self-published by a group of Asian/Pacific writers from Santa Cruz, and *Piece of My Heart: A Lesbian of Color Anthology* (1991) published by Sister Vision (a small Canadian publisher whose mission was to publish literature by women of colour).<sup>765</sup>

Mei Ng's short story, "This Early," was published in *Tasting Life Twice: Literary Lesbian Fiction by New American Writers* (1995). The anthology contains a diverse range of authors from ethnic minority groups.<sup>766</sup> I am concerned with how Mei Ng employs tea in her narratives to present the intensity, and often transgressive condition, of Chinese American female sexuality, which is shown to be independent of male governance, and central to understandings of women's autonomy. In "This Early" and the novel *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, tea is central to reconfiguring and articulating female sexual desire with an unashamed intensity. Through tea Ng expresses, I contend, the main messages in her works: that women's desire is personal, explorative, and should not depend on the opinion or sexual satisfaction of others.

"This Early" is narrated in the second person by a young Chinese American woman called Daisy and is addressed to her lover. The narrative style reinforces how Daisy's world currently revolves around her lover. By her not

---

<sup>764</sup> Wong and Ana, "Gender and Sexuality in Asian American Literature," 202.

<sup>765</sup> Shirely Geok-lin Lim, Mayumi Tsutakawa, and Margarita Donnelly, eds., *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology* (Corvallis, OR: CALYX Inc., 1989); C. Chung, A. Kim, and A. K. Lemeskewsky, eds., *Between the Lines: An Anthology* (Santa Cruz, CA: Dancing Bird, 1987); Makeda Silera, ed., *Piece of My Heart: A Lesbian of Color Anthology* (Toronto, Canada: Sister Vision, 1991).

<sup>766</sup> Two American lesbian literature anthologies, published during the 1990s, with few to no women of colour in them are: Joan Nestle and Naomi Holoch, *Women on Women: Anthology of American Lesbian Short Fiction* (New York: Plume, 1990) and Susan J. Wolfe, *Lesbian Culture: An Anthology: The Lives, Work, Ideas, Art and Visions of Lesbians Past and Present* (California: Crossing Press, 1993).

naming the lover she makes her appear replaceable; therefore, Daisy's self-destructive tendencies seem to be self-induced and not reliant on the lover. Tea culture presents how the narrator's relationship with her mother informs a self-worth she has yet to embrace within her romantic relationships. At the beginning of the short story Daisy exhibits a lack of self-care through having little to no food in her home, by not going outside for days at a time, and by allowing a white woman (who is in a relationship with an Asian man) to use her sexually. The story gives us very few details about the mother-daughter relationship; however, through the depiction of a tea pot and a recipe, the intrinsic role of her mother in Daisy's discovery of self-worth is established. Through tea culture and food, the nurturing nature of their relationship is expressed. One morning the lover comes over for breakfast

I wait for the water to really get going before I make the tea. I make your cup first, you like strong tea. I let it steep, then add lots of lemon, lots of honey. Then I make my tea with your old tea bag. I take my tea light, like old ladies at the diner. If it's too strong, I can't sleep at night.<sup>767</sup>

In the story's first depiction of tea, the flavour suggests what the narrator's romantic "tastes" are, and how they compare with those of her lover. The fact that the prospective lover likes her tea "strong" and "dark" indicates a depth and richness of character which the narrator is continually attracted to.<sup>768</sup> Sexual attraction is also racialised here as the white lover has an Asian boyfriend, is attracted to Daisy, and prefers darker tea. The colours of Daisy's floral namesake (yellow and white) suggest the physical limits of her lover's interest. The addition of "lots of lemon [and] lots of honey" continues to paint the woman as stimulating, with the sharp taste of lemon suggesting a "sharp" wit or fiery temperament, with the "honey" implying a sometimes "sweet" disposition.

Daisy implies that she is not as lively or as interesting as her lover through having her tea like "old ladies" do. Due to her adoration, she perceives the woman as superior, and depicts herself in contrast as "light" (lacking substance). However, through her dialogue and actions, the woman in question appears far less interesting than expressed here. Daisy is portrayed as blinded by infatuation to many of the woman's faults and mundanities. Furthermore, her attraction is

---

<sup>767</sup> Mei Ng, "This Early," in *Tasting Life Twice: Literary Lesbian Fiction by New American Writers*, ed. E. J. Levy (New York: Avon Books, 1995), 214.

<sup>768</sup> Ng, "This Early," 214, 217.

also racialised, as Daisy is interested in a “light” skinned white woman, which is symbolised by her consumption of “light” tea. The initial superficiality of attraction, and its ability to ignore faults, is presented here.

Daisy depicts herself as desperate to have a “taste” of her white lover. In the story, consumption and taste are linguistically inseparable from sexual desire. Using the woman’s old tea bag implies her desire to physically, and mentally, share herself with the other woman, as she is attracted to, and wishes to revel in, the woman’s “rich” character. Despite her desire for the woman, Daisy also indicates the importance of valuing herself in the relationship. A few pages later, tea is portrayed in a different context to emphasise the role of maternal love in the formation of self-worth. While her lover is neglectful, a reflective narration of her mother’s teachings of care is explored through the description of tea being served in a teapot:

At my mother’s house, she makes tea in the old blue-and-white pot that she’s had forever. If you want it light, you take the first cup. If you want it darker, you have to wait a little longer. I used to have a teapot. It was ivory-colored, squat and small. First the knob on the lid fell off. Then the spout got chipped and finally the handle. I saved the pieces for a while, meaning to glue them back together.<sup>769</sup>

The narrator nostalgically recalls her mother’s tea ceremony, and then considers how she has tried to replicate it. The implication of order is important here: from the teapot the narrator would be served first and her lover would need to wait. Symbolically, the narrator would be putting herself first. The teapot is linked to her mother and her Chinese cultural heritage; in contrast, the teabag was invented for U.S. consumers in the early twentieth century. The teapot is symbolic of cultural belonging, respect, and how she values herself when her maternal heritage is expressed. The fact that her teapot has been broken over the years into pieces suggests that disregarding one’s maternal heritage leads to the erosion of self-worth. We are left with the hope that she will metaphorically glue back together her self-worth, which is intrinsically linked to appreciating her ethnic identity and matrilineal heritage.

After her lover leaves her mother calls. Her mother gives her instructions for a fish recipe: “First, pick a sea bass with clear eyes, not cloudy. When you get

---

<sup>769</sup> Ng, “This Early,” 217.

home, wash it in cold water [...].”<sup>770</sup> The instructions are relayed to the reader in descriptive prose with no dialogue or direct speech. The lack of distinction between their voices emphasises the foundational position of her mother within her identity, since it contrasts with the dialogue between the lover and the narrator. As with the teapot, the recipe accentuates how, for Daisy, embracing her matrilineal heritage and her mother’s influence is crucial in building a strong sense of self, as they will scaffold her dignity and self-respect.

Ng continues her exploration of the role of motherhood in informing Chinese American female sexuality in *Eating Chinese Food Naked*. As the title suggests, the consumption of food is linked to erotic encounters. In particular, as Xu notes, Ng “removes the stigma from bisexuality by naturalizing it allegorically through metaphors of food and appetite.”<sup>771</sup> Xu notes that “in the near absence of verbal or physical expressions of affection, the Lees communicate their love mainly through food.”<sup>772</sup> Xu’s comprehensive and informative study of food in the novel highlights how food is used by Ng to explore the intersection between sex, food, and ethnicity. To complement Xu’s work on food, I am concerned with how tea is used to emphasise the role of Ruby Lee’s mother, Bell, in Ruby’s journey towards rejecting the bifurcation of race and sexuality in the development of her own sexuality and hybrid cultural identity.

The novel’s protagonist, Ruby, is a Chinese American who, after finishing her degree in women’s studies at Columbia University, returns to her parents’ home and laundry in Queens, New York. The anxiety she expresses over her future is partially fuelled by her uncertainty regarding her sexuality and cultural identity. Tea is used to dramatize the role of childhood and race in Ruby’s journey from a forced and troubled heteronormative self to a conscious sexually explorative self. Ruby’s relationship with Bell plays a foundational role in the development of her sexuality. As Xu notes, in her mother she finds “a displaced but safe site for [the] articulation” of her “lesbian inclination.”<sup>773</sup> I have decided to use the term “queer” due to the details Ng provides in the novel: Ruby flirts with and is attracted to both men and women, but is not sure she is truly attracted to men. If anything, she is the epitome of queer, as her sexuality cannot be labelled.

---

<sup>770</sup> Ng, “This Early,” 218.

<sup>771</sup> Xu, *Eating Identities*, 160.

<sup>772</sup> Xu, *Eating Identities*, 148.

<sup>773</sup> Xu, *Eating Identities*, 152.

The use of Ruby's mother to articulate her attraction to women is made apparent near the beginning of the novel when Ruby reflects on her desire for women in childhood:

when other little girls were being dangled on their daddy's knee, touching the stubble on his face and thinking about marrying him when they grew up, she was dreaming about marrying her mother and taking her away. She pictured a small house in the woods with a garden out back where her mother would grow vegetables. [...] there would be a porch [...]. In the evenings, she and her mother would sit on the swing bench, drink tea from a blue and white pot and talk until the night ran out.

Six years old and in love with her mother.<sup>774</sup>

This passionate love is presented as ordinary through the consumption of tea in her dream. Tea is symbolic of the sense of belonging and love that her mother has lost and which her daughter wishes to give her. Adrienne Rich's concept of "compulsory heterosexuality" can be applied to Ruby's feelings because, as Rich states, "if women are the earliest sources of emotional caring and physical nurture for both female and male children" then does love initially focus on women for both sexes, and if so, why is this love diverted for heterosexual women?<sup>775</sup> Furthermore, the Neo-Freudian undertones of this scene cannot go unmentioned. Ruby sees most girls displaying symptoms of what psychologist Carl Jung termed the Electra complex: they are presented as desiring the father to the extent of wishing to grow up and replace their mother. Unlike them, Ruby feels these emotions towards her mother. Instead of merely replacing her father, Ruby wishes to give her mother a more fulfilling home with a garden and a porch where they can talk for hours. Tea serves to characterise a uniquely feminine and accommodating location which men appear to be absent from, and as such, highlights a unique advantage Ruby has over her father in her quest to make her mother happy, since she can give her mother what her father cannot.

Ruby blames her father for her mother's unhappiness: "He had gone to China and had taken her mother away from everyone she knew and brought her to a strange country, and then, to top it off, he wasn't kind to her."<sup>776</sup> She wishes to recreate a sense of belonging and mutual affection for her mother by being her

---

<sup>774</sup> Mei Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1998), 18.

<sup>775</sup> Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 182.

<sup>776</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 18.

main emotional partner; tea, located within traditional Chinese female communal settings, communicates this message in several moments in the novel.<sup>777</sup> The sharing of tea from a pot symbolises their connection and a sense of equality between the daughter and mother which is strengthened by their shared position as the women in a struggling immigrant family with a patriarchal structure. Ruby's reaction to the sexist treatment of her mother is to see her mother as a victim and herself as her saviour: she "found little ways to help her mother and her mother came to lean on her."<sup>778</sup> Ruby's passionate love for her mother feeds a desire to empower women through love and a sense of belonging. Ruby's decision to study Women's Studies at University is arguably inspired by her relationship with her mother.

In contrast to creating intimate and emotional spaces with her mother, with her father tea portrays Ruby's disinterest in her father, Franklin. When Ruby returns home after university, Bell asks her to see if her father wants tea. In response Ruby, thinking about the summer and the sun's heat, asks Bell if she wants a hat to protect her skin.<sup>779</sup> At the centre of Ruby's home universe is Bell, and Franklin is shown to be inconsequential to her. This does not go unnoticed by Franklin and, when Ruby was young, he realised that "he wanted his daughter to love him. He saw how she adored her mother and this made him want to break his wife more than ever. But the meaner he was to Ruby's mother, the more Ruby loved her."<sup>780</sup> Calling Bell "Ruby's mother" expresses the deep, overpowering connection between the mother and daughter that Franklin feels alienated from. The lack of love and the actual fear Ruby feels towards Franklin in her youth are represented when he enters the kitchen for his own tea and "[Ruby] hid under the ironing table."<sup>781</sup> The love her father desires is mirrored in the wish for commitment and cohabitation her white Jewish boyfriend, Nick, desires from her later in the novel. The passionate care she gives to her mother, evinced through tea, is contrasted to the lack of care or interest she shows towards Franklin and then Nick, and paves the way to Ruby's discovery of her attraction to women.

---

<sup>777</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 18, 58, 136, 216.

<sup>778</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 18.

<sup>779</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 14.

<sup>780</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 38.

<sup>781</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 38.

It is through tea that we see Ruby decide who will receive her affection, and to what extent. The third-person narrator also highlights the lack of communication and the distance between many of the characters. When Ruby is taught by her mother how to serve tea and does so for her father successfully without spilling any, she returns to the kitchen “swinging the pot like a baton.”<sup>782</sup> A baton is a short stick which is often carried by commanding figures to signify their authority, like a conductor or field marshal. In this moment she is proud, but the imagery of the baton shows how her relationships with first her father, then with the future men in her life, are rigid, and dominated by guarded conversations and a desire to prove herself equal to them. The phallic imagery of the baton communicates the power and equality Ruby strives for in a patriarchal household. In contrast, with her mother tea scenes are loving, and present a time for candid discussion and acceptance.<sup>783</sup> This is evident when they share tea and popcorn and discuss what Bell thinks of Nick; and when Ruby tells Bell she is moving to Manhattan and they have tea together to calm Bell’s nerves.<sup>784</sup> The contrast between her relationships with men, which are solely practical, and those with women, which are formed on feelings of vulnerability, emotional dependency, and love, is a pattern established in her childhood.

The emotional depth and dependency of Bell’s and Ruby’s connection is contrasted, in both of their cases, with their relationships with men which are cold and often confrontational. There are no signs of intimacy between Bell and Franklin:

never a kiss hello, a kiss good-bye. When her mother made her father tea, she wouldn’t hand it to him but would place it beside him on the nightstand in the living room [...]. Once he reached for the cup before she set it down. Instead of putting it into his hands, she held the tea just out of reach, then placed the cup firmly on the table.<sup>785</sup>

This is compared to when they first met and Bell “peeks at him through an amber stream of tea that she pours into his cup. Cup after cup, he drinks”.<sup>786</sup> the care and interest we see here is starkly contrasted with the bitterness of their marriage. The allure of the unknown behind the “stream” is replaced by the dissatisfaction

---

<sup>782</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 202.

<sup>783</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 136.

<sup>784</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 136, 216

<sup>785</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 52.

<sup>786</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 193.

of marriage and life in the United States. Their separation from each other emotionally is presented in how Bell rejects recognition and interaction when she serves the tea. When Franklin reaches out for the tea his unwanted action causes Bell to resent the disruption to their relationship pattern, where neither fully aids the other, with all acts of kindness and companionship metaphorically presented as always slightly out of reach.

It is likely that Ruby's desire for sex without commitment is at least partially informed by observing her parents' often bitter relationship. She is terrified of her relationship with Nick developing, and even though at one point she feels desperate for sex,

It felt dangerous to see him while she was living at home—she might be tempted to stay with him; days and weeks and then years would pass without her noticing, and one morning she'd wake up and look out the window and there, surrounding the house, would be the dreaded white picket fence.<sup>787</sup>

The rejection of her boyfriend's monogamous, heterosexual, and conservative familial and financial ambitions presents the relatively limited position of men in her life: throughout the novel she sees Nick, and other men, solely as satisfiers of her libido. Her sexual partners participate in predictable encounters as she "figured out which of her lovers would eat the plums that morning, drink the tea and slip her a dream, get on top and hold her down as if she were trying to get away."<sup>788</sup> The sexual innuendo of slipping her a dream emphasises her clear differentiation between sex and reality: her relationships with men are presented as cordoned off into a dreamlike realm, whereas her reality and daily life, in some ways, are protected from their interference. Arguably, she does not want a man to control her life the way Bell's life is controlled by Franklin. Furthermore, the separation of emotion from sex limits her ability to fully develop her sexuality. The only same-sex encounter we are informed of is when Ruby reminisces about a girl from Spanish class that she was too shy to have sex with. Ng ties emotion to sexuality, as it is only when Ruby allows herself to feel and be vulnerable, that her sexuality can be developed.

---

<sup>787</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 115.

<sup>788</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 24.



It is only with her mother that Ruby allows her emotions to grow freely. The tea she consumes in a home setting with her mother, free from sexual expectations, is contrasted with the description of tea with her lovers as they “drink the tea and slip her a dream.” For instance, Ruby and Bell share memories of going to Coney Island, taking with them a meal of “chicken, [...] iced tea and grapes and cookies.”<sup>789</sup> At one point they also work together in a synchronised fashion to make tea as “They stood at the counter, looking down at their hands. They opened packets of tea, measured out sugar and poured the milk.”<sup>790</sup> In life, Ruby and Bell acknowledge a past, future, and present together, with tea highlighting these moments of acknowledgement. They are also depicted as part of the same person, and united beyond the limits of physical differentiation. The strength of their unity is contrasted to the fleeting and sexually transactional nature of Ruby’s sexual encounters. The emotional depth and dependence within the mother-daughter relationship highlights the current polarity between Ruby’s sex life and her love life.

A moment in the novel when she rejects others’ assessments of her, and one way Ruby satisfies her sex drive, is when she goes to a café and gets tea to “find some halfway decent person [...because they are needed to make her] feel alive again” through casual sex.<sup>791</sup> She repeats this process on two occasions in the novel.<sup>792</sup> On one of these occasions a white boy approaches her, and tea-drinking, as it is elsewhere in the novel, is eroticised. She wonders if her forehead said “White boys especially welcome’?”<sup>793</sup> He proceeds to ask her

“You drink coffee?” He looked at her hand around her glass. She looked at his mouth, at the faint scar under his eye.

“I drink tea.” They were looking at each other in a way so that they both knew they weren’t talking about coffee. They talked some more about tea and then a little more about coffee.<sup>794</sup>

They continue to talk for a while before Ruby rejects his offer to go for a walk. Interestingly, the tea she orders in the café is an iced tea. Ruby and her family usually drink hot tea, which symbolises their Chinese American minority status.

---

<sup>789</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 69.

<sup>790</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 58.

<sup>791</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 84.

<sup>792</sup> See Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 224.

<sup>793</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 117.

<sup>794</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 117.

In drinking iced tea, Ruby is communicating her cultural hybridity, neither rejecting nor fully accepting one culture, which also mirrors her sexual journey, as she does not label her sexual desires. The fact that the café conversation's tone is erotic is revealing because, in stating she is a tea drinker, Ruby is rejecting his conception of her and she presents her own sexuality, and therefore, her sometimes female preferences. Furthermore, by choosing iced tea instead of traditionally hot Chinese tea, Ruby symbolically recognises her individuality as her mother's history, choices, and opinions are not her own, and instead only support who she is.

In this moment Ruby states an unashamed claim to her heritage as, despite her adoption of many white American norms, she rejects coffee (a national beverage of the United States since the American Revolution).<sup>795</sup> This rejection is made even more pronounced by the novel's setting—New York City—where there are coffee shops on almost every corner; furthermore, it is estimated that New Yorkers drink seven times more coffee than the citizens in any other city in the United States.<sup>796</sup> This simple act of rejection, therefore, emphasises how her culinary tastes, social etiquette, and many other attributes are informed by her Chinese American heritage. As a result, her journey towards understanding her sexuality is informed by her cultural feelings of belonging and, sometimes, of exclusion (one memory of her school days being when children at school “asked her if she ate dog for dinner”).<sup>797</sup> After this event, she searches for information on Chinese food culture by talking to her parents and by reading books from the library. On many occasions, Ruby is presented as alienated from and embarrassed by her heritage; however, as she embraces it more and more through her mother re-exposing it to her after she moves back home after university, she acknowledges and begins to accept her sexuality, as heritage and maternal bonds appear to support her journey of self-discovery.

Xu interestingly notes that “Nowhere in the novel is the language of hetero/lesbian sexuality evoked.”<sup>798</sup> Instead, the novel's focus is on Ruby arriving

---

<sup>795</sup> See introduction for more information of this signification. Also see: Thurston, “United States,” 206-214; Topik and McDonald, “Why Americans Drink Coffee,” 239; and Erin Meister, *New York City Coffee: A Caffeinated History* (Charleston: American Palate, 2017), 90-96.

<sup>796</sup> Toni Avey, “The Caffeinated History of Coffee,” *PBS*, April 8, 2013, accessed June 28, 2020, <https://www.pbs.org/food/the-history-kitchen/history-coffee/>.

<sup>797</sup> Ng, *Eating Chinese Food Naked*, 168.

<sup>798</sup> Xu, *Eating Identities*, 161.

at the acceptance of her own sexuality, which is queer because it rejects the inflexibility of labels. Commodities however are, as Hennessy notes, full of “invisible heterosexual meanings.”<sup>799</sup> The creation and the development of a commodity’s purpose, target audience, and ritual are fuelled by society’s wish to express heteronormativity. For instance, tea-drinking in Chinese American and white American culture, throughout the twentieth century, has been used to communicate women’s domestic, dependent, and maternal role within the family structure.<sup>800</sup> In Ng’s novel, tea presents the opposite of these traits through Ruby’s high libido, lack of a desire to “settle down,” and wish to escape the possibility of becoming kitchen-bound like her mother. The placing of tea within a sexually explorative narrative leads to a subversive rejection of established norms, and the reclaiming of a commodity deeply rooted in her heritage, daily life, and women’s history in order to reflect her own lifestyle and identity.

## Conclusion

The texts explored in this chapter exhibit feminist concerns, as they provide narratives centred on the lives of women who have historically been silenced and misrepresented. The texts also represent a younger generation of vocal and ambitious Chinese American women who have uncomfortable relationships with their mothers due to misunderstandings and ignorance; these barriers are largely overcome, and this leads to appreciation and respect for their foremothers and themselves. In Chinese American literature by women published in the last quarter of the twentieth century, women’s filial relationships are often presented as more valuable than spousal ones due to the personal identity gains exhibited through having strong matrilineal ties.

Two aspects of women’s lives which are explored at length during this period are their feelings of alienation from their matrilineal heritage and the formation of their sexuality. The fear of feminine autonomy or power has controlled narratives around women’s sexuality and position in society. The employment of tea in these narratives serves several purposes: it represents the

---

<sup>799</sup> Rosemary Hennessy, “Queer Visibility in Commodity Culture,” *Cultural Critique*, no. 29 (Winter, 1994-1995): 53, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1354421>

<sup>800</sup> A topic explored further in Chapter 2 and 3 of this study.

oppressive history, in the United States and in China, of enforced female domesticity and docility; it is part of women's rich global heritage as familial and communal healers; and it symbolises the transnational heritage of Chinese Americans. Furthermore, tea is a commonplace drink in the United States, so that by using it in their narratives the authors evince Chinese American women to be neither the docile lotus blossoms nor the dangerous dragon ladies that have dominated their representations in the media from the late nineteenth century to the present day.

The excavation of women's narratives led to issues regarding the validity of their plot and characterisation, and to concerns about the representation of Chinese men and culture as misogynistic and backward compared to the men and culture of dominant U.S. ethnic groups. Moreover, alongside second- and third-wave feminism there was an effort within the Chinese American community to establish their own U.S. identity as both part of, and separate from, the umbrella identity of "Asian American."<sup>801</sup> Tea captures the position of many Chinese American women during this period, as it serves to represent the sexualities of women and the formation of their self-worth, as well as the position of matrilineal heritage in the formation of what are, above all, U.S. identities.

---

<sup>801</sup> Hogue, "The Emergence, Renaissance, and Transformation," 182.

## Coda

### “Milk [Tea] is Thicker than Blood”: Superrich Asians and Transnational Chinese Identity in the Twenty First Century

The hashtag #milkteaalliance began circulating after April 2020 when in a Twitter post Thai actor Vachirawat “Bright” Cheeva-aree implied that Hong Kong is a country.<sup>802</sup> Mainland Chinese netizens heavily criticised his post and decided to boycott his TV programme. They then found a post put up by Bright’s girlfriend in 2017 that suggests that Taiwan is an independent country.<sup>803</sup> Despite initial apologies and other efforts to quell the conflict, an internet battle has since ensued with pro-democratic protesters—mainly from Thailand, Hong Kong, and Taiwan—voicing their concerns and criticisms over the power of the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) power in East Asia. The protesters have united under the name “Milk Tea Alliance.” The choice of milk tea is contentious and divisive as, unlike traditionally bitter or mild Chinese forms of tea, sweet milk tea is particularly popular in pro-democratic Asian places including Taiwan, Thailand, and Hong Kong.

Interestingly, the addition of milk and/or sugar to tea is a traditionally western custom that became popular in the nineteenth century.<sup>804</sup> The practice has been adopted and adapted in many Asian countries due to U.S. influence and British colonialism. The East Asian places and its netizens opposing the CCP bring their own version of milk tea to the alliance—Taiwan’s bubble tea, Hong Kong-style milk tea, and Thai tea—and in reference to their avowed unity the journalist Christina Chan coined the phrase “milk is thicker than blood.”<sup>805</sup>

---

<sup>802</sup> Dan McDevitt, “‘In Milk Tea We Trust’: How a Thai-Chinese Meme War Led to a New (Online) Pan-Asia Alliance,” *The Diplomat*, April 18, 2020, accessed May 30, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/04/in-milk-tea-we-trust-how-a-thai-chinese-meme-war-led-to-a-new-online-pan-asia-alliance/?fbclid=IwAR1QkbNRSTjkHPKRy6Amcv-V2WV0-iapPWSodjeOSKhmwhEFPPEQQsGHB20>.

<sup>803</sup> DecDevitt, “In Milk Tea We Trust.”

<sup>804</sup> Charrington-Hollins, *A Dark History of Tea*, 78.

<sup>805</sup> Christina Chan, “Milk is thicker than blood: An unlikely digital alliance between Thailand, Hong Kong & Taiwan,” *Hong Kong Free Press*, May 2, 2020, accessed May 12, 2020, <https://hongkongfp.com/2020/05/02/milk-is-thicker-than-blood-an-unlikely-digital-alliance-between-thailand-hong-kong-taiwan/>; Rebecca Ratcliffe, “Pro-democracy boycott of Disney’s Mulan builds online via #milkteaalliance,” *The Guardian*, September 4, 2020, accessed February 14, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/04/pro-democracy-boycott-of-disneys-mulan-builds-online-via-milkteaalliance>.

China's growing power in East Asia began in 1976 when Mao's chairmanship ended. In the two decades after Mao's death, China's GDP more than quadrupled.<sup>806</sup> The Chinese economic reforms which took place during the 1980s and 1990s, including the de-collectivisation of agriculture, the ability for entrepreneurs to start their own business, and the lifting of price controls, has led to China becoming, by 2010, the world's second-largest economy (second to the United States).<sup>807</sup> In response to China's economic growth, in 1997 the *Economist* complained about the new popularity of Napoleon's alleged prophecy, "Let China sleep, for when she awakens she will shake the world."<sup>808</sup>

Twenty-one years later, Napoleon's remark is positioned at the opening of the film *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018) directed by Jon M. Chu. The film is based on the 2013 novel of the same name by Singaporean American author Kevin Kwan (b. 1973). The film and novel depict the lives of superrich Asians living mostly in Singapore and Hong Kong, with connections in Taiwan, India, France, Britain, the United States, and elsewhere. Compared to the ominous, "yellow peril" depiction of mainland China by Napoleon, the Asiatic power Kwan presents is a transnational alliance of wealthy, pro-democratic Asians. By aligning Napoleon's quotation with this new global community, made up of many #milkteaalliance locations, a victorious narrative of independence, consumerism, and liberty is purveyed as the winning formula for economic success and global influence.

The capitalist lifestyles of Kwan's mostly Chinese American and Chinese Singaporean characters reveal how, in the twenty first century, Chinese identification is no longer bound to Mainland China because the ethnically Chinese communities that have "awoken" are explicitly opposed to the government of Mainland China. This situation indicates a departure from classic diasporic notions of a Chinese homeland, and points instead towards an age of global variation and political critique amongst ethnically Chinese people. In this coda I will be investigating how tea-drinking in Kwan's trilogy of novels—*Crazy Rich Asians* (2013), *China Rich Girlfriend* (2016) and *Rich People Problems* (2017)—portrays the rise of a pan-Asian, ethnically Chinese, democratic,

---

<sup>806</sup> Isaac Stone Fish, "Crouching Tiger, Sleeping Giant," *Foreign Policy*, January 19, 2016, accessed May 12, 2016, [https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/19/china\\_shakes\\_the\\_world\\_cliche/](https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/19/china_shakes_the_world_cliche/).

<sup>807</sup> David Barboza, "China Passes Japan as Second-Largest Economy," *The New York Times*, August 15, 2010, accessed February 12, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/16/business/global/16yuan.html>.

<sup>808</sup> Fish, "Crouching Tiger, Sleeping Giant."

English-speaking elite that both fascinates and alarms the United States at the start of what has been labelled the “Chinese Century.”

The “Chinese Century” is a neologism that suggests that the twenty first century will be geopolitically dominated by China. Interestingly, tea is a cultural and political commodity in the “Chinese Century,” as it has been previously in the “American Century,” “Pax Britannica” century, and in China’s dynastic history. The transnational significance of tea to indicate imperialism, inclusion, exclusion, class, health, and toxicity for centuries, and in all three nations, is presented and developed in literary texts. This pattern in the twenty first century is evidenced in Kwan’s trilogy.

Sheng-mei Ma criticises Kwan for “cash[ing] in on the stereotype of crazy rich Asians, a riff on the century-old cliché of an extravagant, overdriven Orient.”<sup>809</sup> Furthermore, Kwan’s use of the term “Asian” instead of “Chinese,” or more specifically for the most part “Chinese Singaporean,” links back to U.S. “yellow peril” discourse, as Kwan also creates a sense of ambiguity and mystery over the economic and political leverage of some of his characters. Furthermore, Kwan benefits from rehashing “yellow peril” fears and homogenising Asian identities. Ma goes on to quote Alistair Deacon’s refrain in the TV series *As Time Goes By* (1992–2005): “there are Asians and there are...Asians.”<sup>810</sup> Kwan’s success, Ma argues, rests on setting up the dichotomy between “good” and “bad” Asians. In doing so, Kwan recycles “yellow peril” tropes to titillate his U.S. readership. Kwan may use the homogenising term ‘Asian’ but I am going to be as specific as possible in my analysis on the roots, citizenship, and cultural affiliations each character has.

The trilogy, and the film adapted from the first novel, have been enormously successful in the United States where the latter grossed \$174.5 million.<sup>811</sup> By October 2018, it had become the most successful romantic comedy of the last decade.<sup>812</sup> Its popularity and success can also be seen in the fact that the trilogy occupied the top three slots in the *New York Times* paperback fiction

---

<sup>809</sup> Sheng-mei Ma, *Off-White: Yellowface and Chinglish by Anglo-American Culture* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 213.

<sup>810</sup> Ma, *Off-White*, 214.

<sup>811</sup> *Metro*, “How ‘Crazy Rich Asians’ changed the movie industry,” February 15, 2019, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.metro.us/how-crazy-rich-asians-changed-the-movie-industry/>.

<sup>812</sup> *Metro*, “How Crazy Rich Asians changed the movie industry.”

bestseller list in September 2018;<sup>813</sup> as of December 2019, more than three million printed copies of the books have been sold, or are in bookshops, in North America.<sup>814</sup>

The success of *Crazy Rich Asians* has unquestionably highlighted an appetite for cultural texts about rich Asians. The Netflix reality TV series, *Bling Empire* (2021), follows the lives of ultra-rich Asian Americans, and is one cultural product to come out of this craze. C. N. Le and Miliann Kang defend the film and trilogy as they write, “one movie cannot be expected to represent the entirety of the Asian American or Asian diasporic experience.”<sup>815</sup> Furthermore, Warner Brothers reported that, during the opening week of the film’s release, 40% of the audience were Asian Americans.<sup>816</sup> This percentage highlights the limited number of Hollywood films starring or about Asians, and the desire among Asian Americans to see themselves reflected on screen; the last U.S. film with an almost entirely Asian cast being *The Joy Luck Club* in 1993.

U.S. literature is a more fruitful field for the depiction of Chinese American experiences. In contemporary fiction, the relationship between “Chineseness” and global networks of identification has become an exceedingly popular subject. Along with Kevin Kwan, many U.S. writers of Chinese ethnicity have explored the multiplicity of transnational Chinese identifications and the influence of family, including Gish Jen in *The Love Wife* (2004) and Jade Chang in *The Wangs vs. the World* (2016).

Kevin Kwan was born in Singapore and is part of a rich and established Singaporean Chinese family. He grew up in the social circles he describes and bases his characters on people he is acquainted with.<sup>817</sup> At the age of 11, Kwan with his family moved to Houston, Texas.<sup>818</sup> In an interview with *Refinery29*, Kwan

---

<sup>813</sup> The Associated Press, “Rich sales for ‘Crazy Rich Asians’ books,” *The Seattle Times*, September 17, 2018, accessed June 2, 2020, <https://www.seattletimes.com/business/rich-sales-for-crazy-rich-asians-books/>.

<sup>814</sup> Mary Cadden, “Crazy Rich Asians’ movie boosts sales for books to 1.5 million copies,” *USA Today*, December 15, 2019, accessed April 25, 2020, <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/life/2018/09/17/crazy-rich-asians-film-boosts-book-sales-1-5-million-copies/1334172002/>.

<sup>815</sup> C. N. Le and Miliann Kang, “Crazy Rich Asians,” *Sociological Forum* 34, issue 2 (June 2019): 527, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12511>.

<sup>816</sup> Le and Kang, “Crazy Rich Asians,” 527.

<sup>817</sup> Elena Nicolaou, “Author Kevin Kwan on the World Of Crazy Rich Asians — AKA The World he Grew up in,” *Refinery29*, July 24, 2018, accessed June 20, 2020, <https://www.refinery29.com/en-gb/2018/07/205339/kevin-kwan-crazy-rich-asians-singapore-real-people-inspiration>.

<sup>818</sup> Nicolaou, “Author Kevin Kwan.”



states how “normalising to an American life” gave him the “outsider” status he needed in order to be able to write the trilogy.<sup>819</sup> The detail Kwan provides about objects and locations within the novels provides a sense of authenticity. By setting his novels in actual cafés, hotels, parks, and other locations, along with the omniscient third-person narration and the explanatory footnotes detailing information about the rare teas and other items possibly unfamiliar to western readers, Kwan appears to be giving an insider’s guide to the top echelons of Singaporean society. This sense of authenticity requires Kwan to provide a disclaimer at the start of his first and third novel that states that the works are pieces of fiction.

The trilogy follows Rachel Chu, a U.S. success story, as she comes from an immigrant single-parent household that flourishes in the United States; her mother escapes an abusive marriage in China and becomes a successful estate agent in California, and Rachel, who comes to the United States as an infant, becomes a professor of economics at NYU. Rachel falls in love with Nick Young, a history professor at NYU who, initially unbeknownst to her, comes from a wealthy Chinese Singaporean family. The first book chronicles how Rachel meets Nick’s family for the first time in Singapore. The second novel reveals that Rachel is the illegitimate daughter of a Chinese billionaire and narrates her almost lethal poisoning at the hands of her half-brother’s girlfriend, Colette, who doesn’t want Rachel to be a future beneficiary of her father’s estate. The third novel focuses on the declining health and eventual death of Nick’s grandmother, the matriarch Su Yi (Ah Ma), and the family inheritance drama that subsequently transpires.

The chapters shift between the plot lines of numerous characters, and at the beginning of each book there is a detailed family tree that documents the various familial links between characters. My analysis focuses on the two protagonists, Rachel and Nick, as they are the main Chinese American characters, and from their positioning provide a largely U.S. perspective; this is especially the case with Rachel, as her “regular” upbringing and income make her a character to whom readers can more easily relate. In the trilogy, tea scenes show how the brew symbolises civility, morality, and a sense of superiority in ancient Chinese culture, and in English and U.S. culture during their times of expansion and empire in the last three hundred years. By bringing imperial tea

---

<sup>819</sup> Nicolaou, “Author Kevin Kwan.”

culture to fictional tea scenes, tea highlights an inter-imperial site of struggle as the brew is a symbol both of prestige and of colonial oppression.

Nick Young's family's business connections, marital alliances, western education, consumer choices, and social appearances are logically and communally decided upon to secure the family's prosperity. Rachel, who it is initially believed comes from a poor immigrant background and is too American due to her upbringing and lifestyle, is considered an unworthy match for Nick by his mother and grandmother.<sup>820</sup> Rachel's mother, Kerry, highlights the possible difficulties Rachel might face when meeting Nick's family as "these Overseas Chinese families can be even more traditional than we Mainland Chinese."<sup>821</sup>

Kerry foresees the conservative, Chinese family politics of Nick's family, which is combined with a specifically Singaporean cultural identity shaped by British colonialism and wealth. The Chinese Singaporeans show a great deal of snobbery towards Mainland China (excluding Hong Kong), and consider its inhabitants less cultured and less educated, and "tacky" in their tastes.<sup>822</sup> Despite this, the characters refer to themselves as "Chinese," and in so doing decide to associate with China's ancient philosophy and cultural heritage. In 2015, ethnically Chinese citizens constituted over 75% of Singapore's population.<sup>823</sup> However, Singapore was a colony under British rule between 1819 and 1942, and the population is also made up of citizens of Malay, Indian, and other descent. The country has four official languages: Malay, Mandarin, Tamil, and English. English is the lingua franca and the de facto main language.

The combination of Singapore's colonial heritage with its Chinese heritage is depicted when Rachel goes to Tyersall Park (the home of Nick's grandmother in Singapore) for tea with Nick's family. There are

delectable *nyonya kuehs* [Singaporean teatime staples], finger sandwiches, gemlike *pâte de fruits*, and fluffy golden-brown scones. A tea cart was rolled to them by one of the Thai lady's maids, and Rachel felt like she was hallucinating as she watched the maiden delicately pouring freshly steeped tea from a teapot intricately carved with multicoloured dragons. She had never had a more sumptuous tea service in her life.<sup>824</sup>

---

<sup>820</sup> Kevin Kwan, *Crazy Rich Asians* (Great Britain: Corvus, 2013), 350-352, 258-260.

<sup>821</sup> Kwan, *Crazy Rich*, 52.

<sup>822</sup> Kwan, *Crazy Rich*, 334.

<sup>823</sup> Amy Qin, "Worries Grow in Singapore Over China's Calls to Help 'Motherland'," *New York Times*, August 5, 2018, accessed July 4, 2020,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/05/world/asia/singapore-china.html>.

<sup>824</sup> Kwan, *Crazy Rich*, 117, 257.

There is no firm division here between traditionally Chinese, British, and French gastronomic traditions: what is depicted is therefore a fusion of different cultural customs to create a cultural identity that is uniquely wealthy Chinese Singaporean. Furthermore, Aiwaha Ong notes how affluent Asians in countries like Singapore may valorise ethnicity-based values to “allow the state to produce disciplinary knowledges and ideologically align family and state interests along a single moral continuum.”<sup>825</sup> In this scene, which has a culturally and geographically Asian background, with dragons on the teapot to emphasise a tangible link to Chinese heritage, Rachel is rejected at first due to her lack of a traditional East Asian upbringing. Her exclusion serves to present an air of superiority through a “best of both worlds” situation, as the legacy of British imperialism is combined with *ancient* Chinese philosophy and morality. Power and affluence are communicated through evoking the tea customs of past empires that employed the brew to signify their superiority.

The first book opens in 2010, with Nick and Rachel drinking tea in a New York café called Tea & Sympathy. Tea & Sympathy’s website boasts of serving “British comfort food and proper tea since 1991” on Greenwich Avenue.<sup>826</sup> Afternoon tea for two is currently priced at \$75.00.<sup>827</sup> The “British” experience is enjoyed by Rachel and Nick as she blows “softly on the surface of her steaming cup of tea [as they sit in] their usual window table.”<sup>828</sup> Then, Nick “slath[ers] jam and clotted cream onto a scone still warm from the oven.”<sup>829</sup> The habitual enjoyment of a British afternoon tea in New York exhibits a colonial approach to sampling Britain’s culture, as British tea culture is presented as transportable, with all its quaint intricacies intact. The tea ceremony displays how the power dynamic has switched, as historically white colonial goods and customs are now being purchased and sampled by ultra-rich people of Chinese descent, in a city in which their ancestors had previously been excluded and exoticized.

Indulging in British tea-drinking outside Britain continues in the second book, *China Rich Girlfriend* (2016), when Colette, a wealthy Chinese heiress,

---

<sup>825</sup> Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*, 151.

<sup>826</sup> Tea & Sympathy, “Tea & Sympathy,” accessed August 12, 2020, <https://www.teaandsympathy.com>.

<sup>827</sup> Tea & Sympathy, “Tea & Sympathy Menu,” accessed March 23, 2021, <https://www.teaandsympathy.com/menu#kDyBNz>.

<sup>828</sup> Kwan, *Crazy Rich*, 11.

<sup>829</sup> Kwan, *Crazy Rich*, 11.

invites Rachel to tea at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel (a historic and international chain of U.S. hotels that owes its existence to “Gilded Age” millionaires) in Singapore. She says how “fabulous high tea is here. You must try the scones—they’re just like the ones at Claridge’s.”<sup>830</sup> In this phrase British cultural customs remain the benchmark for quality. The characters exist within a consumerist free-market world, where identity is, as Lennard Davis phrases it, “activated by consumer choice.”<sup>831</sup> As with *Tea & Sympathy*, the refinement, expense, and ceremony of a British tea custom is enjoyed here, but now the setting is a luxury U.S. hotel in Singapore. This location presents the creation of a new cultural location where evocations of wealth and expensive tastes are valued above all else.

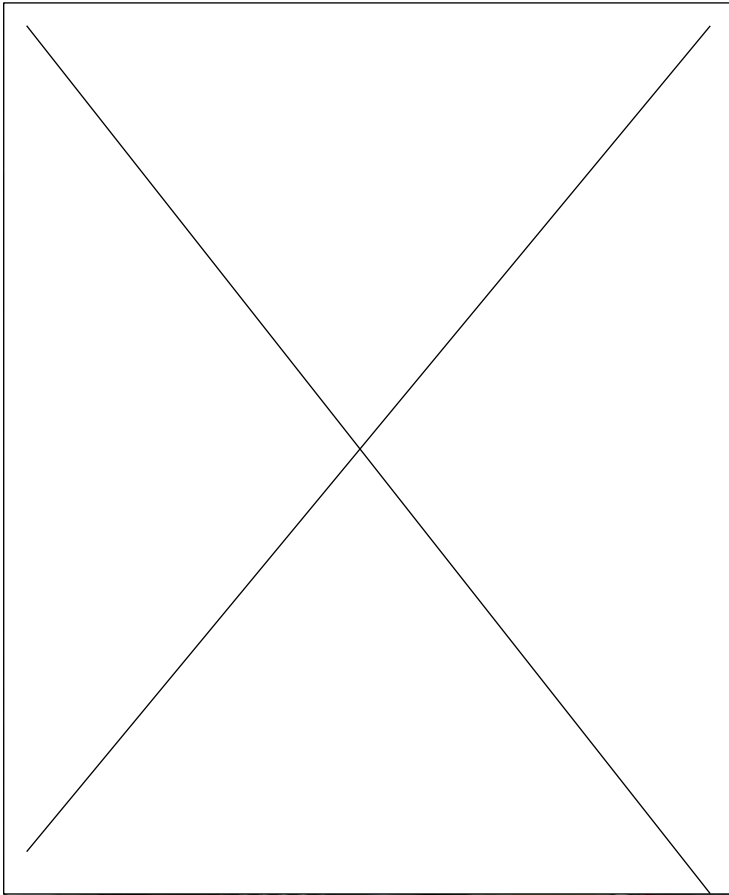
In the early twenty first century afternoon tea in major hotels became a craze, with customers willing to spend inordinate amounts on the experience.<sup>832</sup> Claridge’s is one of the most expensive hotels in London, with connections to the British Royal family. The Waldorf Astoria is a Hilton luxury U.S. hotel brand which boasts of its afternoon tea. By solely representing this phenomenon, with less expensive and less ornate tea ceremonies absent from the plot, Kwan illustrates in the twenty first century how the ultra-rich, with the convenience and speed of first-class (or private) travel, are creating an international community which unites its members through expensive tastes and lifestyles: creating a global community fuelled by money and void of a specific national identity. In doing so a richness and depth in cultural practices is lost, and its ornate presentation is shown to be inferior to the humble life of Rachel and Nick in New York who, for the most part, reject expensive things and enjoy the simple pleasures in life, as when they listen to buskers singing in the park and drink coffee in local cafés.

---

<sup>830</sup> Kevin Kwan, *China Rich Girlfriend* (Great Britain: Allen & Unwin, 2016), 367.

<sup>831</sup> Lennard Davis, *The End of Normal: Identity in a Biocultural Era* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2013), 3.

<sup>832</sup> Pettigrew and Richardson, *A Social History of Tea*, 228



6.1 An untitled photograph taken of afternoon tea at Tea & Sympathy. Posted on the website *Oh, How Civilised*, January 16, 2021.

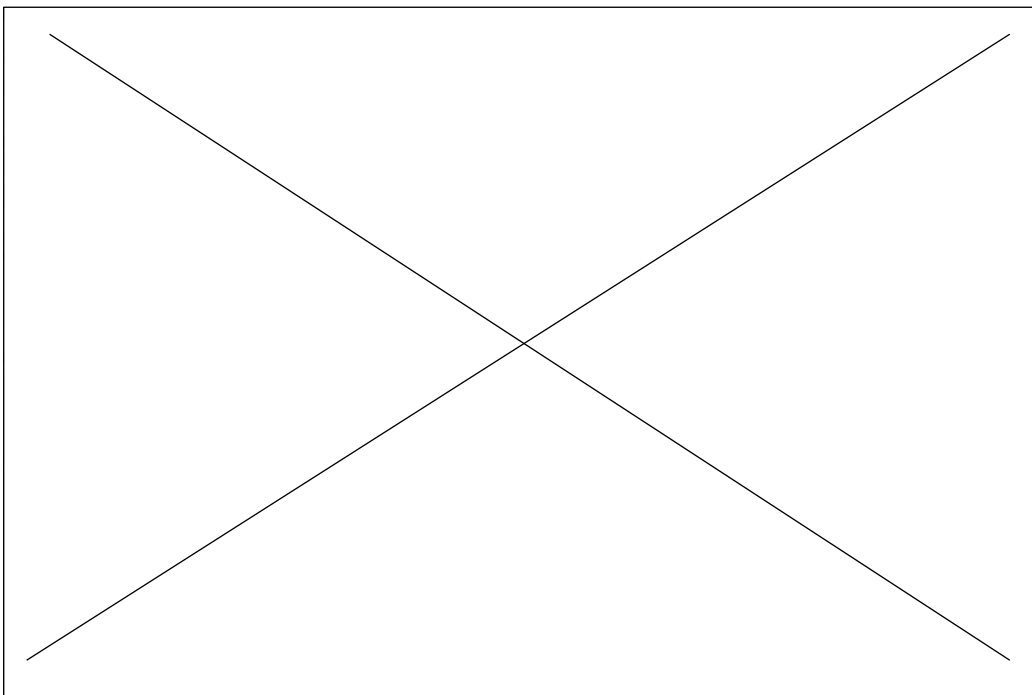


Figure 6.2 A photograph of the interior of Tea & Sympathy and its owners Nicky Perry and Sean Kavanagh-Dowsett, taken by Helayne Seidman.

While Nick has tea with Rachel in *Tea & Sympathy*, Nick reflects on “the best in the world” scones at his Ah Ma’s house in Singapore.<sup>833</sup> Rachel is surprised by this as “she tried to imagine a traditional Chinese grandmother preparing this quintessentially English confection.”<sup>834</sup> At this point, Rachel is unaware of his family’s wealth. In the third book, during another visit to *Tea & Sympathy*,

Nick looked down at his cup of tea. The saucer was emblazoned with an image of Queen Elizabeth II, and seeing the gold patterning at the edge of the porcelain suddenly took him back to a memory of Tyersall Park [his Ah Ma’s home], of sitting in the ornate eighteenth-century French pavilion over-looking the lotus pond with his grandmother when he was six years old, being taught how to properly pour a cup of tea for a lady. He could remember how heavy the Longquan celadon teapot felt in his hands, as he carefully lifted it toward the teacup. *If the butler doesn’t notice that her cup needs to be refilled, you must do it for her. But never lift the cup away from the saucer when pouring, and be sure the spout is turned away from her*, his grandmother had instructed.<sup>835</sup>

The image of a Chinese grandmother making Chinese delicacies is replaced by an archetypally British tea ceremony in a café that prides itself on providing a British experience with lots of British food and drink for sale (see fig. 6.1 & 6.2). The image of Elizabeth II in New York, combined with the assumption of a butler’s presence in Singapore, presents how, through culture, the Chinese Singaporeans have surpassed the European West; the restaurant’s cup is, very likely, inexpensive, replaceable, and relatively new compared to the aristocratic finery and history of the eighteenth-century pavilion, lotus pond, and ancient teapot at his Ah Ma’s. Contrary to capitalist ideas, Ah Ma shows how you cannot buy respect, customs, location, and utensils which have taken generations to secure. Longquan celadon are green ceramics that were made in China between 950 and 1550. The lotus is a significant flower in Chinese culture, since it symbolises Buddha’s seat, as well as purity in both mind and body. The mention of a butler and the French pavilion point to the colonial heritage that complements, but does not dominate, their cultural practices. The representation of a culture which is deeply rooted in the past highlights the comparatively shallow roots of white American culture. However, Ah Ma’s teapot’s antiquity, which is rooted in Chinese history, emphasises a cultural identity which is ultimately on

---

<sup>833</sup> Kwan, *Crazy Rich*, 12.

<sup>834</sup> Kwan, *Crazy Rich*, 12.

<sup>835</sup> Kevin Kwan, *Rich People Problems* (New York: Doubleday, 2017), 47.

the brink of decline, as the younger generation overall are shown to value commodified western culture including tea in the Waldorf Astoria, scones from Claridge's, and a Mad Hatter's Tea Party-themed wedding party. Consequently, Ah Ma's cultural identity is presented as fascinating but ultimately rigid and uninviting for the younger generation.

In many ways, wealthy Chinese Singaporeans are shown to do things better than the West by holding on to Chinese morality within their capitalist society. Astrid, Nick's first cousin, is described as "pouring tea like Princess Diana" by a distant cousin.<sup>836</sup> By referring to Astrid as appearing like Britain's most globally admired and loved Princess of the last hundred years, the narrative evokes the "yellow peril" threat as these new "super-rich Asians" are shown to adopt British customs and "do them better." Through adaptation and wealth, the Singaporean Chinese are depicted as consuming and surpassing Europe through their wealth and cultural diversity. The United States is not part of this cultural landscape, and so American readers can voyeuristically consume the old "yellow peril" tropes of excessive consumption and domination by the East of the West. However, the leaving behind of the "American Century" and start of the "Chinese Century" cannot be completely ignored and thus, the underlying threat of this shift in power fuels curiosity and a desire to "know your enemy."

The enjoyment of tea is not limited to British customs. In Paris, Nick and Rachel join Colette and others for tea and *pains au chocolat* in the Jardin du Luxembourg.

Colette explained: "These *pains au chocolat* are from Gérard Mulot. They are my favourite, but the problem is they don't have a sit-down café there. And I can only eat my *pain au chocolat* while sipping a good cup of tea. But the decent tea places don't have *pain au chocolat* as good as this, [so to solve the situation I must] resort to a switcheroo."<sup>837</sup>

The combining of particular items, in specific locations, all of which have been selected carefully, is used to express tasteful superiority. In Jodhpur, India, Nick joins Astrid for tea and she says: "This is a Nilgiri from the Dunsandle Tea Estate in South India...I hope you like it."<sup>838</sup> The specificity of the type of tea consumed is paramount. Though culture is no longer restricted to national borders, the tea

---

<sup>836</sup> Kwan, *Rich People*, 215.

<sup>837</sup> Kwan, *China Rich*, 250.

<sup>838</sup> Kwan, *Rich People*, 154

consumed and the desired customs in which the characters wish to partake, rest on a combination of details relating to tea type, the accompanying food, the ambience, and the quality of the tea.

Ah Ma's tea-drinking is always presented as expensive. Her favourite tea, da hong pao tea ("big red robe" tea), from the Muyi Mountains, is one of the rarest teas in the world, and costs \$1,400 per gram; Kwan also points out in a footnote that "the tea [is] worth thirty times its weight in gold."<sup>839</sup> Ah Ma's prestigious tea ceremonies, often serviced by Thai maids, are shown to rest on connections to peerage, selectivity, and wealth. They also support Lynn Pan's observation that diasporic identities, particularly for people of Chinese descent, are often regional or connected to a certain village.<sup>840</sup> Ah Ma's tea from the Muyi Mountains points to the specificity of diasporic identities, and how they often only identify with *ancient* Chinese culture, philosophy, and customs. It is only through particularity, wealth, and peerage that Kwan displays the consumption of tea as fulfilling: a scenario that symbolises the exclusivity and wealth of the Singaporean characters' cultural customs.

Rachel's and Nick's decision to reject the ornate and ludicrously wealthy lifestyle of Nick's family and friends in Singapore is symbolised through choosing coffee over tea. Rachel is a Chinese American, as is Nick in essence, since he chooses to live and work in New York and has had a western education (British schooling followed by Oxford University). Their decision to live relatively humbly in New York, and their choice of coffee over tea at several points in the novel, highlights their "Americanness" as more liberal, more equal, and more welcoming.<sup>841</sup>

Culturally, coffee is part of the fabric of U.S. society. The world's largest coffeehouse chain, Starbucks, is American and was founded in Seattle in 1971. Coffee is also the fuel of New York City (N.Y.C.), with coffee shops on almost every corner. By choosing coffee over tea on numerous occasions, Rachel and Nick align themselves intrinsically with the lifestyle and social patterns of N.Y.C. Different types of tea, and indulging in their specificity, are presented throughout the novels by Singaporeans in Paris, London, Singapore, China, and India—but

---

<sup>839</sup> Kwan, *Rich People*, 200.

<sup>840</sup> Pan, *Sons of the Yellow Emperor*, 12–13, 21.

<sup>841</sup> Kwan, *China Rich*, 172; Kwan, *Rich People*, 354.



not in the United States, except for the British tea experience at Tea & Sympathy. By usually choosing coffee, geographically Rachel and Nick culturally align themselves with N.Y.C. This identification mirrors the same specificity other characters have shown regarding the regions and customs with which they identify, and as such points to the paradox of globalisation and geographically specific cultural identities.

Throughout the books, tea-drinking is never represented as American, and in many ways serves as a reassurance against the archetypal “yellow peril” fear of Chinese invasion and monopoly, as the Chinese consume limited aspects of European culture and show little interest in U.S. culture. This is symbolised when Singaporean relatives are confused and shocked at how Rachel and Nick prefer coffee over tea. In a conversation with Nick’s family in Singapore,

Rachel jumped into the conversation. ‘Some people really can’t function without their coffee. In New York, I have to grab my usual cup at Joe Coffee on the way to work or I won’t be able to get through the morning.’

‘I’ll never understand you coffee people.’ Victoria tut-tutted as she carefully stirred her cup of tea made from GFBOP [Golden Flowery Broken Orange Pekoe] Orthodox leaves she had flown in every month from a special reserve estate in Tanzania.<sup>842</sup>

The gap here between hard work and luxurious indulgence is starkly represented. Joe Coffee is a standard-price café chain in New York City (coffee prices range between \$2.50 and \$4.75). The monetary comparison stresses that the tastes of New Yorkers are modest and unassuming, compared to the indulgent and snobbish tastes of the Chinese elite. However, the possibility of Joe Coffee being equally, if not more, exploitative of its labour force (compared to Victoria’s Tanzanian workers) emphasises the systematic exploitation of foreign workers within the capitalist and consumerist societies of Singapore and the United States. Though this may not be the message Kwan wishes to convey, the hypocrisy is evident. It is clear that the coffee presents New York’s “Americanness” in its most idealised sense: with hustle and bustle, and the drive to make one’s own way in the world.

James Lyons’s study of Starbucks reflects on how the company’s advertising literature has never lost sight of its North-western origins.<sup>843</sup> Unlike

---

<sup>842</sup> Kwan, *Rich People*, 284.

<sup>843</sup> James Lyons, *Selling Seattle* (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), 151.

with tea in the United States, one is able to, as Lyons puts it, “Sell Seattle” through coffee. Indeed, Michael Smith emphasises how “Starbucks has cultivated an image as a Pacific Northwest phenomenon.”<sup>844</sup> Lyons documents how, in the 1990s, Seattle became well-known for its coffee culture, evidenced through articles and tourist guides stating how “Seattle-style coffee” is an “art form.”<sup>845</sup> The cultural affiliation and sense of ownership the United States can feel in relation to coffee has never been replicated with tea. Though coffee sellers may, at times, highlight the beans’ origins in Latin America, with tea its East Asian origins and British imperial heritage place the brew as belonging elsewhere. Compared to Victoria (Nick’s aunt who lives at Tyersall Park), Rachel is presented as a hardworking independent woman. Victoria, on the other hand, embodies a pretentious and self-obsessed outlook which is signified by her expensive and exclusive tea.

The U.S. food critic Robert Sietsema writes about New York that it would be “snoozing ‘round the clock if it weren’t for coffee [with the] New Yorker [ungluing their] eyes with a double latte.”<sup>846</sup> Sietsema indulges in a clichéd popular depiction of New York as a city of workaholic coffee drinkers. By contrast, Victoria’s tea characterises the particularity of a custom and the obscene wealth and self-indulgence of its elite consumers—a spectacle that is both fascinating and ludicrous for readers to behold. As Kuan-Yi Chen notes, Rachel’s financial individualism “is not only not Chinese enough, but also violates the gendered logic of citizenship.”<sup>847</sup> Chen is referring to Ong’s concept of flexible citizenship which stipulates that mainly economic reasons now drive people’s choice on citizenship. Ong contends that this structure of citizenship rests on a male vision where women’s role in nation forming is decidedly domestic for the most part; this is depicted in *Crazy Rich Asians*, with Rachel and her mother the only businesswomen reliant on their financial earnings. In Nick’s family, Rachel’s career aspirations are not welcome, since the women are, as Nick’s mother Eleanor points out, supposed to hold domestic positions or do charitable work.

---

<sup>844</sup> Michael D. Smith, “The Empire Filters Back: Consumption, Production, and the Politics of Starbucks Coffee,” *Urban Geography* 17, no. 6 (1996): 502-525, DOI: 10.2747/0272-3638.17.6.502, quoted in Lyons, *Selling Seattle*, 151.

<sup>845</sup> Lyons, *Selling Seattle*, 152.

<sup>846</sup> Robert Sietsema, *Secret New York: The Unique Guidebook to New York’s Hidden Sites, Sounds & Tastes* (Ontario, Toronto: ECW Press, 1999), 60.

<sup>847</sup> Kuan-Yi Chen, “Locating Asianness,” 234.

Therefore, though readers may be envious of the Chinese Singaporeans' wealth and luxury, the moral high ground is presented as patriotically American, since women are portrayed as freer and able to pursue their professional ambitions (and be rewarded for this) in the United States.

Coffee symbolises U.S. industrialism, compared to tea, which sparked the American Revolutionary War due to high taxes. Coffee has its own cultural space in the United States separate from other national cultures, namely filter coffee (with the French and Italians often labelling U.S. coffee as an abomination). While staying at Tyersall Park, Rachel's desire for coffee expresses a homesickness for New York and her lifestyle there. In doing so, she rejects the rich pan-Asian identity network and instead values her U.S. home comforts:

Before Rachel was even fully awake, she could smell the coffee. The aroma of the Homacho Waeno beans she loved so much roasted, ground, and poured into a French press with boiling water. But wait a minute—she was still in Singapore, and the one thing that wasn't absolute perfection at Tyersall Park was the coffee. Rachel opened her eyes and saw her usual breakfast tray [...with] the beautiful silver curves of the Mappin & Webb teapot glinting against the morning light [...]<sup>848</sup>

Rachel is not impressed or intoxicated by excessive wealth: instead, she values her U.S. lifestyle characterised by drinking coffee made in a simple French press compared to tea from a designer teapot. The one thing that is not perfect there is the coffee, which shows how no amount of finery will supersede the pleasure of a coffee. The inability of Rachel to become affected by the wealth and grandeur of her surroundings presents her moral high ground rooted in her mother's U.S. immigrant story which tells of a journey that took them from poverty to employment, education, and living in comfort. However, perhaps unwittingly, the coffee is also indicative of inter-imperiality with the Ethiopian beans and French press, to an extent, signifying France's imperial legacy.<sup>849</sup> Therefore, despite the focus on the difference between a Chinese American and Chinese Singaporean identity, the overlapping influence of traditional imperial cultural customs, the romanticisation of faraway produce and objects, an investment in details, and the idea of exclusivity, all emphasise their similar cultural viewpoints.

---

<sup>848</sup> Kwan, *Rich People*, 373.

<sup>849</sup> Though France colonised many countries in Africa, Ethiopia was never one of them.

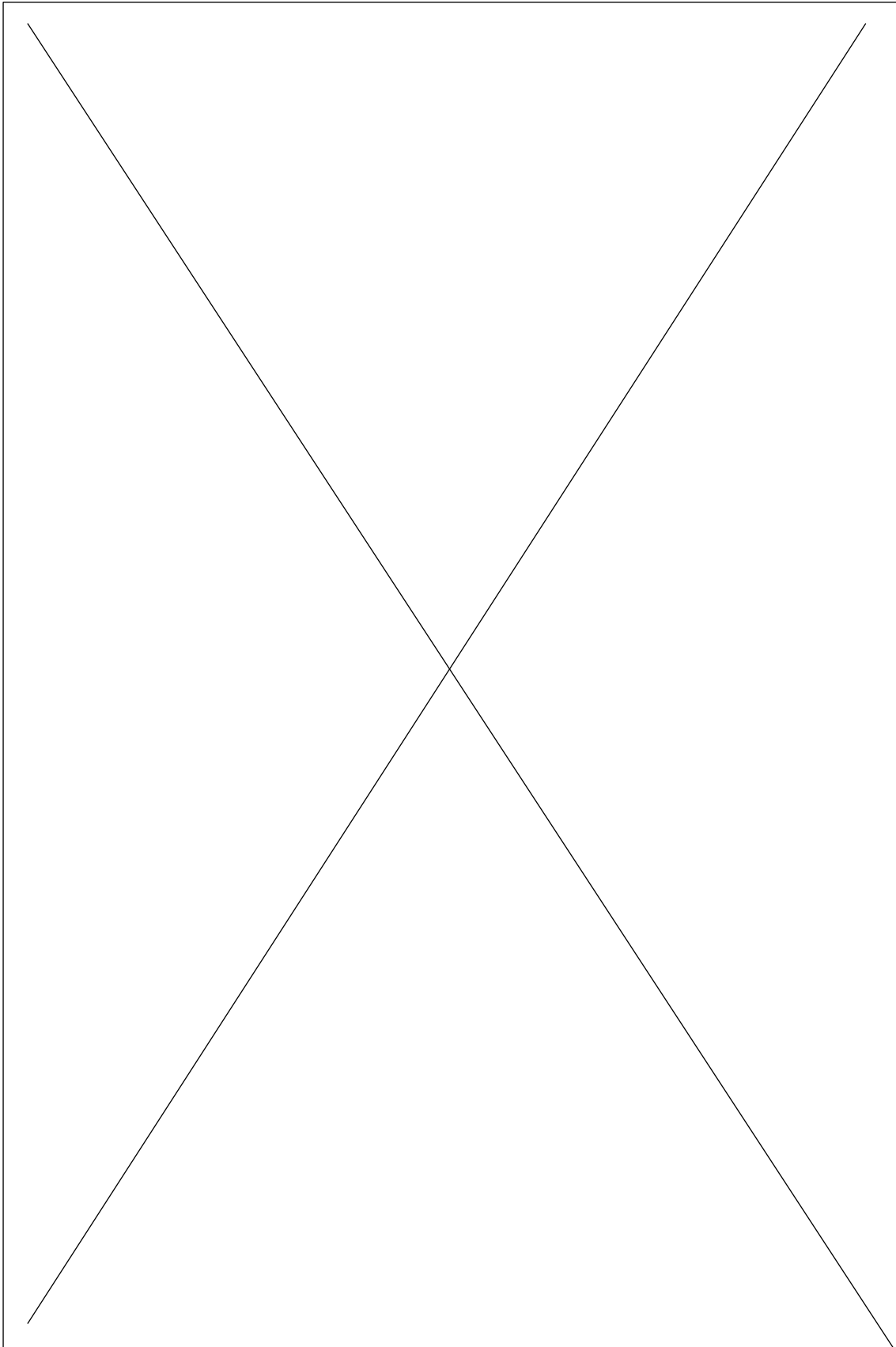


Figure 6.3 “The Coming Man,” May 20, 1881, by George Frederick Keller, *The San Francisco Wasp*. Published one year before the Chinese Exclusion Act came into effect on May 6, 1882.

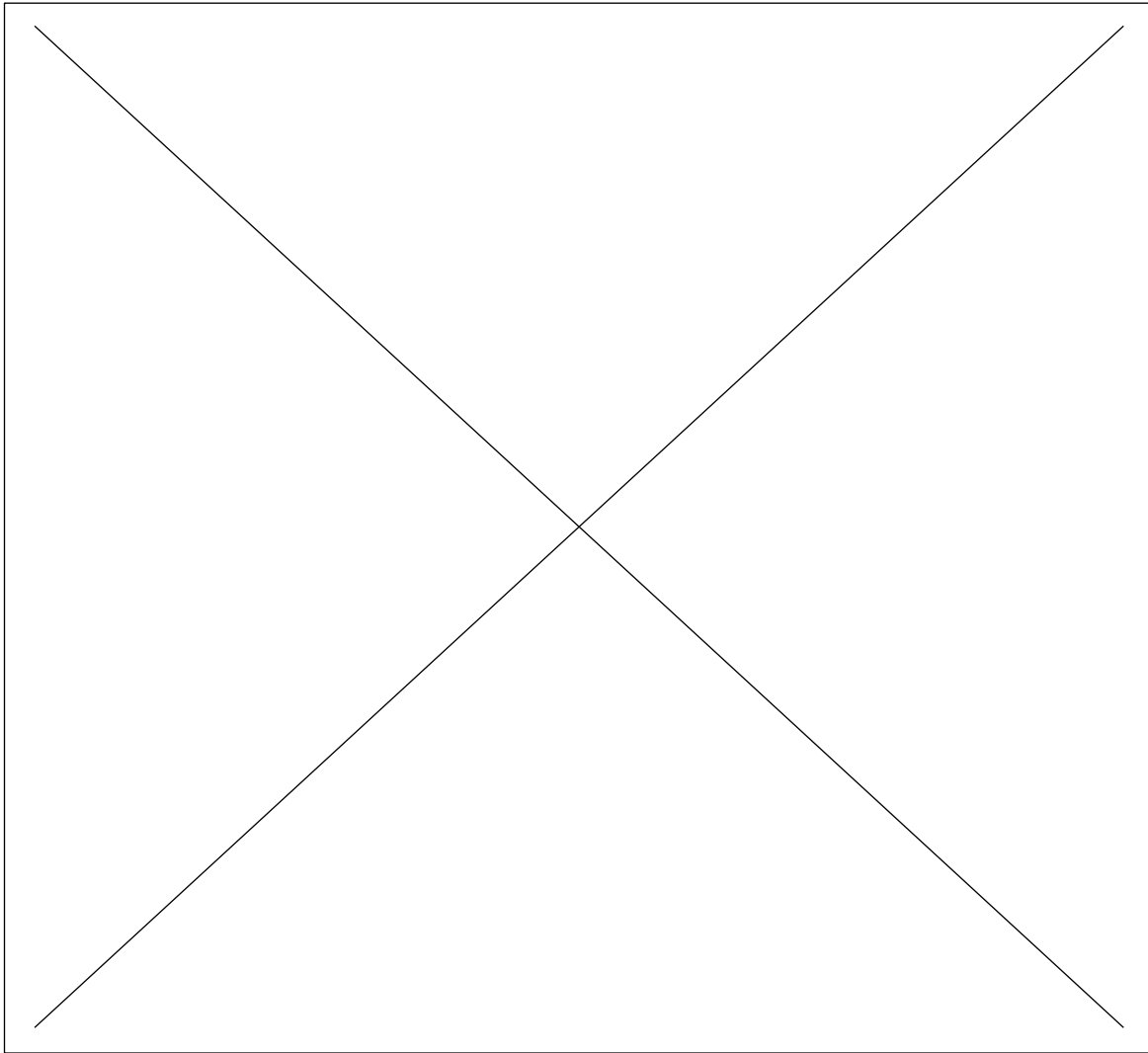


Figure 6.4 This mid-nineteenth century San Franciscan anti-Chinese cartoon negatively depicts Irish and Chinese immigrants overtaking (consuming) the United States, which is symbolised by the Uncle Sam figure. By the end it is clear that the Chinese are seen as the worst of all, as they are capable of “consuming” all who come in their path (even their luggage). “The Great Fear of the Period: That Uncle Sam may be Swallowed by Foreigners: The Problem Solved” (San Francisco: White & Bauer, c.1860-1869).

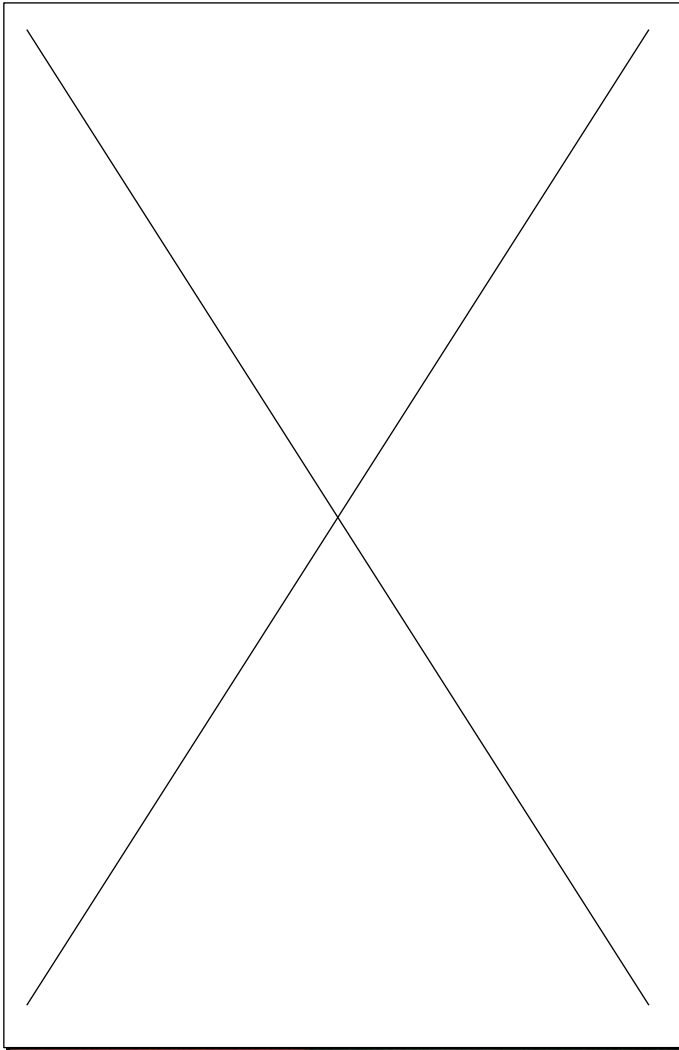


Figure 6.5 A film poster for *The Return of Dr. Fu Manchu* (1930).

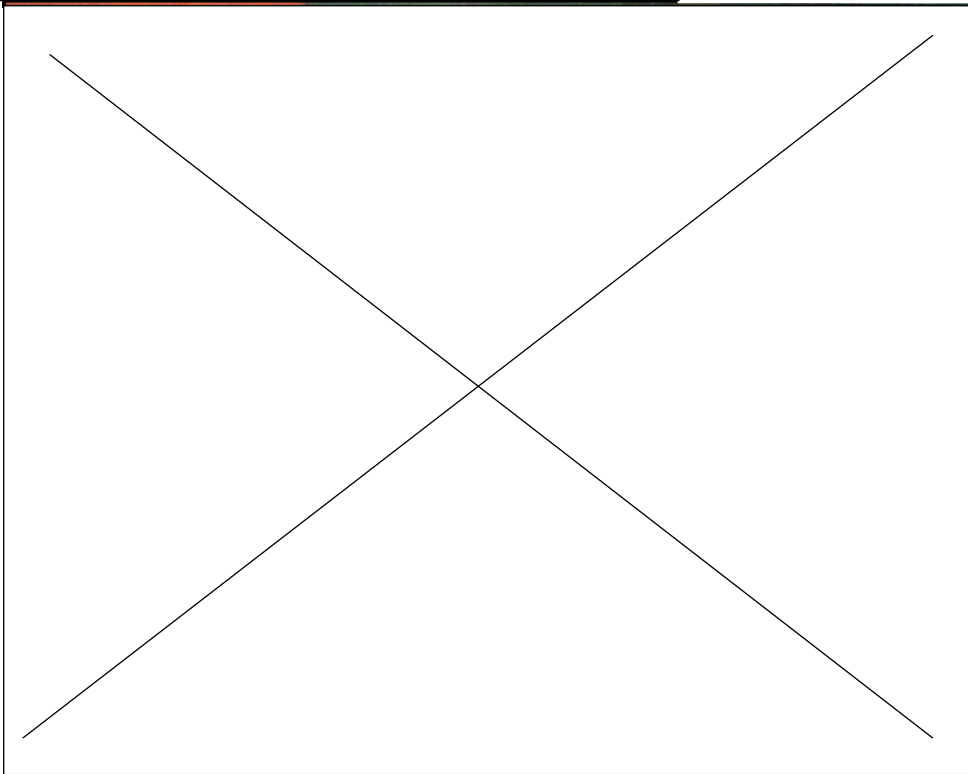


Figure 6.6 An advertisement for the film *The Return of Dr. Fu Manchu* (1930).

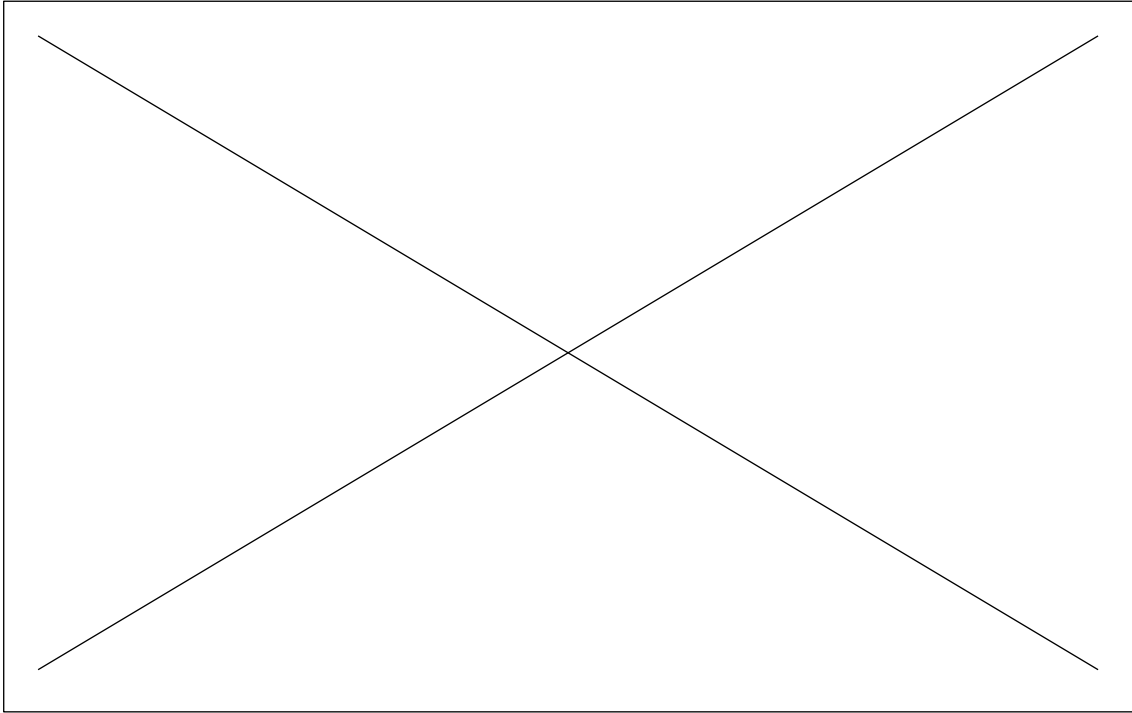


Figure 6.7 A photograph taken by Steven Senne of members of the Massachusetts's Asian American Commission, outside the statehouse in Boston, protesting against the racism directed towards Asians during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The only tea drunk in England is the “morning tea” of Eleanor, Nick’s mother, in Hyde Park. If anything, the lack of description which accompanies Eleanor’s consumption emphasises how cultural customs, especially those that arise in imperial nations, are often enjoyed outside the country of origin, and come to display wealth and power in the world’s subsequent leading nations. The concept of consuming other cultures aligns with the “yellow peril” fear of the Chinese coming to the United States and “consuming” the nation. This fear can be traced back to anti-Chinese cartoons from the nineteenth century which depict the Chinese as an invading and indomitable race that will take over the United States (see fig. 6.3 & 6.4). Racist depictions of the Chinese continue in the twentieth century, with villains like Fu Manchu presented as desiring to conquer and/or “contaminate” the white race. The scared white couple in a poster for the film *The Return of Dr. Fu Manchu* (1930), directed by Rowland V. Lee, feeds into fears of “miscegenation” and domination (see fig. 6.5 & 6.6). In the film, Fu Manchu wishes to get revenge by killing the people he believes are responsible for the death of his family. The film posters reflect the fear of the happy white couple (symbolic of all white heterosexual couples) being destroyed and held culpable for crimes they did not commit, with the blonde damsel-in-distress figure

highlighting fears of “miscegenation” and corruption. The representation of “yellow peril” here is similar to what we see in the novelette *The Second Generation* by Camilla Kenyon. The labelling of COVID-19 the “Chinese virus” by Donald Trump continues the harmful “yellow peril” narrative of the Chinese being an insidious and alien race wishing to dominate the world (see fig. 6.7).<sup>850</sup> Anti-Asian crime has increased drastically in the United States since the start of the pandemic: for instance, an elderly Chinese American woman was slapped and set on fire in New York, and the Atlanta spa shootings, which took place on March 23rd 2021, led to the murders of six women of Asian descent (and two others).<sup>851</sup>

Kwan capitalises on the established “yellow peril” fear of Chinese domination by presenting how rich ethnically Chinese individuals are buying up European jewels, art, real estate, and business. This is evidenced during a Singaporean wedding when, after the traditional Chinese wedding tea ceremony, the party moves to Fort Canning Park where, “In the centre, an immense teapot spouted a waterfall of bubbly champagne into a cup the size of a small swimming pool [and they were] transported to a tea party for giants.”<sup>852</sup> One guest wonders “is this supposed to be the Mad Hatter’s tea party or Marie Antoinette on a bad acid trip?”<sup>853</sup> The ludicrous expense and commodification of Northern European culture contrasts with the awe and reverence found in tea scenes with Ah Ma. The younger generation are shown to be veering away from their predecessors’ approach—of valuing ancient and historic cultural practices—and instead are shown to be adapting, combining, and commodifying culture in ways that make it appear relevant in the lives of the new young and global elite.

---

<sup>850</sup> Lauren Aratani, “‘Coughing while Asian’: living in fear as racism feeds off coronavirus panic,” *The Guardian*, March 24, 2020, accessed April 12, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/24/coronavirus-us-asian-americans-racism>; Masood Farivar, “Anti-Asian Hate Crime Crosses Racial and Ethnic Lines,” *VOA News*, March 23, 2021, accessed March 24, 2021, <https://www.voanews.com/usa/anti-asian-hate-crime-crosses-racial-and-ethnic-lines>; Nina Storchlic, “America’s long history of scapegoating its Asian citizens,” *National Geographic*, September 2, 2020, accessed December 20, 2020, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/09/asian-american-racism-covid/>; Sabrina Tavernise and Richard A. Opper Jr., “Spit on, Yelled at, Attacked: Chinese-Americans Fear for their Safety,” *New York Times*, June 2, 2020, accessed December 20, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/23/us/chinese-coronavirus-racist-attacks.html>.

<sup>851</sup> George Wright, “China Mac: From Attempted Murder to Leading a Protest Movement,” *BBC News*, February 11, 2021, accessed May 19, 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-55945949>; “8 Dead in Atlanta Spa Shootings,” *New York Times*.

<sup>852</sup> Kwan, *Crazy Rich*, 286.

<sup>853</sup> Kwan, *Crazy Rich*, 287.



To choose coffee is to break away from Chinese heritage. Throughout the trilogy, traditional Chinese tea-drinking is practised predominantly by the older generation who value the art of ritual and the specifics of their Chinese tea blends.<sup>854</sup> However, rejecting tea goes beyond claiming an American identity, since it also serves as a symbolic form of protection against the Asiatic unknown. When Rachel goes to China for the first time she is poisoned by tea. Rachel, unaware of her poisoning, enjoys a boat ride on the famous West Lake in Hangzhou.

the boat drifted slowly under one of the romantic stone bridges [...]  
[the boatman says] 'Hangzhou was a favored retreat of the emperors for five thousand years—Marco Polo called it the City of Heaven,' [...]  
'I would have to agree with him,' Rachel said, taking another long, slow sip of the freshly roasted Longjing tea that the boatman had prepared for her.<sup>855</sup>

Rachel is enthralled by the setting and she agrees with Peik Lin that Hangzhou is "China's answer to Lake Como."<sup>856</sup> The tea they enjoy is renowned for its quality and is produced in Longjing Village in Hangzhou. Not long after the boat ride ends, Rachel's health deteriorates; she decides to rest in her room and hours later she is found by Peik Lin in the marble bathroom "lying unconscious in a pool of dark green bile."<sup>857</sup> Rachel is rushed to the hospital and nearly dies because her kidneys shut down and she falls into multi-organ failure. Only through being air-ambulated to a Hong Kong hospital, obtaining the best medical care, and receiving a floral arrangement with a note (revealing what she has been poisoned by) does Rachel survive; the note says that Rachel has been poisoned by a fictitious drug "Tarquinomid" and if she values her life she should never return to China.<sup>858</sup> It is much later on that an investigation reveals that the boatman was actually an assassin assigned by Colette (her half-brother's girlfriend) to poison Rachel's tea.<sup>859</sup> The combination of an exotic and beautiful location, a maliciously planned poisoning, a Chinese tea, and an unassuming American tourist clearly

---

<sup>854</sup> Kwan, *China Rich*, 233; Kwan, *Crazy Rich*, 230-231; Kwan, *Rich People*, 57.

<sup>855</sup> Kwan, *China Rich*, 309.

<sup>856</sup> Kwan, *China Rich*, 310.

<sup>857</sup> Kwan, *China Rich*, 314.

<sup>858</sup> Kwan, *China Rich*, 321.

<sup>859</sup> Kwan, *China Rich*, 353.

draws on the historic U.S. “yellow peril” apprehensions of adulterated tea and Chinese villains.

The concept of tea being dangerous or poisonous can be traced back to the brew symbolising colonial oppression in the revolutionary United States. Leading up to and during the American Revolution, articles and pamphlets characterised tea as “*enslaving and poisoning ALL the AMERICANS.*”<sup>860</sup> Fearmongering around tea-drinking continues to this day, with news outlets, including *CNN* and *Woman’s Day*, publishing material on tea’s possible toxicity.<sup>861</sup> In fiction concerning Chinese characters, the employment of tea as a dangerous substance is evidenced in “The Wisdom of the New” by Sui Sin Far, and *The Flower Drum Song* by Lee. In both texts, tea is adulterated to overpower men and ultimately, in Kwan’s trilogy as well, to depict desperate and underestimated women who use the seemingly innocuous brew to gain power.

Throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty first, tea has been used in U.S. culture in remarkably flexible, and sometimes paradoxical, ways. It alternately signifies both health and toxicity, refinement and barbarity, femininity and masculinity, feminism and sexism, and acceptance and exclusion. The use of tea to present luxurious lifestyles and white American supremacy through a Eurocentric custom was popular in the early twentieth century with the rise of neo-colonialism, oriental tastes, and tea rooms. However, tea also presents the barbarous opposite: businesses (the Union and Pacific Tea Co.), writers of “yellow peril” fiction (Camilla Kenyon), and cartoonists (Thomas Nast) employed tea to stress the idea that Chinese immigrants could “poison” the nation’s physical health and Christian morality. Eventually, tea became a household brew in the 1950s and 1960s, thereby stressing the suburban ideal, while also being employed by the counterculture in an effort to rejuvenate “lost” white American masculinities.

The positioning of tea as a feminine brew in U.S. society meant that it could be employed in literature to present Chinese men as effeminate: Charlie Chan in *The Chinese Parrot* is a prime example. Despite this process, Pardee Lowe, C.

---

<sup>860</sup> Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*, 301; Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire*, 54.

<sup>861</sup> Johanzynn Gatewood, “Woman dies after drinking poisonous herbal tea,” *CNN*, March 21, 2017, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/03/21/health/poisoned-herbal-tea-death-san-francisco/index.html>; Tori Rodriguez, “New Studies Reveal that Certain Teas Pose Dangerous Health Risks,” *Woman’s Day*, December 23, 2015, accessed May 14, 2018, <https://www.womansday.com/health-fitness/wellness/a53159/dangers-of-tea/>.

Y. Lee, and Louis Chu include tea scenes in their texts to counteract the feminisation of Chinese men as they portray, above all, the changing but ultimately constant presence of Chinese patriarchy in Chinatowns. The efforts to rehabilitate Chinese American masculinity have existed alongside efforts to counteract reductive stereotypes of Chinese American women. In texts by Sui Sin Far, Jade Snow Wong, Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, and Mei Ng, tea scenes emphasise the determination, resilience, and complexity of Chinese women, along with the importance of unity and understanding in their fights for better, more equal, lives.

To narrate the lives of Chinese Americans, as well as to counter “yellow peril” fiction and racist stereotypes, Chinese American writers have utilised tea’s rich heritage as a drink with religious, social, political, and health connotations and properties in order to present the impacts of exclusionary laws on men and women, the formation and overcoming of generational divides, and the development of Chinese American diasporic communities and identities. The creation in the twenty first century of new blends and types of tea, from Bruce Tea to Charlie Chan Cha, indicates the continuation of clashing narratives that can present or contest the “worth” and acceptance of Chinese Americans in the United States.

## Works Cited

- Adams, Bella. *Asian American Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008.
- Adelson, Joseph. "Is Women's Lib a Passing Fad?" *New York Times Magazine*. March 19, 1972, 94.
- Ali, Monica. "The burden of representation." *The Guardian*. July 13, 2003. Accessed February 9, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/jul/13/fiction.features>.
- Allen, Theodore. *The Invention of the White Race: Racial Oppression and Social Control*. Vol. 1. New York: Verso, 2012.
- American Federation of Labor. *Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion, Meat vs. Rice, American Manhood Against Asiatic Coolieism, Which Shall Survive?* Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902.
- The American Gulliver and Chinese Lilliputians: SHALL THE LAST SPIKE BE DRIVEN?* Cartoon. In *Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion, Meat vs. Rice, American Manhood Against Asiatic Coolieism, Which Shall Survive?* Washington D.C.: The American Federation of Labor, 1902. Front cover.
- American Suffragette* (reprinted from the *New York Tribune*). "Tilt with Police." December 1909, 18.
- Anderson, Linda. *Autobiography*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Ang, Ien. *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asian and the West*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999.
- Appadurai, Arjun. "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value." In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Edited by Arjun Appadurai, 3-63. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Aratani, Lauren. "'Coughing while Asian': living in fear as racism feeds off coronavirus panic." *The Guardian*. March 24, 2020. Accessed January 12, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/24/coronavirus-us-asian-americans-racism>.
- Argosy Weekly*. *They would only let him peep at her through the devil screen, but still she seemed to smile*. Illustration. May 13, 1939, 72.
- The Associated Press. "Rich sales for 'Crazy Rich Asians' books." *The Seattle Times*, September 17, 2018. Accessed June 2, 2020.

<https://www.seattletimes.com/business/rich-sales-for-crazy-rich-asians-books/>.

Avey, Toni. "The Caffeinated History of Coffee." *PBS*. April 8, 2013. Accessed June 28, 2020. <https://www.pbs.org/food/the-history-kitchen/history-coffee/>.

Baldwin, Clive. *Anxious Men: Masculinity in American Fiction of the Mid-Twentieth Century*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020.

Barboza, David. "China Passes Japan as Second-Largest Economy." *The New York Times*. August 15, 2010. Accessed February 12, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/16/business/global/16yuan.html>.

Baritz, Loren. *City on a Hill: A History of Ideas and Myths in America*. New York: Wiley, 1964.

Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Translated by Annette Lavers. London: Vintage, 1993.

Baxandall, Rosalyn and Elizabeth Ewen. *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

Beckert, Sven. *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*. London: Penguin Books, 2014.

Beckley, Michael. "China Century? Why America's Edge Will Endure." *International Security* 36, no. 3 (Winter 2011/12): 41–78. [muse.jhu.edu/article/461859](https://muse.jhu.edu/article/461859).

Belasco, Warren. *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1989.

Bell Jr, Derrick A. "Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma." *Harvard Law Review* 93, no. 3 (January 1980): 518-533. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1340546>.

"Who's Afraid of Critical Race Theory?" *University of Illinois Law Review* 1995, no. 4 (1995): 893-910.

Belletto, Steven. *The Beats: A Literary History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Benn, James. "Buddhism, Alcohol, and Tea in Medieval China." In *Of Tripod and Palate*. Edited by Roel Sterckx, 213-236. New York: Macmillan, 2005.

*Tea in China: A Religious and Cultural History*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2015.

- Bennett, Robert A. *The Bohemians: American Adventures from Bret Harte's Overland Monthly*. Walla Walla, Washington: Pioneer, 1987.
- Berg, Allison. *Mothering the Race: Women's Narratives on Reproduction, 1890-1930*. Chicago: University of Illinois, 2002.
- Berlant, Lauren. *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Berlin, Isaiah. "Two Concepts of Liberty." In *Four Essays on Liberty*, 118-192. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Bernard, Ian. *Queer Race: Cultural Interventions in the Racial Politics of Queer Theory*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2004.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge Classics, 2004.
- Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Bierowski, Thomas R. *Kerouac in Ecstasy: Shamanic Expressions in the Writings*. North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2011.
- Biggers, Earl Derr. *The Chinese Parrot*. Philadelphia: The Curtis Publishing Company, 1926; New York: Bantam Books, 1974.
- The House Without a Key*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1925; New York, Bantam, 1974.
- Bill, Roger. "Traveller or tourist? Jack Kerouac and the Commodification of Culture." *Dialectical Anthropology* 34, no. 3 (September 2010): 395-417. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10624-010-9157-y>.
- Birkle, Carmen. "Orientalism in "Fin-de-Siècle" America." *American Studies* 51, no. 3 (2006): 323-342. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41158235>.
- Bonneaud, Jacques. *Fu-Manchou*. 1929. Film poster. IMDb. Accessed June 30, 2019. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0020197/mediaviewer/rm4025617664>.
- Bow, Leslie. *Betrayal and Other Acts of Subversion: Feminism, Sexual Politics, Asian American Women's Literature*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Introduction to *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, ix-xxx. Seattle: Washington University Press, 2019.
- Bowker, John. "Bodhisattva." In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Accessed May 12, 2019. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780192800947.001.0001/acref-9780192800947-e-1132>.

- "Dharma." In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Accessed May 12, 2019. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780192800947.001.0001/acref-9780192800947-e-1954>.
- Brah, Avtar. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Brandimarte, Cynthia A. "“To Make the Whole World Homelike”: Gender, Space, and America’s Tea Room Movement." *Winterthur Portfolio* 30, no. 1 (Spring, 1995): 1-19. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4618478>.
- Breen, Timothy H. *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Brook, Peter. "Melodrama, Body, Revolution." *Melodrama: Stage Picture Screen*. Edited by Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook, and Christine Gledhill, 11-24. London: British Film Institute, 1994.
- Brown, Joanne. *Immigration Narratives in Young Adult Literature: Crossing Borders*. Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2011.
- Brown, Walter C. "Steal No Man’s Shadow." *Argosy Weekly*. May 13, 1939. 72-80. Digitalised by *The Unz Review*. Accessed May 24, 2018. <https://www.unz.com/print/ArgosyWeekly-1939may13-00072/>.
- Brubaker, Rogers. "The ‘diaspora’ diaspora." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (January 2005): 1-19. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987042000289997>.
- Bruce Lee. "Bruce Tea – Royal Jelly Ginseng & Honey – Blend by Bruce Lee." Youtube video, 2:25. June 15, 2015. Accessed August 22, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJgt0x-vLT4>.
- brucetea. "Enjoy!" Photograph. *Instagram*. September 23, 2016. Accessed May 9, 2020. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BKtLcTaBjsu/>.
- "Good energy, fresh air." *Instagram*. September 29, 2016. Accessed May 9, 2020. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BK9Ec1pBYgJ/>.
- "New BruceTea bottles! We’re loving this new #SuperPowered look!" *Instagram*. December 9, 2016. Accessed May 9, 2020. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BNx1Z1yhJSO/>.
- Brustein, Robert. "The Cult of Unthink." In *Beat Down to Your Soul: What Was the Beat Generation?* Edited by Ann Charters, 49-57. London: Penguin Books, 2001.
- Brooks, David. *Bobos in Paradise*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010.

- Buck, Pearl S. *The Good Earth*. New York: John Day 1931; London: Simon and Schuster, 1997.
- Buell, Paul and Christopher Muench. "Chinese Medical Recipes from Frontier Seattle." In *The Annals of the Chinese Historical Society of the Pacific Northwest*, edited Douglas W. Lee, 100-143. Bellingham, WA: Chinese Historical Society of the Pacific Northwest, 1984.
- Burnett A. G. "Misunderstanding of Eastern and Western States Regarding Oriental Immigration." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 34, Issue 2 (September 1909): 37-41. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/000271620903400205>.
- Burt, Lawrence. "Woman's Love of the Exotic." *Munsey's Magazine*. September 1909. 831-834.
- Butler, David, director. *Tea for Two*. 1950; Los Angeles: Warner Bros, 2017. DVD.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Cadden, Mary. "Crazy Rich Asians' movie boosts sales for books to 1.5 million copies." *USA Today*. December 15, 2019. Accessed April 25, 2020. <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/life/2018/09/17/crazy-rich-asians-film-boosts-book-sales-1-5-million-copies/1334172002/>.
- Caplan, Paula J. *Don't Blame Mother: Mending the Mother-Daughter Relationship*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- "Don't Blame Mother: Then and Now." In *Maternal Theory: Essential Readings*. Edited by Andrea O'Reilly, 592-600. Ontario: Demeter Press, 2007.
- Carter, Robert. "The Real Yellow Peril." Illustration. *New York World*. June 21, 1909. Reproduced in *Street Scenes: Staging the Self in Immigrant New York, 1880-1924* by Esther Romeyn, 52. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Case, Sue-Ellen. "Tracking the Vampire." In *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*. Edited by Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury, 380-400. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.
- Cass, Victoria B. "Female Healers in the Ming and the Lodge of Ritual and Ceremony." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106, no. 1 (January - March 1986): 233-245. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/602374>.
- CBS San Francisco. "Woman Dies After Drinking Deadly Chinatown Tea." March 20, 2017. Accessed May 30, 2018.



<https://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2017/03/20/woman-dies-after-drinking-deadly-chinatown-tea/>.

Chan, Christina. "Milk is thicker than blood: An unlikely digital alliance between Thailand, Hong Kong & Taiwan." *Hong Kong Free Press*. May 2, 2020. Accessed May 12, 2020. <https://hongkongfp.com/2020/05/02/milk-is-thicker-than-blood-an-unlikely-digital-alliance-between-thailand-hong-kong-taiwan/>.

Chan, Jachinson. *Chinese American Masculinities: from Fu Manchu to Bruce Lee*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2001.

Chan, Jeffery Paul. Introduction to *Eat a Bowl of Tea* by Louis Chu, 1-5. New York: Kensington Publishing Corp., 1979.

Chan, Jeffery Paul, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong. Introduction to *The Big Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature*. Edited by Jeffery Paul Chan, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong, xi-xvi. New York: Meridian, 1991.

"Preface to the First Edition." In *Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Asian-American Writers*. Edited by Jeffery Paul Chan, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada and Shawn Hsu Wong, xxv-xxvii. Washington: University of Washington Press, 2019.

Chan, Sucheng. "Asian American Struggles for Civil, Political, Economic, and Social Rights." In *Asian American Studies Now: A Critical Reader*. Edited by Jean Yu-wen Shen Wu and Thomas C. Chen, 213-238. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010.

"The Exclusion of Chinese Woman, 1870-1943." In *Entry Denied: Exclusion and the Chinese Community in America, 1882-1943*. Edited by Sucheng Chan, 94-146. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991.

"Race, Ethnic Culture, and Gender in the Construction of Identities among Second-Generation Chinese Americans, 1880s to 1930s." In *Claiming America*. Edited by K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan, 127-164. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.

Chang, Gordon H. *Ghosts of Gold Mountain: The Epic Story of the Chinese Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019.

Chang, Iris. *The Chinese in America: A Narrative History*. New York: Penguin Group, 2003.

Chang, Jade. *The Wangs vs. the World*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016.

- Chang, Joan Chiung-huei. *Transforming Chinese American Literature: A Study of History, Sexuality & Ethnicity*. Oxford: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2000.
- Chang, Robert. *Disoriented: Asian Americans, Law, and the Nation-State*. New York: University Press, 2000.
- Chapman, Mary. "A 'Revolution in Ink': Sui Sin Far and Chinese Reform Discourse." *American Quarterly* 60, no. 4, (December 2008): 975-1001. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40068558>.
- Charrington-Hollins, Seren. *A Dark History of Tea*. Great Britain: Pen & Sword History, 2020.
- Charters, Ann. "John Updike." In *Beat Down to Your Soul: What Was the Beat Generation?* Edited by Ann Charters, 584-585. London: Penguin Books, 2001.
- Kerouac*. London: Picador, 1978.
- "Norman Podhoretz." In *Beat Down to Your Soul: What Was the Beat Generation?* Edited by Ann Charters, 479-492. London: Penguin Books, 2001.
- Chase, Marilyn. *The Barbary Plague: The Black Death in Victorian San Francisco*. New York: Random House, 2003.
- Chatterjee, Piya. *A Time for Tea: Women, Labor and Post-colonial Politics on an India Plantation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001.
- Chen, Fu-jen. "Jade Snow Wong." In *Asian American Autobiographers: A Biobibliographical Critical Sourcebook*. Edited by Guiyou Huang, 389-396. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001.
- Chen, Shehong. "Chinese American Experiences in a New England Mill City: Lowell, Massachusetts, 1876-1967." In *Remapping Asian American History*. Edited by Sucheng Chan, 3-30. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003.
- Chen, Xiaofen. "Labor and Employment, Chinese American." In *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia*. Vol. 1. Edited by Huping Ling and Allan W. Austin, 196-198. New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2010; London and New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Chen, Yong. *Chop Suey, USA: The Story of Chinese Food in America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.
- Cheng, Cindy I-Fen. "Out of Chinatown and into the Suburbs: Chinese Americans and the Politics of Cultural Citizenship in Early Cold War America." *American Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (December 2006): 1067-1090. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40068406>.

Cheung, King-Kok. "The Woman Warrior versus The Chinaman Pacific: Must a Chinese American Critic Choose between Feminism and Heroism?" In *Conflicts in Feminism*. Edited by Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller, 234-251. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Chii, Janie. "The Oriental Girl in the Occident." *Women and Missions* 3, no. 5, 1926: 174-175.

Chin, Frank. "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and Fake." In *The Big Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature*. Edited by Jeffery Paul Chan, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong, 1-93. New York: Meridian, 1991.

*The Confessions of a Number One Son: The Great Chinese American Novel*. Edited by Calvin McMillin. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2015.

"Sons of Chan." In *The Chinaman Pacific & Frisco R. R. Co*, 131-165. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1988.

"This is Not an Autobiography." *Genre* 18, no. 2 (1985): 109-130.

"The Year of the Dragon." In *The Chickencoop Chinaman and The Year of the Dragon*, 67-142. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981.

Chin, Frank and Jeffery Paul Chan. "Racist Love." In *Seeing through Shuck*. Edited by Richard Kostelanetz, 65-79. New York: Ballantine, 1972.

*Chinese Digest*. "Editorial Notes." March 1937, 23.

"Entertains Californians." November 22, 1935, 5.

"Filming of 'Good Earth' to Start Soon." December 13, 1935, 5.

"Good Earth Number." March 1937.

"Secrets of Chinatown." November 22, 1935, 12.

"Why the Digest?" November 15, 1935, 8.

*Chinese Press*. "Cathay, USA: Washington, DC: A Shadow of Fear Remains with the Chinese in the Nation's Capitol." June 22, 1951, 4.

"Chinese in Los Angeles are Troubled." December 29, 1950, 1.

"Footnote on Korean War; Local Incidents Reported." December 22, 1950, 3.

*Chinese World*. "L.A. Chinese Note Unpleasant Incidents." December 27, 1950, 2.

"Texas Chinese Shot: Assailant Says 'I Thought He Was a Communist."  
April 3, 1951, 2.

Chu, Louis. *Eat a Bowl of Tea*. New York: Lyle Stuart Books, 1961; Reprinted, New York: Lyle Stuart Books, 2002.

Chu, Patricia. "Chinatown Life as Contested Terrain: H. T. Tsiang, Jade Snow Wong, and C. Y. Lee." *Part II – The Exclusion Era, World War II, and the Immediate Postwar Era*. Edited by Rajini Srikanth and Min Hyung Song, 155-170. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Chun, Gloria H. "'Go West . . . to China': Chinese American Identity in the 1930s." In *Claiming America*. Edited by K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan, 165-190. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.

Chung, C., A. Kim, and A. K. Lemeskewsky, editors. *Between the Lines: An Anthology*. Santa Cruz, CA: Dancing Bird, 1987.

Chung, L. A. "Chinese American Literary War: Writers, Critics Argue Over Portrayal of Asians." *San Francisco Chronicle*. August 26, 1991, D4.

Chung, Sue Fawn. *In Pursuit of Gold: Chinese Americans Miners and Merchants in the American West*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011.

Churchill, Charles. *The Ghost Book I*. London: Charles Churchill, 1763.

Chow, Serene. "The cultural significance of mandarin oranges." *Monash University*. Accessed February 5, 2020.  
<https://www.monash.edu.my/news-and-events/trending/the-cultural-significance-of-mandarin-oranges>.

Clifford, James. "Diasporas." *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (August 1994): 302-338. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/656365>.

*Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*.  
Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Coe, Andrew. *Chop Suey: A Cultural History of Chinese Food in the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Cohen, John. "Jack Kerouac, Chinatown." 1959. Photograph, gelatin silver print, 11 × 14 inches. (L. Parker Stephenson Photographs, New York).  
Reproduced, Jack Kerouac. *The Dharma Bums*. London: Penguin, 2007. Front cover.

"Kerouac, Lucien Carr, and Ginsberg singing in Chinatown." 1959.  
Photograph, gelatin silver print, 8 × 10 inches. (L. Parker Stephenson Photographs, New York).  
Reproduced, David J. Krajicek. "Where Death

Shaped the Beats.” *The New York Times*. April 5, 2012. Accessed May 15, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/06/books/columbia-u-haunts-of-lucien-carr-and-the-beats.html>.

Cohen, Robin. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2008.

Coleman, Oliver. “Taste.” *House Beautiful*, 12. September 1902, 242-44.

Collins English Dictionary. “Celestial Empire.” Accessed June 27, 2019. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/celestial-empire>.

Connell, Raewyn W. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. Oxford, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1987.

*Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995.

Copley, John Singleton. *Paul Revere*. 1768. Oil on canvas, 89.22 x 72.39 cm. *Museum of Fine Arts Boston*. Accessed February 18, 2020. <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/32401>.

Coulson, Victoria. “Teacups and love letters: Constance Fenimore Woolson and Henry James.” In *Henry James, Women and Realism* by Victoria Coulson, 96-140. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Counihan, Carole M. *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning, and Power*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Cowan, John L. “In the Lair of the Bear: The Japanese Question.” *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine*. January 1907, 88–89.

Creadick, Anna G. *Perfectly Average: The Pursuit of Normality in Postwar America*. Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010.

Crenshaw, Kimberlè. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” *University of Chicago Law Forum* 1989: 139-168. <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>.

“Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (July 1991): 1241-1299. DOI: 10.2307/1229039.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas. Introduction to *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*. Edited by Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas, xiii-xxxii. New York: The New Press, 1995.

“Race, Reform, and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation Antidiscrimination Law.” *Harvard Law Review* 101, no. 7 (May 1988): 1331-1387. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1341398>.

- Crowley, Nicholas Joseph. *Fortune Telling by Cup Tossing*. 1842. Oil on canvas painting. *Sotheby's*. Accessed February 3, 2021.  
<http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/lot.23.html/2018/irish-art-l18134>.
- Culver, R. K. "The Fighting Chinese." *Munsey's Magazine*. February 1918, 145-149.
- Daniels, Roger. *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850*. Washington: University of Washington Press, 1988.
- Foreword to *Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton: A Literary Biography* by Annette White-Parks, xi-xii. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995.
- Davidson, Michael. *Guys Like Us: Citing Masculinity in Cold War Politics*. London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- The San Francisco Renaissance: Poetics and Community at Mid-Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Davis, Lennard. *The End of Normal: Identity in a Biocultural Era*. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2013.
- Dawson, Ashley and Malini Johar Schueller. "Coda: Information Mastery and the Culture of Annihilation." In *Exceptional State: Contemporary U.S. Culture and the New Imperialism*. Edited by Ashley Dawson, Malini Johar Schueller, 275-284. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- "Introduction: Rethinking Imperialism Today." In *Exceptional State: Contemporary U.S. Culture and the New Imperialism*. Edited by Ashley Dawson, Malini Johar Schueller, 1-33. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Deaville, James. "The Many Lives of Flower Drum Song (1957–2002): Negotiating Chinese American Identity in Print, on Stage, and on Screen." In *China and the West: Music, Representation, and Reception*. Edited by Yang Hon-Lun and Michael Saffle, 119-136. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017.
- Delgado, Richard and Jean Stefancic. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.
- Denker, Joel. *The World on a Plate: A Tour Through the History of America's Ethnic Cuisine*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2003.
- Detective Story. The Yellow Claw*. Illustration. In *Detective Story* 5 no. 1, October 5, 1916. Front cover.
- DeVault, Majorie L. *Feeding the Family: The Social Organization of Caring Work as Gendered Work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

- Dew, Robb Forman. "Pangs of an Abandoned Child." *New York Times*. June 16, 1991. Accessed July 14, 2017.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/1991/06/16/books/pangs-of-an-abandoned-child.html>.
- Dewitt, Henry, Geoffrey Clark and Richard Yates. "From the Archive: An Interview with Richard Yates." *Ploughshares* 37, no. 2/3, (reprinted from Issue 3 of *Ploughshares*, Winter 1972), Fall 2011: 207-224.
- Diner, Hasia. *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- Douglas, Ann. Introduction to *The Dharma Bums* by Jack Kerouac, vii-xxix. London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2007.
- Douglas, Susan J. and Meredith W. Michaels. *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Undermined Women*. New York: Free Press, 2004.
- Dow, Caroline. *Tea Leaf Reading for Beginners: Your Fortune in a Teacup*. Woodbury, Minnesota: Llewellyn Publications, 2011.
- Doyle, Laura. "Inter-imperiality: An Introduction." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 64, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 395-402. DOI:  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.2018.0035>.
- Inter-imperiality: Vying Empires, Gendered Labor, and the Literary Arts of Alliance*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020.
- "Inter-imperiality and Literary Studies in the Longer "Durée." *PMLA* 130, no. 2 (March 2015): 336-347. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44015715>.
- Dudziak, Mary L. "Brown as a Cold War Case." *The Journal of American History* 91, no. 1 (June 2004): 32-42. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/3659611>.
- Duong, Lan P. "Transnationalism." In *Keywords for Asian American Studies*. Edited by Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, Linda Trinh Võ, and K. Scott Wong, 232-234. New York: New York University Press, 2015.
- Dreyfus, Philip J. *Our Better Nature: Environment and the Making of San Francisco*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008.
- Driem, George L. van. *The Tale of Tea: A Comprehensive History of Tea from Prehistoric Times to the Present Day*. Boston: Brill, 2019.
- Dyer, Thomas G. *Theodore Roosevelt and the Idea of Race*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980.

- Eburne, Jonathan Paul. "Trafficking in the Void: Burroughs, Kerouac, and the Consumption of Otherness." *Modern Fiction Studies* 43, no. 1 (1997): 53-92. DOI: 10.1353/mfs.1997.0005.
- Edelman, Susan Schieber. "A Red Hot Suffrage Campaign': The Woman Suffrage Cause in California, 1896." *California Supreme Court Historical Society Yearbook* 2 (1995): 49-131.  
<https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/cashsy2&div=6&id=&page=>.
- Ellwood, Robert. *The Fifties Spiritual Marketplace: American Religion in a Decade of Conflict*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica, editors. "Shi Pei Pu: Chinese Opera Singer and Spy." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed July 4, 2018.  
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Shi-Pei-Pu>.
- Eng, David L. "Out Here and Over There: Queerness and Diaspora in Asian American Studies." *Social Text*, no.52/53 (Autumn - Winter, 1997): 31-52. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/466733>.
- Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.
- Eng, David L. and Alice Y. Hom. "Introduction." In *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*. Edited by David L. Eng and Alice Y. Hom, 1-24. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.
- Espiritu, Yen Le. *Asian American Women and Men: Labor, Laws, and Love*. California: AltaMira Press, 2000.
- "Homes, Borders, and Possibilities." In *American Studies Now: A Critical Reader*. Edited by Jean Yu-wen Shen Wu and Thomas C. Chen, 603-621. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010.
- Fabricant, Florence. "Iced Tea's New Popularity as a Pour that Refreshes." *New York Times*. June 10, 1992, C1.
- Far, Sui Sin. "The Americanizing of Pau Tsu." In *Mrs Spring Fragrance*, 81-91. Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1912. Republication with selections from the 1912 edition, New York: Dover Publications Inc, 2013.
- "The Inferior Woman." In *Index to Hampton's Magazine XXIV: January 1910 to June 1910*, 727-731. New York: Columbian-Sterling Pub. Co., 1910. Also in *Mrs Spring Fragrance*, 13-27. Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1912. Republication with selections from the 1912 edition, New York: Dover Publications Inc, 2013.



“Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian (1909).” In *Before They Could Vote: American Women's Autobiographical Writing, 1819–1919*. Edited by Sidonie A. Smith and Julia Watson, 406-418. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006.

“Mrs Spring Fragrance.” In *Index to Hampton's Magazine XXIV: January 1910 to June 1910*, 137- 141. New York: Columbia-Sterling Pub. Co., 1910. Also in *Mrs Spring Fragrance*, 1-12. Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1912. Republication with selections from the 1912 edition, New York: Dover Publications Inc, 2013.

“A Chinese Party: A Singular Scene at the Windsor Street Depot.” In *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings*. Edited by Amy Ling and Annette White-Parks, 180-181. Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1995.

“Its Wavering Image’.” In *Mrs Spring Fragrance*, 49-54. Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1912. Republication with selections from the 1912 edition, New York: Dover Publications Inc, 2013.

“The Wisdom of the New.” In *Mrs Spring Fragrance*, 28-48. Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1912. Republication with selections from the 1912 edition, New York: Dover Publications Inc, 2013.

Farivar, Masood. “Anti-Asian Hate Crime Crosses Racial and Ethnic Lines.” *VOA News*. March 23, 2021. Accessed March 24, 2021. <https://www.voanews.com/usa/anti-asian-hate-crime-crosses-racial-and-ethnic-lines>.

Farris, William Wayne. *A Bowl for a Coin: A Commodity History of Japanese Tea*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2019.

Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration. *San Francisco in the 1930s: The WPA Guide to the City by the Bay*. California: University of California Press, 2011.

Fenton, Sasha. *Tea Cup Reading: A Quick and Easy Guide to Tasseography*. Boston, MA/York Beach, ME: Weiser Books, 2002.

Ferens, Dominika. *Edith and Winnifred Eaton: Chinatown Missions and Japanese Romances*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002.

Fish, Isaac Stone. “Crouching Tiger, Sleeping Giant.” *Foreign Policy*. January 19, 2016. Accessed May 12, 2016. [https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/19/china\\_shakes\\_the\\_world\\_cliche/](https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/19/china_shakes_the_world_cliche/).

Fisher, James. *The Catholic Counterculture in America, 1933-1962*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.

Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. “Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies: Presidential Address to the American Studies

Association, November 12, 2004." *American Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (March 2005): 17-57. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40068248>.

"Interview with Maxine Hong Kingston." In *Conversations with Maxine Hong Kingston*. Edited by Paul Skenazy and Tera Martin, 159-167. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998.

Fong-Torres, Ben. "Can Amy Tan Do It Again?" *San Francisco Chronicle*. June 12, 1991, B4.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1980.

Furst, Lillian R., editor. "Introduction." In *Women Healers and Physicians: Climbing a Long Hill*, 1-9. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1997.

Frank, Caroline. "The Art of Tea, Revolution, and an American East Indies Trade." In *Global Trade and Visual Arts in Federal New England*. Edited by Patricia Johnston and Caroline Frank, 27-49. Lebanon, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2014.

*Objectifying China, Imagining America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011.

Friedman, Natalie J. "Adultery and the Immigrant Narrative." *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S.* 34, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 71-91. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/mel.0.0036>.

Gabaccia, Donna. *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Garrity, Terry. *The Sensuous Woman*. New York: Dell, 1969.

Gatewood, Johanzynn. "Woman dies after drinking poisonous herbal tea," *CNN*. 21 March 2017. Accessed March 13, 2019. <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/03/21/health/poisoned-herbal-tea-death-san-francisco/index.html>.

"A General Awakening." *American Suffragette*. February 1910, 6.

Genthe, Arnold. *As I Remember*. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1936; London: G. G. Harrap & Co, 1937.

"Carrying New Year's Presents." c.1896-1906. Photograph. In *Old Chinatown* by Arnold Genthe. London: Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd, 1913. 25. Digitalised by *Hathitrust*. Accessed June 14, 2018. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uva.x000966410&view=1up&seq=33>.

*Old Chinatown*. New York: Moffat, Yard and Co., 1908; London: Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd, 1913.

“The Street of the Gamblers (by day).” c.1898. Photograph. In *Old Chinatown* by Arnold Genthe. New York: M. Kennerley, 1913. 139. Digitalised by *Hathitrust*. Accessed June 14, 2018. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uva.x000966410&view=1up&seq=33>.

“Waiting for the Car.” c.1896-1906. Photograph. In *Old Chinatown* by Arnold Genthe. London: Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd, 1913. 17. Digitalised by *Hathitrust*. Accessed June 14, 2018. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uva.x000966410&view=1up&seq=33>.

Giamo, Benedict. “Enlightened Attachment: Kerouac's Impermanent Buddhist Trek.” *Religion & Literature* 35, no. 2/3 (Summer-Autumn 2003): 173-206. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40059920>.

Gilman, Sander. “AIDS and Syphilis: The Iconography of Disease.” In *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism*. Edited by Douglas Crimp, 87-107. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness*. London: Verso Books, 1993.

Ginsberg, Allen. Dedication in *HOWL and Other Poems*, 3. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1956.

Introduction to *Visions of Cody*, 1-10. London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2012.

Glazer, Nathan and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. “Beyond the Melting Pot.” In *White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror*. Edited by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, 368-377. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/j.ctt1bw1kc5.83>.

Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. “Split Household, Small Producer and Dual Wage Earner: An Analysis of Chinese-American Family Strategies.” In *A Companion to Asian American Studies*. Edited by Kent Ono, 177-195. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004.

Golden, Eve. *Golden Images: 41 Essays on Silent Film Stars*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2001.

Gotanda, Neil. “A Critique of ‘Our Constitution is Color-Blind’.” *Stanford Law Review* 44, no. 1 (November 1991): 1-68. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1228940>.

Graham, Edward D. “Chinese-American Women Writers.” In *Oriental Prospects: Western Literature and the Lure of the East*. Edited by C. C. Barfoot and Theo D’haen, 247-262. Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1998.

- Grasso, Linda M. "Inventive Desperation: Anger, Violence, and Belonging in Mary Wilkins Freeman's and Sui Sin Far's Murderous Mother Stories." *American Literary Realism* 38, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 18-31. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27747180>.
- Grice, Helena. "'The beginning is hers': The Political and Literary Legacies of Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan." In *China Fictions/English Language: Literary Essays in Diaspora, Memory, Story*. Edited by A. Robert Lee, 33-55. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008.
- Maxine Hong Kingston: Contemporary World Writers*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006.
- Griffiths, John. *Tea: A History of the Drink that Changed the World*. London: André Deutsch, 2011.
- Project Gutenberg. The front cover of *Mrs Spring Fragrance*. Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1912. Accessed May 10, 2021. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/62940/62940-h/62940-h.htm>.
- Hagedorn, Jessica, editor. *Charlie Chan is Dead 2: At Home in the World: An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American*. New York: Penguin Group, 2004.
- Hall, Bruce. *Tea That Burns: A Family Memoir of Chinatown*. 1998; New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000.
- Hall, Donald E. *Queer Theories*. New York: Palgrave, 2003.
- Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Edited by Jonathan Rutherford, 222–237. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990.
- Hamamoto, Darrell Y. *Monitored Peril: Asian Americans and the Politics of TV Representation*. University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
- Hampton's Magazine*. *The Inferior Woman*. Black and white illustration. In *Index to Hampton's Magazine: January 1910 to June 1910*. Vol. XXIV. New York: Hampton's Magazine, 1910. 727. Digitalised by *HathiTrust*. Accessed February 12, 2021. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=iau.31858045109786&view=1up&seq=6>.
- 'Now Little Sister,' comforted Mrs. Spring Fragrance, 'You Must Not Grieve.' Black and white illustration. In *Index to Hampton's Magazine: January 1910 to June 1910*. Vol. XXIV. New York: Hampton's Magazine, 1910. 139. Digitalised by *HathiTrust*. Accessed February 12, 2021. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=iau.31858045109786&view=1up&seq=6>.
- Hanway, Jonas. *An Essay on Tea*. London: H. Woodfall, 1756.

- Harris, Angela P. "The Jurisprudence of Reconstruction." *California Law Review* 82, no. 4 (July 1994): 741-785. DOI: 10.15779/Z389J06.
- Harte, Bret. "Plain Language from Truthful James." *The Overland Monthly*. September 1870, 287–288.
- Hawley, Sandra M. "The Importance of Being Charlie Chan." In *America Views China: American Images of China Then and Now*. Edited by Jonathan Goldstein, Jerry Israel, and Hilary Conroy, 132-148. Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1991.
- Hawthorne, Fran. *Inside the FDA: The Business and Politics Behind the Drugs We Take and the Food We Eat*. Hoboken: Wiley, 2005.
- Hennessey, Rosemary. "Queer Visibility in Commodity Culture." *Cultural Critique*, no. 29 (Winter, 1994-1995): 31-76.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1354421>.
- Hirata, Lucie Cheng. "Free, Indentured, Enslaved: Chinese Prostitutes in Nineteenth-Century America." *Signs* 5, no.1 (Autumn 1979): 23-24.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3173531>.
- Hirose, Stacey Yukari, and David Wong Louie. "David Wong Louie." In *Words Matter: Conversations with Asian American Writers*. Edited by King-Kok Cheung, 189-214. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000.
- Ho, Jennifer. *Consumption and Identity in Asian American Coming-of-Age Novels*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Hoganson, Kristin L. *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920*. North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
- Hogue, W. Lawrence. "The Emergence, Renaissance, and Transformation of Multicultural American Literature from the 1960s to the Early 2000s," *symploke* 26, no. 1-2 (2018): 173-190.  
<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/710012>.
- Holford, Diana Vanessa. "Biracial/Bicultural Identity in the Writings of Sui Sin Far." *MELUS* 26, no. 2 (2001): 159-186.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3185523>.
- Holmes, [John] Clellon. "Tea for Two." *Neurotica* 1, Issue 2 (Summer 1948): 36-43.
- hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. 3rd ed. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Hoover Institution Archives. *Interview with Esther Wong*. Interview. Survey of Race Relations. March 1924. Stanford University, Hoover Institution Archives. Box 28, Folder 239.

Hoyt, R. *Untitled*. 1882. Trade card for G. Rossler. Reproduced in *Re/collecting Early Asian America*. Edited by Josephine Lee, Imogene L. Lim, and Yuko Matsukawa. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002. 211.

Huang, Yunte. *Charlie Chan: The Untold Story of the Honorable Detective and His Rendezvous with American History*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.

*Transpacific Displacement: Ethnography, Translation, and Intertextual Travel in Twentieth-Century American Literature*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002.

Huh, Jinny. *The Arresting Eye: Race and the Anxiety of Detection*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015.

Hull, Keith N. "A Dharma Bum Goes West to Meet the East." *Western American Literature* 11, no. 4 (Winter 1977): 321-329. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/wal.1977.0014>.

Hune, Shirley. "Chinese American Women in U.S. History: Explaining Representations of Exotic Others, Passive Objects, and Active Subjects." In *The Practice of U.S. Women's History: Narratives, Intersections, and Dialogues*. Edited by S. Jay Kleinberg, Eileen Boris, and Vicki L. Ruiz, 161-184. Rutgers University Press, 2007.

Huntley, E. D. *Amy Tan: A Critical Companion*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1988.

Hutchinson, George. *Facing the Abyss: American Literature and Culture in the 1940s*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.

Hsiao, Ruth. "Facing the Incurable: Patriarchy in 'Eat a Bowl of Tea'." In *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*. Edited by Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling, 151-162. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992.

Hwang, David. "Introduction." In *The Flower Drum Song* by C. Y. Lee, xiii-xxi. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002.

*M. Butterfly*. Dramatists Play Service Inc., 1988.

IMBd. *The Return of Dr. Fu Manchu*. 1930. Film poster. Accessed June 30, 2019. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0021297/mediaviewer/rm1010047488/>.

*The Return of Dr. Fu Manchu*. 1930. Film advertisement. Accessed June 30, 2019. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0021297/mediaviewer/rm355215360/>.

Innes, Sherrie. *Secret Ingredients: Race, Gender, and Class at the Dinner Table*. New York: Palgrave, 2006.

- Innis, Harold. *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*. Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1930.
- Jackie Chan's Tea. "Company Profile." *Tea Tech*. Accessed September 14, 2020. <http://www.teatech.com/about.php>.
- "Welcome to Jackie Chan's Tea House." *Tea Tech*. Accessed September 14, 2020. <http://www.teatech.com/store/>.
- Jackson, Carl. "the counterculture looks east: beat writers and asian religion." *American Studies* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 51-70. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40642254>.
- Jakobi, Paula. "And Ye Gave Me a Stone." *The Outlook*. May 19, 1915, 151-152. Digitalised by *The Unz Review*. Accessed April 25, 2018. <https://www.unz.com/print/Outlook-1915may19-00151/>.
- "Chinese Lily." *The Forum*. November Issue, 1915, 551-566. Digitalised by *The Unz Review*. Accessed February 14, 2018. <https://www.unz.com/print/Forum-1915nov-00551/Commentary/>.
- "The Lodging-House." *The Outlook*. April 21, 1915, 936-938. Digitalised by *The Unz Review*. Accessed May 14, 2018. <https://www.unz.com/print/Outlook-1915apr21-00936/>.
- Jen, Gish. *The Love Wife*. New York: Vintage, 2004.
- Jenkins, Jeff, producer. *Bling Empire*. Jeff Jenkins Productions, 2021.
- Johnston, P. J. "Dharma Bums: The Beat Generation and the Making of Countercultural Pilgrimage." *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 33 (2013): 165-179. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/bcs.2013.0022>.
- Jones, Camara Phyllis. "Confronting Institutionalized Racism." *Phylon* (1960-) 50, no. ½ (2002): 7-22. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/4149999>.
- Jorae, Wendy Rouse. *The Children of Chinatown: Growing Up Chinese American in San Francisco, 1850-1920*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- Judson, Judith. "Child of Two Cultures." *Washington Post*. July 2, 1989, D3.
- Jung, Soya. *Left or Right of the Color Line: Asian Americans and the Racial Justice Movement*. U.S.: ChangeLab, 2012.
- Jurca, Catherine. *White Diaspora: The Suburb and the Twentieth-Century American Novel*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- J-Song Ku, Robert. *Dubious Gastronomy: The Cultural Politics of Eating Asian in the USA*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2013.

- Kain, Geoffrey. "Refracted Identity(ies) in Louis Chu's 'Eat a Bowl of Tea': Insularity as Impotence." *MELUS* 26, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 187-189. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3185524>.
- Kalberg, Stephen. "Weber, Max (1864-1920)." In *The Social Science Encyclopaedia*. Edited by Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper, 906–910. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Kalisch, Philip A. "The Black Death in Chinatown: Plague and Politics in San Francisco 1900–1904." *Arizona and the West* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1972): 113–136. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40168068>.
- Kaplan, Amy and Donald E. Pease, editors. *Cultures of United States Imperialism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994.
- Kayorie, Susan. "The Ten Precepts of Zen in Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums*." In *Moody Street Irregulars: A Jack Kerouac Magazine*, issue 28 (1994): 18-20.
- Keely, Karen A. "Sex Slavery in San Francisco's Chinatown: 'Yellow Peril' and 'White Slavery' in Frank Norris's Early Fiction." *Studies in American Naturalism* 2, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 129-149. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23431248>.
- Keire, Mara L. "The Vice Trust: A Reinterpretation of the White Slavery Scare in the United States, 1907-1917." *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 1 (Autumn, 2001): 5-41. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3789262>.
- Keller, George Frederick. *The Coming Man*. May 20, 1881. Cartoon. *The San Francisco Wasp*. Reproduced on *ThomasNastCartoons*. April 3, 2014. Accessed January 29, 2021. <https://thomasnastcartoons.com/2014/04/03/the-coming-man-20-may-1881/>.
- Kenyon, Camilla E. L. *The Second Generation*. *Munsey's Magazine*. March 1917, 309-351. Digitalised by *The Unz Review*. Accessed December 10, 2017. <https://www.unz.com/print/Munseys-1917mar-00309/>.
- Kerouac, Jack. *The Dharma Bums*. New York: The Viking Press, 1958. Reprinted with an introduction by Ann Douglas. London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2007.
- Desolation Angels*. New York: Coward McCann, 1965; Reprinted with an introduction by Joyce Johnson. London: Penguin Classics, 2012.
- Kesey, Ken. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. 1962; New York: Penguin Books, 1996.



- Kim, Chang-Hee. "Asian Performance on the Stage of American Empire in Flower Drum Song." *Cultural Critique* 85 (Fall 2013): 1-37.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/culturalcritique.85.2013.0001>.
- Kim, Elaine. *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and their Social Context*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982.
- Kim, Elaine. "Asian American Writers: A Bibliographical Review." *American Studies International* 22, no. 2 (October 1984): 41-78.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41278723>.
- "Preface." In *An Anthology of Contemporary Asian American Fiction: Charlie Chan is Dead*, vii-xiv. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.
- "'Such Opposite Creatures': Men and Women in Asian American Literature." *Michigan Quarterly Review* 29, no. 1 (Winter 1990): 68-93.  
<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.act2080.0029.001:10>.
- Kim, Ju Yon. *The Racial Mundane: Asian American Performance and the Embodied Everyday*. New York: New York University Press, 2015.
- Kimmel, Michael. "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity." *Theorizing Masculinities*. Edited by Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman, 119-141. Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 1994.
- Kingston, Maxine Hong. *China Men*. London: Picador, 1981.
- "Cultural Mis-Readings by American Reviewers." In *Asian and Western Writers in Dialogue: New Cultural Identities*. Edited by Guy Amirthanayagam, 55-65. London: Macmillan, 1982.
- Kipling, Rudyard. "The White Man's Burden." In *Kipling: Poems*, 96-98. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007.
- Kitch, Sally. *The Specter of Sex: Gender Foundation of Racial Formation in the United States*. Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2009.
- Klein, Christina. *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961*. California: University of California Press, 2003.
- Koehn, Peter H. and Xiao-huang Yin. *The Expanding Roles of Chinese Americans in U.S.-China Relations*. Oxford: Routledge, 2015.
- Kowalski-Wallace, Beth. "Tea, Gender, and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century England," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 23 (1994): 131-145.  
 DOI: 10.1353/sec.2010.0065.
- Kuehn, Julia. *A Female Poetics of Empire: From Eliot to Woolf*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2014.

- Kulp, Daniel Harrison. *Country Life in South China: The Sociology of Familism*. Vol. 1. Taipei: Ch'eng-wen Publishing Company, 1966.
- Kupferschmidt, Kai. "Dangers of Chinese Medicine Brought to Light by DNA Studies." *Science*. April 12, 2012. Accessed June 19, 2020. <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2012/04/dangers-chinese-medicine-brought-light-dna-studies>.
- Kurlansky, Mark. *Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World*. London: Vintage Books, 1997.
- Krassner, Paul. *Confessions of a Raving, Unconfined Nut: Misadventures in the Counterculture*. CA, Berkeley: Soft Skull Press, 2012.
- Kristof, Nicholas D. "Sick Tibetans Turn to Herbs Once Again." *The New York Times*. October 3, 1990, 5.
- Kwan, Kevin. *China Rich Girlfriend*. Great Britain: Allen & Unwin, 2016.
- Crazy Rich Asians*. Great Britain: Corvus, 2013.
- Rich People Problems*. New York: Doubleday, 2017.
- Le, C. N. and Miliann Kang. "Crazy Rich Asians." *Sociological Forum* 34, Issue 2 (June 2019): 524-528. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12511>.
- Lee, C. Y. *The Flower Drum Song*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957. Reprinted with an introduction by David Hwang. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002.
- Lee, Erika. *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- The Making of Asian America: A History*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015.
- Lee, Jennifer 8. *The Fortune Cookie Chronicles: Adventures in the World of Chinese Food*. New York: Hachette Book Group, 2008.
- Lee, Rachel C. "Journalistic Representations of Asian Americans and Literary Responses, 1910-1920." In *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*. Edited by King-Kok Cheung, 249-273. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Lee, Robert G. "The Cold War Origins of the Model Minority Myth." In *American Studies Now: A Critical Reader*. Edited by Jean Yu-wen Shen Wu and Thomas C. Chen, 256-271. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010.
- Lee, Rose Hum. *The Chinese in the United States of America*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960.

- Le Fanu, J. Sheridan. *Green Tea*. 1872; London: Penguin Books, 2016.
- Le Gallienne, Richard. "The True Lover." *Munsey's Magazine*, March 1917. 352. Digitalised on UNZ. Accessed December 17, 2017. <https://www.unz.com/print/Munseys-1917mar-00352/Contents/>.
- LeMay, Michael C. *Guarding the Gates of Immigration and National Security*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2006.
- Leong, Karen. *The Chinese Mystique: Pearl S. Buck, Anna May Wong, Mayling Soong, and the Transformation of American Orientalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Lerner, Gerda. *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
- Lewens, Alan. *Popular Song: Soundtrack of the Century*, 50. New York: Billboard Books, 2001.
- Li, David Leiwei. *Imagining the Nation: Asian American Literature and Cultural Consent*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Library of Congress. "Cinematic Classics, Legendary Stars, Comedic Legends and Novice Filmmakers Showcase the 2008 Film Registry." December 30, 2008. Accessed July 14, 2018. <https://www.loc.gov/item/prn-08-237/2008-entries-to-national-film-registry-announced/2008-12-30/>.
- Lieberman, Henry R. "Peiping Promotes Old Herb Therapy." *New York Times*. November 14, 1954, 29.
- LIFE*. *Aren't you glad you switched?: TAKE TEA AND SEE*. 1952. Tea Council advertisement. January 7, 1952. 63. Reproduced on *Pininterest*. Accessed June 21, 2019. <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/775463629583068387/>.
- "How to Tell Japs from the Chinese." 1941. Annotated collage of photographs. December 22, 1941. 81. Reproduced on *Anthropology*. Accessed July 3, 2019. <https://anthropology.net/2007/08/06/life-magazines-1941-article-how-to-tell-japs-from-the-chinese/>.
- If he comes home UNDER PRESSURE, give him tea for dinner*. 1951. Tea Council advertisement. January 8, 1951. 61. Reproduced on *Pininterest*. Accessed June 21, 2019. <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/626985579360585957/>.
- "The New American Domesticated Male." January 4, 1954. 42-45.
- TAKE TEA AND SEE*: *SEE what a glow you get from hot and hearty tea for dinner*. 1951. Tea Council advertisement. December 10, 1951. 9.

Reproduced on *Pininterest*. Accessed June 20, 2019.  
<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/245727723392537368/>.

- Light, Ivan. "From Vice District to Tourist Attraction: The Moral Career of American Chinatowns 1880-1940." *Pacific Historical Review* 43, no. 3 (August 1974): 367-394. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3638262>.
- Lim, Shirley Geok-lin. "The Tradition of Chinese American Women's Life Stories: Thematics of Race and Gender in Jade Snow Wong's *Fifth Chinese Daughter* and Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*." In *American Women's Autobiography, Fea(s)ts of Memory*. Edited by Margo Culley, 252-67. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992.
- Lim, Shirely Geok-lin, Mayumi Tsutakawa, and Margarita Donnelly, editors. *The Forbidden Stitch: An Asian American Women's Anthology*. Corvallis, OR: CALYX Inc., 1989.
- Lincoln, Abraham. "The Gettysburg Address." Transcript of Cornell University's copy. Accessed March 01, 2018.  
[http://rnc.library.cornell.edu/gettysburg/good\\_cause/transcript.htm](http://rnc.library.cornell.edu/gettysburg/good_cause/transcript.htm).
- Ling, Huping. *Surviving on the Gold Mountain: A History of Chinese American Women and their Lives*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.
- Ling, Jinqi. *Narrating Nationalisms: Ideology and Form in Asian American Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- "Reading for Historical Specificities: Gender Negotiations in Louis Chu's *Eat a Bowl of Tea*." *MELUS* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 35-51.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/467852>.
- The Literary Digest*. "Science and Invention: Dr. Wiley on Tea and Coffee Topers." November 19, 1910, 927.
- "Substitutes for Tea." June 24, 1905, 934.
- "Teetotalism and Tea-Tippling." February 22, 1919, 29.
- Liu, Eric. *The Accidental Asian*. New York: Vintage Books, 1999.
- Liu, Haiming. "Chinese Herbalists in the United States." In *Chinese American Transnationalism: The Flow of People, Resources*. Edited Sucheng Chan, 136-155. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.
- Little, Douglas. *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East Since 1945*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Little, John, editor. *Bruce Lee: The Art of Expressing the Human Body*. Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 1998.

- Locan, Clarence A. and Lemuel L. De Bra. "The Chambers of Tranquillity." *Munsey's Magazine*. November 1922, 302-306.
- London, Jack. "The Unparalleled Invasion." *McClure's Magazine*. July 1910, 308-316.
- "Yellow Handkerchief." In *Tales of the Fish Patrol*, 93-108. 1906; The Floating Press, 2011.
- London Magazine. The Able Doctor; or America Swallowing the Bitter Draught*, May 1774. Vol. 43. 184. Cartoon. Reproduced in *The Royal American Magazine* 1 no. 10 (June 1774). Retrieved from the Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/97514782/>.
- Loomba, Ania. *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- López, Ian Haney. *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*. 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed. New York: New York University Press, 2006.
- Louie, Andrea. *Chineseness Across Borders: Renegotiating Chinese Identities in China and the United States*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004.
- "Creating Histories for the Present: Second-Generation (Re)definitions of Chinese American Culture." In *Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation*. Edited by Peggy Levitt and Mary C. Waters, 312-340. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002.
- "Searching for Roots in Contemporary China and Chinese America." In *Chinese Americans and the Politics of Race and Culture*. Edited by Sucheng Chan and Madeline Y. Hsu, 195-217. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008.
- Lowe, Lisa. "Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences." In *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*. Edited by Min Zhou and Anthony C. Ocampo, 531-553. 3rd ed. New York: NYU Press, 2016.
- Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996.
- Lowe, Pardee. *Father and Glorious Descendant: A Story of Life in Chinese America*. New York: Council on Books in Wartime Inc., 1943.
- Lu, Shun and Gary Allen Fine. "The Presentation of Ethnic Authenticity: Chinese Food as a Social Accomplishment." *Sociological Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 535-553. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4120779>.

- Lui, Mary Ting Yi. *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery: Murder, Miscegenation, and Other Dangerous Encounters in Turn-of-the-Century New York City*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Lyons, James. *Selling Seattle*. London: Wallflower Press, 2004.
- Ma, Sheng-mei. *Off-White: Yellowface and Chinglish by Anglo-American Culture*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020.
- Madsen, Deborah L. "Chinese American Writers of the Real and the Fake: Authenticity and the Twin Traditions of Life Writing." *Canadian Review of American Studies* 36, no 3 (2006): 257-271. DOI: 10.1353/crv.2007.0005.
- "The Oriental/Occidental Dynamic in Chinese American Life Writing: Pardee Lowe and Jade Snow Wong." *Amerikastudien/American Studies* 51, no.3 (2006): 343-353. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41158236>.
- Maier, Pauline. "Reason and Revolution: The Radicalism of Dr. Thomas Young." *American Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (Summer 1976): 229-249.
- Mark, Diane Mei Lin and Ginger Chih. *A Place Called Chinese America*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt Pub. Co., 1982.
- Martinez, Manuel Luis. *Countering the Counterculture: Rereading Postwar American Dissent from Jack Kerouac to Tomás Rivera*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003.
- Masatsugu, Michael K. "'Beyond This World of Transiency and Impermanence': Japanese Americans, Dharma Bums, and the Making of American Buddhism during the Early Cold War Years." *Pacific Historical Review* 77, no. 3 (August 2008): 423-451. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/phr.2008.77.3.423>.
- Matsuda, Mari and Charles R. Laurence. *We Won't Go Back: Making the Case for Affirmative Action*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1997.
- Matsukawa, Yuko. "Representing the Oriental in Nineteenth-Century Trade Cards." In *Recollecting Early Asian America: Essays in Cultural History*. Edited by Josephine Lee, Imogene L. Lim, and Yuko Matsukawa, 200-217. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002.
- May, Elaine Tyler. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*. New York: Basic Books, 2008.
- Mazumdar, Sucheta. "Through Western Eyes: Discovering Chinese Women in America." In *A New Significance: Re-envisioning the History of the American West*. Edited by Clyde A. Milner II, 158-167. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

- McClure, Michael. *Scratching the Beat Surface*. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1982.
- McCunn, Ruthanne Lum. *Thousand Pieces of Gold*. San Francisco: Design Enterprises of San Francisco, 1981; Boston: Beacon Press, 2004. [search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=972164&site=ehost-live](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=972164&site=ehost-live).
- McDernon, Daniel. "How Bruce Lee Exploded a Stereotype with a One-Inch Punch." *New York Times*. January 25, 2017. Accessed August 17, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/25/movies/bruce-lee-movies.html>.
- McDevitt, Dan. "'In Milk Tea We Trust': How a Thai-Chinese Meme War Led to a New (Online) Pan-Asia Alliance." *The Diplomat*. April 18, 2020. Accessed May 30, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/04/in-milk-tea-we-trust-how-a-thai-chinese-meme-war-led-to-a-new-online-pan-asia-alliance/?fbclid=IwAR1QkbNRSTjkHPKRy6Amcv-V2WV0-iapPWSodjeOSKhmwhEFPPEQQsGHB20>.
- McDougall, Bonnie S. *Fictional Authors, Imaginary Audiences: Modern Chinese Literature in the Twentieth Century*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2003.
- McDowell, Colin. *McDowell's Directory of Twentieth Century Fashion*. London: Century Hutchinson Ltd, 1987.
- McLennan, Rachael. *American Autobiography*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013.
- Meister, Erin. *New York City Coffee: A Caffeinated History*. Charleston: American Palate, 2017.
- Meloney, William Brown. "Slumming in New York's Chinatown." *Munsey's Magazine*. September 1909, 818-830. Digitalised by *The Unz Review*. Accessed June 18, 2019. <https://www.unz.com/print/Munseys-1909sep-00818/>.
- Mendelson, Anne. *Chow Chop Suey: Food and the Chinese American Journey*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.
- Metrick-Chen, Lenore. *Collecting Objects/Excluding People: Chinese Subjects and American Visual Culture, 1830-1900*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012.
- Metro*. "How 'Crazy Rich Asians' changed the movie industry." February 15, 2019. Accessed June 2, 2020. <https://www.metro.us/how-crazy-rich-asians-changed-the-movie-industry/>.

- Metzger, Sean. *Chinese Looks: Fashion Performance, Race*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2014.
- Miller, Alan L. "Ritual Aspects of Narrative: An Analysis of Jack Kerouac's 'The Dharma Bums.'" *Journal of Ritual Studies* 9, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 41-53. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44398661>.
- Mintz, Stephen. *Sweetness and Power*. New York: Penguin, 1985.
- Miščević, Dušanka and Peter Kwong. *Chinese Americans: The Immigrant Experience*. Connecticut: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc., 2000.
- Mittler, Barbara. *A Newspaper for China? Power, Identity, and Change in Shanghai's New Media, 1872-1912*. Cambridge, MA: President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2004.
- Moon, Krystyn R. *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850s-1920s*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005.
- Moran, Rachel. *Interracial Intimacy: The Regulation of Race and Romance*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Morgan, Bassett. "Jade Bells." *Argosy Weekly*. January 5, 1935, 91-113.
- Morgan, Ted. *Literary Outlaw: The Life and Times of William S. Burroughs*. New York: Henry Holt, 1988.
- Morrison, Toni. "The Site of Memory." In *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*. 2nd ed. Edited by William Zinsser, 83-102. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995.
- Moser, Linda Trinh. "Pardee Lowe." In *Asian American Autobiographers: A Bio-bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*. Edited by Guiyou Huang, 232-238. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001.
- Mott, Frank Luther. *A History of American Magazines*. Vol. 3. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957.
- Movieclips Classic Trailers. "Tea For Two (1950) Official Trailer - Doris Day, Gordon MacRae Movie HD." Warner Bros., July 28, 2014, Youtube video, video still, 0:10. Accessed August 18, 2020. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNrQxZ2jep4>.
- Mui, Hoh-Chueng and Lorna H. Mui, "Smuggling and the British Tea Trade before 1784," *American Historical Review* 74, no. 1 (October 1968): 44-73.
- Mumford, Lewis. *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1961.



- Munsey's Magazine. The Second Generation.* Black and white illustration. March 1917. 309. Digitalised by *The Unz Review*. Accessed April 04, 2017. <https://www.unz.com/print/Munseys-1917mar-00309/>.
- The Museum of Modern Art. *100 Useful Objects of Fine Design 1947*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1947.
- Nast, Thomas. *Blaine's Teas(e)*. Cartoon. *Harper's Weekly*, March 20, 1880. 192. Reproduced on *ThomasNastCartoons*. Accessed November 12, 2018. <https://thomasnastcartoons.com/2014/01/12/blaines-tease-20-march-1880/>.
- Nee, Victor G. and Brett de Bary Nee. *Longtime Californ': A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown*. California: Stanford University Press, 1986.
- Nenno, Nancy P. "Between Magic and Medicine: Medieval Images of the Woman Healer." In *Women Healers and Physicians: Climbing a Long Hill*. Edited by Lilian R. Furst, 43-63. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1997.
- Nestle, Joan and Naomi Holoch. *Women on Women: Anthology of American Lesbian Short Fiction*. New York: Plume, 1990.
- Nestle, Marion. *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- New York Public Library. "Afternoon tea at the Hotel Royal Poinciana, Palm Beach, FLA." 1910. Black and white photograph. New York Public Library, The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, shelf locator MFV 95-29. Reproduced in Rappaport, Erika. *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017. 205, fig 6.3.
- New York Times*. "Herbs, Leaves, and Eel's Blood Fill Medicine Gap in Red China." March 20, 1966, 17.
- "Tons of Pigtailed Here: Cargo to Build Up the Pompadours of American Girls." June 22, 1908, 4.
- "8 Dead in Atlanta Spa Shootings, with Fears of Anti-Asian Bias." March 26, 2021. Accessed May 19, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/03/17/us/shooting-atlanta-acworth>.
- New York Tribune*. "Literary Lights are Lined up for Votes." January 11, 1914, 9.
- Ng, Mei. *Eating Chinese Food Naked*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1998.

- "This Early." In *Tasting Life Twice: Literary Lesbian Fiction by New American Writers*. Edited by E. J. Levy, 213-219. New York: Avon Books, 1995.
- Nichols, Mary Gove. "To the Women who Read the Water Cure Journal." *Water Cure Journal* 14 (September 1852): 67-68.
- Nicolaou, Elena. "Author Kevin Kwan on the World of Crazy Rich Asians — AKA The World he Grew up in." *Refinery29*. July 24, 2018. Accessed June 20, 2020. <https://www.refinery29.com/en-gb/2018/07/2053339/kevin-kwan-crazy-rich-asians-singapore-real-people-inspiration>.
- Ninh, erin Khuê. *Ingratitude: The Debt-Bound Daughter in Asian American Literature*. New York: New York University Press, 2011.
- Norton, Jeannette Young. "When Madame Goes Marketing in Chinatown." *New York Tribune*. October 8, 1916, 38.
- Oh, How Civilised. "Untitled." Photograph. January 16, 2021. Accessed January 29, 2021. <https://www.ohhowcivilized.com/afternoon-tea-tea-and-sympathy/>.
- Okada, John. *No-No Boy*. Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle, 1957.
- Olderr, Steve. *Symbolism: A Comprehensive Dictionary*. 2nd ed. North Carolina: Jefferson, McFarland & Company, Inc., 2012.
- Ong, Aihwa. *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.
- "On the Edge of Empires: Flexible Citizenship among Chinese in Diaspora." *Positions* 1, no. 3 (Winter 1993): 745-778. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10679847-1-3-745>.
- Ong, Bill. *To Be an American: Cultural Pluralism and the Rhetoric of Assimilation*. New York: New York University Press, 1997.
- O'Neill, Paul. "The Only Rebellion Around." In *A Casebook on the Beat*. Edited by Thomas Parkinson, 232-246. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1961.
- O'Neill, William. *Divorce in the Progressive Era*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1967.
- Osborn, Robert. *The Decline of The American Male*. Illustration. In *The Decline of the American Male* by the editors of *Look Magazine*. New York: Random House, 1958. Front cover. Reproduced on *Amazon*. Accessed August 19, 2020. <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Decline-American-Male-Editors-LOOK/dp/B0010DQGV5>.
- Palumbo-Liu, David. *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

- Pan, Lynn. *Sons of the Yellow Emperor: The Story of the Overseas Chinese*. London: Mandarin, 1991.
- Park, Robert E. "Racial Assimilation in Secondary Groups with Particular Reference to the Negro American." *Journal of Sociology* 19, no. 5 (March 1914): 606-623. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2763128>.
- Patterson, Martha H. *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915*. Urbana: University of Illinois, 2005.
- Patton, Tracey Owens. "'Ally McBeal' and her Homies: The Reification of White Stereotypes of the Other." *Journal of Black Studies* 32, no. 2 (November 2001): 229–260. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3180962>.
- Pellerin, Pierre-Antoine. "Jack Kerouac's Ecopoetics in *The Dharma Bums* and *Desolation Angels*: Domesticity, Wilderness and Masculine Fantasies of Animality." *Transatlantica: American Studies Journal* 2 (2011): 1-23. <http://journals.openedition.org/transatlantica/5560>.
- Pendergrast, Mark. *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World*. London: Texere, 2001.
- Perkins, Dorothy. *Encyclopedia of China: The Essential Reference to China, its History and Culture*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2013.
- Perrick, Penny. "Daughters of America." *Sunday Times Book Review*. July 14, 1991, 6.
- Pettigrew, Jane, and Bruce Richardson. *A Social History of Tea*. Danville, Kentucky: Benjamin Press, 2014.
- Photoplay*. *The Secret Moral Code of the Screen*. Illustration. October 1926. Front cover. Reproduced on *Worth Point*. Accessed July 30, 2020. <https://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/photoplay-magazine-october-1926-alice-joyce>.
- Piatti-Farnell, Lorna. *Food and Culture in Contemporary American Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Pieterse, Jan. *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*. Massachusetts: Yale University Press, 1995.
- Pilcher, Jeffrey. *¡Que Vivan Los Tamales! Food and the Making of Mexican Identity*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998.
- Podhoretz, Norman. "The Know-Nothing Bohemians." *Partisan Review* 25 (Spring 1958): 305-319.

- Polanski, Roman, director. *Chinatown*. 1974; Los Angeles: Paramount Pictures, 2008. DVD.
- Pratt, Norwood. *Tea Lover's Treasury*. California: Cole Group, Inc., 1982.
- Prensky, William L. "Reston Helped Open a Door to Acupuncture." *New York Times*. December 14, 1995, 30.
- Prothero, Stephen. "On the Holy Road: The Beat Movement as Spiritual Protest." *The Harvard Theological Review* 84, no. 2 (April 1991): 205-222. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1509800>.
- Puccini, Giacomo, Luigi Illica, and Giuseppe Giacosa. *Madame Butterfly: Opera in Three Acts*. New York: Ricordi, 1954.
- Puck. *The Pigtail has Got to Go*. Cartoon. October 1898. Front cover. Reproduced on *Library of Congress*. Accessed August 12, 2020. <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2012647479/>.
- Pyke, Karen D. "What is Internalized Racial Oppression and Why don't we Study it? Acknowledging Racism's Hidden Injuries." *Sociological Perspectives* 53, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 551-572. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/sop.2010.53.4.551>.
- Qin, Amy. "Worries Grow in Singapore Over China's Calls to Help 'Motherland'." *New York Times*. August 5, 2018. Accessed July 4, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/05/world/asia/singapore-china.html>.
- Rappaport, Erika. *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017.
- Ratcliffe, Rebecca. "Pro-democracy boycott of Disney's Mulan builds online via #milkteaalliance." *The Guardian*. September 4, 2020. Accessed February 14, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/04/pro-democracy-boycott-of-disneys-mulan-builds-online-via-milkteaalliance>.
- Rebora, Carrie, Paul Staiti, Erica E. Hirshler, Theodore E. Stebbins Jr., and Carol Troyen, editors. *John Singleton Copley in America*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1995.
- Reitz, Julie Kjendal. "Espresso." *Food, Culture & Society* 10, no.1 (2007): 7-21. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2752/155280107780154114>.
- Reston, James. "Now, About My Operation in Peking." *New York Times*. July 26, 1971, 1.
- Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." In *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*. Edited by Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, 177-205. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983.

- Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. New York: Norton, 1976.
- Riello, Giorgio. *Cotton: The Fabric that Made the Modern World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Ritzer, George. *The McDonaldization of Society: An Investigation into the Changing Character of Contemporary Social Life*. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 1996.
- Robbins, Bruce. "Commodity Histories," *PMLA* 120, no. 2 (2005): 454-463. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25486171>.
- Roberts, J. A. G. *China to Chinatown: Chinese Food in the West*. London: Reaktion Books, 2002.
- Rodriguez, Tori. "New Studies Reveal that Certain Teas Pose Dangerous Health Risks," *Woman's Day*. December 23, 2015. Accessed May 14, 2018. <https://www.womansday.com/health-fitness/wellness/a53159/dangers-of-tea/>.
- Roediger, David R. *The Wages of Whiteness*. New York: Verso, 1991.
- Rohmer, Sax. *The Insidious Dr. Fu-Manchu*. New York: McBride, Nast & Company, 1913.
- Romeyn, Esther. *Street Scenes: Staging the Self in Immigrant New York, 1880-1924*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Ropp, Paul S. "The Distinctive Art of Chinese Fiction." In *Heritage of China: Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization*. Edited by Paul S. Ropp, 309-334. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- Saberi, Helen. *Tea: A Global History*. London: Reaktion Books, 2010.
- Sachs, Hannah Joe. "'Yellow Peril' in the Age of COVID-19." *Humanity in Action*. April 2020. Accessed May 17, 2021. [https://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledge\\_detail/article-usa-hannah-sachs-yellow-peril-in-the-age-of-covid-19/](https://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledge_detail/article-usa-hannah-sachs-yellow-peril-in-the-age-of-covid-19/).
- Safran, William. "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return." *Diaspora* 1, no.1 (Spring 1991): 83-99. DOI: 10.1353/dsp.1991.0004.
- "The Jewish Diaspora in a Comparative and Theoretical Perspective." *Israel Studies* 10, no. 1 (2005): 36-60. <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/180371>.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage Books, 1994.

- Orientalism*. Abingdon: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978; London: Penguin, 2003.
- San Francisco Call*. "Tye Leung, the first Californian woman to vote." May 19, 1912, 63.
- San Francisco Chronicle*. "Chinatown Loyalty." December 5, 1950, 20.
- Sánchez-Eppler, Karen. *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Sawtelle, Dr. M. P. "The Foul Contagious Disease: a Phase of the Chinese Question." *Medico-Literary Journal* 1, no. 3 (November 1878): 1-8.
- Saxton, Alexander. *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California*. California: University of California Press, 1971.
- Schönberg, Claude-Michel, Alain Boublil. *Miss Saigon*. London: Theatre Royal, 1989.
- Schueller, Malini Johar. *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790-1890*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998.
- Schultermandl, Silvia. "Mei Ng." In *Voices from the Gaps*, 1. Minneapolis: Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2009.  
<http://hdl.handle.net/11299/166291>.
- Sedgwick, Eve. *Tendencies*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.
- See, Lisa. *On Gold Mountain*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.
- Seidman, Helayne. *Nicky Perry and Sean Kavanagh-Dowsett*. n.d. Photograph. *New York Post*, November 25, 2018. Accessed January 18, 2021.  
<https://nypost.com/2018/11/25/popular-west-village-tea-joint-launches-gofundme-to-stay-afloat/>.
- Senne, Steven. *Members of the Massachusetts's Asian American Commission protest racism aimed at Asian communities amid the coronavirus pandemic at the statehouse in Boston*. n.d. Photograph. *The Guardian*. March 24, 2020. Accessed June 22, 2020.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/24/coronavirus-us-asian-americans-racism>.
- SerendipiTea. "Award Winning Teas and Tisanes, Charlie Chan Cha." Accessed June 30, 2020.  
<https://www.serendipitea.com/product/CharlieChan.html>.
- Server, Lee. Introduction to *Encyclopedia of Pulp Fiction Writers*. Edited by Lee Server, xi-xvi. New York: Facts on Files, Inc., 2002.

- Shah, Sonia, editor. *Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1997.
- Shah, Nayan. *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2021.
- “Perversity, Contamination, and the Dangers of Queer Domesticity.” In *Queer Studies: An Interdisciplinary Reader*. Edited by Robert J. Corber and Stephen Valocchi, 121-141. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2003.
- Shea, Pat. “Winnifred Eaton and the Politics of Miscegenation in Popular Fiction.” *MELUS* 22, no. 2 (1997): 19-32. DOI: <https://doi-org.uoelibrary.idm.oclc.org/10.2307/468132>.
- Shelton, Tamara Venit. *Herbs and Roots: A History of Chinese Doctors in the American Medical Marketplace*. New Haven: Yale University, 2019.
- Shih, Shu-mei. “Exile and Intertextuality in Maxine Hong Kingston’s *China Men*.” In *The Literature of Emigration and Exile*. Edited by James Whitlark and Wendell Aycock, 65-77. Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University Press, 1992.
- Shimizu, Celine Parreñas. *The Hypersexuality of Race: Performing Asian/American Women on Screen and Scene*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Shin, Andrew, and C. Y. Lee. “‘Forty Percent Is Luck’: An Interview with C. Y. (Chin Yang) Lee.” *MELUS* 29, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 77-104. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4141820>.
- Shu-Yan, Li. “Otherness and Transformation in *Eat a Bowl of Tea and Crossings*.” *MELUS* 18, no. 4 (Winter, 1993): 99-110. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/468122>.
- Sietsema, Robert. *Secret New York: The Unique Guidebook to New York's Hidden Sites, Sounds & Tastes*. Ontario, Toronto: ECW Press, 1999.
- Silera, Makeda, editor. *Piece of My Heart: A Lesbian of Color Anthology*. Toronto, Canada: Sister Vision, 1991.
- Simpson, Janice C. “Fresh Voices above the Noisy Din.” *Time*. June 3, 1991, 66-67.
- Smith, Andrew. *Drinking History: Fifteen Turning Points in the Making of American Beverages*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- editor. *The Oxford History of Food and Drink in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

- Smith, Sidonie. *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Smith, William Carlson. *The Second Generation Oriental in America*. Honolulu: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1927.
- Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. *This Violent Empire: The Birth of an American National Identity*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010.
- Snyder, Gary. "Untitled." 1956. Black and white photograph. In *Kerouac: A Biography* by Ann Charters, 270. London: St. Martin's Griffin, 1994. Reproduced on *Cryptoforestry*. Accessed July 14, 2019. <http://cryptoforest.blogspot.com/2012/06/gary-snyder-bit-much.html>.
- Snyder, Tom. *120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait*. Washington: National Center for Education Statistics, 1993.
- Sökefeld, Martin. "Mobilizing in Transnational Space: a Social Movement Approach to the Formation of Diaspora." *Global Networks* 6, Issue 3 (June 2006): 265-284. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2006.00144.x>.
- Sollors, Werner. *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Solomons, Selina. *How We Won the Vote in California: A True Story of the Campaign of 1911*. San Francisco: New Woman Publishing Co., 1912.
- Sone, Monica Itoi. *Nisei Daughter*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953.
- Soysal, Yasemin Nugoğlu. "Citizenship and Identity: Living in Diasporas in Post-War Europe?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, no.1 (2000): 1-15. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/014198700329105>.
- Spongberft, Mary. *Feminizing Venereal Disease: The Body of the Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century Medical Discourse*. New York: New York University Press, 1997.
- Spurling, Hilary. *Pearl Buck in China: Journey to The Good Earth*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010.
- Stefon, Matt, editor. "Dharma." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Accessed June 4, 2019. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/dharma-religious-concept>.
- Stern, Alexandra. *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2016.
- Stoddard, Theodore Lothrop. *The Rising Tide of Colour Against World White Supremacy*. New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1920.



- Stowe, William W. "Critical Investigations: Convention and Ideology in Detective Fiction." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 31, no. 4, 1989: 570-591. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40754910>.
- Strochlic, Nina. "America's long history of scapegoating its Asian citizens." *National Geographic*. September 02, 2020. Accessed December 20, 2020. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/09/asian-american-racism-covid/>.
- Sueyoshi, Amy. *Discriminating Sex: White Leisure and the Making of the American "Oriental"*. Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018.
- "Mindful Masquerades: Que(e)rying Japanese Immigrant Dress in Turn-of-the-Century San Francisco." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 26, no. 3 (2005): 67-100. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4137374>.
- Sullivan, Nikki. *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*. New York: New York University Press, 2003.
- Sundblom, Haddon. "Pierce-Arrow: Dual-Valve Six." 1925. Painted car advertisement. Reproduced in *20s: All-American Ads* by Jim Heimann. Vol. 20. Germany: Taschen, 2004. Reproduced on *Pinterest*. Accessed September 14, 2018. <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/378795018658125642/>.
- The Supreme Court. "Reports of Cases Determined in the Supreme Court of the State of California." Vol. 62. San Francisco: Bancroft-Whitney Company, 1906.
- Swartz, Omar. "Buddhism as Critical Lens: 'The Dharma Bums' as Social Criticism." *The AnaChronisT* 13 (2008): 99-113. <http://seas3.elte.hu/anachronist/2008Swartz.pdf>.
- Tacorda, Ryan. "Constructing Chinese American Identity through Film and Theatre: 'Flower Drum Song' as Ingroup Narrative and as Counterstory." *UCLA Asian Pacific American Law Journal* 118 (2004): 118-142. <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/asiapalj9&div=9&id=&page=>.
- Takaki, Ronald. *Ethnic Islands: The Emergence of Urban Chinese America*. New York: Chelsea House, 1994.
- Strangers From a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*. New York: Penguin Books, 1990.
- Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1989; London: Vintage, 1998.

*The Kitchen God's Wife*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1991;  
Hammersmith: Flamingo, 1992.

*The Opposite of Fate: A Book of Musings*. New York: Putnam, 2003.

Tavernise, Sabrina and Richard A. Opiel Jr. "Spit on, Yelled at, Attacked: Chinese-Americans Fear for their Safety." *New York Times*. June 02, 2020. Accessed December 20, 2020.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/23/us/chinese-coronavirus-racist-attacks.html>.

Taylor, Thomas. *Food Product: Tea and Its Adulteration*. Buffalo: Bigelow Printing, 1889.

Tchen, John Kuo Wei. *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001.

Tchen, John Kuo Wei and Dylan Yeats, editors. *Yellow Peril! An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear*. London: Verso, 2014.

Tea Association of the U.S.A. Inc. "Explanatory Note." Accessed December 16, 2020. <http://www.teausa.com/14519/tea-council>.

*Tea Room and Gift Shop*. "Interior, Tally-Ho, New York City." Black and white photograph. Issue 3, no. 1 (July 1923): 5. Reproduced in Brandimarte, Cynthia A. "'To Make the Whole World Homelike': Gender, Space, and America's Tea Room Movement." *Winterthur Portfolio* 30, no. 1 (Spring, 1995): 18, fig 15. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4618478>.

*Tea Room Management*. "Interior, Satsuma Tea Room, Nashville, Tenn." Black and white photograph. Issue 1, no. 1 (August 1922): 22. Reproduced in Brandimarte, Cynthia A. "'To Make the Whole World Homelike': Gender, Space, and America's Tea Room Movement." *Winterthur Portfolio* 30, no. 1 (Spring, 1995): 6, fig 4. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4618478>.

Tea & Sympathy. "Tea & Sympathy." Accessed August 12, 2020.  
<https://www.teaandsympathy.com>.

"Tea & Sympathy Menu." Accessed 23 March 2021.  
<https://www.teaandsympathy.com/menu#kDyBNz>.

*Tea Tech*. "Welcome to Jackie's Tea House." 2008. Webpage. Accessed April 14, 2020. <http://www.teatech.com/store/>.

*Tea Tells the World*. "Turn to Tea Today!" Advertisement. In *Tea Tells the World*. London: International Tea Market Expansion Board, 1937. 7.

*The Telegraph*. "Shi Pei Pu." July 3, 2009. Accessed July 4, 2018.  
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/5735335/Shi-Pei-Pu.html>.

- Telemaque, Eleanor Wong. *It's Crazy to Stay Chinese in Minnesota*. 2nd ed. Self pub., Xlibris Corporation, 2000.
- Thurston, Robert W. "United States." In *Coffee: A Comprehensive Guide to the Bean, the Beverage, and the Industry*. Edited by Robert W. Thurston, Jonathan Morris, and Shawn Steiman, 206-212. Maryland: Powman & Littlefield, 2013.
- Time*. "How to Tell Your Friends from the Japs." 1941. Illustrated article. December 22, 1941, 33. Reproduced on *Chicago Monitor*. Accessed April 12, 2019. <https://chicagomonitor.com/2012/08/how-to-tell-your-friends-from-the-japs-in-time-1941-vs-turban-primer-in-redeye-2012/>
- "The New Pictures." September 11, 1950. Accessed June 27, 2019. <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,813215,00.html>.
- "Religion: Zen: Beat & Square." July 21, 1958. Accessed June 26, 2019. <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,868663,00.html>.
- Tölölyan, Khachig. "The Nation-State and its Others: In Lieu of a Preface." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 3-7. DOI: 10.1353/dsp.1991.0008.
- "Restoring the logic of the sedentary to diaspora studies." In *Les Diasporas: 2000 ans d'Histoire*. Edited by Lisa Anteby-Yemini, William Berthomière and Gabriel Sheffe. Rennes: Presse Universitaires de Rennes, 2005: 137-148.
- Tomkinson, Carole. *Big Sky Mind: Buddhism and the Beat Generation*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1995.
- Tong, Benjamin. "Critic of Admirer Sees Dumb Racist." *The San Francisco Journal* (May 11, 1977): 20.
- Topik, Steven and Michelle Craig McDonald. "Why Americans Drink Coffee: The Boston Tea Party or Brazilian Slavery?" In *Coffee: A Comprehensive Guide to the Bean, the Beverage, and the Industry*. Edited by Robert W. Thurston, Jonathan Morris, and Shawn Steiman, 234-247. Maryland: Powman & Littlefield, 2013.
- Uhl, Kathryn. *Untitled*. 1978. Illustration. Reproduced in *Fifth Chinese Daughter* by Jade Snow Wong, 227. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989.
- Updike, John. "Afterword by the Author." In *Rabbit, Run* by John Updike, 264-280. London: Penguin Classics, 2006.
- "On the Sidewalk." In *Beat Down to Your Soul: What Was the Beat Generation?* Edited by Ann Charters, 585-587. London: Penguin Books, 2001.

- Rabbit, Run*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960. Reprinted with an Afterword by the author, London: Penguin Classics, 2006.
- Upton, L. F. S. "Proceedings of ye Body Respecting the Tea." In "Notes and Documents," *William and Mary Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (April 1965): 287-300.
- Union Pacific Tea Co. *Melican Man he mus dlink Tea an den he get so fat like me*. c. 1880s-1890s. Trade card. Reproduced in *Collecting Objects/Excluding People: Chinese Subjects and American Visual Culture 1830-1900* by Lenore Metrick Chen. Albany: State University of New York, 2012. 201, fig. 4.18.
- U.S. Department of State Archive. "Repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act, 1943." Accessed May 15, 2019. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/wwii/86552.htm>.
- Vandenberg-Daves, Jodi. *Modern Motherhood: An American History*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014.
- Võ, Linda Trinh and Marian Sciacchitano. "Introduction: Moving beyond 'Exotics, Whores, and Nimble Fingers.'" In *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 21, no. 1-2, (January 2000): 1-19. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3347027>.
- Wadler, Joyce. "The True Story of M. Butterfly; The Spy who Fell in Love with a Shadow." *New York Times Magazine*. August 15, 1993, 30.
- Waldstreicher, David. *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.
- Walmart. "Bruce Tea JKD Ginseng Royal Jelly & Honey, 15 fl oz." Accessed September 12, 2020. <https://www.walmart.com/ip/Bruce-Tea-JKD-Ginseng-Royal-Jelly-Honey-15-fl-oz/103703816>.
- Wang, Alfred S. "Lu Hsun and Maxine Hong Kingston: Medicine as a Symbol in Chinese and Chinese American Literature." *Literature and Medicine* 8 (1989): 1-21. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/376700/pdf>.
- Wang, Gungwu and Annette Shun Wah. *Imagining the Chinese Diaspora: Two Australian Perspectives*. Canberra: Centre for the Study of the Chinese Southern Diaspora, 1999.
- Wang, L. Ling-chi. "Roots and Changing Identity of the Chinese in the United States." *Daedalus* 120, no. 2 (Spring 1991): 181-206. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20025379>.
- Wang, Wayne, director. *Eat a Bowl of Tea*. 1989; Los Angeles: Columbia Pictures, 2003. DVD.

- Warner, Judith. "The Motherhood Religion." In *Maternal Theory: Essential Readings*. Edited by Andrea O'Reilly, 705-725. Ontario: Demeter Press, 2007.
- Perfect Madness: Motherhood in the Age of Anxiety*. United Kingdom: Vermilion, 2006.
- Weber, Max. *Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*. Translated by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons. New York: The Free Press, 1947.
- Wee, Sui-Lee. "In Coronavirus, China Weighs Benefits of Buffalo Horn and Other Remedies." *New York Times*. February 5, 2020. Accessed June 12, 2020.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/05/world/asia/coronavirus-traditional-chinese-medicine.html>.
- Weir, David. *American Orient: Imagining the East from the Colonial Era through the Twentieth Century*. Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011.
- Wells, Ephraim. "Rough on Rats." Advertisement. Reproduced in *China Through American Eyes* by Zhang Wenxian, 398. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2018.
- Wharton, Edith and Ogden Jr. Codman. *The Decoration of Houses*. London: B. T. Batsford, 1898; New York: Cosimo Inc., 2008.
- Wheat, Lu. *Ah Moy: The Story of a Chinese Girl*. New York: Grafton Press, 1908. Accessed May to July 2018.  
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo1.ark:/13960/t84j12q1v&view=1up&seq=9>.
- Whitaker, Jan. "Tea." In *The Oxford Companion to American Food and Drink*. Edited by Andrew F. Smith, 582-583. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- White & Bauer. *The Great Fear of the Period: That Uncle Sam may be Swallowed by Foreigners: The Problem Solved, c.1860-1869*. Cartoon. *Library of Congress*. Accessed January 2, 2020.  
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/pgs.03047/>.
- White-Parks, Annette. *Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton: A Literary Biography*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995.
- Whitfield, Stephen J. *The Culture of the Cold War*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
- Wiggam, Albert Edward. *The Fruit of the Family Tree*. New York: Blue Ribbon, 1922.

- Wilford, Hugh. *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Williams-Forsen, Psyche. *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food and Power*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.
- Williams, Raymond. "Literature and Society." In *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays*. Edited by Alan O'Connor, 11-31. London: Verso, 1980.
- Wolfe, Susan J. *Lesbian Culture: An Anthology: The Lives, Work, Ideas, Art and Visions of Lesbians Past and Present*. California: Crossing Press, 1993.
- Women's Day. Check the Flavor! Check the Price!* 1952. A&P advertisement. November 1952. 130. Reproduced on *Flickr*. Accessed May 20, 2019. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jbcurio/2666263189/sizes/o/in/set-72057594111613034/>.
- Wong, Jade Snow. "Author's Note to the Original Edition." In *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, xxxvii-xxxviii. Seattle: Washington University Press, 2019.
- "Bowl." *The Met*. Accessed June 18, 2020. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/488286>.
- Fifth Chinese Daughter*. New York: Harper and Row, 1945, 1950; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978, 1989, 2019.
- "Untitled." Mid-1950s. Earthenware vase, height 5.5 inches. Pictured in *American Studio Ceramics: Innovation and Identity, 1940 to 1979* by Martha Drexler Lynn. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2015. 96.
- Wong, K. Scott. "Cultural Defenders and Brokers: Chinese Responses to the Anti-Chinese Movement." In *Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities During the Exclusion Era*. Edited by K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan, 3-40. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.
- Wong, Sau-Ling Cynthia. "Ethnicizing Gender: An Exploration of Sexuality as Sign in Chinese Immigrant Literature." In *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*. Edited by Shirley Geok-lin Lim and Amy Ling, 110-130. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992.
- "Necessity and Extravagance in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*: Art and the Ethnic Experience." *MELUS* 15, no.1 (March 1988): 3-26. DOI: <https://doi-org.uoelibrary.idm.oclc.org/10.2307/467038>.
- Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

- “Sugar Sisterhood’: Situating the Amy Tan Phenomenon.” In *The Ethnic Canon: Histories, Institutions, and Interventions*. Edited by David Palumbo-Liu, 174-210. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995.
- Wong, Sau-ling C., and Jeffrey J. Santa Ana. “Gender and Sexuality in Asian American Literature.” *Signs* 25, no. 1 (Autumn 1999): 171-226, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3175619>.
- Wong, Victor. “Childhood II.” In *Ting: The Cauldron: Chinese Art and Identity in San Francisco*. Edited by Nick Harvey, 69-72. San Francisco: Glide Urban Center, 1970.
- Woo, Deborah. “Maxine Hong Kingston: The Ethnic Writer and the Burden of Dual Authenticity,” *Amerasia Journal* 16, no.1 (February 2019): 173-200. [10.17953/amer.16.1.v6744nn1717w551q](https://doi.org/10.17953/amer.16.1.v6744nn1717w551q).
- Workingmen’s Party of California Anti-Chinese Council. *Chinatown Declared a Nuisance!* San Francisco: Workingmen’s Party of California, 1880. 4-5.
- Wu, Ellen D. “America’s Chinese: Anti-Communism, Citizenship, and Cultural Diplomacy during the Cold War.” *Pacific Historical Review* 77, no. 3 (August 2008): 391-422. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/phr.2008.77.3.391>.
- The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014.
- Wu, William F. *The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction 1850-1940*. Connecticut: Archon Books, 1982.
- Wright, George. “China Mac: From Attempted Murder to Leading a Protest Movement.” *BBC News*. February 11, 2021. Accessed May 19, 2021. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-55945949>
- Wyatt, David. *Five Fires: Race, Catastrophe, and the Shaping of California*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Xu, Ben. “Memory and the Ethnic Self: Reading Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club*.” *MELUS* 19, no.1 (Spring 1994): 3-18. DOI: <https://doi-org.uoelibrary.idm.oclc.org/10.2307/467784>.
- Xu, Wenying. *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American Literature*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008.
- Historical Dictionary of Asian American Literature and Theater*. Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2012.
- Yamamoto, Eric. *Interracial Justice: Conflict and Reconciliation in Post-Civil Rights America*. New York: New York University Press, 1999.

Yang, Jimmy O. *How to American: An Immigrant's Guide to Disappointing Your Parents*. New York: Hachette Book Group, 2018.

Yates, Richard. *Revolutionary Road*. New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1961. Reprinted, London: Vintage, 2009.

Yin, Xiao-huang. *Chinese American Literature Since the 1850s*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

“Writing a Place in American Life: The Sensibilities of American-born Chinese as Reflected in Life Stories from the Exclusion Era.” In *Chinese American Transnationalism: The Flow of People, Resources, and Ideas between China and America during the Exclusion Era*. Edited by Sucheng Chan, 211-236. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.

Yu, Ming. *Chinese Jade*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Yung, Judy. *Chinese Women of America, A Pictorial History*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986.

editor. *Unbound Voices: A Documentary History of Chinese Women in San Francisco*. California: University of California Press, 1999.

Zhang, Wenxian. *China Through American Eyes*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2018.

Zhao, Xiaojian. *Remaking Chinese America: Immigration, Family, and Community, 1940-1965*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002.

Zhou, Min. *Chinatown: The Socioeconomic Potential of an Urban Enclave*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992.

Zhu, Lia. “Americans seek Chinese roots.” *China Daily*. April 8, 2019. Accessed March 13, 2018.  
<http://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201904/08/WS5cab60e3a3104842260b5024.html>.

Zia, Helen and Susan B. Ball. *Notable Asian Americans*. New York: Research Gate, 1995.