An Intimate World: Race, Migration, and Chinese and Irish Domestic Servants in the United States, 1850-1920

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Growing up in Maryland, dinner at the Urban household was not for the faint of heart. I for one would like to apologize for the occasions when my language became a bit too profane. Nonetheless, I am thankful that my parents, Janet and Ted, raised me in a manner that emphasized the benefits of being able to hold one's own in an intellectual and political argument. Their love of books, museums, and critical thinking – and their

ability to share this – made me who I am. On a practical level, my parents have also served as proofreaders and editors for various portions of this dissertation. Their help and love is obviously boundless. I wish all the best for my sister Claire, who is now in her second year of law school and focusing on public interest immigration law. It has been wonderful that recently our interests have overlapped – with obvious disciplinary differences – and I hope Claire knows that even though I believe that the law is nothing but a social technology used to maintain the spurious authority of the state…the world still needs more people like her willing to do battle on the ground.

Nicole Heater and I first met in September 2001, fittingly as co-workers at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. Since October 2002 she has been my partner in all senses of that word. I will always remember in particular, when she took me on a trip to Brownsville so that we could track down the building where Margaret Sanger briefly operated the first public birth control clinic in the United States, before she was arrested. Wandering the streets of Brownsville looking for this abandoned building, I remember being awestruck about having found someone whose curiosity about the past mirrored mine. I look forward to a lifetime together and celebrating her accomplishments as a landscape architect. The sense of awe she inspires in me has not diminished, but only grows stronger…

Dedication

To Nicole…

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Introduction

In 1912, six years before his death, Hubert Howe Bancroft published his *Retrospection: Political and Personal*. During the course of his career as a historian, Bancroft wrote extensively about California's early years and the tumultuous political battles that had accompanied the state's leading role in the effort to restrict Chinese immigration, and his published memoirs again returned to the subject. Thirty years after the passage of the initial Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, his *Retrospection* revealed serious regret about the legislation's economic, political, and social effects both domestically and abroad. "A true story of the Asiatics in America," Bancroft wrote, would emphasize "the amazing gullibility of the American people."[1] At the center of Bancroft's interpretation of the history of Chinese immigration to the United States was his belief that access to Chinese labor had not only provided an incredible economic opportunity, but "an opportunity for the statesmen, the merchant, the manufacturer, the philanthropist, the proselytist, an opportunity for us to make the whole of China our sphere of influence." Instead, the United States had squandered its chance to exercise its "beneficent guardianship" over China and its population, by forcefully rejecting the Chinese immigrants who had arrived on American shores.[2]

The "gullibility of the American people," Bancroft explained, was illustrated by the public's willingness to embrace demagogic leaders like Denis Kearney. In 1877,

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[1] Hubert H. Bancroft, *Retrospection: Political and Personal* (New York: The Bancroft Company, 1912), 345. In its review of *Retrospection*, the *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* described the book as "the reflections of a man who has lived a long life in a new country, [and] has watched and helped it grow from a primitive no-man's land to a great empire." Richard Ellwood Dodge, "Review," *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* 45, no. 3 (1913): 224.
[2] Bancroft, *Retrospection,* 348.

Kearney had emerged – "out of the bogs" of Ireland as Bancroft put it – and had risen to national prominence as the best-known and most vocal advocate of restricting Chinese immigration.[3] With the passage of the Exclusion Act in 1882, Bancroft blamed foreigners for imposing upon the rest of the country legislation that was "selfish" and which offered a version of republicanism that in his opinion was nothing more than "government by wild Irishmen, for wild Irishmen and self-serving labor leaders."[4]

Adopting a more conciliatory tone toward white laborers, and taking a broad view of the global position of the white race, Bancroft noted that, "The white race proposes to control the earth. When that time comes the working-man of to-day will want men to work for him; will he employ all white labor or use Asiatics for some things?"[5] Nearly a half century earlier, in an 1867 letter to the *Springfield Republican*, the author and playwright Bret Harte made a similar point about how Chinese immigration might force Irish men and women to "progress," as long as they were willing to cede their monopoly over various forms of degraded, manual labor.[6] In a letter dated February 28, Harte explained to the readership of the Massachusetts-based newspaper that the Chinese "had fostered the blind hatred and active malice of our Celtic citizens."

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[3] Ibid., 354

[4] Ibid., 355.

[5] Ibid., 358. Although Bancroft used the phrase "Asiatics," despite the imprecise nature of the term, it is clear that he meant Chinese immigrants specifically. For example, Bancroft distinguished Chinese immigrants from Japanese immigrants, in that the Japanese immigrant "is captious, clamorous of his rights, and would like to become the equal or superior of the white race." Conversely, Chinese immigrants, in Bancroft's analysis, were more than willing to occupy a subservient role in society. Ibid., 357.

[6] The *Republican* had hired Harte – a "pioneer" transplant from Albany, New York, who had arrived in California shortly after the Gold Rush – in an effort to satisfy its readers' curiosity about life on the Pacific Coast. Harte, who was also employed by the Boston-based *Christian Register*, received ten dollars for each correspondence he sent. Gary Scharnhorst, ed., *Bret Harte's California: Letters to the Springfield Republican and Christian Register, 1866-67* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 1.

> As servants [the Chinese] are quick-witted, patient, obedient and faithful, and the old prerogatives of Bridget and Norah in the domestic circle are seriously threatened by the advent of these quiet, clean, and orderly male chambermaids and cooks. That John Chinaman will eventually supplant Bridget and Patrick in menial occupations seems to be a settled fact. I see nothing for Bridget and Patrick to do except to progress.[7]

In this context, Harte's comment that Bridget had no other option but to progress can be seen as both a recommendation for Irish servants to reform as workers and willingly submit to their roles cleaning, cooking, and caring for their social betters, or, alternatively, a suggestion that they yield this type of labor to the Chinese altogether. Like Bancroft, Harte implied that it was preferable for white laborers – the Irish included – to walk away from menial occupations that were better suited to the naturally servile Chinese.

From his vantage point as a historian, Bancroft argued that the division of labor among different races was something that domestically, had vexed the United States since the end of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery. Freed from bondage and granted (at least on paper) equal rights to whites, "Africans" no longer provided a reliable source of labor. Although millions of European immigrants had arrived in the United States since 1865, their "aspirations" – Bancroft cynically noted – had resulted in labor radicalism and ingratitude. "We want some men in the United States for work alone." Bancroft emphasized. "We do not need them all for governing or for breeding purposes, least of all low grade foreigners, Asiatic or European."[8]

Like Harte, among the menial occupations that Bancroft felt that Chinese immigrants were essentially suited for was domestic service, where he estimated that

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[7] Harte to *Springfield Republican*, 28 February 1867, in *Bret Harte's California*, ed. Scharnhorst, 114.
[8] Bancroft, *Retrospection*, 358.

100,000 Chinese servants would be needed to adequately satisfy contemporary demand.[9] Bancroft did not propose lifting restrictions on Chinese immigrants, but rather creating instead a "system of passports" so that "needed Asiatic laborers could be admitted as required, and sent away when no longer needed."[10]

The Racial Politics of Immigration and Domestic Service

This dissertation looks at how individuals like Bancroft and Harte, and the many others who arrived at similar conclusions, supported immigration policies that favored Chinese immigration to the United States, based on the racial understanding that male Chinese immigrants were uniquely suited to domestic service. It argues that native-born, white middle class Americans placed immense importance on domestic service, as a labor relationship that defined and maintained their class and racial identity. Central to that identity was an assumption that they had the privilege of leading the nation's course when it came to creating immigration policy and the laws that governed whom could enter the country. By looking at domestic service this dissertation argues that the historic relationship between race and the social and legal inclusion does not necessarily have a neat or entirely predictable genealogy.[11] Even though the federal government ultimately restricted Chinese immigration in 1882, both before and after the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act, there remained a considerable and active population of

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[9] Ibid., 358.

[10] Ibid., 359. Bancroft's reference to a "system of passports" offers an early version of the type of guest worker program that the United States would ultimately implement during the Second World War, with Mexican migrants.

[11] This is not to discount the work of George Sanchez and other immigration historians who have emphasized the centrality of race in the immigrant experience. Rather, my intent is to demonstrate that in some circumstances, Americans welcomed immigrants because they felt that their racial characteristics – while inferior to whites – could nonetheless be put to use. On race and immigration history, see George Sanchez, "Race, Nation, and Culture in Recent Immigration Studies," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 18, no. 4 (Summer 1999): 66-84.

white Americans who were willing to assert that this federal legislation represented an error in the nation's collective judgment.

As work, domestic service was unique because it required immigrant laborers to live in the same homes as their native-born American employers, under closely-monitored conditions that middle class mistresses themselves regularly described as akin to slavery. With domestic work, the highest value was placed on servants who were perceived as naturally and unwaveringly obedient. Journalists, politicians, reformers, and middle-class mistresses all assessed domestic service as racial work in that they unanimously agreed that the "best" servants occupied that category for reasons having to do with race.

The home was not simply a site where servants worked, but a place where civilization was actively fostered through reproduction and the cultivation of moral values.[12] The sweat and toil of servants freed middle class women from having to perform arduous labor in the home. In turn, middle class women governed their servants with unyielding control and intimate supervision lest the subjects of domestic service assume that they could rule the domestic sphere on their own accord. In 1883, for example, Hester Martha Poole, a well-known observer of domestic life, warned readers that, "we are more and more at the mercy of an alien and ignorant population," who

[12] On the concept of "true womanhood" and the domestic values that middle class women were naturally supposed to embody, see, Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no.2 (1966): 151-174. As Gail Bederman argues, historically, "civilization" has been understood by Americans as a gendered and a racial concept, denoting specific social, economic, and political arrangements. Nonetheless, as this dissertation will explore as well, civilization was (and remains) a contested cultural discourse. As Bederman notes, "'Civilization' was protean in its applications. Different people used it to legitimize conservatism, and change, male dominance and militant feminism, white racism and African American resistance." Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 23.

"overrun our homes like the plagues of Egypt, marring all they touch."[13] Among members of the middle class, the home provided an arena of governance for women and was represented as their primary and natural domain over which to exercise power. To revisit the well-known imperial concept that was also crucial to how mistresses thought of their obligations in the home, ruling over their servants with an "iron hand," to quote Poole, was their particular burden.[14]

I have chosen to focus on Irish and Chinese servants because these immigrant groups were widely seen in the second half of the nineteenth century as representing two polar opposites when it came to their qualities as domestic servants, and, in many cases, were depicted as direct antagonists competing for jobs in cities as far apart as San Francisco and New York. In part, my frame of analysis was imposed upon me by the sources I used. Although I originally conceived of this dissertation as focusing exclusively on Irish servants, it quickly became apparent that when middle class Americans aired their problems with Irish servants, almost invariably comparisons to Chinese servants followed. By 1850, newspapers, magazines, and novels had begun to popularize the figure of "Biddy" in order to construct a common stereotype of the laziness, ignorance, insubordination, and, in some cases, violence that employers felt characterized Irish domestic labor. By 1869, a year marked with excitement and expectations accompanying the completion of the transcontinental railroad, many middle class families concluded that a solution to the crisis posed by Biddy was now

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[13] Hester Martha Poole, "The Household – Domestic Service," *The Continent* 3 (February 1883): 185.
[14] As Amy Kaplan argues, "If domesticity plays a key role in imagining the nation as home, then women, positioned at the center of the home, play a major role in defining the contours of the nation and its shifting borders with the foreign." In domestic service more than any other relationship that they engaged in, the foreign – and the threat of foreigners to both American domesticity and the American nation – directly confronted middle class women. Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (Sept. 1998): 581-606, here 582. See also, Karen Sanchez-Eppler, "Raising Empires Like Children: Race, Nation and Religious Education," *American Literary History* 8 (1996):399-425.

available to them. As numerous authors proclaimed, Chinese men belonged to a docile and emasculated race, and, unlike aggressive and masculine Irish women who failed to recognize their subservient status, were ideal for domestic service work.[15] Relief, they believed, was just a railroad trip away.

Historians of immigration to the United States have – with notable exceptions – failed to pay attention to how Americans compared and linked Irish and Chinese immigrants as contemporaries during the nineteenth century.[16] In all of the locations where Irish and Chinese migrants crossed paths during the nineteenth century, whether in the United States, Canada, or Australia, popular opinion called into question their ability to coexist.[17] Although this dissertation focuses on the domestic manifestations of imperial concerns, and the ways in which Americans approached the issue of how to best utilize different types of immigrant and racial labor in the United States, the real

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[15] That Chinese men were in most cases the only Chinese domestic laborers available, reflects the passage of the Page Act in 1875, which gave consular officials in China the authority to bar the immigration of Chinese women on the basis that they were sexual threats. The Page Act was administered at the discretion of individual officials, who used the act to effectively stop the immigration of single Chinese women. On the Page Act, see Eithne Luibhéid, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 31-54; and, George Peffer, *If They Don't Bring Their Women Here: Chinese Female Immigration Before Exclusion* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

[16] See for example, John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (London and Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); and, Tchen, "Quimbo Appo's Fear of Fenians: Chinese-Irish-Anglo Relations in New York City," in *The New York Irish*, ed. Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 125-152.

[17] Wherever movements developed to restrict Chinese immigration to English-speaking countries, Irish immigrants were perceived to play a major role. See for example, Robert Huttenback, *Racism and Empire: White Settlers and Colored Immigrants in the British Self-Governing Colonies, 1830-1910* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976); Charles Price, *The Great White Walls are Built: Restrictive Immigration to North America and Australasia, 1836-1888* (Canberra: Australian Institute of International Affairs in association with Australian National University Press, 1974); and, Malcolm Campbell, *Ireland's New Worlds: Immigrants, Politics, and Society in the United States and Australia, 1815-1922* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008). Kevin Kenny has advocated for comparative work that looks at how race mattered to the Irish in different locations and how Irish immigrants attempted to represent themselves and were received in different nations. For example, Irish immigrants also modeled themselves as "pioneers" in Australian and Canadian nation-building, as they did in the United States. Kevin Kenny, "Diaspora and Comparison: The Global Irish as a Case Study," *The Journal of American History* 90, no. 1 (June 2003): 134-62.

and imagined conflicts that occurred between Irish and Chinese migrants over work, social inclusion, and political representation, took place on a global scale.

The passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 was intended to protect white workers from competition with "coolie" Chinese labor, and to stop the immigration of members of a race that many American believed was unassimilable. Even after 1882, however, many middle class Americans continued to praise Chinese servants as unassailably loyal and dedicated employees who were absolutely necessary to the profession. Employers of Chinese servants, as the latter part of my dissertations shows, challenged the wisdom and legality of Chinese Exclusion as public policy, which they felt interfered with their right to freely hire the best servants. In this sense my dissertation documents a failed attempt to influence the path taken by the United States. Even though middle-class Anglo Americans – or Anglo Saxons – claimed the unique privilege to govern, in practice this was far from the case.[18]

At its most general level, my research reveals how the concept of domesticity, and the belief that it was the obligation of middle class women to create a home environment that would nurture American citizens, cannot be studied separately from how individuals and the state governed immigrants. Employers of servants understood the racial and gendered qualities of Irish and Chinese immigrants in the context of how

[18] As Peter Kolchin has argued, the failure of "critical whiteness" scholarship to distinguish between social/cultural citizenship and legal citizenship has been one of its most glaring weaknesses. Although it is true that Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants to the United States all struggled to become white, this struggle occurred primarily within social and cultural arenas. All of these groups were able to naturalize and reap the benefits of citizenship because legally they were considered white. This is immediately evident when it comes to Chinese Exclusion. Although Irish immigrants may have shouldered the cultural blame for Chinese restriction, their ability to participate in this political movement in the first place distinguishes them from their Chinese counterparts, who were denied the right to naturalize. Peter Kolchin, "Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America," *The Journal of American History* 89, no. 1 (June 2002): 154-173.

these qualities might strengthen or weaken the domestic ideal of the middle class home. The adulation that certain classes of Americans heaped on the figure of the Chinese servant, helped to sustain the racial view that the worth of Chinese immigrants could be measured primarily through their servility. In the early-twentieth century, as the history of the Columbus refugees reveals (discussed in chapter six), the government was willing to make exceptions to its federal immigration policy – and create a special category of refugee – in a case where officials felt that racial servility of the Chinese could be utilized by the military and therefore serve the nation as well. The belief that immigrants from certain countries and regions of the world are naturally predisposed to work as the servants of Americans still informs immigration debates – both culturally and legally, and in a manner that imbricates the two categories – even today.

How to best govern the imagined relationship between race and labor has been an inescapable feature of American life dating back to the nation's founding as a slaveholding society. Even before independence, by the end of the seventeenth century, race not only marked the legal difference between an enslaved and indentured individual arriving in North America, but provided the ideological justifications for this distinction as well. In the context of European expansion into the Americas, race explained, for example, the purported capabilities of African slaves to tolerate inhuman conditions and to exist happily in bondage – and, conversely, why the white race could not.[19] Nor were Irish and Chinese servants the first servants evaluated in specifically racial terms. As the extensive scholarship on the figure of "Mammy" has shown, the

[19] See, for example, Jennifer L. Morgan, "'Some Could Suckle Over Their Shoulder': Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1770," *William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (January 1997): 167-92. For an overview of the legal history of slavery in the United States, which also offers a comparative perspective, see Paul Finkelman, ed., *Slavery and the Law* (Madison, WI: Madison House Books, 1998).

belief that female slaves and later, freed blacks, naturally embraced their roles caring for white children and families, served as a powerful argument for slavery and later forms of racial subjugation.[20] As Howard Winant has suggested, the foregrounding of race is important because scholars have often failed to theorize how race was as a "constitutive element" and a "key causative factor in the creation of the modern world," rather than a "manifestation of some other, supposedly more profound or more 'real' social relationship."[21]

Increased global migration in the nineteenth century and the arrival of immigrants from places like Ireland and China further complicated assumptions about the suitability of different races for particular types of labor, and again raised the issue of how immigrants desired mainly for their labor could be incorporated into the political and social structure of the United States. Although male Irish immigrants were allowed to naturalize as citizens and were granted suffrage, Anglo American critics expressed serious reservations about the fitness of "Paddy" to govern. "Prehensile paws" – to quote one nineteenth-century observer – made the male Irish Catholic immigrant suitable for manual labor. On the other hand, his blind allegiance to the Catholic Church and his continued loyalty to Ireland made him a dangerous participant in republicanism.[22] For female Irish servants, fitness to govern took on a different meaning in the context of the home. Mistresses regularly accused Biddy of being a tyrant and a

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[20] See for example, Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 44-78, and Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in the Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

[21] Howard Winant, *The World is a Ghetto: Race and Democracy Since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 19.

[22] Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas, eds., *The Diary of George Templeton Strong: Young Man in New York, 1835–1849*, 4 vols. (New York, 1952), 1: 318; on anti-Irish nativism, see Dale Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic: Ethnicity and Nationality in Antebellum America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1986).

rebel who did not know her place, which was to follow orders and not attempt to exercise her own rule over the home.

How to take advantage of Chinese immigrant labor, and whether Chinese immigrants had to be included in American political and social life, posed similar dilemmas. For example, in the aftermath of the Civil War, when white Southern planters proposed replacing freed black slaves with Chinese labor on sugar and cotton plantations, critics of these plans questioned whether the introduction of a new source of racialized labor would only serve to replicate the ills caused by slavery. Such concerns centered on the figure of the "coolie," and the belief that Chinese immigrants arriving in the United States did not exercise free-will when it came to determining the conditions and wages of their labor. As Moon Ho Jung has argued, "coolies were never a people or a legal category. Rather, coolies were a conglomeration of racial imaginings that emerged worldwide in the era of slave emancipation, a product of the imaginers rather than the imagined."[23]

Solving labor problems precipitated by the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century was by no means a uniquely American concern. Proposals to import Chinese laborers to the American South in the aftermath of the Civil War closely paralleled similar efforts in Cuba, where Spanish colonists and American expatriates brought in large numbers of Chinese contract laborers to work on sugar plantations.[24] In the British

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[23] Moon-Ho Jung, *Coolies and Cane: Race, Labor, and Sugar in the Age of Emancipation* (London and Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 5. On the role that concerns surrounding Chinese immigration played in mid-nineteenth century and Reconstruction Era debates pertaining to citizenship, see Najia Aarim-Heirot, *Chinese Immigrants, African Americans, and Racial Anxiety in the United States, 1848-82* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

[24] Matthew Guterl, "After Slavery: Asian Labor, Immigration, and Emancipation in the United States and Cuba, 1840-1880," *Journal of World History* 14, no. 2 (June 2003): 209-241. See also, Guterl, *American Mediterranean: Southern Slaveholders in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

colonies of the Caribbean, Chinese workers were introduced into the workforce of sugar plantations following the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1834, as part of a strategy to free Great Britain from its dependency on slave labor. As Lisa Lowe points out, "the Chinese were represented as a paradoxical figure, at once both an addition that would stabilize the colonial order and the supplement whose addition might likewise threaten the attainment of such stability."[25]

The overwhelmingly male immigration of the Chinese to the United States led Americans to assert that the Chinese were sojourners who had no desire to settle permanently and adopt domestic arrangements. Karen Leong notes, that "Without a home, a 'Chinaman' had no reason to defend the country; without a family, a 'Chinaman' had no reason to invest in the future well-being of the nation; without a wife, a 'Chinaman' was simply barbaric and uncivilized."[26] Employers of Chinese servants, however, did not see their "sojourner" status as a dangerous quality. Rather, because Chinese immigrants were perceived as sojourners, Chinese servants did not have the competing demands of their own families interfering with the service required of them by their white employers.

How to balance the profitability of foreign labor, and the benefits that it allegedly accrued to manufacturers, landowners, and, as this dissertation will address, households, with the threat that those foreigners posed to the racial and social composition of the nation, was a domestic question for the United States with a

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[25] Lisa Lowe, "The Intimacies of Four Continents," in Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted By Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 197.
[26] Karen J. Leong, "'A Distinct and Antagonistic Race': Constructions of Chinese Manhood in the Exclusionist Debates, 1869-1878," in *Across the Great Divide: Cultures of Manhood in the American West*, ed. Matthew Basso, Laura McCall, and Dee Garceau (New York; London: Routledge, 2001), 143. See also, Peffer, *If They Don't Bring Their Women Here*.

decidedly imperial tone.[27] The racial dangers of imperialism, whether abroad or on American soil, were best avoided in the minds of white laborers and their political allies, by creating a nation that relied on and valued white labor alone.[28] This extended to domestic service, where white laborers – even while acknowledging and lamenting the occupation's close ties to slavery and inherent degradation – nonetheless expected to have priority when it came to being hired.

Although Lucy Maynard Salmon, a Vassar College professor and historian of domestic service, recognized in 1891 that "much has been said of the superiority of the Chinese as household employees and not a few housekeepers would be glad to see the restriction act repealed," she argued that the effect of such a reversal would only function to harm the occupation further. "Superior and inferior labor cannot exist side by side," Salmon argued. "The introduction to any considerable extent of Chinese servants would drive out European labor as that has in a measure driven out native born

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[27] Chinese immigration was central to other, more specific imperial concerns as well. For example, as chapter five will address in greater detail, he racial paternalism that marked interactions between Chinese immigrants and domestic missionaries in the United States served an important role in providing a discourse that would inform American imperialism in the Philippines and on mainland Asia. See, for example, Erin L. Murphy, "'Prelude to Imperialism': Whiteness and Chinese Exclusion in the Reimagining of the United States," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 18, no. 4 (2005): 457-90.
In addition, missionaries had distinct transnational agendas for Chinese immigrants, which centered on their conversion to Christianity. Missionaries believed that upon their return to China, Chinese immigrants could help to evangelize. On nineteenth-century American missionary ideology and Chinese immigrants, see Timothy Tseng, "Ministry at Arms' Length: Asian Americans in the Racial Ideology of Mainline Protestants, 1882-1952" (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1994); and, Jennifer Snow, *Protestant Missionaries, Asian Immigrants, and Ideologies of Race in America, 1850–1924* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[28] As Eric Love notes, white "racism upheld social hierarchies and systems of privilege and oppression based on the conviction that whites were, by every measure, superior to all nonwhite people. In short, the principal goal of the late-nineteenth-century racial social order was the exclusion of those racial and ethnic groups cast as 'nonwhite' from equal access to and participation in America's economic, political, social, and cultural mainstream." As Love argues, racist attitudes conflicted with the imperial plans of elite American policy makers. Most white laborers did not see themselves benefitting from the acquisition of territories, and feared the consequences of having to compete with non-white labor both at home and abroad. Eric T. L. Love, *Race Over Empire: Racism and US Imperialism, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 1.

American servants."[29] Unless Americans were willing to allow for the immigration of enough Chinese to fill all servant positions, a limited number of Chinese servants would only cause racial conflict.

The differing views of individuals such as Bancroft, Harte, and Salmon – spanning more than fifty years – indicate that the participation of Irish and Chinese immigrants in domestic service remained a contested subject, even as circumstances surrounding the occupation changed. The home was a place of sharp, and, at times, brutal racial calculations when it came to determining how domestic labor was best governed. While there was no consensus on how immigrant labor should be deployed in domestic service, all parties involved were adamant that whatever arrangement might be reached, had serious implications for the vision of American society that would ultimately prevail.

Chapters

Chapter one of my dissertation further develops the ideas I have outlined above, and looks specifically at how colonial ideas surrounding race, gender, immigration, and labor, informed how white Americans thought about Chinese and Irish servants and the problems that they allegedly posed. In addition, this chapter examines how domestic service provoked unique concerns that were specific to the intimacy that the occupation necessitated.

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[29] Lucy Maynard Salmon, *Domestic Service* (1891; repr., New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901), 176-7. Immediately preceding her discussion of Chinese servants, Salmon argued that proposals to bring black servants to the North should also be viewed with a skeptical eye, because the new generation of blacks born after the end slavery did not possess the servile qualities of the older generation. To make her point, she cited a newspaper from Texas, which claimed that, "younger negroes are too lazy to be of much use." Overall, Salmon observed that there was no uniform view on black servants in the South anymore, and that their migration to the North could not be trusted to provide a solution to the domestic service problem. Ibid., 174.

Beginning in roughly 1850, and continuing well into the 1880s, discussions of the so-called "domestic service question" in the United States were inseparable from concerns about Irish immigration. Chapter two argues that middle-class American women used the figure of Biddy to align their domestic governance with the broader goal of transforming Irish immigrants into useful members of society who respected Anglo American authority and served middle-class needs. The question of whether rural, Catholic Irish immigrants could be changed into respectful, obedient, and civilized citizens, mattered not only as an issue of domesticity, but connected directly to the broader dilemma of what Irish immigrants contributed to the United States.

Biddy was the product of a trans-Atlantic dialogue about the Irish. Employers' negative accounts of Biddy reflected fears associated with Irish political disorder that originated in Great Britain, and the belief that the Irish servant could bring violence into the American home. While Irish agitators were accused of terrorizing peaceful British rule in Ireland, employers depicted Biddy's frequent bouts of insubordination as endangering the tranquility and peace that the home was supposed to promise. Similarly, American mistresses believed that Biddy sought to exercise in the home independence that she was unequipped to carry out; employers characterized her attempts to achieve greater control over her time, duties, and wages, as rebellious actions by a colonial subject not fit to rule.

All of the qualities that made the female Irish servant a liability in the home – her insubordinate behavior, violent outbreaks, and her outspokenness in demanding time off and higher wages – were believed to be absent in the character of the humble and passive Chinese male. Chapter three of my dissertation looks at how white

employers, beginning in 1869, both imagined and attempted to put into practice schemes that would bring "John Chinaman to their rescue." Seeking a solution to the "servant problem" that plagued Eastern cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, white employers repeatedly invoked what they believed to be the imminent arrival of Chinese immigrants in numbers sufficient to satisfy their labor demand. At the same time, white employers asserted that their obligation to create a peaceful home for their families and their right to hire Chinese immigrants who were best suited for servile labor, outweighed their obligation to hire Irish women who (questionably) belonged to the white race.

The second half of this chapter explores novelists, journalists, and politicians who believed that Chinese immigrants would one day spell the doom of the American republic and race. They opposed and attacked the commonly held belief that Chinese men made great servants. Opponents of Chinese servants invoked the common accusation that employers were motivated by simple greed and a desire to take advantage of the fact that the Chinese were willing to work for slave wages, yet the effectiveness of this argument was limited, since frequently Chinese servants made higher wages than their white counterparts. Thus, they also accused Chinese servants of putting white women at risk sexually and of introducing disease into the home. Finally, certain authors, like Robert Woltor, who presented violent fictional accounts of Chinese servants murdering their employers, depicted the Chinese servant as an intimately-placed enemy. No matter how productive and accommodating Chinese servants might appear, these sources argued, his presence was a constant threat to both the home and the nation.

Chapter four directly connects the social and economic roles of Chinese and Irish immigrants by looking at the late-1870s in San Francisco, where the Workingmen's Party of California, led by Irish-born Denis Kearney, coalesced into a movement to end Chinese immigration. Tapping into popular ideology that presented the American West as the site of an impending race war between whites and Asians, Irish labor leaders claimed that they were acting to defend civilization. San Francisco's predominantly Anglo American civic elite agreed that Chinese immigration had to be restricted but blamed labor leaders – in particular the foreign Irish, embodied in the figure of Kearney – for the violent manner in which they went about trying to achieve this goal. Working-class violence, they felt, exposed the contradictions of allowing the Irish to immigrate, but not the Chinese.

Domestic service emerged as a key theme in the allegations wealthy Californians directed against the Irish, whom they accused of rioting on the behalf of Biddy and using violence to intimidate employers willing to hire her Chinese competitors. Even as the federal government moved toward the restriction of Chinese immigrants and an implicit acknowledgement that Chinese immigrant labor was dangerous to the United States, the question of how this danger compared to the danger posed by other immigrant groups, remained highly contested.

The exclusion of Chinese laborers, which began in 1882, was a disputed colonial policy. Chapter five of my dissertation explores the plight of Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans working as domestic servants following the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, and at the start of the twentieth century, white Americans who were sympathetic to Chinese

immigration used the figure of the Chinese domestic servant to challenge the justice and wisdom of immigration law. Relying on representations and stereotypes that presented the Chinese servant as unassailably devoted, loyal, and efficient, Protestant missionaries, authors critical of the white working class, and political commentators concerned with the threats posed by increased immigration from Eastern Europe and Italy, as well as Japan, all looked to the Chinese servant as proof that the Exclusion Act and subsequent legislation had been passed in error and failed to serve the interests of the segment of the American population that truly mattered.

Underlying the opposition of white employers to the Chinese Exclusion Act was their opinion that while Chinese immigrants may have entered white homes as "heathens" and "barbarians," the domestic environs of the white home combined with the tutelage of their Christian employers, imbued them with "civilized" traits. Paternalistic views of Chinese servants, while critical of immigration injustices, nonetheless failed to account for the fact that by 1900 many Chinese had left domestic service for work as cooks, which allowed them to live outside their employers' homes. Specifically, this chapter argues that white employers ignored this shift and the plight of Chinese service workers who did not live in their homes, since their representations of the value and worth of Chinese immigrants was linked to their ability to exercise direct control and moral authority over their Chinese employees.

Chapter six focuses on a group of Chinese refugees from Mexico known colloquially as "Pershing's Chinese." In 1916, General John J. Pershing led a punitive expedition of the United States Army into Mexico, with the goal of capturing "Pancho" Villa and revenging the raid that Villa and his troops had conducted against the town of

Columbus, New Mexico. During the expedition, Chinese immigrants living in the Northern provinces of Mexico offered goods and services to American soldiers quartered in the region. When it came time for Pershing's troops to leave, the Chinese who had been associated with the army followed Pershing out of Mexico, fearing for their own lives since Mexicans' sympathetic to Villa had branded them traitors.

By 1916, the only Chinese immigrants allowed to enter the United States were those who belonged to the exempt classes, such as merchants and students. The bulk of Chinese refugees who sought to enter the United States at Columbus, New Mexico, had been laborers. Initially, these refugees were allowed to stay as temporary guest workers under the employment of the United States Army. In this capacity, for the next four years, these Chinese refugees worked as cooks, waiters, and servants for the soldiers and officers of the United States Armed Forces, mainly at bases in Texas, Louisiana, and New Mexico. In 1921, after debating the services that the Chinese refugees had offered to the United States during the First World War and afterwards, Congress passed a special resolution allowing the refugees to remain in the country as registered aliens. Congress was swayed to pass this resolution based on the testimony of not only Pershing, but other high ranking officers who claimed that the Chinese, working as cooks and servants, had performed loyal, faithful, and diligent service. This chapter argues that a racial understanding of the servility of the Chinese, offered them a means of winning exemptions to immigration laws. "Pershing's Chinese" were the first group of immigrants specifically classified as refugees, since they could not enter under existing immigration laws.

The conclusion to my dissertation, attempts to connect my research to contemporary debates. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo has argued that domestic service remains "the domain of disenfranchised immigrant women of color."[30] Advocates for the adoption of less restrictive immigration policies cite domestic workers as evidence that contemporary immigrants provide essential services to the middle class, allowing, for example, American women to work outside the home and to avoid the "second shift" of domestic labor that has typically also been expected of them. Conversely, proponents of more restrictive immigration laws and policies argue that undocumented immigrants take jobs away from Americans while undermining American laws, culture, and values. Immigrant service workers remain important figures in a larger pattern of globalization, and, I would argue, American imperialism in the home. Immigrant women from countries such as Mexico and Central America provide a source of cheap labor that Americans, by virtue of their country's global standing and economic power, have the ability to access.

Historically and in the present, American homes played host to intimate relations that were "global" in the sense that they brought together individuals from different parts of the globe. Yet while domestic service brought laborers from across the world into American homes, it reinforced rather than weakened assumptions about race and labor. Domestic servants were not granted humanity through the labor they performed. As the conclusion to my dissertation addresses, the belief that immigrants from certain countries and regions of the world are naturally predisposed to work as the servants of Americans, remains a crucial part of how contemporary Americans think

[30] Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Doméstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), xii.

about the place of the United States in the world today. Rarely do Americans think about the circumstances and colonial forces that have brought immigrant laborers to their doorsteps.

Chapter 1

Governing the Home: Domestic Service and the Question of Immigrant Labor

"A Woman's Protest"

On April 16, 1882, the *Christian Union*, a New York-based newspaper founded by Henry Ward Beecher, published an article that examined why it was the duty of American women to protest a Congressional bill that would prohibit the entrance of Chinese laborers into the United States. The article, "American Women and the Anti-Chinese Bill: A Woman's Protest," was authored by a Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania journalist and author, Mary Wager-Fisher, who was 37-years old at the time and married to William Richter Fisher, a middle-class lawyer and reformer. During the previous two decades, the Fishers had been active members of the Freedmen's Bureau and involved in promoting the education of former slaves.[31] Like many white, middle class Protestant Americans involved in social reform, Mary Wager-Fisher had turned her attention from the plight of freed African Americans to that of Chinese immigrants.

By the end of the 1870s, restrictions on Chinese immigration appeared imminent. In March 1879, the Republican President Rutherford B. Hayes had vetoed the Fifteen Passenger Bill, legislation that would have limited the number of Chinese passengers on ships arriving in American ports to fifteen. After spending the summer of 1878 on a tour of the West Coast, Beecher, the famous abolitionist minister whose sermons at Plymouth Congregationalist Church in Brooklyn drew an audience in the

[31] This brief biographical sketch of the Fishers is drawn from the finding aid to the collection of their papers at Duke University. Melissa J. Delbridge and Joann Kleinneiur, "Guide to the William Righter and Mary Wager Fisher Papers, 1830-1934," Duke University, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/rbmscl/fisher/inv/ (accessed September 2, 2008).

thousands and were published in newspapers across the country, had become increasingly vocal in his support of Chinese immigration.[32] Beecher placed blame on the mounting pressure to restrict Chinese immigration on white workers, and, more specifically, Irish immigrants. Speaking before a crowd in Vermont in September 1879, Beecher asserted that if the Irish community of San Francisco was silenced, the American public would no longer hear "one word of grumbling about the Chinese." In his opinion, the Chinese were the "most industrious" immigrants arriving in the United States "and thrive where Americans would starve."[33]

Beecher first voiced his views on Chinese labor in 1870, when he provided editorial support in the *Christian Union* for factory owners in North Adams, Massachusetts, who had brought in Chinese laborers from California to replace striking shoemakers. Although the editorial focused on the situation in North Adams, more broadly it claimed that the presence of Chinese labor in the Northeast would "emancipate" white families forced to rely on domestic servants from the Irish immigrant community.[34] In Beecher's most famous sermon on Chinese immigration, titled "New Men, New Nation," which he delivered before an audience of more than 3,000 people at the Philadelphia Academy of Music on March 3, 1879, he refuted Republican presidential candidate James Blaine's claim that the Chinese would never

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[32] Elmer Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 30. On Henry Ward Beecher's fame, see, Debby Applegate, *The Most Famous Man in America: The Biography of Henry Ward Beecher* (New York: Three Leaves, 2007).

[33] "The Farmers' Picnic," *Vermont Watchman and State Journal,* September 3, 1879. Beecher melded his Protestant beliefs with Herbert Spencer's ideology of social Darwinism. In his opinion, the fact that Chinese immigrants could allegedly "thrive where Americans would starve" was not a mark of the alien and inimical qualities of the Chinese race, as many whites argued, but rather a sign of how Americans could benefit from the natural ability of Chinese immigrants to work in professions that whites found untenable. On Beecher and Spencer, see Lyman Abbott, *Henry Ward Beecher* (New York: Houghton and Mifflin Company, 1903), 314-7; 404-5.

[34] *Christian Union*, November 5, 1870.

assimilate. Among Chinese servants, Beecher noted, "there has been an increase of intelligence and knowledge of our domestic manners," which he attributed to the intimate supervision they received in American homes. Beecher rallied his audience to action by presenting the Chinese question to be an issue that put their very rights as Americans at stake. "You are not discussing the Chinese question only," Beecher preached, "you are discussing those of commerce and freedom, the freedom of your own persons, the rights of your own prosperity."[35]

Beecher's advocacy on the behalf of Chinese immigrants earned him the enmity of San Francisco's leading humor magazine, *The Wasp*. An 1879 cartoon published in the magazine accused Beecher and T. DeWitt Talmage, the minister of the Brooklyn Tabernacle who possessed similar clout, of interfering in legislation designed to limit Chinese immigration.[36] In the cartoon (pictured on the following page), Beecher and Talmage are joined by a man wearing a hat with the inscription "Puritan Demagogues." Collectively, they restrain President Hayes – dressed as a woman to show his weak will – from using a Chinese bill to beat off the crocodile of "coolie immigration," which threatens to devour the Western states.

Despite Beecher's claims that fears regarding Chinese immigration were in reality limited to a distinct subset of the American population (if the Irish were even to be considered American), ultimately his lobbying and that of other prominent ministers and businessmen could not prevent legislation aimed at stopping Chinese immigration. In May 1882, a month after the *Christian Union* published Wager-Fisher's article,

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[35] The sermon was reprinted in full in the *Christian Union*. "New Men, New Nation," *Christian Union*, March 5, 1879.
[36] Frederick Keller, "Reasons Why the Anti-Coolie Bill had no Effect," *The Wasp*, 1879.

Frederick Keller, "Reasons Why the Anti-Coolie Bill had no Effect,"
The Wasp, 1879.

President Chester Arthur signed the Chinese Exclusion Act into law. The Chinese Exclusion Act, which would remain in effect until 1943, barred the immigration of Chinese laborers into the United States, while maintaining exemptions for Chinese students and merchants.

Immediately prior to its passage, Wager-Fisher had argued in the *Christian Union* that the Chinese Exclusion Act "bears very heavily against the solution of a question that is daily becoming to American women one of very great importance."[37] For Wager-Fisher, the so-called "Chinese Question," which encompassed a wide-ranging set of topics surrounding the overarching issue of whether the United States should continue to allow unrestricted immigration of Chinese men, was unavoidably connected to the question of domestic service. With Westerners claiming that California and the other Pacific states could not tolerate any additional Chinese immigration, newspapers and magazines argued that the employment of the Chinese as servants in cities such as Boston and New York would provide a solution that satisfied all parties. If Chinese immigration had become such a burden to residents of the Western states that it was true that "householders of the Pacific coast" were willing to give up their Chinese servants – a claim Wager-Fisher wrote "was no means apparent" – then as had been the case for the previous decade, "women of the inland and North Atlantic states are ready to welcome them."[38] In California and in Oregon, Wager-Fisher observed, despite the widespread agitation against the Chinese that had caused tumult in both states, it was

[37] Mary Wager-Fisher, "American Women and the Anti-Chinese Bill: A Woman's Protest," *Christian Union*, April 16, 1882
[38] Wager-Fisher, "American Women and the Anti-Chinese Bill."

"still unquestionably true that of all the races who come to our shore the Chinese become, in an incredibly short space of time, as a class, the best servants to be had."[39]

Wager-Fisher was part of a chorus of commentators who believed that Chinese servants followed orders carefully, worked hard, and displayed appropriate deference by not making unreasonable demands surrounding the terms of their employment. Wager-Fisher, like most authors who praised the talents of the Chinese as servants, attributed their abilities to the fact that it was an innate quality of members of the Chinese race to act servile and docile. "To close our doors to such a class of servants, considering our extraordinary need of them," Wager-Fisher announced, "amounts to state foolishness that deserves to be classed under the head of lunacy."[40] In the case of Chinese immigration to the United States, the migrants' racial qualities and the receiving nation's labor needs had converged serendipitously, and, as Wager-Fisher lamented, the United States government now sought to disrupt this relationship.

In contrast, Irish immigration to the United States and the entrance of Irish women into the occupation of domestic service had been anything but harmonious. In order to refresh her readers' understanding of why women on the East Coast and in the Midwest should be so eager to welcome Chinese servants exiled from the West, Wager-Fisher painted a bleak picture of domestic life in American cities. According to Wager-Fisher, medical experts believed that many American women became ill because a dearth of competent servants forced them to perform arduous domestic labor on top of their other maternal duties. Voicing a common complaint, Wager-Fisher contended that many contemporary middle-class families had chosen to abandon their homes altogether

[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

in favor of rooming in boarding houses, since this meant that they did not have to deal with the vexing issue of finding domestic help.[41]

In Wager-Fisher's opinion, Irish servants were at the root of the myriad problems that domestic service in the United States posed. In 1882, in most of the urban United States, female Irish immigrants were the most readily available if not only class of domestic laborers. So common was the belief that the Irish domestic servant – generically labeled "Bridget" or "Biddy" – was "incompetent, ignorant, and wasteful," that Wager-Fisher simply noted this point was "not to be disputed."[42] Wager-Fisher felt that the complaints about Irish servants were so well-known that she did not need to reiterate them, and her readers certainly would have found no shortage of literature from the period that depicted Irish domestic servants to be blundering, insubordinate, and even violent employees. In the eastern states (where Chinese immigrants still comprised a relatively small population), Wager-Fisher argued that "it is only where there is a large colored population that domestic service can be better filled."[43]

Wager-Fisher's progression of thoughts, illustrate how she saw the "Chinese Question," the "Domestic Service Question," and the "Irish Question" as interrelated problems. Americans, she argued, could deal more effectively with these questions if they were addressed in a manner that acknowledged that they were inseparable as social, political, and economic issues. For this reason, practically, Wager-Fisher was not prepared to let the Exclusion Act become a reality and she joined men like Beecher in making her protests public. Summoning women to act on the moral power they

[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

exercised over their husbands, especially when it came to matters of the home, Wager Fisher argued:

> That women influence legislation, and are indirectly law makers, has rarely had greater need of illustration than at the present time, in regard to the Chinese bill, which has passed both Houses of Congress and is now awaiting final disposition at the hands of the Chief Executive. No bill has been before Congress for many a year which so directly affects the possible future well-being of the American housekeeper as this very Chinese bill. And there can be nothing in the whole scheme of legislation of more vital importance than that which touches upon the health, happiness and development of the women of the land.[44]

By putting white, middle-class women at the center of the potential impact of the Chinese Exclusion Act, Wager-Fisher sought to privilege domesticity and its importance.

Wager-Fisher dismissed the claims made by anti-Chinese labor leaders that economic competition between working-class white women and Chinese men in domestic service could lead to dire moral consequences for the white race. Domestic service was the work "God provided for the woman," noted the author of an 1873 tract opposed to the "Coolie invasion." If male Chinese servants drove white women from the respectable work that had been provided to their gender, the author suggested that white women had no choice but to "depart from the path of rectitude and duty" and find work as prostitutes.[45] Wager-Fisher was clearly not swayed by this line of reasoning. Implicitly refuting that the white working-class could define the terms of how Chinese immigration threatened the survival of the white race, Wager-Fischer argued instead that the survival of the white race was dependent on reform in domestic service, which

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[44] Ibid.
[45] M.B. Starr, *The Coming Struggle: What People on the West Coast Think of the Coolie Invasion* (San Francisco: Bacon and Company, 1873), 68-9.

only Chinese labor could supply. "There must be a revolution in domestic service," she urged, "or the race specifically known as American must die out."[46] In equating the survival of the American race with the domestic needs of middle-class families, Wager-Fisher made it clear that the white laborers and others who opposed Chinese immigration on the grounds that it endangered their own livelihood and respectability, were not essential to the American race's reproduction. Conversely, it was essential that middle class American women – abetted by loyal and obedient Chinese servants – benefitted from a domestic environment that encouraged them to reproduce and raise families in order to avoid "race suicide."[47]

Domesticity and its Servants

Since the 1960s, when academics first began to devote serious attention to women's history in the United States, the American home has been a focal point for understanding women's lives. Women historians argued that the American home provided married, white middle-class women with a distinct "sphere" of authority and control, and a space to engage in social relationships with women who shared their class and racial status. Since predominantly male historians had previously tended to focus solely on the public lives of elite men, attention to the home and its purportedly private world, allowed historians to interpret the historical experiences of women.[48]

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[46] Wager-Fisher, "American Women and the Anti-Chinese Bill."
[47] On white, middle class women as reproductive agents combating "race suicide," see, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg, "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Woman and Her Role in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of American History* 60, no. 2 (1973): 332-356.
[48] Linda Gordon, "U.S. Women's History," in *The New American History: Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Eric Foner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 257-84.

A fundamental dilemma in women's history has been how historians should understand the notion of "true womanhood," which in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the early part of the twentieth century, ascribed to white, middle-class (and usually Anglo Protestant) women, essential qualities and traits that made them naturally virtuous, reserved in their behavior, and maternal in their instincts. Social historians have shown that the middle-class sources that promoted the ideal of true womanhood in the nineteenth century reveal little about the experiences and histories of women who ostensibly fell outside that construct.[49]

Studies of domestic service reflect challenges in the 1970s and 1980s by labor and women's historians to scholarship that separated domestic service and more generally, housework, from histories that looked at factories, manufacturing sites, and other places that earlier historians had privileged as locations of work. By attempting to document the day-to-day experiences of domestic servants, scholars reconfigured the spatial and gendered dimensions of what constituted "labor."[50] These scholars made both domestic servants who were hired, as well as women who performed housework in the service of their own families, visible as historical subjects. Since mistresses expected their domestic servants to remain out of sight and "below the stairs,"[51] unless called upon, bringing domestic work to the light of labor and urban history was an

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[49] See for example, Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

[50] See for example, Faye E. Dudden, *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth Century America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1983); David M. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); and, Daniel E. Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants: Domestic Service in the United States from 1800 to 1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981).

[51] Servants' lives were conducted on the spatial peripheries of the urban dwelling. When not working, servants slept in the attic. As one writer in *Scribner's Monthly* described, "Passing along a city street at night one cannot look up at the dim lights burning in these far skyey attics without a groan of compassion for the wearied wretches dragging themselves to their beds up yonder after the day's hard labor." "House and Home Building," *Scribner's Monthly* 14 (July 1877): 405.

important accomplishment. This scholarship also challenged the idea that women occupied a "private sphere" devoid of politics and social conflict, by demonstrating the power mistresses exercised over their employees and the manner by which servants resisted this power.[52]

In the nineteenth century, domestic service was the single largest employer of women in the United States. It is estimated that in 1870, fifty percent of all women employed outside the home worked as servants, a number that accounted for eight percent of the total labor force (both men and women), or about one million people.[53] As an occupational category, "domestic service" has typically encompassed many different types of work. A general rule of thumb in the nineteenth century was that the wealthier a family was, the greater the number of servants that family employed and the more specialized each servant's work was. For example, a household in New York City that could afford to hire three servants would divide up the different types of work – cleaning, cooking, and doing laundry – among them. Servants considered the designation of "maid of all work," to be the most odious position they could have. "Maids of all work," referred to servants employed in middle- or lower middle-class families who could only afford to hire one servant, which resulted in that servant taking on all of the family's domestic chores.[54]

Domestic servants found employment through three main avenues: newspaper classifieds, personal and familial networks, and employment offices and agencies that

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[52] On the historiography of "spheres" and their study in women's history, see, Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," in *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (1988): 9-39.
[53] Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants*, 45.
[54] Although it is not the focus of this dissertation, wet nurses, governesses, and other more specialized roles in the home could also fall under the occupational category of domestic service.

were responsible for placing servants with families. An aspect of domestic service that created unavoidable intimacy was the living-in system, which required servants to board at their employers' homes. It was not until the start of the twentieth century that most mistresses considered it acceptable for domestic servants to live away from their place of work. Because servants resided under the same roof as their employers, mistresses controlled their servants' living arrangements, their time-off and socializing privileges, their right to visitors, and other facets of their servants' lives that went far beyond the ability of servants to keep the house clean and the family fed. Although the living-in system did mean that servants were guaranteed room and board as part of their employment, servants by the end of the century routinely cited their lack of independence as the main reason they chose to opt out of domestic service for factory work and other types of labor that on the surface did not appear to have comparable material benefits. Finally, it is important to remember that the nineteenth century did not provide servants with many technological devices or consumer products to help reduce their workload. To give just a few examples, servants made bread and most food products from scratch; the lack of central heating in homes required the constant and dangerous maintenance of fires; cloth diapers had to be continually washed. To worsen matters, many mistresses refused to implement a daily or weekly schedule for their servants, operating instead with the idea that servants could be assigned new and different tasks at their beck and call.[55]

[55] Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 95-145; Lucy Maynard Salmon, who conducted surveys with domestic servants during the course of her research, repeatedly cited the inability to manage and control their own time as one of the main factors pushing women away from the occupation. Lucy Maynard Salmon, *Domestic Service* (1891; repr., New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901).

Governing the Home

Far from being a neutral concept that all women had access to, domesticity structured relationships across the boundaries of race and class. Peggy Pascoe has argued, for example, that "female benevolent activity emerged at the juncture of gender ideology and class formation in early-nineteenth century America."[56] The motives and sense of obligation that encouraged middle class women to exercise their domestic authority outside of the home in reform efforts directed at members of the working class were also directed at working-class subjects within their own households.

Middle class women were also motivated by the welfare of the governing race, which they understood to be their own. An author, housekeeper, and domestic "expert" in her own right, Wager-Fisher demonstrated how the domestic concerns of the Anglo American middle class, and the belief that a well-managed and tranquil home created virtuous American citizens, allowed her to weigh in on the implications of the United States immigration policy. Wager-Fisher asserted that women had to vocalize their protests against the pending ban on Chinese immigrants, because they uniquely knew that Chinese immigrant labor was essential to allowing domestic life to function seamlessly.

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[56] Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 3. Pascoe argues that the imperative for white women to exercise their moral authority was even stronger in the American West, which was represented as being hyper-masculine and dangerously uncivilized. Sarah Deutsch has used a similar framework for exploring how urban space was culturally represented and produced in Boston. Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870-1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Governance in the modern era refers not simply to the type of absolute power or sovereignty that a ruler or the state exercised over a population, but also to what Michel Foucault has called the "knowledge of things." The "finality of government," Foucault notes, "resides in the things it manages and in the pursuit of the perfection and intensification of the processes which it directs." In addition, governance encompasses a "range of multiform tactics" designed to reach a desired end for a population.[57] From Wager-Fisher's standpoint, the objective she sought to reach and attain through the governance of her home was represented in the cultural construct of domesticity, and the belief that a healthy, well-functioning home cultivated a healthy population. In Wager-Fisher's case, the end for the Chinese population was servile labor befitting their racial status. The racial and hierarchical organization of the population precluded the existence of a unified social body sharing common purposes and roles.

Domesticity, and the values that a well-managed and functional domestic space purportedly cultivated, enabled the American middle class to claim that conflicts that pitted employer against employee, workers against the middle class, and foreigners against natives, were cultural struggles in which the very preservation of civilization was at stake. In order to define their fears about the results of eroding domesticity, middle-class Americans produced knowledge on the working classes, immigrants, and racial groups whom they deemed incapable of emulating what they had achieved. John Discursively the middle class effectively sought to couple normalcy with their own behavior, while exposing the deviance of "others."[58] Because domestic service brought

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[57] Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 95.
[58] John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper's Row, 1988), xvi.

the "other" inside the home, it represents fertile ground for understanding how colonial relations operated when made intimate.[59]

Although Wager-Fisher's position and status as a white, middle-class mother gave her special authority to address matters pertaining to the domestic, the belief that it was necessary to intervene in questions of population and labor, and how they related to the home, extended to men as well. E.L. Godkin, the founder and editor of *The Nation*, declared to his magazine's predominantly male readership while reluctantly defending Chinese immigration, that: "the question of domestic service is fast becoming a question of civilization itself. Marriage, divorce, childbearing, female health, the permanence and purity of homes are all affected by it."[60] Godkin struggled with the idea that Chinese immigrants possessed value as potential American subjects only due to their "fitness for servile duties," which contradicted the republican ideals of independence and individual freedom. Yet he believed that domestic service – and civilization – inevitably required the United States to absorb groups who would contribute to society not as equals, but as recognized inferiors. The servant question and its relationship not only to immigration, but also to the concerns of cultural and physical reproduction, meant that as a subject it was given serious weight in a variety of different forums.

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[59] As Ann Laura Stoler has argued, in providing a genealogy of the European "bourgeois self," Foucault failed to fully account for the role that the colonial played in this construction. Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 16. In the United States, during the nineteenth century and early-twentieth century, colonial interactions between people believed to be essentially and racially different often took place as a result of immigration. In this respect, a genealogy of how the bourgeois self was constructed in the United States must take into account not only the colonial "other" abroad, but also the "other" brought to American shores.

[60] E.L. Godkin, "The Coming of the Barbarian," *The Nation*, July 15, 1869, 45.

Foucault argues that a defining characteristic of the modern nation has been a focus on "biopower." Whereas previously sovereigns had focused on disciplining individual bodies and were limited in their power to the act of taking life, by the eighteenth century the focus was increasingly on "propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary."[61] Furthermore,

> If the development of the great instruments of the state, as *institutions* of power, ensured the maintenance of production relations, the rudiments of anatomo- and bio-politics, created in the eighteenth century as *techniques* of power present at every level of the social body and utilized by very diverse institutions (the family and the army, schools and the police, individual medicine and the administration of collective bodies), operated in the sphere of economic processes, their development, and the forces working to sustain them. They also acted as factors of segregation and social hierarchization … guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony.[62]

When Americans directed their attention to the biopower contained within the American family and home, they did so in a manner that presented Chinese immigrants to be servants of this life force.

The Realm of Intimate Labor

Ann Laura Stoler has urged American historians to think about how "relations of empire" have "haunted" the intimate spaces of United States history.[63] Compared to nations like Great Britain and France, the United States controlled relatively few overseas colonies and did not establish rule in places such as the Philippines and Puerto

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[61] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 139.
[62] Ibid., 141.
[63] Stoler, "Intimidations of Empire: Predicaments of the Tactile and Unseen," in Stoler, ed., *Haunted By Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 1-22.

Rico until the very end of the nineteenth century. Still, the influence of empire on its history can be traced in ways that make salient both the political and cultural manifestations of empire.[64] "To be haunted," Stoler argues, "is to be frequented by and possessed by a force that not always bares a proper name."[65]

At the forefront of the United States relationship to imperial forms of governance, was the belief that different populations organized into categories of race, possessed "implicit cultural competencies."[66] Yet the roles and expectations attached to these "competencies" were almost always disputed and constantly changing. Stoler observes that "colonialism was at once a comparative endeavor," which relied on the differentiation of individuals within the population that constituted the colonial society, and "a protracted war of assessments over what could be measured by common principles of right and rule – and who should be exempt or excluded from them."[67] In order to arrange for the governance of its population in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the United States produced a complicated racial taxonomy that explained individuals' and groups' relation to each other and the nation, yet at the same time allowed for remarkable fluidity. To suggest a racial and legal taxonomy existed is not to assert that it was somehow fixed or static as a feature of American life.

Irish immigrants, for example, grasped the privileges of whiteness and actively worked to affect their inclusion in the white race. Irish authors such as Hugh Quigley

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[64] As Stoler points out, "the interior frontiers of the nation-state, as evinced in the treaties with Native Americans, were as dependent on colonial relations of dominance as were any of Europe's external incursions." Ibid., 12. Nor is it possible to discount the importance of the United States' imperial endeavors abroad, and how they shaped domestic culture and politics. As Amy Kaplan has argued, the United States' empire abroad weighed heavily on domestic concerns surrounding race, gender, and sexuality. Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).
[65] Stoler, "Intimidations of Empire," 1.
[66] Ibid., 5.
[67] Ibid.

and John Francis Maguire (discussed in greater detail in chapter four) defended Irish immigrants from accusations that their Catholicism and peasant backgrounds made them ill-suited to contribute to American civilization. "Though they came from a country in which enterprise had little existence, and industry not at all times a fair field or right reward," Maguire wrote in 1867, "these men and women of Irish race soon caught the spirit of the American – the right spirit for a new country, the genuine 'Go-ahead' – that which always looks forward and never looks back."[68] Similarly, it is evident that the Irish community, both in Ireland and the United States, understood servitude as an economic strategy and not as a marker of a permanent role that they were to play in American society. Irish and Irish American publications frequently portrayed Irish domestic servants as bravely stomaching the humiliation and degradation that domestic work forced them to endure – out of a sense of religious and familial duty. As one Irish American publication observed, "In the kitchen, where Bridget slaves the week through, it is religion that rewards her, - it is father, mother, and friend to her, it is Ireland to her, it is the one thing that makes it worthwhile for her to go through another week of wash-tub and gridiron."[69] In an era when Irish women were precluded from citizenship by virtue of their gender, and seen as inferiors due to the labor they performed, religiosity and generosity provided an alternative social identity.

Stoler argues that the "tender ties" of intimacy in occupations such as domestic service could break down segregation based on race, class, gender, and religion, and the boundaries constructed to organize these social relations. As much as intimate relations maintained the "tense ties" that governed colonial society and the subjugation of certain

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[68] John Francis Maguire, *The Irish in America* (1868; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1969), 278.
[69] "The Faithful Irish Girl," *Donahoe's Magazine* (April 1879): 328.

segments of the population, "tender ties" emerged in the intimate spaces where different races and classes were required to coexist in close proximity.[70]

An 1874 editorial in the *New York Times*, for example, reminded the newspaper's readership that Irish servants were "to be treated, not as equals, nor again as slaves or animals, but rather as children."[71] The newspaper's blunt condescension obfuscates the fact that its directive to treat Irish servants as children, was actually meant to represent a more civilized approach to master and servant relations. Whereas many employers assumed that they could treat their servants as if they were slaves or animals, the newspaper argued that it was better to handle Irish women as if they were children; employers had to pair stern discipline with the patience to nurture. In the minds of her employers, Biddy's potential incorporation into American society was predicated on her ability to learn how to behave in a civilized fashion. For many of American employers, the first step in this process involved Irish servants recognizing their employers' authority and right to govern over them, as a child would.

By employing male Chinese servants in the home, white women forged intimate relationships that many white Americans believed were both scandalous and dangerous. In order to defend the appropriateness of this intimacy, white women who employed Chinese servants argued that they were not "men" and therefore lacking in masculine sexual desires. "Young ladies who have grown up with Chinese servants in the house all their lives," claimed the author of an article that was published in the

[70] Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies," in Stoler, ed., *Haunted By Empire*, 23-70.
[71] "Servants," *New York Times*, September 20, 1874.

Quaker *Friend's Review*, "tell me they never regard 'John' as a man."[72] Arguments of this nature enabled white women to justify allowing Chinese domestics' access to their bedrooms and other spaces where the presence of a man would otherwise be indecent. In the nineteenth and early-twentieth century, when white Americans viewed intimate interactions between a white woman and a black man as a severe (and in the case of black men, potentially deadly) violation of racial and sexual propriety, male Chinese servants were able to enter the homes and bedrooms of white families and white women due to the unique way in which they were racialized.[73]

Race, Agency, and Domestic Service

A key goal in the social histories of domestic service in the United States has been to illustrate how servants – despite the unequal power relationship of service – possessed agency. David Katzman notes that "servants were rarely consulted in discussions of the 'servant problem' despite the voluminous late-nineteenth-century American literature that addressed this subject time and again."[74] Nevertheless, as scholars have documented, servants acted as historic agents by attempting to control the

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[72] "California," *Friend's Review*, January 31, 1880. David Eng has coined the term "racial castration" as a means of describing the historical process by which Chinese men were stripped and denied a male and masculine identity. David Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

[73] As Ida B. Wells revealed during her anti-lynching campaigns of the 1890s, when black men were accused of raping white women, sexual accusations of this nature almost always masked other factors – usually economic and political – that drove whites to lynch black men. Nonetheless, even the hint of sexual relations between black men and white women could result in extreme violence. On mob justice and the maintenance of racial boundaries, see Michael Pfeifer, *Rough Justice: Lynching and American Society, 1874-1947* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 67-93. As Martha Hodes has argued, consensual sexual relations between black men and white women were often discreetly tolerated in the pre-Civil War South, even if they presented legal questions as to the status of the children produced by these relationships. It was not until after slavery had been abolished, that these liaisons became extremely taboo. Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).

[74] Katzman, *Seven Days a Week*, 5.

terms of their labor. American commentators on domestic service frequently critiqued Irish servants for demanding what they felt was an excessive amount of time-off, for refusing to cook for large dinner parties, and for refusing to attend Protestant religious services. The frequency with which these complaints were raised shows that Irish servants were able to determine – within obvious limitations – what they would or would not do.

With domestic servants, however, it is important not to conflate agency with resistance. It is necessary to account for the nuances of the possibilities that servitude simultaneously allowed and denied different immigrant groups, and how the range of possible actions for each servant group related to the legal and social meaning of race in the late-nineteenth century. As Walter Johnson argues of historical debates on slavery, agency need not mean independence and self-determination. These are not only ideological constructs of liberalism, but markers that were used to identify whites as the dominant racial group. By highlighting resistance, scholars of slavery have inadvertently reproduced liberal interpretations of agency and privileged the historical importance of actions that ostensibly worked toward freedom.[75]

Similarly, slavery and servitude were not the same, even if critics of servitude tended to see the occupation of domestic service as a profession that was suitable only for slave labor. The range of actions available to white Irish women servants included not only the choice to engage in purposeful confrontation with their employers or to

[75] Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (Fall 2003): 113-24.

leave the job altogether, but also included the choice to try to consciously emulate their employers' middle-class ways.[76]

The agency of Chinese servants was circumscribed by their membership in a race barred from naturalizing. Unlike female Irish servants, whose male countrymen could hold political office and make their influence felt through the ballot box, Chinese servants and the Chinese community as a whole lacked direct political access. When white employers like Wager-Fisher claimed to speak on behalf of their Chinese servants, it obvious that they had their own agendas. Chinese immigrants, when given the opportunity to speak, often sought to capitalize on their reputations as diligent workers. Lee Chew, a Chinese servant interviewed by *The Independent* as part of its series on the "life stories of undistinguished Americans," claimed that "men of other nationalities are jealous of the Chinese, because he is a more faithful worker than one of their people…but the trouble is that the Chinese are such excellent and faithful workers that bosses will have not others."[77] Rather than resisting racial explanations of labor, such claims strategically reinforced them as they served the interests of Chinese immigrants. Colonial relations created specific forms of governance *and* specific forms of agency.

I anticipate that one critique of this dissertation could be that in focusing on representations of servants, and, in particular the racialized representation of Chinese servants, this dissertation reproduces rather than repudiates the work of white nineteenth-century Americans, by dredging up racial ideas that are no longer at the

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[76] Diane M. Hotten-Somers, "Relinquishing and Reclaiming Independence: Irish Domestic Servants, American Middle-Class Mistresses, and Assimilation, 1850-1920," *Eire-Ireland* 36, no. 1-2 (2001): 185-201.

[77] "The Biography of a Chinaman: Lee Chew," in Hamilton Holt, ed., *The Life Stories of Undistinguished Americans As Told By Themselves* (1906; repr., New York: Routledge, 1990), 184.

forefront of most people's consciousnesses.[78] My intent, however, is not to use agency to show that Chinese and Irish immigrants were servile, or for that matter to show that they were not servile. To pose a question in this manner, and to undertake to answer it, is to implicitly acknowledge a master/servant binary that frames everything that follows (to return to Johnson's point). In other words, when servility or autonomy emerge as the only possible outcomes of the master/servant relationship, it is because the historical question has been constructed in a way that predetermines this result.

It is possible to speculate on some specific aspects of what allowed white employers to depict their Chinese servants as racially servile. I would argue that the purported ability of Chinese servants to imitate tasks and therefore learn them quickly (which employers frequently cited as a natural trait of the Chinese race), can easily be seen from a more removed and "neutral" perspective as an acquired skill. Rather than acknowledge that inherently "inferior" servants required talent in order to cook certain dishes or to mop the floor in order to meet meticulous standards, employers instead made race the explanation for their Chinese servants' successes. Similarly, employers who chastised Irish servants for their lack of cultivated manners tended to see such "savagery" as a feature of the Celtic race, and did not apply a critical perspective to the fact that the social world of rural Ireland had different codes and conducts of behavior, and that female Irish peasants had their own understanding of what constituted

[78] This is not to claim somehow that contemporary Americans lack racial consciousness, but rather to argue that race as a concept has changed, and most people apply different – if not equally pertinent – meanings to the idea of race. Yet as Gayatri Spivak argues, "Colonial Discourse studies, when they concentrate only on the representation of the colonized or the matter of colonies, can sometimes serve the production of current neocolonial knowledge by placing colonialism/imperialism securely in the past." As Spivak concludes, to combat this it is important to argue for the persistence of colonial representations, precisely to show how colonial discourse has changed to serve new ideologies of power. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward A History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 1.

"respectability." Again, race provided a convenient axis by which to explain master and servant differences.

To use a more colloquial phrase – people saw what they wanted to see. For example, another regular critique that white employers leveled against Biddy was that her excessive sociability, which was considered to be a negative trait shared by all Irish people, meant that she would rather gossip and socialize than work hard. Rarely did these accusations take into account that "Biddy" was required by her employers to remain on call at all times, and could not leave her employer's home to meet and see friends.[79] Yet when Chinese men socialized on the job, their employers understood it quite differently. In *Yellow Angel*, Sue Chang, a Chinese servant employed at the Temple Hill ranch outside of Los Angeles, engages in constant conversation with his employer's family. Sue Chang is not reprimanded for his talkative ways but instead is praised by the story's narrator, who commends him for seeking out information on Christianity and how to behave morally.[80]

Conclusion

Descriptions of servility, or the absence of servility, were never truthful representations of behavior; they were discursive concepts that allowed people to create knowledge on immigrants, race, and the gendered dynamics of intimate labor. Because Americans like Mary Wager-Fisher thought about immigration as a social and political topic that could not be distinguished from domestic concerns, rarely did they consider

[79] As Dudden notes, in the second half of the nineteenth century it was typical for domestic servants to have two days off each week – usually Thursday and Sunday. Yet even on these days, they were required to put in seven or eight hours of work before they were free to leave their employers' homes. Dudden, *Serving Women*, 179.
[80] Mary Sue Daggett, *The Yellow Angel* (Chicago: Browne & Howell Company, 1914).

the causes and economic forces that drove impoverished Irish and Chinese individuals to leave their homes across oceans and come to the United States to find work. When they did attempt to account for their servant's histories abroad, and the different worlds that their employees had belonged to prior to entering their homes, it was typically for the purpose of explaining employment failures or successes.

Still, the discourse of servility nonetheless had real social and legal implications. As the next chapter of my dissertation argues, when American employers referenced their Irish servants' journey from the peasant economy and culture of rural Ireland to the middle-class parlors and kitchens of New York and Boston, it was more often than not to complain about how this background made their servants ill-suited for civilized tasks such as cooking a meal for company. Americans struggling to implement a more perfect rule over their Irish servants looked abroad to Britain for guidance on how to best affect this colonial relationship.

Chapter 2

"Burned Steaks" and "Domestic Anarchy": Irish Servants and the American Home

Introduction

In the fall of 1871, the weekly women's magazine, *Harper's Bazar*, published an article titled simply "Bridget." In the article, the anonymous author surveyed recent developments in what was popularly known as the "domestic service question." Following the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, middle class magazines and newspapers had made the impending availability of male Chinese servants an item of frequent discussion. As chapter three will address in detail, the anticipated migration of Chinese immigrants from California to Eastern cities – and the promise of Chinese servants – captivated middle class audiences. "A cry goes up from the multitude of matrons in which there is a tone of desperation," explained the author of the article in *Harper's Bazar*, "for the machine, the Chinese machine, the imitative, accurate worker, who murmurs have been subdued through a thousand generations or less."[81] The author's description suggests that American women believed the appeal of the Chinese domestic servant lay in his instinctive and essential servility. A "machine," the Chinese servant did not possess a personality and was not capable of disobeying orders or challenging his employers' authority.

Yet as the article's title indicates, the purpose of the author's commentary was not as other writers did, to tout "the coming of John Chinaman," but rather to explore and determine what had gone wrong with the employment of "Bridget" – the female

[81] "Bridget," *Harper's Bazar*, November 11, 1871, 706. It was not until 1929 that the magazine changed the spelling of its name to its contemporary form, *Harper's Bazaar*.

Irish servant – and to contemplate whether the task of transforming Irish immigrant girls into capable servants had become a lost cause. According to the author of the piece in *Harper's Bazar*, Anglo American mistresses still possessed the ability to impart to their Irish servants civilized habits and behavior, as long as they were willing to dedicate themselves to the arduous work that this entailed. For example, instead of lamenting the fact that Bridget did not know how to scrub floors properly, employers needed to realize that this was an alien task for the Irish servant, "since her floor at home was the hard earth." Instead of bemoaning Bridget's deplorable culinary skills, middle class mistresses had an obligation to teach Bridget how to use different food products, since she was "accustomed to such simple diet as oatmeal and buttermilk." In addition, in the United States, where many middle-class families relied on a single "maid of all work" to complete an entire household's labor, it was unfair to expect a "poor peasant girl just landed from a sea-voyage" to immediately perfect the many skills required of her.

Still, the author noted that it was foolish to over-extend sympathy to Bridget and her plight. If "added to the hard duty of repressing the unrighteous but natural impatience with ignorance, rawness, or stupidity, [she] finds that she has to contend with a shirk, a slattern, a shrew, not to speak of exceptionally worse," then the mistress "cannot be altogether blamed for her declaration of war upon all the Bridgets that St. Patrick left alive." Ultimately the article in *Harper's Bazar* concluded where it begun: if Bridget resisted designs for her personal improvement, then perhaps the solution was to look toward the Chinese after all.[82]

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[82] Ibid.

For much of the nineteenth century, discussions of the "domestic service question" in the United States were inseparable from concerns about Irish immigration. Demographically, the particularities of Irish immigration to the United States meant that Irish women provided the majority of servants in East Coast cities prior to 1920. It was not until the "Great Migration" that African American women migrating from the South came to replace Irish immigrants as the main source of domestic labor. In the post-Famine years between 1851 and 1921, 27 percent of the approximately 4.5 million Irish immigrants who came to the United States were females aged 15 to 24, the cohort most likely to enter into domestic service.[83] Unmarried Irish women served as a crucial economic lifeline for family members who remained in Ireland, and it was common for Irish leaders in the United States to discourage marriage among female immigrants, since it prevented them from earning wages outside the home.[84] In the years before factory jobs were widely available to women, compared to needlework – the other occupation readily available to women wage earners – domestic service provided higher wages as well as room and board.

By 1855, Irish women accounted for 74 percent of all domestic servants in New York City. In 1900, 54 percent of all Irish-born women in the United States still worked as domestic servants (even though immigration from other European countries had surpassed immigration from Ireland), and represented just under half of all the servants in New York and Philadelphia.[85] Salmon, discussed in the introduction, observed in her

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[83] See table 12, Appendix, in Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 581.
[84] Maureen Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion: Irish Catholic Nuns and the Origins of New York's Welfare System, 1930-1920* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 64-7.
[85] Hasia Diner, *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 74-94; on the percentage of Irish immigrants entering domestic service, Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion,* 56, and Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 500-1.

history of domestic service in the United States that the employers she interviewed romanticized about a "golden age" of domestic service that existed prior to 1850, when they were able to hire coreligionists and native-born Americans as "help" or as "hired girls." The entrance of thousands of Irish immigrant women into domestic service coincided with the creation of an urban, middle class who demanded that their servants show deference and respect for the social boundaries that existed between them.[86] Whereas wives in the 1830s and 1840s – especially outside of urban areas – often worked alongside their help, by the second half of the nineteenth century the differing roles that mistresses and servants would play in the home were sharply delineated.[87]

While the conflict between predominantly Protestant, Anglo American employers and their Catholic, Irish servants has been well-documented, scholars have spent less time interpreting how "Biddy," the stereotypical figure of Irish domestic labor (and the nickname for Bridget), came into existence.[88] This chapter argues that middle class American women used the figure of Biddy, and the problems she allegedly posed, in order to align their reform efforts in the home with the broader goal of transforming Irish immigrants into useful members of society who respected Anglo American authority and served middle-class needs.[89] The question of whether rural, Catholic Irish immigrants could be changed into respectful, obedient, and civilized

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[86] Lucy Maynard Salmon, *Domestic Service* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901), 54-62.
[87] Faye Dudden, *Serving Women: Household Service in Nineteenth Century America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), 12-43.
[88] As Margaret Lynch-Brennan notes, American employers also used "Kate," "Katy," "Maggie," and "Peggy" as generic nicknames for Irish servants, although never to the same degree that they used Biddy and Bridget. Margaret Lynch-Brennan, "Ubiquitous Bridget: Irish Immigrant Women in Domestic Service in America, 1840-1930," in J.J. Lee and Marion Casey eds., *Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States* (New York and London: NYU Press, 2006), 333.
[89] The prefix Anglo references a belief among members of the middle class who could afford to hire servants that the American nation possessed a Protestant identity that could be traced back to England. Undoubtedly, individual Anglo Americans traced their own heritage back to Scotland or Ireland.

citizens was not solely relegated to the realm of organized politics, where nativists argued that the male figure of "Paddy" threatened republicanism in the United States. Many Americans saw Biddy as a more immediately dangerous threat in the context of the American home, where the revolution and anarchy sowed by Irish servants directly endangered middle class households.

Biddy's refusal to follow orders and her frequent bouts of insubordination compromised the tranquility and moral calm that the nineteenth-century home and the creation of a domestic space were supposed to promise. An article in *Harper's Monthly* noted to its mainly male audience that the result of Biddy's presence was that "the master of the house returns from the cares and vexations of his day's business, seeking repose in his home, but finds only disquiet."[90] It was the responsibility of Anglo American women to devise solutions on how to put Biddy in her place, in order to preserve the sanctity of the home. An author writing in *Scribner's Monthly*, for example, explicitly noted how the governance of domestic servants was a mark of a mistress's domestic talent and central to her political and social identity: "Bridget indeed is a creature of possibilities; her flowering depends much upon the quality of cultivation."[91]

Scholars have described women's influence over the domestic sphere in the nineteenth century as "paradoxical." Their domestic roles, and confinement to the private realm of the home, meant that middle class women embodied "private virtue

[90] Robert Tomes, 'Your Humble Servant', *Harper's Monthly* 29 (June 1864): 55.
[91] 'She,' *Scribner's Monthly* 3 (November 1871): 117.

removed from national power."[92] Nonetheless, middle class women were political actors responsible for controlling and disciplining their immigrant employees. While middle class women expressed disgust over what they viewed as their Irish servants' political agitation against the domestic sphere, they eagerly embraced the responsibility of governing the home and quelling any domestic uprisings. A woman letter-writer explained to the editor of the *New York Observer* that her husband had encouraged her to act as the "Secretary of the Interior" over her servants, and that she was only to convene the "cabinet" when "great emergencies arose." By performing a role analogous to a President's cabinet member – in her case one charged with overseeing the "interior" or the home – the wife took pride in exercising authority over her Irish servants and in relieving her husband from having to govern this aspect of the family's affairs. In this role, her actions were far from symbolic.[93]

"Manifest domesticity," Amy Kaplan has argued, meant in the nineteenth century that "the empire of the mother thus shares the logic of the American empire; both follow a double compulsion to conquer and domesticate the foreign, thus incorporating and controlling a threatening foreignness within the borders of the home and the nation."[94] Whether seeking to civilize their Irish servants and make them productive in catering to their needs, or attempting to replace them altogether, middle class women were adamant in their desire to create an acceptable labor relationship in the home. Although they shared a home with their employers, Irish servants were frequently reminded of their status and place in it. Unlike the middle class families who

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[92] On the paradox of power vested in sentimentality and the domestic sphere, see Shirley Samuels, "Introduction," in Samuels, ed., *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4.
[93] "Letters from the Fireside. That Old Question again." *New York Observer*, November 16, 1865.
[94] Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (Sept. 1998): 581-606, here 582.

purportedly embodied domesticity, Irish servants provided the physical labor that on a practical level, allowed the domestic to exist.

Finally, as the last section of this chapter addresses, the ways in which Irish immigrants themselves responded to attacks against Irish servants, offer insights into how they thought about race, servitude and social inclusion. As David Roediger has noted, to call a white woman a servant in the middle part of the nineteenth century risked insult since in the American South "servant" and "slave" were often interchangeable terms, and in the North, employers considered free blacks to be "domestic servants" and white women to be "help" or "hired girls" – a point that was not lost on the Irish.[95] Even as late as 1888, an English correspondent for the *Leeds Mercury*, writing about Irish immigration and the servant question in the United States would make a similar observation. In the United States, he noted, "it is dangerous to speak of a servant as a servant."[96]

The efforts of European immigrants to "become white" did not occur uniformly among men and women. If as scholars of critical whiteness have argued, Irish men were acutely conscious about the benefits of claiming whiteness – and used suffrage and other tools to this end – Irish women likewise understood what was at stake in their racialization.[97] While striving to meet their employers' demands may have improved Irish women's relationships with middle class Anglo Americans, willful subservience was simultaneously seen as a distinctly un-American quality and a characteristic that

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[95] David Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness* (New York; London: Verso, 1991), 47-8.
[96] *Leeds Mercury*, April 28, 1888.
[97] Ibid., 133-56. Bronwen Walter, one of the few historians to examine the relationship of Irish women to whiteness, notes that "what was labelled the 'servant problem' by employers could also be interpreted as evidence of Irish women's resistance to the identities and social positions constructed for them." Bronwen Walter, *Outsiders Inside: Whiteness, place and Irish women* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), 64.

defined non-white populations. Irish women were forced to take up domestic service as a means of economic survival, yet they attached different meanings to the degraded status of the labor they had to undertake.

"Paddy" and "Hibernia"

Although Anglo Americans and their British counterparts understood their cultural and racial superiority to the Irish in similar ways, they defined the threat that the Irish posed differently. Unlike the American middle class, who felt that Irish domestic servants were "pioneers in the general conquest" [98] of Irish immigration and the frontline of cultural and social conflict, British portrayals of a dangerous race of Irish agitators and political malcontents kept Irish women and Ireland – embodied in the figure of "Hibernia" (or "Erin") – above the fray. "Paddy," in particular the version of this stereotype made famous in the magazine *Punch*, was not only a threat to the good governance of Ireland provided by Britain, but also to Hibernia herself, who was far safer under British rule.

British publications did employ the long-running trope of the clumsy Irish servant who unwillingly made poetry out of his or her mangling of the English language. These discourses – while racialized – were more patronizing than overtly malicious, and did not represent Irish servants as an imminent threat to the British way of life. The stereotype of the Irish servant as 'light-hearted, light-headed, and light-heeled' originated with the stock character of the stage Irishman, which had been a

[98] Harriet Elizabeth Prescott Spofford, *The Servant Girl Question* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1881), 29.

mainstay of English theatre dating back to the sixteenth century.[99] Although the character of the stage Irishman could encompass any number of occupations, Samuel Lover's play *Handy Andy*, which featured an Irish servant named Andy Rooney who "had the most singularly ingenious knack of doing everything the wrong way," functioned to further popularize the stage Irishman as a servant.[100]

The Irish servant that appeared in theatre and comic anecdotes was disproportionately male. Characters of the "Handy Andy" type were meant to depict the Irish as buffoons and children, whose gaffes explained why they occupied a subservient role within the internal colonial structure of the Union, and to provide a humorous contrast to the decorum and seriousness that marked Anglo Protestant civilization. In an article titled "Recollections of an Irish Home" in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Journal*, for example, the Anglo Irish narrator remembered her Irish servants as enjoyable playthings and companions. Although "no Irishman could resist the temptations of whisky," the author presented hiding the decanter from the male butler as an amusing game. She noted that "Old Sarah," the cook, "had a deep-seated conviction that everything not Irish was little worth consideration," a personal philosophy that she comically demonstrates when the house receives a "hamper of game from a very exalted personage" and Sarah dismisses the food as not being up to her standard. In contrast to these humorous encounters that occur at the manor home where the author's family resides, the reader is also reminded that the author's stay in Ireland was during the time

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[99] *The Era*, October 22, 1871. On the stage Irishman, see G.C. Duggan, *The Stage Irishman* (Dublin: The Talbot Press, 1937).

[100] Sally E. Foster, "Irish Wrong: Samuel Lover and the Stage-Irishman," *Éire-Ireland* 13, no. 1 (1978), 34-44, here 41. As Foster points out, Lover claimed to be an Irish nationalist, and was often accused by the British press – despite the caricatures he presented of the Irish – of being too sympathetic to the Irish autonomy and self-governance.

when the "Fenian conspiracy was at its height" and that her grandfather never left the house unarmed. The Irish outside the home lurk in the dark planning violent and savage action – a different and unpleasant tomfoolery altogether.[101]

In an article published in *Chambers's Journal* titled "Domestic Helps and Hindrances," the Irish domestic servant displays a type of harmless childishness as well, repeatedly giving her notice only to rescind this action the next morning.[102] An article titled "Humours of Irish Servants," published in 1913, mourned what the author ("The Honourable Mrs. Edward Lyttelton") believed to be the fact that previously entertaining and eccentric Irish servants had become "rather dull and commonplace, and in many ways assimilated to English manners and customs." In the article the author offered such anecdotes from the past as the Irish servant who upon receiving a caller immediately forgets the name and the caller's business, only to come sobbing to the mistress "Mebbe it was Higgins or mebbe it was Elephant; but if ye' was to kill me for it, I can't tell ye' any more nor that" as well as a cook who "used to speak of 'dissecting' the clothes that came from the wash."[103]

Although the character of the Irish servant existed separate from the character of the stage Irishman, the two blended together. In the widely covered trial surrounding the Tichborne Claimant, a court case involving a man who fraudulently claimed to be the heir to an aristocratic fortune, the *Derby Mercury* used the character of the stage Irishman to paint a portrait of the real-life Irish servant who was called on to testify. In the newspaper's account, "the comic witness" was "a thin, long-visaged melancholy

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[101] "Recollections of an Irish Home," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 162 (September 1897): 578.
[102] E.D. Cumming, "Domestic Helps and Hindrances," *Chambers's Journal* 3 (December 1899): 17.
[103] The Honorable Mrs. Edward Lyttelton, "Humours of Irish Servants," *Nineteenth Century and After* 72 (November 1912): 798.

looking man, with an almost unintelligible brogue, whose drollery was heightened by it being manifestly unconscious, evidenced by the fact that his gravity was never for one moment disturbed by the roars of laughter which his testimony provoked."[104]

Irish servants were also a staple of the jokes that British newspapers would publish in their "Amusements," "Scraps," or "Variety" sections. One joke described a male Irish servant instructed to fetch his mistress's "new velvet mantilla" from the dressmaker, and told to take a cab home afterwards in order to avoid the rain. Upon returning with the mantilla soaking wet, the servant explains to his peeved employer that he had sat "on the box with the driver," since servants were not expected to ride on the inside.[105] In another joke, "Biddy" interprets her mistress's order to clean up after her goldfish by taking the fish out of their tanks and scrubbing them with polish.[106] In a cartoon published by *Punch* in 1902, Bridget and her mistress examine a sickly pet dog, and the mistress suggests shooting the animal in order to put it out of its misery (pictured on the following page). Bridget disagrees, explaining that if the dog is shot and then recovers her health, "ye'd be sorry ye'd had her kill'd!"[107] The common theme in these jokes is the inability of Irish servants to grasp instructions and events logically.

Although it is clear that the specific figure of Bridget or Biddy circulated on both sides of the Atlantic, in Britain the usage of this particular stereotype was not nearly as common. Nor were the British and American versions of Biddy the same. Treatments of Irish Catholic domestic servants in Ireland and Great Britain under the Union, and the servant's invariably humorous encounters with his or her Protestant

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[104] "The Tichborne Case," *Derby Mercury*, June 4, 1873.
[105] "Varieties," *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, April 17, 1872. As was often the case, this particular joke made the rounds and appeared in a number of different English newspapers.
[106] "Varieties – Grooming the Goldfish," *Derby Mercury*, June 18, 1890.
[107] J. Leighton, [untitled cartoon], *Punch*, November 5, 1902, 102.

Mistress. "POOR DARLING LITTLE TOPSY! I'M AFRAID SHE WILL NEVER RECOVER. DO YOU KNOW, BRIDGET, I THINK THE KINDEST THING WOULD BE TO HAVE HER SHOT, AND PUT HER OUT OF HER MISERY!"

Bridget. "'DEED, MAM, I WOULDN'T DO THAT. SURE SHE *MIGHT* GET BETTER AFTER ALL, AN' THEN YE'D BE SORRY YE'D HAD HER KILL'D!"

J. Leighton, [untitled cartoon], *Punch*, November 5, 1902

employer, complemented the political discourses of the time period that sought to portray Ireland as an infant in need of British rule and civilization. The jokes reveal ambivalence about this civilizing mission, as it might detract from the entertainment value of the uniquely backwards Irish.

The politicized version of Biddy that emerged in the United States, where Irish domestic labor posed a direct threat to the ability of Anglo Americans to maintain domesticity, did not have a counterpart in Great Britain. Even though more than fifty percent of Irish immigrant women in London entered domestic service during the middle part of the nineteenth century, they still only accounted for a small portion of the total number of servants.[108] Irish servants appear to have been hired more regularly in Jewish households in Britain, which reflects that Irish servants held a lower status than their British counterparts, and were relegated to taking jobs in Jewish homes that existed on the margins of the British middle class.[109]

In other contexts, British publications subjected the Irish to far more negative forms of stereotyping and racial representation that were not aimed at producing humor. Yet if Irish servants recognized their place in the British home and were not openly political, their stubbornness and odd behavior were written off as quaint and amusing. Rather, it was in the arena of politics and Irish nationalism that the Irish lost their endearing quirkiness and became monsters, gorillas and inhuman foes.

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[108] Lynn Lees, *Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 93. Bronwen Walter estimates that in 1881, Irish servants accounted for only 2.7 percent of the domestic servants employed in England, and 3.4 percent of the total number in London. Walter, "Strangers on the inside: Irish women servants in England, 1881," in Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley, eds., *Irish Identities in Victorian Britain* (Special Issue of *Immigrants & Minorities*, Frank Cass, 2009, forthcoming).

[109] Lees, *Exiles of Erin*, 95; and, Stephen Fielding, *Class and Ethnicity: Irish Catholics in England, 1880-1939* (Buckingham, UK; Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1993), 25.

In the nineteenth century, British politicians and commentators opposed to Irish Home Rule and critical of Irish men's fitness for self-government, addressed the colonial situation with a barrage of images that depicted the Irish as simian, savage, prone to lose their temper, rapacious, drunk and lazy.[110] These images were embodied in the hyper-masculine Paddy character whose racialization and transformation into his monstrous, simian state occurred only when he was acting politically defiant.[111] A proliferation of these images took place in the early-1880s, when the Land League, under the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell, aggressively campaigned for reform in tenants' rights and Home Rule and advocated such techniques as the rent boycott, which British commentators and politicians viewed as an excuse to incite peasant violence. In addition, the Phoenix Park Murders of May 1882, when a splinter group of Fenians known as the "Invincibles" assassinated the British Secretary to Ireland, Lord Frederick Cavendish, in a Dublin park, further fuelled accusations that the Land League was inciting the violent predisposition of the Irish.[112]

Often, Paddy was juxtaposed with the figure of the feminine, beautiful and innocent "Hibernia." Used together, Paddy and Hibernia show the Irish home and nation to be in disarray. The variations on this theme in *Punch* alone are many. One cartoon in *Punch* shows Paddy wearing a hat with the word "anarchy" written on it. He is preparing to throw a stone and is being reprimanded by a stern female figure,

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[110] L. Perry Curtis Jr., *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature, Revised Edition* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1997), 29-57.

[111] Cartoons in the early-1880s in *Punch*, for example, would depict Irish tenant farmers who chose to ignore the politics of the Land League as normal-looking humans.

[112] On the complicated politics of the Land League, see, Paul Bew, *Land and the National Question in Ireland, 1858-1882* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978). It should also be noted that a major strategic goal of militant Land Leaguers was to make Ireland ungovernable. This further fueled British public discourse on the chaos that befell Ireland when left to the devices of the Irish. For a discussion of this, see, Michael de Nie, *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798-1882* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 201-266.

John Tenniel, "The Fenian Guy Fawkes," *Punch*, December 28, 1867

Britannia (in Roman regalia), who holds a sword inscribed with the words "The Law," while with her other arm she consoles a distraught Hibernia.[113] Another cartoon, titled "The Rivals," shows Hibernia accepting a bouquet of flowers symbolizing the Irish Land Bill from a dapper English gentleman, while Paddy representing the Land League lurks behind her with a basket full of bayonets, gunpowder and dynamite.[114] In the "Fenian Pest," a garishly dressed and heavily armed group of Irish agitators march by Hibernia, who, turning away from the savage male figures, asks her sister Britannia – "what *are* we to do with these troublesome people?"[115] Female Hibernia and her volatile husband did not even always have to be allegorical – one *Punch* cartoon from an earlier period of Irish nationalist agitation depicts an ape-like Irish male sitting on a keg of gunpowder angrily brandishing a torch (pictured on the previous page). In the background, his wife and children, portrayed with human features, mill about anxiously.[116]

The interplay of Hibernia and Paddy within the pages of *Punch* provides visual cues that sought to capture Ireland's position as a dissenting member of the Union. Depictions of Hibernia as an endangered woman, as C.L. Innes argues, illustrated that "Ireland must be rescued from the Irish, who are quintessentially undeserving of this desirable prize," and that female Ireland's stability was based on its union with the British husband, or through the protection of the British father.[117] British publications also used Hibernia to call into question gender roles among the Irish and the notion of

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[113] John Tenniel, "Two Forces," *Punch*, October 29, 1881, 199.
[114] John Tenniel, "The Rivals," *Punch*, August 13, 1881, 67.
[115] John Tenniel, "The Fenian Pest," *Punch*, March 3, 1866, 122.
[116] John Tenniel, "The Fenian Guy Fawkes," *Punch*, December 1867, 263.
[117] C.L. Innes, *Women and Nation in Irish Literature and Society, 1880-1935* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 15.

masculine duty. With "hot-headed" Paddy out in the fields planning revolution, it fell on Hibernia to perform the purportedly male task of supporting the family.[118]

During the height of the Land League's activities in 1881, the editors of *Punch* admitted to this strategy in their gendering of Ireland. The editors of *Punch* defended their usage of an "Ogreish character" to depict Irish agitators, since "houghing and mutilating dumb animals, maiming men and women, and shooting defenceless victims, are ugly crimes, and the embodiment of them in one single figure cannot be made too hideous or too repulsive." At the same time, the editors pointed out that they were discerning in their criticism:

> On the other hand, *Punch* has consistently and persistently kept before the public his ideal classic figure of Hibernia, graceful, gentle, tender, loving, but 'distressful', as being more or less in fear of this Ogre, her evil genius, from whose bondage may she soon be free; and then, mistress of herself, with peace and plenty in her land, blessed with wise Administration and Local Government, in happy and unbroken union with her sister, England, with a regal residence in her midst, may she see the emerald gem of the Western World set glittering in the crown of one who will be no longer a stranger.[119]

While it is possible to take this explanation as meaning that all Irish, regardless of their gender, had to reform so that the symbolic Hibernia could be the "mistress of herself," its message complements the numerous other images *Punch* ran where the white, human, Irish female, stands next to the racialized, male Irish beast. In these instances, *Punch* depicted Paddy as mentally incapable of recognizing the foolishness of his nationalist claims, and therefore unable to maintain his home or practice Home Rule.

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[118] See De Nie, *The Eternal Paddy*, 257.
[119] "A Message of Peace," *Punch*, November 12, 1881, 226.

Irish Domestic Servants in the United States – Militants in the Kitchen

Because authors on both sides of the Atlantic imagined affinities between the ruling classes of the United States and Great Britain, it was common practice for English authors to assess how Americans were coping with an influx of Irish immigrants – in light of their own difficulties governing the Irish. In an 1880 article titled "Romanism and the Irish Race," for example, the English historian James Anthony Froude noted that despite the continuous influx of Irish immigrants into the United States, "The Irish race on the other side of the Atlantic remains as separate from the Anglo-Saxon as it is at home, and, instead of the Americans being infected with the Irish ill will toward Great Britain, they have themselves an Irish problem of their own."[120]

E.L. Godkin, an Irish Protestant immigrant to the United States and founder of the *Nation*, understood in exact terms how Americans perceived of the Irish threat. Addressing an 1872 lecture tour by Froude, which had been cut short after riots broke out in New York City in response to Froude's opposition to Home Rule, Godkin snidely stated, that, "The memory of burned steaks, of hard-boiled potatoes, of smoked milk, would have done for him what no state papers, or records, or correspondence of the illustrious dead can ever do; it had prepared the American mind to believe the worst he could say of Irish turbulence and disorder."[121]

Unlike *Punch* and other British publications, which directed their ire at the Irish male and his militant doings, American publications and commentators took direct aim

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[120] James Anthony Froude, "Romanism and the Irish Race," *North American Review* 129 (1879): 519-36, here 523.

[121] E.L. Godkin, *Reflections and Comments, 1865-1895* (New York: Scribner's, 1895), 58. This essay was originally published in 1873 in Godkin's *Nation*, under the title, "The Morals and Manners of the Kitchen."

at the invasion of Biddy, the female domestic servant. The demands made on Irish men in Ireland – that they accept the Union as a superior form of governance – were similar to the demands that Anglo American women placed on their female Irish servants, who were expected to recognize their subservient status and welcome their employers' attempts to civilize them. When Irish servants in the United States resisted the terms of their employment or failed to live up to employers' expectations, Anglo Americans mocked the claims of Irish independence as self-governing subjects. Even though Americans joined their British counterparts in trying to find humor in their situation, more dire concerns were never very far from the surface. Biddy's monopoly over domestic service in the United States meant that she was far from simply a joke. As an author in *Arthur's Home Magazine* put it, Biddy had "reduced [families] to a mood of pitiable despair."[122]

An 1884 cartoon by Frederick Opper in the American magazine *Puck* gave visual form to the insolence of Irish servants. Titled, "Our Self-Made 'Cooks' – from Paupers to Potentates," the cartoon portrayed the simianized figure of Biddy in two panels (pictured on the following page). In the first she is in Ireland, wearing rags and pleading with a bailiff not to evict her, while nearby an emaciated child sleeps on the floor. In the second, dressed in middle-class finery she is serving tea to an Irish American policeman, reading a magazine on the latest fashions, and ordering her employer, who has interrupted her socializing, to leave the room. On the wall of the room that Biddy has claimed as her own there is a portrait of St. Patrick, a visual reference to Biddy's Catholicism and its entrance into Protestant homes. As the

[122] "Our Irish Girls," *Arthur's Illustrated Home Magazine* 43 (November 1875): 668.

Frederick Opper, "Our Self-Made 'Cooks' – from Paupers to Potentates,"
Puck, January 30, 1884

accompanying caption to the cartoon noted: 'They are Evicted in the Old Country … But in America They Do All the Evicting Themselves."[123]

There was more at work than merely dressing Paddy in a skirt to make him into Biddy.[124] Biddy, while bearing many of the same traits that British and American commentators applied to Paddy, was a mainstay of the middle-class American home. As a result, the Irish disorder and anarchy she represented directly endangered the American family and in the minds of her employers, necessitated specific actions. When American magazines depicted Biddy as a masculine figure capable of violence and bullying, it was not simply to show that the Irish race lacked gender distinctions. Biddy's masculine aggression also signified her distance from the refined, civilized women who employed her and were responsible for her supervision.

Anglo Americans portrayed Irish domestic servants as both immediate threats to order in the home, and, on the other hand, colonial subjects who by immigration had arrived on the doorstep of Protestant America. Harriet Spofford, the novelist and author of advice books on household management, would assert in 1881, that "the young Irish girl comes to us as plastic as any clay in all the world. She is fresh, emotional, strong, willing, full of energy that sent her three thousand miles across the water, and so totally ignorant of any other civilized ways than ours that she is completely ready to be

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[123] Frederick Opper, "Our Self-Made 'Cooks' – from Paupers to Potentates," *Puck,* January 30, 1884, back cover. For an overview of the different depictions and forms *Puck* used in portraying Irish domestic servants, see, Maureen Murphy, "Bridget and Biddy: Images of the Irish Servant Girl in *Puck* Cartoons, 1880-1890," in Charles Fanning, ed., *New Perspectives on the Irish Diaspora* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 152-175.

[124] In regard to Biddy, the historian Dale Knobel has commented that "the undifferentiating quality of the [Irish] image rendered even gender distinctions irrelevant." As he puts it, "'Bridget' was only Paddy with skirts." Dale Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic: Ethnicity and Nationality in Antebellum America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1986), 16. As this chapter hopefully demonstrates, gender did matter when it came to how the Irish in the United States were portrayed.

moulded to our wish."[125] An 1874 article in the *New York Times*, employing the same language of colonial duty, bluntly noted: "the Irish peasantry makes capital servants, but they are to be treated, not as equals, nor again as slaves or animals, but rather as children."[126]

Mistresses posited themselves as possessing ultimate responsibility over the character of their servants, since servants were incapable of reforming themselves. An article in the *Happy Home and Parlor Magazine*, for example, encouraged readers to look to the bible for lessons on how to treat their servants, and, as their Christian duty, to provide guidance to those they employed. While Abraham "had no domestics from Ireland," the article pointed out that he employed servants from Egypt, Mesopotamia and Syria, and ruled over them judiciously despite their "peculiarities."[127] Rather than yielding authority to rebellious servants within the home, mistresses had to rule more effectively. In the 1850s in New York City, Protestant missionaries established the Five Points Christian Home for Female Servants especially for this purpose, as a home catering to former servants who had been dismissed. The Five Points Christian Home stated that one of its primary duties was to compete with Catholic priests for influence over Irish servants, and to use education in the Protestant religion to create a "new relation and sense of responsibility" between employers and employees.[128]

When authors articulated the problems that Irish servants posed, they described certain tendencies that were deemed quintessentially Irish in the literature of the time. Biddy was a force of destruction. An article in *Scribner's Monthly* on what type of

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[125] Spofford, *The Servant Girl Question*, 42.
[126] "Servants," *New York Times*, September 20, 1874.
[127] "Family Scenes of the Bible," *The Happy Home and Parlor Magazine*, December 1, 1858, 364.
[128] Cited in Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, 70.

glassware to purchase described, for example, how the previous set the author had owned was made a "total wreck by the vandal hands of irrepressible Bridget."[129] When not destroying her employers' goods, Biddy was attempting to steal them. Magazines often portrayed Biddy as a petty thief who was in awe of the affluence surrounding her and unable to resist the temptation of her mistress's goods. Authors complained that Biddy saw no problem in inviting her myriad Irish cousins to visit her employer's home, and that it was common for her to feed "hearty company at the expense of their larders."[130] The extension of such hospitality disrupted the notion that mistresses and masters controlled their own homes.

Still, the threat posed by Biddy's inflated sense of status and generosity with her employer's possessions paled in comparison to the threat of violence that she brought into the American home. In the minds of her employers, Biddy's temper and her refusal to accept reprimand for her misdoings was her greatest fault; she would not acknowledge that being "born and bred in a mud-hovel … she can know nothing of the simplest elements of civilized life." Had Biddy merely been incompetent, then supervision and training could ameliorate her condition. Yet Biddy reacted with fury to even the slightest of criticisms. "Her mistress would as soon stir up a female tiger as arouse her anger," described Robert Tomes, "Her strong arm and voluble tongue keep the most tyrannical housekeeper in such awe as to save her from all invasions of her prescriptive rights."[131] In this context, rights take on an ironic meaning that closely parallels caricatures of Irish men attempting to govern in the public sphere. An article in *Putman's Magazine*, ironically titled "Princess Biddy," noted that Biddy was "a more

[129] "Glassware and Glass-houses," *Scribner's Monthly* 14 (June 1877): 260.
[130] Tomes, "Your Humble Servant," 56.
[131] Ibid., 57.

disquieting and unendurable ruler" than even the most "tyrannical" of workingmen's unions and equally unfit to exercise such power. Accordingly, American employers had to closely police their servants and become minutely familiar with what they were doing. As the author of the article in *Putman's* proclaimed: "Know housework and cooking, Madam. Then you can issue your Declaration of Independence against your tyrant."[132]

A story published in *Godey's Lady's Book*, "The Revolt in the Kitchen," blamed the intelligence offices that were responsible for placing servants for being complicit in Biddy's attempt to seize power. The intelligence office "represents, in Biddy-dom, all the power of the State, and is moreover the Temple of Liberty. The custom of other places is here reversed, and the servant is the mistress. She sits enthroned, waiting to receive the homage of dependent and tributary housekeepers." Clearly, employers saw the intelligence office as an institution that protected Biddy and allowed her to dictate the terms of her employment, a clear usurpation of the way power was supposed to be structured. Again, the solution the author of the story presents is greater discipline. Circumventing the intelligence office, the story's narrator designs a system where she hires young Irish girls directly and subjects them to her own training program, which earns her the praise of her husband for being a "sister of charity" and a successful "domestic missionary."[133]

Not surprisingly, cartoons were highly effective in visualizing employers' concerns about their Irish servants, especially when it came to capturing the threat of violence. The magazine *Puck*, which closely modeled its layout and editorial tone after

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[132] "The Princess Biddy; or 'Help' and 'Self-help,'" *Putnam's Magazine* 14 (August 1869): 247.
[133] Patience Price, "The Revolt in the Kitchen," *Godey's Lady Book* 76 (February 1868): 143-4.

Punch, used vivid imagery and depictions of simianized Irish domestic servants to conflate the dangers of Irish independence and home rule with the dangers of Irish control over the American kitchen.[134] On May 9, 1883, Frederick Opper's drawing of an Irish domestic servant graced the cover of *Puck* (pictured on the following page). In the cartoon Biddy has assumed the apelike countenance usually associated with male Irish radicalism and Paddy. Standing over a broken dish she is shaking her fist threateningly and looming over her slim and pleading employer, while the accompanying caption reads "The Irish Declaration of Independence That We Are All Familiar With."[135] An article accompanying the cartoon explained that the image had been inspired by the Irish Convention, a meeting of Irish nationalists that was taking place in Philadelphia, and the platforms for Irish independence that the participants had passed. In *Puck's* opinion,

> The Irish declaration of independence has been read in our kitchens, many and many a time, to frightened housewives, and the fruits of that declaration are to be seen in thousands of ill-cooked meals on ill-served tables, in unswept rooms and unmade beds, in dirt, confusion, insubordination and general disorder, taking the sweetness out of life.[136]

Biddy's rebellious tendencies were not only figurative. Irish domestics were also portrayed and displayed as directly financing Irish revolutionary activities back home. In Opper's "The Goose That Lays the Golden Eggs," Biddy appears as a distorted, hunched-over goose, while the nationalist politician Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa feeds her promissory notes (including one labeled "Blarney") so that she can then lay eggs

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[134] Maureen Murphy counts in *Puck* 59 cartoons of Irish women by the cartoonist Opper alone. As Murphy notes, their "features become more simian when Opper's point becomes more bitter." Murphy, "Bridget and Biddy," 154.
[135] Frederick Opper, "The Irish Declaration of Independence," *Puck,* May 9, 1883, cover.
[136] "Cartoons and Comments," *Puck*, May 9, 1883, 146.

Frederick Opper, "The Irish Declaration of Independence," *Puck,* May 9, 1883

that bear the description "Contributions from Irish Servant Girls."[137] Another Opper cartoon shows simianized Irish domestic servants queuing in line to hand over their wages to purchase dynamite and to finance an "Irish regiment to crush the British."[138] The *Times of London* echoed this theme through the dispatches of its foreign correspondents in the United States, who in updating readers on the various visits made by Irish politicians and on Irish nationalist activity abroad, invariably commented how those involved sought to once again tap the coffers of New York's and Boston's servant girls.[139] The political struggles of the domestic space that pitted Irish Catholic employees against Protestant Anglo employers easily became conflated with the political struggles of the Irish people against British rule.

Looking Abroad for Help

In the midst of the domestic service crisis perpetuated by what Anglo American employers believed to be the intransigence and inexperience of Biddy, journalists and observers of the domestic situation looked toward Great Britain for advice on how to cultivate and manage a proper class of servants. American magazines and journals regularly referenced and even published accounts on the British (or more typically, English) system of domestic service, arguing that Britain's rigid class system and the ability of British families to hire servants from their own country allowed the profession to operate more smoothly there. Symbolically, England factored into American notions

[137] Frederick Opper, "The Goose That Lays the Golden Eggs," *Puck*, August 22, 1883, cover.
[138] Frederick Opper, "Another Blind for the Biddies – The Dynamiters' New Device," *Puck*, March 11, 1885, back cover.
[139] See for example, "The United States," *The Times of London*, September 27, 1867; "News," *The Times of London*, September 30, 1867; "The United States," *The Times of London*, June 9, 1870; "American Opinion and Home Rule," *The Times of London*, October 11, 1887; and, "The Irish Parties: Mr. Parnell's Manifesto to the Irish Americans," *The Times of London*, March 14, 1891.

of domesticity since as one author writing in the *Home Journal* put it, England was "the Palestine of the Home."[140] The birthplace of sophisticated class-consciousness and colonial rule, England provided a natural source of comparison. In looking abroad for advice and guidance on how to best manage domestic servants, Americans also defined the unique problems that the occupation raised in the United States.

American authors argued that because English masters and servants possessed a clear sense of social class, this meant that they also understood – either implicitly or explicitly – that each had a mutual obligation to the other. For example, *Godey's Lady's Book* promoted its reprint of an article that appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1862, by touting British mastery of the "art" of how to run a home. The article from the *Edinburgh Review* argued that by granting their servants both obligations, and, if they fulfilled them, privileges, British employers had decreased friction in the home. Such efforts had also benefited society more broadly by elevating working class men and women from the status of "pauperism and raggedness" into a productive and disciplined labor force.[141] For an American audience this was an important lesson. While it was tempting for housewives to lose their tempers and verbally abuse their Irish servants, the British had shown that rewarding employees for doing things correctly produced a better result.

Instructions on how to be a better employer could be quite specific. In the *Galaxy,* Albert Rhodes, who frequently contributed articles on European manners and worked as an American consul in England, noted that in the "representative" English

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[140] Although American authors occasionally discussed domestic service in Ireland, Scotland, or Wales, England was far and away the most frequent point of reference. "Hints for Judicious-Few-Dom on Hotel Life and Domestic Happiness," *Home Journal*, April 26, 1856.
[141] "Modern Domestic Service," *Godey's Lady Book* 65 *(*August 1862): 197.

household, "a sense of duty was the leading trait, which showed itself in taking care of the poor, providing instruction to the needy young, contributing to different charitable societies, subscribing for religious journals and magazines, [and] sending tracts and missionaries to the heathens." Rhodes believed that the cultivation of these virtues among members of the English middle and upper classes translated naturally into knowledge of how to teach and govern servants. Rhodes specifically praised an English employer who had taken on a "person in the humbler walks of life" as a boy, and through close supervision and education guided the servant's progression to the rank of butler.[142]

While acknowledging the merits of the English system, other authors felt that it had less to do with training, and more to do with tradition. Comparing the system of domestic service in the United States to that of England, the *New York Times* asserted that, "in England, where domestic service is most complete and easy … servants often belong to families of servants, with all the habits, training and long practice of serving-people." Unable to marshal a comparable pool of servants from a servant class, the American mistress had to cope with Irish immigrants bereft of such knowledge and equally unskilled in taking care of themselves:

> They have had no experience in nice housework, no habits of cleanliness or economy – for the lowest laboring class is never saving – nor even an education often in the simplest kinds of cooking…. The consequence is that each house is, at some time or other, a kind of philanthropic 'Servants' Institute', where a blundering, slovenly, strong-armed maiden is educated into a neat, handy, serviceable house-helper.[143]

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[142] Albert Rhodes, "The English at Home," *The Galaxy* 13 (June 1872): 773; 778.
[143] "The Social Question of the Day – Servants and Mistresses," *New York Times*, December 13, 1863.

The perception that the British kept their best servants at home and left Americans to fend with the Irish was not isolated to the *Times.* An article in *Appleton's Journal* noted with sarcasm, for example, that while the English jealously guarded their dutiful and faithful servants, the British government had no problem sending abroad "raw material from the sister isle which smashes our favorite crockery and spoils Nature's choicest gifts in attempting to cook them."[144]

At the same time that middle class Americans openly proclaimed their wish to secure Chinese servants from California, they also considered English servants as a possible replacement for Biddy. In 1870, an article in *Old and New* by Reverend John Williams featured the services of Elihn Burritt of Birmingham, England, who was already engaged in the business of arranging for English girls to travel to Canada to work as domestic servants there.[145] Ultimately, Williams claimed to have passed along word of Burritt's services to various friends, which resulted in twenty-eight English girls being brought over to work as servants in towns and cities in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont. As Williams reported satisfactorily, all of servants were "Protestants" and "not one yet has arrived who would think it beneath her dignity to clean a pair of shoes if that was required of her."[146] In the same way that they praised Chinese servants, middle-class authors similarly promoted English

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[144] R. Lewin, "English Servants," *Appleton's Journal* 8 (November 1872): 606.
[145] As Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock note, the British government took an active role in encouraging the settlement and development of Canada by creating programs designed to promote the emigration of single women. Ideally, female immigrants to Canada were expected to provide domestic labor and then eventually become wives managing their own homes. Ninette Kelley and Michael Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 43-57.
[146] "English Servants in America," *Old and New* 1(June 1870): 840-1.

servants' obedience and their willingness to perform the subservient tasks that domestic work demanded.[147]

The reliance of the American middle class on immigrant domestic workers exposed one of the occupation's fundamental paradoxes. Although authors blamed Irish immigrants' predominance in domestic service as one of the main reasons that paid domestic work had acquired such a lowly status, others argued that in a republican society like the United States, domestic work, and the servitude it implied, would always be stigmatized. An author writing in *Every Saturday* argued in 1869 that since English servants were superior to their American counterparts, "Any American who values his comfort more than his democracy would do well to exchange countries for this reason alone." After pondering whether "comfort" was worth sacrificing the egalitarianism and social mobility of American democracy, the author chose democracy as the better option. "It is not pleasant to think of thousands of young men and women who grow up as servants in private houses with no ambition" as was the case in England he concluded, whereas in the United States, "a coachman may win his way into Congress, and a servant-girl may marry a future President. If we must have either discomfort or feudalism, let us choose discomfort."[148] Arguments about the degraded status of service acknowledged that Anglo American efforts to assimilate Irish immigrants ran counter to the wish to cultivate a permanent class of servants, as was the case in Britain. The author of the *Harper's Bazar* article on "Bridget," discussed at the very beginning of this chapter, made a similar point. As she argued, while English

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[147] Many American authors' impressions of the harmony that purportedly existed between British masters and their servants conveniently ignored the fact that the "servant question" was a feature of British life as well. On the servant question in Britain, see Pamela Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), 120-45.
[148] "Housekeeping, English and American," *Every Saturday,* January 23, 1869, 108.

"tyranny" was largely to be blamed for the Irish servant's backwards condition, such a condition did not have to be a permanent feature, since Americans had also escaped English rule and the resulting personal degradation.[149]

Anglo Americans might expect to be able to hire Irish girls as servants, yet even the harshest critics of Biddy realized that it led to conflict to assume that the Irish belonged immutably to a servant class. The value placed on personal independence in the United States, and the racial connotation of servitude, commentators recognized, undermined the behavior that employers expected and demanded from white servants, regardless of their national origin.

The Noble Irish Girl Abroad

Confronted by attacks on Biddy's character, and recognizing domestic service's status in the United States, Irish and Irish American authors responded by portraying domestic service as a necessary form of economic sacrifice that required Irish women to endure frequent harassment. Although Anglo Americans may have succeeded in creating the stereotype of Biddy in order to capture their disdain for Irish domestic labor, the Irish community – on both sides of the Atlantic – refused to accept such portrayals as accurate.

In Hugh Quigley's *The Cross and the Shamrock*, for example, the Protestant home and its surrounding community appears as a force of seduction where religious

[149] "Bridget," 706. Knobel argues that while nativists in 1840s and 1850s tended to see the Irish as permanently unassimilable, after the Civil War American commentators were more likely to argue that the negative qualities of the Irish could be gradually reformed through good governance and assimilation. Knobel, *Paddy and the Republic*, 34-8. Nonetheless, it is evident that even though the tone of nativist resentment may have softened, when it came to domestic service, native-born Americans questioned whether Irish servants could truly be transformed.

conversion is equated with rape. The Protestant home in Quigley's depiction bears little resemblance to the moral sanctuary that Anglo American authors presented. Written for the Irish in the United States "continually subjected to a most trying ordeal of temptation and persecution on account of their religion," *The Cross and the Shamrock* includes a dramatic scene where a Presbyterian minister accosts Bridget, an Irish domestic servant. After commenting on Bridget's "purty curls" and "beautiful teeth," and how surely she makes her mistress jealous, the minister proceeds to caress Bridget while urging her to become a "good Christian." It is not until a fellow Catholic, a young Irish man, shows up and confronts the minister, that Bridget is able to escape this harassment.[150]

In the chapter of John Francis Maguire's account of Irish life in the United States dedicated to female Irish immigrants, he shares an anecdote about Kate, an Irish servant working in a Protestant household in an unnamed American city. The local preacher frequently visits the home where Kate works, generically calling her Bridget and mocking her Catholicism. While Kate typically responds to the preacher's patronizing humor with patience and humility, when the preacher tells Kate in front of a dinner party that he will pay her whatever "Father Pat" is asking for absolution, Kate can no longer control her temper. "She flung the hot steaming liquid," a tureen of pea soup, Maguire recalls with evident pride, "over the face, neck, [and] breast."[151] Maguire's celebration of Kate's response shows the violence of the Irish servant in a completely different light. The preacher's incessant verbal abuse and his mockery of the sacred rituals of Catholicism, justifies Kate's response.

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[150] Hugh Quigley, *The Cross and the Shamrock, or, How to Defend the Faith: An Irish-American Catholic Tale of Real Life* (Boston: P. Donahoe, 1853), 3; 128.
[151] John Francis Maguire, *The Irish in America* (1868; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1969), 334-5.

Irish and Irish American commentators regularly deployed servants as the foremost symbol of Ireland's suffering and (female) Ireland's ability to maintain a Catholic dignity throughout its privations. Mary Sadlier, an Irish immigrant author, began her 1861 novel *Bessy Conway* with the assertion that "perhaps in the vast extent of the civilised world, there is no class more exposed to evil influences than the Irish Catholic girls who earn a precarious living at service in America."[152] In the novel, after initially being harassed by an employer who wishes to convert Bessy to Protestantism, Bessy finally quits and is "blessed" in that she is able to find refuge and a fair paying job in an American Catholic home.

Because the female Irish emigrant was supposed to be a singularly humble and dutiful figure, the Irish Catholic establishment reproved Irish servants who spent their money on themselves. In this regard, the Catholic Church and the Protestant middle class found common ground in the belief that a domestic servant should not concern herself with personal vanity. Mary Frances Cusack, better known as the Nun of Kenmare, lectured in *Advice to Irish Girls in America* that if the servant "wishes to be rich that she may buy fine clothes, which are not suitable to her station in life…then she is doing very wrong, and is putting herself in danger both in this world and the next."[153] Cusack, conscious that poverty, the opposite of excess, might also be seen as a fault of the Irish servant girl, included tips and suggestions on cleanliness and hygiene, as well as advice on how to be industrious and diligent. Irish Catholic authors urged servants,

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[152] Mary Sadlier, *Bessy Conway; or, the Irish Girl in America* (New York: D. &. J. Sadlier, 1861), 3-4.
[153] Mary Fraces Cusack, *Advice to Irish Girls in America, by the Nun of Kenmare* (New York: McGee, 1872), 26.

who relied on Protestant wages, to look beyond the "faults or imperfections of your employers; see only Jesus, your Master and your best Friend, shining through them."[154]

It is also evident that the Irish Catholic community interpreted the rural backgrounds and physicality of female Irish immigrants in a completely different light than their Protestant American counterparts. In an account produced by the Catholic Sisters of Mercy, for example, physical strength is depicted as a virtue for Irish women who were required to perform demanding labor in order to earn a living, and rural simplicity a trait that kept the Irish singularly focused on their duties. Describing Hanna Flynn, an Irish immigrant working as a servant in New York, the Sisters of Mercy noted that she was "a woman of masculine strength and endurance" whose "utmost limit of travel was her crowded parish chapel." Flynn was illiterate and the "alphabet was to her as the hieroglyphics of Egypt." Nonetheless, Hanna Flynn "was a heroine. She knew her prayers, she honored her parents, she loved God in her own simple, faithful way; she was honest, upright, truthful, laborious and capable of self-sacrifice."[155]

Strategically, middle class Irish American publications like *Donahoe's Magazine* welcomed and even solicited the praises of Protestant Americans who would speak on behalf of the hard work of Irish immigrant girls. Patrick Donahoe, the founder of the magazine and the wealthy publisher of the *Boston Pilot*, asked that Harriet Beecher Stowe write an article extolling Irish servant girls in order to combat the criticism they received. In the resulting article, titled "Ireland's Daughters in their New

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[154] This particular quote comes from George Deshon, *Guide for Catholic Young Women* (1868; repr. New York: Arno Press, 1978), 156.

[155] [Mother Mary Teresa] Austin Carroll, *Leaves from the Annals of the Sisters of Mercy* (New York: Catholic Publication Society, 1889), vol. 3: 177. As Maureen Fitzgerald notes, Hanna Flynn was likely an archetype as opposed to an actual individual, used to describe a common experience among the Irish immigrant women who had come through the House of Mercy. Fitzgerald, *Habits of Compassion*, 59-61.

Homes," Stowe claimed that she had "always maintained that the very best, the safest, the most respectable, and (taking all things into account) the most really desirable situation for a working-woman was that of a family domestic."[156] She added, "I know an eminent clergyman of Boston who has often been heard to say that the claim to saintship of some of the Irish nurses who have been helpers in his family went beyond that of many saints in the calendar."[157] If work in the American home was portrayed as allowing Irish women to display a type of saintly benevolence then Irish leaders were not to oppose such an arrangement.

Conclusion

By the 1890s, the direct association that linked Irish women with domestic service in the United States had begun to fade and lose its vitriolic edge. From roughly 1910 onwards, African American migrants from the South increasingly took over domestic work in Northeastern cities such as Philadelphia and New York. The female children of Irish immigrants followed the lead of other white, native-born Americans and chose to work instead in factories or in the white collar sector as secretaries and teachers.[158] Images and representations of the insolent and dangerous Biddy gave way to more gentle chiding that acknowledged what scholars of "critical whiteness" have argued came with the more complete incorporation of the Irish into the white race,

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[156] Harriet Beecher Stowe, "Ireland's Daughters in their New Homes," *Donahoe's Magazine* 1 (January 1879), 53. Stowe's praise of Irish servants, in this particular venue, needs to be taken with a large grain of salt. In other contexts, her comments about Bridget were far less flattering. In an 1872 article that appeared in the publication *Wellman's Miscellany*, for example, Stowe provided detailed instructions on how mistresses might cope with the "half-civilized beings" that had entered their homes in the form of Irish servants. Stowe, "Fault Finding," *Wellman's Miscellany* 6 (September 1872): 81.
[157] Stowe, "Ireland's Daughters in their New Homes," 40.
[158] Diner, *Erin's Daughters*, 94-105.

when they were no longer perceived to be dangerously different.[159] Towards the turn of the century even *Puck* softened its views on the Irish and what their race was able to achieve, depicting in the place of simian savages successful and human Irish politicians and businessmen with refined wives, often consciously trying to distance themselves from their more humble pasts.[160] During the first decade of the twentieth century, Irish American protesters were successful in halting productions of the theatrical performance "The Irish Servant Girls," a long running satirical show put on by the Russell brothers, in which they wore women's clothing in order to depict a masculine and blundering version of Biddy. In 1907, near riots by Irish American audience members in Manhattan and Brooklyn forced the Russell brothers to cancel performances.[161]

Looking at the history of Biddy and the particular stereotypes Anglo American women used to represent Irish domestic labor, it is important to recognize that employers did not construct the figure of Biddy in a generic fashion. The Irish were not the only immigrant or minority racial group providing servants in the nineteenth century. Typically, however, newspaper and magazine articles on domestic service presented Biddy in an unfavorable light in comparisons with her racialized counterparts. In contrast to the racially docile and emasculated male Chinese servant, or the doting figure of "Mammy," who as Patricia Morton notes, was almost always depicted as

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[159] See for example: Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness.*

[160] See for example, John J. Appel, "From Shanties to Lace Curtains: The Irish Image in *Puck*, 1876-1910," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13, no. 4 (Oct. 1971): 365-75. One image Appel uses shows a nattily dressed Irish businessman, in human form, staring at a simianized man in rags in the mirror. Appel also argues that the 1894 death of Joseph Keppler, the Austrian-born cartoonist and founder of *Puck*, also contributed to the magazine's shift, since Keppler allegedly relished attacking the Irish.

[161] M. Alison Kibler, "The Stage Irishwoman," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 24, no. 3 (Spring 2005): 5-30.

being unwaveringly loyal to her white family, detractors portrayed Biddy as being volatile and disobedient by nature.[162]

In exploring the role that women photographers played in creating sentimental portraits of domestic scenes in the post-Civil War South, Laura Wexler has argued that black domestic servants were a common fixture, and that the staging of such photographs "became desirable for former slaveholding families to undertake in order to maintain domestic composure after the legal cessation of the American slave system."[163] In the decades prior to 1890, it is hard to imagine Biddy signifying domestic composure and tranquility. An article titled "Biddy Dethroned" that appeared in *Putnam's Magazine* in 1870, celebrated the "incoming of the Chinese" by explaining that "never till our homes cease to be workshops chafed by the friction of endless toil, will they rise perfectly to their true end of nurseries of a Christian nation."[164] While not all Anglo American employers were ready (or able) to "dethrone" Biddy and dismiss their Irish servants outright, almost all middle class mistresses shared in the consensus that the Irish had to be reformed, and given the Irish disposition, this would be no easy accomplishment. When Anglo Americans on the East Coast blindly praised the labor of Chinese men and argued (often without ever having encountered an actual Chinese servant) that the Chinese race was naturally servile and never failed to provide loyal workers, it is safe to say that arguments about the problems posed by Irish labor almost inevitably followed.

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[162] Patricia Morton, *Disfigured Images: The Historical Assault on Afro-American Women* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 1-15.
[163] Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in the Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 94.
[164] 'Biddy Dethroned', *Putnam's Magazine* 15 (January 1870): 117.

By acting out against their employers and frustrating Anglo American employers' attempts at reform, Irish servants demonstrated that they were conscious of the profession's degraded status in the United States. Hanna Flynn, discussed earlier, immigrated to the United States in 1859 from Ireland in order to support her family and received training as a domestic servant at the House of Mercy on Houston Street in New York City. Flynn, upon receiving a position in an American home, sent her earnings to her brother and sister still in Ireland, "'slaving out' her life… among strange people, in strange places, for those she loved so well."[165] Irish servants understood the social implications of doing domestic work even as they relied on the wages it provided. Irish immigrants realized that the racial groups believed to supply the "best" servants occupied a position at the bottom of the nation's social and racial hierarchy for this very reason. When authors noted that employers would not treat native-born American girls in the same manner they treated their Irish servants, they too acknowledged that the Irish were not to be treated like the Chinese, who could allegedly tolerate any order. Horatio Seymour, the former governor of New York and the Democratic nominee for the presidency in 1868, commented in the *New York Times*, that "I have no doubt the Chinese have useful qualities. They are said to be good servants, ready to do the work of men or women, but they have not the traits which will build on this Continent a great and high-toned power."[166] Servility may have made Chinese immigrants ideal for domestic labor, but it excluded them from being participants in nation-building.

While Irish servants in the nineteenth century certainly used workplace resistance to challenge the social control and racialized prejudice they experienced at

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[165] Carroll, *Leaves from the Annals of the Sisters of Mercy*, 3: 179.
[166] *New York Times*, August 6, 1870.

the hands of their Anglo American employers, they also used their resistance in order to identify with the white race. Since servitude was antithetical to equality, resistance to employers' demands provided a tactic by which to identify with the dominant group – while also combating the power that it exercised.[167] As the following chapters will address, Chinese servants did not stand to gain in the same ways that Irish servants did by resisting their employers' demands. Their allies were few and far between, and certainly not among the white laborers who saw their racial difference as absolute and unassimilable.

By creating a public discourse about why Biddy was such a problematic employee, Anglo American women placed themselves at the forefront of the debates surrounding immigration and assimilation, and how immigrants had to be molded in order to fit American labor needs. As policy makers responsible for maintaining both the concept of domesticity and the management of domestic labor, Anglo American women had to reign in and control Irish disorder and the threat it posed to the home, or design schemes to replace Biddy altogether.

[167] In this sense, the type of resistance demonstrated by Irish servants differs from the workplace resistance exhibited by blacks in the United States, which typically sought to contest the structural and economic implications of racial subjugation. On workplace resistance by black Americans, see Robin Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1996). On locating the "hidden transcripts" of resistance, see, James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

Chapter 3

"John Chinaman to Her Rescue!"
Chinese Labor and the Domestic Service Question

Introduction

Margaret Hosmer's short story, "Mary Ann and Chyng Loo," which the Philadelphia-based magazine *Lippincott's* published in 1870, addressed in fictional form a topic of public discussion that had gained a great deal of exposure after the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. Despite being set in San Francisco, Hosmer's story was directed at an Eastern audience that had displayed a ravenous appetite for material and information concerning Chinese immigrants on the West Coast, and how their labor might be put to use.

Hosmer's story begins with the narrator first meeting Mary Ann Mahoney, an Irish immigrant who has been hired to replace the narrator's black servant. The narrator's "Ethiopian" receives only a single paragraph in the story and it is revealed that she has quit the job based on her refusal to cook and clean for her employer's frequent house guests, and to accommodate what she considers their excessive hospitality.[168] Mary Ann, her replacement, is "gigantic in stature and of great bone and muscle," and has an aggressive personality to match her physical presence. On her first day at work, Mary Ann confidently announces her talents as a servant yet soon proceeds to break a number of dishes and cups, which she then tries to blame on the "nagur" who

[168] Margaret Hosmer, "Mary Ann and Chyng Loo. Housekeeping in San Francisco," *Lippincott's Magazine* 6 (October 1870): 354. As Hosmer's depiction of the black servant reveals, representations of servants were by no means uniform. Whereas some sources in this period maintained that the black and white social relations remained largely unaltered, and used the image of "Mammy" to support this, other sources depicted freed black laborers and domestic servants as increasingly difficult to manage as a result of their emancipation.

preceded her. On her second day of service, Mary Ann burns the family's meals, but again faults the black servant for leaving her an allegedly damaged and malfunctioning stove.[169]

When it becomes clear that the new Irish servant does not possess the talents she claimed, the story's narrator attempts to confront Mary Ann over her performance, a decision that only exacerbates the situation. In response to her employer's criticism, Mary Ann brandishes an "awful iron spoon as a sort of scepter," which convinces the narrator to back off. Mary Ann, having established "tyranny" over the household, proceeds to invite the siblings Bridget and Dennis McFetridge over to her employers' home as regular guests, and rather than completing the domestic tasks required of her, spends her time on the job entertaining her own company instead. Things hit rock bottom for the family one night when Mary Ann gets drunk and attacks the family with the dreaded iron spoon, forcing them to seek refuge upstairs. In the midst of being held hostage in their own bedroom, the narrator recalls how the family entertained the notion of abandoning their home altogether in favor of boarding at a rooming house, since even this solution appeared preferable to having to continue to put up with Mary Ann's absolute rule.[170]

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[169] Ibid., 354-5.

[170] Ibid., 355-7. The idea that the crisis of finding good domestic servants would lead middle class families to abandon their homes and board out in hotels or rooming houses, appears frequently in articles on the domestic service question. When Charles Dilke visited San Francisco in the 1870s, for example, he portrayed the servant situation as dire, noting that "The want of servants is such that even the wealthiest inhabitants live with their wives and families in hotels, to avoid the cost and trouble of an establishment." Dilke blamed insolent Irish help. Those who could not afford to or were unable to live in hotels had to tolerate the social demands of Irish workers, and "pay rough, unkempt Irish girls from £6 to £8 a month, with board, 'outings' when they please, and 'followers' unlimited." Charles Wentworth Dilke, *Greater Britain: A Record of Travel in English-Speaking Countries During 1866 and 1867* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1869), 182.

When the hung-over Mary Ann leaves the house the next day, the family quickly moves to replace her. Pledging to find "a good girl" to replace Mary Ann; the narrator's cousin returns instead with a Chinese man, Chyng Loo. Despite "a vision of stewed rats," the family reluctantly agrees to give Chyng Loo an opportunity to prove himself as a servant. Chyng Loo, by cooking and cleaning without complaint, and by demonstrating "an extreme willingness to learn," soon earns the family's trust.[171] When Mary Ann returns to reclaim her job and erupts in fury upon learning that she has been replaced by someone "worse than the nagur," Chyng Loo rescues his employers by throwing her spoon in a pot of boiling soup so that she cannot use it as a weapon. The story concludes with the narrator expressing some frustration in the fact that she has not yet been able to convert Chyng Loo to Christianity. Nonetheless, as she conveys to readers, "if you could see our kitchen you would think, apart from all higher considerations, that, in the language of California, *it pays*."[172]

In 1880, ten years after the publication of Hosmer's story, comparisons of Irish and Chinese servants remained a popular item of discussion in the East Coast media. In a revealingly titled letter to the editor of the *New York Times* – "What Happened When Bridget and Maggie Retired and Ching Took Charge of the House," – the author, who identified himself only as a Californian, cheerfully noted how his wife finally relented and agreed to try Chinese servants, putting aside her prejudice and belief that "they were dirty." Her newfound willingness to open her home to Chinese labor occurred in

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[171] Hosmer, "Mary Ann and Chyng Loo," 358.

[172] Ibid., 361. In 1868, Hosmer explored a similar theme in her short novel about "You-Sing" a dutiful Chinese servant that rescued a Sacramento family from approaching flood waters. In the story, while the family's black servant cries hysterically and is paralyzed with fear by the rising waters, You Sing acts heroically – and nearly at the cost of his own life – to ensure that the white family is saved. Margaret Hosmer, *You-Sing: the Chinaman in California. A True Story of the Sacramento Flood* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Publication Society, 1868).

the aftermath of a violent incident, when her Irish servant allegedly tried to turn her out of her own house by threatening her with a broomstick. The family hired Tom, a Chinese servant, and, as the author notes, since then "peace and quietness have reigned."[173]

Domestic service was a subject that often blended the line between fiction and fact. Whether it was the message of Hosmer's fictional narrator confronting and ultimately triumphing over a difficult set of circumstances, or a letter writer reporting his personal success, magazines, newspapers, and novels all provided important mediums for dissecting the servant question. The middle-class media of the late-nineteenth century established that when one form of immigrant or racial labor was deemed a failure, and the possibility of replacing that group presented itself, employers had a right to act on this opportunity even if it meant denying, as was the case with the Irish in domestic service, white women employment.[174]

Proponents of Chinese domestic labor argued that, not only did middle class employers have a right to choose what race of workers they wanted to provide domestic labor, they also had a moral obligation to do so, since the cultivation of domesticity through a tranquil and functional home was of central importance to a civilized nation. Given the sacred importance that middle class Americans placed on domesticity, some authors drew on religious parables to interpret what was at stake. "O Biddy-ridden housekeepers," an author in *Lippincott's* asked in an article discussing the anticipated migration of Chinese immigrants from San Francisco to the east, "can it be that a day of

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[173] "Californian," letter to the editor, *New York Times*, April 11, 1880.
[174] There were obvious exceptions, especially among middle-class publications based out of California. As chapter four addresses, the widespread support that the anti-Chinese movement received in California, made middle-class publications in that state more reluctant to proclaim male Chinese servants superior to white women.

deliverance is dawning?"[175] Harriet Spofford, a regular critic of Irish domestic labor, did not look to divine intervention but rather to the "resolve" and collective power of middle class women. "If the Irish girl will still give her no rest, and the American girl refuse her succor," Spofford noted, "she will find out some honorable way to bring John Chinaman to her rescue!"[176]

The stereotype of John Chinaman was not unique to domestic service, and was often used to describe any male Chinese immigrant, regardless of his occupation.[177] In the language of the anti-Chinese clubs and restriction movements, John Chinaman was a coolie and slave laborer. By this logic, all Chinese immigrants were "John Chinamen" in that they were interchangeable as workers, and lacked the individuality and free-will of the white laborer.[178] When employers of Chinese servants invoked "John Chinaman," however, it was to a different end. In the context of domestic labor, John Chinaman's mechanical precision and indefatigable industry represented positive attributes.

The involvement of Chinese immigrants in domestic service, while widely acknowledged by nineteenth-century Americans, has only rarely captured the attention of historians. Daniel Sutherland has estimated that Chinese men accounted for fifty percent of all servants in California at the peak of their employment in the profession in

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[175] A.M., "A Glimpse of San Francisco," *Lippincott's Magazine* (June 1870): 647.
[176] Harriet Elizabeth Prescott Spofford, *The Servant Girl Question* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1881), 167; 181.
[177] According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the name "John Chinaman" emerged in the early part of the nineteenth century, and reflects the practice of British sailors, who were not interested in learning how to pronounce Chinese names, generically calling Chinese interpreters "John." *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "John Chinaman," http://dictionary.oed.com.floyd.lib.umn.edu/cgi/entry/50124010/50124010se5?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=John+Chinaman&first=1&max_to_show=10&hilite=50124010se5 (accessed November 25, 2008).
[178] John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (London and Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 174.

1880.[179] June Mei, citing the censuses of 1870 and 1880, offers 989 and 2,471 as the number of Chinese servants in San Francisco during those respective years. Sucheng Chan notes that there were approximately 12,000 Chinese immigrants and American-born Chinese residents of the city of San Francisco in 1870, and 22,000 in 1880. Taking into account that these numbers are far from precise, they demonstrate that in 1870, domestic service employed 8.24% of the Chinese community in San Francisco, and in 1880, 11.23%. Both Mei and Chan connect the increase in Chinese servants between the years 1870 and 1880 to the decline in the mining and railroad work that previously employed Chinese immigrants, and to the natural growth in San Francisco's population and wealth.[180] (By comparison, the percentage of Irish women working as servants and the overall number of Irish servants in the East was considerably higher.)

In proclaiming the superiority of male Chinese domestic labor over that of the domestic labor provided by female Irish immigrants, authors and other commentators participated in what Stuart Hall has referred to as "inter-textuality," the process by which individual representations acquire an "accumulation of meanings across different texts."[181] When paired with a Chinese domestic servant as was the case in Hosmer's story, the signifiers used to mark Biddy as a threat to domesticity take on additional meanings and initiate a broader discussion on the traits and racial qualities that different immigrant groups displayed. Middle class Americans created the discursive figure of

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[179] Daniel Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants: Domestic Service in the United States from 1800 to 1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 56-7.
[180] June Mei, "Socioeconomic Developments among the Chinese in San Francisco, 1848-1906," in Lucie Cheng and Edna Bonacich, eds., *Labor Immigration Under Capitalism: Asian Workers in the United States Before World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 370-401; figure on page 374. Sucheng Chan, *This Bittersweet Soil: The Chinese in California Agriculture, 1860-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 45.
[181] Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation," in Hall, ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997), 6.

"John Chinaman," the domestic servant, as the antithesis to Biddy. Mary Ann is masculine in her physique, while Chyng Loo is petite and effeminate. Mary Ann's destruction of the family's plates and cups foreshadowed more ominous violence on her part; Chyng Loo is meticulous in making sure everything is in "perfect order."[182]

Whereas the previous chapter focused on the Biddy's problematic relationship with the American home, this chapter looks at the demand for Chinese immigrants as domestic servants, and how middle class Americans used the figure of the Chinese domestic servant to defend Chinese immigration to the United States and to challenge Irish domestic servants' domination of the profession. Scholars have documented how white Americans targeted Chinese men who entered domestic service by accusing them of subverting traditional gender roles and positing a sexual threat to white women and children. I hope to expand on that focus by looking at how the Chinese domestic servant also allowed middle class Americans to temporarily re-imagine the benefits of continental expansion and the "opening" of the West.[183] While opponents of Chinese immigration regularly drew attention to the disruption of gender roles that male Chinese servants represented, and to what they believed to be the sexual consequences of male servants, the figure of Chinese domestic servant was also used by middle class women to imagine possible solutions and colonial arrangements designed to fix the domestic

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[182] Hosmer, "Mary Ann and Chyng Loo," 358.

[183] In particular, see, Karen J. Leong, "'A Distinct and Antagonistic Race': Constructions of Chinese Manhood in the Exclusionist Debates, 1869-1878," in Matthew Basso, Laura McCall, and Dee Garceau, eds., *Across the Great Divide: Cultures of Manhood in the American West* (New York; London: Routledge, 2001). Similarly, in *Orientals*, Robert Lee argues that although the Chinese servant "saved True Womanhood from the physical demands of the secular cult of cleanliness, the entry of men into the domestic sphere threatened to unsettle the gendered division of labor, putting men in domestic roles such as cleaning and cooking and assigning supervisor and management roles to women." Robert Lee, *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 99. Nonetheless, as middle class women's willingness to discipline Biddy demonstrates, mistresses had assumed "management roles" long before encountering Chinese servants.

servant question. The effeminate, docile Chinese servant that middle class authors constructed in public discourse was a welcome contrast to the hulking, masculine figure of Biddy.

Even though Chinese servants had been regularly employed in Californian homes since the 1850s, after the Civil War they became part of a national discussion, with authors like Hosmer presenting to audiences across the county an idealized vision of the Chinese servant that could finally free American families from the wrath of Biddy, as had already been accomplished in San Francisco. Up until 1882, when the federal Exclusion Act greatly restricted Chinese immigration, authors seeking to find a solution to the "servant problem" that plagued Eastern cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, repeatedly made reference to what they believed to be the imminent arrival of Chinese immigrants in numbers sufficient to satisfy their labor demand. During the late-1870s and early-1880s, when anti-Chinese politics in California erupted in violence and led to electoral victories by the Workingmen's Party of California, women and men in cities like New York expressed their willingness to "save" Chinese immigrants from persecution by finding them jobs as servants.

When efforts at disciplining unruly Irish servants failed, employers were willing to devise dramatic solutions in an attempt to eradicate Irish servants altogether. In the nineteenth-century United States, this meant advancing the radical proposal to employ Chinese men as servants in middle class homes across the country, challenging the widely-held belief that Chinese men presented a risk to the health, morality, and sexual purity of the white family. As the previous chapter addressed, Anglo American mistresses regularly contrasted Biddy's physical and cultural crudeness with the

gendered and racial expectations of how a "true" woman was supposed to handle herself.[184] Similarly, when a letter writer to the *New York Herald* pointed out that "the docile and industrious Celestials" could "be educated to become efficient and reliable househelp," it can be assumed that the same writer would not ascribe these traits to her own husband or other male peers, since to suggest that a white male was docile and willing to do work that was gendered female would have been a grievous affront.[185]

In presenting the Chinese servant as the mirror opposite of the Irish servant in a racialized hierarchy of labor, the predominantly Anglo American commentators who wrote frequently on the topic of the "Servant Question," also found themselves participating in an ongoing debate surrounding economic liberalism and access to labor, which had fully emerged after the end of slavery. These debates suggested that different immigrant groups possessed or lacked discrete racial qualities for performing certain types of labor. As Lisa Lowe has argued, "Modern hierarchies of race appear to have emerged in the contradiction between's humanism's aspirations to universality and the needs of modern colonial regimes to manage work, reproduction, and the social organization."[186] In the aftermath of the American Civil War, as Americans sought to escape the paradox of enslavement and subjugation in a liberal society, the belief that Chinese immigrants were racially predisposed to servile labor allowed middle class Americans to explain and naturalize their social status.

While white Americans were able to agree that Chinese immigrants were servile, class, regional, and ethnic tensions prevented a common understanding of what

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[184] "Glassware and Glass-houses," *Scribner's Monthly* 14 (June 1877): 260; and, "How to Sweep a Room," *The Century Illustrated Magazine* 9 (November 1874): 115.
[185] S.H.P., letter to the editor, *New York Herald*, March 14, 1880.
[186] Lisa Lowe, "The Intimacies of Four Continents," in Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted By Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 204.

this servility meant in relationship to the United States' social, political, and economic life. Novelists, journalists, and politicians who believed that Chinese labor would one day spell the doom of the American republic, specifically targeted Chinese servants. Chinese servants were accused of putting white women at risk sexually and of introducing disease into the home. Finally, for some extremists, the Chinese servant was an intimately-placed enemy. No matter how productive and accommodating he might seem as a worker, his presence in the most sacred of national spaces, the home, would lead to catastrophic events.

"Go East" Chinese Servant

On May 10, 1869, reporters, photographers, government officials, and railroad representatives gathered at Promontory Summit, Utah, to celebrate the completion of the transcontinental railroad. In a symbolic gesture designed to illustrate the capability of American industry, Irish and Chinese workers had laid the final ten miles of track needed to the connect the Eastern and Western sections of the Union and Central Pacific lines in a single, frenzied day. The meeting of the locomotives on the finished line was captured in an iconic photograph, meant to memorialize the moment when the successful unification of the entire continent had been achieved. The photographer purposely omitted Chinese laborers from the picture. As Anna Pegler-Gordon has noted, "this photograph is a graphic metaphor for the ways that the Chinese were excluded from the United States and the ways that their long-standing presence in this country has been erased."[187]

[187] The image is on display online as part of the Central Pacific Railroad's Photographic History Museum. Charles R. Savage, "Jubilation Laying the Last Rail," Central Pacific Railroad Photographic History

This important moment in opening the West was to be represented as a white accomplishment. After all, the completed railroad's purpose was to allow for white passengers to travel to Western states and aid in the settlement and advancement of civilization toward the Pacific Coast. Moving in the opposite direction, the completed railroad allowed manufacturers and agriculture access to markets in the East. Newspapers from the period fawned over the accomplishment in vivid terms, presenting California as an Eden opened up, bringing to New York even in the dead of the winter, "apples, pears, apricots, peaches, and grapes in clusters three feet long."[188] In 1869, however, with white laborers increasingly protesting what they considered to be the unfair competition "coolie" laborers from China posed, to make visual reference to the role of Chinese workers in unifying the nation would have only fueled further racial debate and acrimony.[189]

Even as photographers erased the contribution of Chinese workers from the image of the completed transcontinental railroad, other parties took advantage of the technological accomplishment to imagine putting Chinese workers into the picture. Observers who had closely followed the progress of the railroad's construction knew that Chinese workers had been widely employed by the Central Pacific and that their labor was considered essential to the project's success. "The rugged mountains looked

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Museum, http://cprr.org/ (accessed November 10, 2008). Anna Pegler-Gordon, "Chinese Exclusion, Photography, and the Development of U.S. Immigration Policy," *American Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 51. Chinese workers, although omitted from certain pictorial depictions of the American West, were featured prominently in others. As Deirdre Murphy discusses in *Common-Place*, illustrators and photographers used the figure of the Chinese worker to make claims about American industrial progress and modernity. Deirdre Murphy, "Like standing on the edge of the world and looking away into heaven': Picturing Chinese labor and industrial velocity in the Gilded Age," *Common-Place* 7, no. 3 (2007), http://www.common-place.org/vol-07/no-03/murphy/ (accessed November 10, 2008).

[188] *New York Herald*, "The Fruitfulness of California," August 13, 1869.

[189] For additional information on the politics behind the construction of the transcontinental railroad, see, David Bain, *Empire Express: Building the First Transcontinental Railroad* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1999).

like stupendous ant-hills," described the author Albert Richardson, "they swarmed with Celestials, shoveling, wheeling, carting, drilling and blasting rocks and earth, while their dull, moony eyes stared out from under immense basket-hats, like umbrellas." Despite Richardson's obvious fascination with what he considered to be the exotic features of the Chinese workforce, he noted in their favor that, "Irish laborers received thirty dollars per month (gold) and board; Chinese, thirty-one dollars, boarding themselves. After a little experience the latter were quite as efficient and far less troublesome."[190]

In 1865, describing the Central Pacific Railroad's progress to President Andrew Johnson and his cabinet, Leland Stanford, head of the company, painted the Chinese as an ideal source of labor: "As a class they are quiet, peaceable, patient, industrious and economical—ready and apt to learn all the different kinds of work required in railroad building, they soon become as efficient as white laborers. More prudent and economical, they are contented with less wages."[191] A.W. Loomis, who worked as both a Presbyterian missionary in China and in San Francisco, insinuated that unlike the Irish, since the Chinese had not acquired "a taste for whisky, they have few fights, and no 'Blue Mondays.'" Writing in 1869, Loomis predicted that the Chinese laborers soon to be without work after the completion of the railroad would be welcomed as servants back in San Francisco.[192]

The completion of the transcontinental railroad came only a year after the future of Chinese immigration to the United States was seemingly secured. In 1868, with the

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[190] Albert Richardson, *Beyond the Mississippi* (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1867), 570.
[191] Leland Stanford, *Central Pacific Railroad Statement Made to the President of the United States, and Secretary of the Interior, on the Progress of the Work* (Sacramento: H.S. Crocker & Co., 1865).
[192] A.W. Loomis, "How Our Chinamen Are Employed," 2 *Overland Monthly* (March 1869): 232-3.

Burlingame Treaty, the United States granted China "Most Favored Nation" status and included provisions that encouraged continued Chinese immigration. With Reconstruction the topic of national debates, as Najia Aarim-Heriot has argued, it was unavoidable that white Americans would soon come to grapple with how Chinese immigration would affect the issue of "free" labor.[193] Critics of Chinese immigration during Reconstruction questioned whether Chinese labor was free, or whether as a racial group they would be bound as "coolies" and unable to negotiate their own wages and contracts. In 1862, Congress had passed legislation that prohibited the transportation of Chinese "coolies" on American vessels (while permitting and even promoting the labor contracts for immigrants from Europe). Opponents of Chinese immigration argued that Chinese immigration would eventually lead to a problem on the scale of African slavery, with a permanent class of laborers unfairly competing against whites and existing outside the social fabric of the nation.

In 1869, the city of Memphis, Tennessee, hosted a convention of Southern planters in order to explore the possibilities of replacing freed black slaves with imported Chinese labor. The convention's featured speaker, Cornelius Koopsmanschap, promised to deliver Chinese contract laborers to work on sugar and cotton plantations. An article in the New Orleans *Daily Picayune* from July 7, 1869 responding to Koopmanschap's proposal echoed a common sentiment expressed by white Southerners during the period of Reconstruction. The editorial accused blacks of acting "insolently" in claiming equality with white men, and advocated for Chinese labor that is "the

[193] Najia Aarim-Heirot,*Chinese Immigrants, African Americans, and Racial Anxiety in the United States, 1848-82* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 100.

patient and industrious representative of a civilization which dates back far beyond the Christian era!"[194]

Harper's Weekly, a staunch supporter of the Republican Party, did not see it in the same terms, claiming instead, that "'the South' wanted an ignorant, brutish, servile population of laborers, instead of intelligent, industrious, self-respecting workmen."[195] After the Memphis Convention, Secretary of Treasury George Boutwell felt obliged to emphasize to Southern planters that the 1862 law expressly prohibited the immigration of contract laborers. Other sources simply found humor in the idea that the South might rescue California from its "Chinese Question." A cartoon in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Magazine* added the Irish to the picture, offering a visual demonstration of what "Pat" wanted to be done with the Chinese – in this case, thrown into the Pacific Ocean – versus what the magazine thought would happen, which is that they would be brought to work on plantations in the South (pictured on the following page).[196]

Donna Gabaccia has pointed out that in the nineteenth century the term "coolie" rarely differentiated between Chinese migrants who were indentured laborers with a fixed contract, and Chinese migrants who travelled on a "credit ticket" system, which involved pledging their future wages to the middleman or business who funded their trip in order to pay off the debts of their passage. Gabaccia notes that the credit ticket system was commonly used by Italian migrants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and is a feature that can be found among most nations where a large segment of the population has been forced to emigrate. Nonetheless, in the years following the Civil War it was the Chinese who had to weather the prevailing confusion about their

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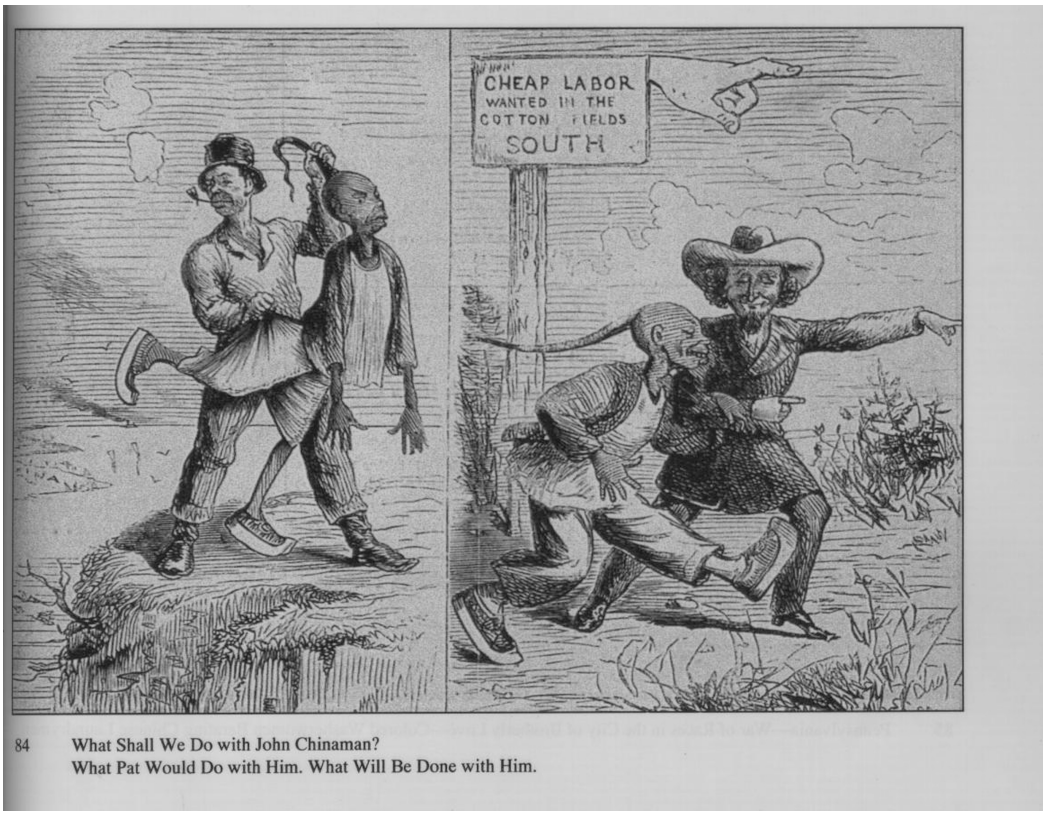
[194] Cited in Ibid., 115.
[195] "Coolies," *Harper's Weekly*, August 14, 1869.
[196] *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Magazine*, "What Shall We Do With John Chinaman?" September 1869.



84 What Shall We Do with John Chinaman?
What Pat Would Do with Him. What Will Be Done with Him.

"What Shall We Do With John Chinaman?"
Frank Leslie's Illustrated Magazine, September 1869

status as immigrants, and the attacks that they represented slave labor.[197] In July 1870, when Congress passed a new Naturalization Act that extended citizenship to Americans of African descent, the language of the bill purposely excluded Asians and denied them the ability to naturalize as citizens, in the process addressing concerns that Chinese immigrants might gain political rights. Representatives from both of the major political parties believed that unlike European immigrants, Chinese immigrants would never assimilate and came from a civilization that made them incapable of learning republican values.[198]

In the South, white Americans viewed Chinese immigrants as a replacement for black slaves, while in the West and North, native-born Americans depicted Chinese immigrants as the main economic competitors to the Irish. In June 1870, employers brought Chinese immigrants from the West Coast to North Adams, Massachusetts to replace striking shoemakers at a factory there, and to work as steam launderers in South Belleville, New Jersey in 1871. These highly publicized events made Chinese labor of interest on the East Coast too.[199] *Appleton's Journal*, for example, reported that "not a short-handed lumberman in Maine – not a prairie-farmer west of Minnesota – is to be found who does not look for John's coming . . . There has been nothing like this from the days of Plymouth rock. The Pacific train from Omaha is crowded with passengers,

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[197] Donna Gabaccia, "The 'Yellow Peril' and the 'Chinese of Europe': Global Perspectives and Race and Labor, 1815–1930," in Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, eds., *Migration, Migration History, History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997), 182-3.
[198] Aarim-Heriot, *Chinese Immigrants, African Americans*, 143-52.
[199] On the Chinese in North Adams, Massachusetts, see, Frederick Rudolph, "Chinamen in Yankeedom: Anti-Unionism in Massachusetts in 1870," *American Historical Review* 53, no. 1 (1947): 1-29.

every one of whom is discussing Chinese labor." The author's conclusion: "Patient John Chinaman makes friends wherever he carries his deft and industrious fingers."[200]

Irish and Chinese Stereotypes – Together and Apart

Prior to 1869, when Chinese immigrants in New York and other Eastern cities were mainly sailors and merchants, commentators frequently depicted the Irish and Chinese as being akin to each other, and, drawing on the real history of intermarriage between Chinese men and Irish women, as sexually and racially intermingled. Demographically, in the 1850s the number of Irish women emigrating from Ireland outnumbered Irish men. These single women, who lived in neighborhoods like New York's Five Points, married single Chinese men often enough that such marriages became an established comedic genre for Anglo Americans to mock.

Cartoonists and satirists took pleasure in imagining the social and cultural implications of these marriages. For example, in one cartoon, published in *Yankee Notions*, the disfigured offspring of a Chinese-Irish marriage, Chang-Mike, Pat-Chow, and Rooney-Sing, are instructed by their mixed race parents to fetch "puppy pie" and "praties" (potatoes) for the evening meal.[201] In 1859, when a Chinese immigrant, Quimbo Appo, was accused of murdering his Irish landlady, Mary Fletcher, the accompanying trial, as Tchen argues, became an occasion to weigh the various stereotypes of the two groups, and to try to determine whether the crime was a case of a

[200] N.S. Dodge, "John Chinaman," *Appleton's Journal*, January 15, 1870, 75. White workers did not share this enthusiasm. For example, in New York City and in San Francisco, demonstrators expressed sympathy for the striking Order of Crispins in North Adams. Rudolph, "Chinamen in Yankeedom."
[201] Tchen, "Quimbo Appo's Fear of Fenians: Chinese-Irish-Anglo Relations in New York City," in *The New York Irish*, eds., Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 125-152.

"white woman murdered by the violent Chinese heathen" or a "sympathetic …Protestant-like Chinaman beset by lowly Irishwomen."[202] In California and the mining regions of the American West, Chinese men and Irish women also frequently interacted in the early-years of the Gold Rush. Mark Twain and Bret Harte comically referred to Irish and Chinese intermarriages in their play "Ah Sin" when the eponymous main character states that his goal in the United States is to "catches plenty golde, mally Ilish girl, go back to China."[203] Such a prospect must have delighted and entertained the native-born, white American audience that Twain and Harte sought to cultivate, by depicting Chinese sojourners as relieving them of their problem with Irish women.

By the 1870s, with Chinese migration to Eastern cities steadily increasing, the most common theme linking Chinese men and Irish women was domestic service, not marriage. In literary magazines, journals, and newspapers, the middle-class, native-born American women who were responsible for the day-to-day management of "Biddy" professed to be fed up with efforts to reform her blundering ways. Biddy's insolent nature caused her to resist their exertions to civilize her, and as a result, she had become an obstacle to their domestic tranquility. As the previous chapter discussed, while some authors from this period grudgingly acknowledged that Bridget's complaints were reasonable, as excitement over Chinese domestic servants intensified, increasingly employers characterized Biddy as "a necessary evil" of the past who could now be replaced. Emboldened by their perceived right to utilize the global labor market, middle-class American employers celebrated the linking of the East and West coasts through the railroad not as part of a plan to spread white civilization to the Pacific

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[202] Ibid., 163.
[203] Bret Harte and Mark Twain, "Ah Sin," in Dave Williams, ed., *The Chinese Other (1850-1925): An Anthology of Plays* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997), 34.

Ocean, but as the "laying down a service-pipe to an immense reservoir brimming over with labor."[204] "To thousands of people in this country, Irish labor makes housekeeping a prolonged misery," noted a writer in *Putnam's Magazine*, "if the Chinese shall come to compete with it here, as we are promised that they will, we, for one, hold out hands of cordial welcome to them."[205]

"Colonel" Frederick Bee, who served as the lawyer for the Chinese Six Companies (a powerful mutual society of Chinese merchants based out of San Francisco), argued before Congress during its investigation into Chinese immigration that "[the Chinese servant] is the balance wheel which protects the mistress and housewife from imposition, and relieves her of the idea that servant and mistress are on an equality. He holds the balance of power against Bridget."[206] Nor were Chinese immigrants themselves immune to self-promotion. In 1877, when the Chinese Six Companies published a collection of different testimonies and documents in an attempt to cast Chinese immigrants in a more positive light, they cited the testimony of Henry Beals, editor of San Francisco's *Commercial Herald*, and his statement that "a good Chinese servant will do twice the work of any white servant woman you can have here" and that a "Chinaman" is "worth his weight in gold as a servant."[207]

Rather than presenting the Chinese as an impediment to recognizing the white conquest of the continent, in *Scribner's* Sage Richardson depicted the linking of the West and East Coasts as an opportunity to alleviate Irish dominance of the kitchen, which "has done more to hinder our social growth than all other causes combined."

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[204] C.C. Coffin, "China in Our Kitchens," *Atlantic Monthly* 23 (June 1869): 749.
[205] *Putnam's Magazine*, "Table Talk," (August 1869): 137.
[206] F.A. Bee, *Opening Argument of F.A. Bee before the Joint Committee of the Two Houses of Congress on Chinese Immigration* (San Francisco: 1876), 33.
[207] *Memorial of the Six Chinese Companies* (San Francisco: Alta Print, 1877), 27.

While Richardson could not resist indulging in the common racial assumption that there will be "Chineses in the kitchen adding to our excellent American fare, the succulent puppy-dog, the gelatinous bird's nest," she still felt that the arrival of "John Chinaman" from the West should be celebrated since "they are steady, industrious, quiet, cheerful and respectful."[208] A letter writer to the *New York Times* posited that the fact that Chinese immigrants would come to take over domestic service work in the United States was both "inevitable and most desirable." Rather than viewing the domestic service question as one that could be solved by setting a fixed wage, establishing more comprehensive training schools, or introducing written contacts between employer and employee – all proposals that reformers had advocated – the woman letter writer felt that the introduction of Chinese servants to the East Coast would be the most efficient solution.[209]

In *Lippincott's*, Fanny Stevenson (the wife of author Robert Louis Stevenson) described how her desire to find a solution to her own personal domestic service problem led her to try Chinese labor. When the Wells-Fargo agent delivered a Chinese servant from the employment agency to her San Francisco home, her initial response was shock at his small size. When he pledged to "plenty cook" she wondered out loud as to whether he can even reach the kitchen counter. Nevertheless, Ah Choon exceeded all her expectations. In the article, Stevenson described how Ah Choon responded to her fairness with an unwavering devotion, and how she in turn repeatedly came to his rescue when he was attacked by "Ilish" hoodlums. In contrast to the narratives used to describe Biddy's failure to recognize her place, Stevenson depicted the willingness of

[208] Abby Sage Richardson, "A Plea for Chinese Labor," *Scribner's Monthly* 2 (July 1871): 290.
[209] "Aunt Addie," letter to the editor, *New York Times*, March 23, 1879.

Chinese servants to submit to parental authority, and how over the years many of the Chinese servants she ended up employing came to call her "mamma." Incidentally, Stevenson offered other comparisons for where "her China boys" fit into the familial structure. In the article, Stevenson noted that See Yung was the "most stupid" Chinese servant that she had employed – nonetheless, even when being disciplined he kept his good disposition and acted like "a dog fond of a master who abuses him."[210] *Lippincott's* readership would have undoubtedly understood this to be a stark contrast to Biddy, whose temper ignited after even the slightest of reprimands.

The idea that "John" would rescue besieged middle-class women entered the American stage during this period as well. In the play "Curiosity," Mrs. Sprightly tells the appropriately named Mrs. Woebegone, who is lamenting that neither her Irish nor African American servants have worked out, that, "Haven't you heard the good news that rejoices the hearts of all the housekeepers in the land? No more ruling of helpless mistresses by lady Bridgets or saucy Dinahs. Is it possible you haven't read in the newspapers about the great revolution taking place? About the coming man who is to relieve all our perplexities?"[211] In "Curiosity" the Chinese servant causes all sorts of chaos in the household and fails to live up to his promise. But as the play demonstrates, for many middle class women it was the promise of relief that they mainly latched on to.

The stereotype that the Chinese were masters of imitation also became a means to mock the Irish. Whereas the Irish were predisposed to resisting authority and often failed in following even the most basic of instructions, articles from the nineteenth

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[210] Fanny Stevenson, "My China Boys," *Lippincott's Magazine* 1 (March 1881): 268.
[211] "Curiosity," in Williams, ed., *The Chinese Other*, 27.

century dehumanized Chinese labor by portraying Chinese servants as perfectly complacent. A story in *Scribner's Monthly* parodied what happens when Kitty, the senior Irish servant in a home on the East Coast, was assigned with the task of training Fing Wing, a Chinese immigrant from California. Although Kitty tried to disassociate herself from the "haythin nager" altogether, her plan backfires when Fing Wing brazenly steals sugar and tea from the mistress, behavior he explains that he has learned from Kitty herself. The illustration drawn to accompany the article shows a similar theme, with a stereotyped Chinese servant, replete with an elongated face, following the lead of the simianized Irish servant as she lets fall a tray of plates and bowls. Even though the story was written by Mary Mapes Dodge, a well-known Anglo American author, it was narrated from the perspective of "Miss Maloney" whose brogue and self-interest provide additional comedy for the reader.[212]

If the mechanical Chinese servant's ability to imitate posed any problem, it was when he copied mistakes that his mistress did not want him to learn. In "Ah Sin," Twain and Harte touch upon this theme humorously when the main character, Ah Sin, in training to be a domestic, purposely drops a piece of china after his employer has accidently done so, leaving the employer to ask: "is there *nothing* to you but imitation?"[213] Prentice Mulford, writing in *Lippincott's Magazine*, issued a similar warning. "When you catch this Celestial domestic treasure, be sure that the first culinary operations performed for his instruction are correctly manipulated, for his imitativeness is of a cast-iron rigidity," she told readers. "Burn your toast or your

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[212] Mary Mapes Dodge, "Miss Maloney on the Chinese Question," *Scribner's Monthly* (January 1871): 350-2. Dodge was a relatively well-known author of children's books at the time this article was published. It was apparently quite popular, as it was anthologized in a number of humor collections in the late-nineteenth century.
[213] Harte and Twain, "Ah Sin," in Williams, ed., *The Chinese Other*, 72.

pudding, and he is apt to regard the accident as the rule." On a more positive note, Mulford also pointed out that if the Chinese servant's obedience meant that he was mechanical in his work, it also meant that he was "neat in person, can be easily ruled, [and] does not set up an independent sovereignty in the kitchen."[214] Others, such as the British travel writer, W.F. Rae, made the Chinese servant out to be a machine-like jack-of-all-trades because of his ability to learn any task. The Irish servant demanded high wages and had little expertise; the Chinese servant "takes lower wages; he is temperate, honest, and respectful; he does his work with extreme care, whether it consists in washing dishes or nursing babies, scrubbing floors or waiting at table."[215] The author's inclusion of "nursing babies" among the tasks that the Chinese servant had perfected is striking. As the last part of this chapter will address, the idea that white women allowed Chinese servants access to their intimate affairs led critics of male Chinese servants to regularly allude to sexual trysts, acts of rape, and other alleged indecencies.

Imagined Solutions

In November 1870, the *Christian Union* published an article about an intelligence office at 11 Pemberton Square in Boston that charged ninety dollars gold to bring a single Chinese servant from San Francisco to Boston, although that price remained the same or increased only slightly "if a number are transported at once." According to the same article, Boston employers could expect to pay English-speaking Chinese servants $18-$20 per month while non-English speaking Chinese servants could be had for as little as $10-12 per month, which was well below the wages paid to

[214] Prentice Mulford, "Glimpses of John Chinaman," *Lippincott's Magazine* 11(February 1873): 224.
[215] W. Fraser Rae, *Westward by Rail* (London: Longmans, Green and Co.: 1871), 303.

Irish servants. For both groups of Chinese servants, the article predicted that their wages would decrease as more Chinese came to the East Coast from California and there was greater competition. In any case, as the article concluded, the superior work ethic of the male Chinese servant in comparison to female Irish servants made the initial cost of their importation well worth the price.[216]

Writing in 1875, Frances Walker acknowledged in *Scribner's Monthly* that the "great domestic revolution" that newspapers and magazines had promoted in 1869 and 1870, had failed to become manifest. Walker estimated that less than 400 Chinese immigrants were employed as domestic servants outside of Western states.[217] An article that appeared in *Arthur's Home Magazine* in 1875 maintained that while eventually, "Asiatic hands are…to make the wheels run smoothly in American homes," it could "hardly be accomplished in one generation."[218]

By the end of the decade, however, events in California renewed hope that there would be a migration of Chinese immigrants east, who were willing to work as servants.[219] In March 1880, after the mayor of San Francisco, Isaac Kalloch, declared Chinatown to be a "nuisance" and ordered all Chinese to leave by the end of the month, both the *New York Times* and *New York Herald* anticipated an influx of immigrants.[220] In order to engender sympathy for the exiles from San Francisco, Isabella Beecher

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[216] *Christian Union*, November 5, 1870.
[217] Frances Walker, "Our Domestic Service," *Scribner's Monthly* 11 (December 1875): 278.
[218] Virginia Townsend, "Our Irish Girls," *Arthur's Home Magazine* 43(November 1875): 667.
[219] Chinese migration to Eastern cities did increase throughout the 1870s and into the 1880s. Based on a more informal survey of census records in Brooklyn, it appears that Chinese migrants to the city were far more likely to work in the laundry business, although there were certainly some who worked as servants.
[220] Kalloch was a member of the Workingmen's Party. Ultimately, after the city's elite formed a vigilante committee to defend Chinatown and hired a private army, Kalloch backed down. See chapter five of my dissertation for additional information regarding this episode.

A panel from "The Chinese Invasion" depicts Chinese men receiving a warm welcome from middle class women in New York City. Joseph Keppler, "The Chinese Invasion," *Puck*, March 17, 1880

Hooker, the sister of Henry Ward Beecher, claimed in front of an audience of the New York State Ladies' Social Science Association that she had never met a California lady who did not appreciate the work of her Chinese servants.[221] The *New York Times* kept a running tab on the Chinese who were arriving as refugees. An article, referring to the agitation on the streets of San Francisco, documented the arrival of thirty Chinese emigrants who came to New York to "shake the dust of the Sand Lots from their pigtails." Responding to the allegation that Chinatown was a health nuisance, the article claimed that "all were scrupulously neat and clean, and that the officers of the Erie Road say that the car in which they rode came into Jersey City a model of cleanliness, as compared with those occupied by white emigrants."[222] The humor magazine *Puck*, true to its fashion, took advantage of the events in the spring of 1880 to mock what it called "The Chinese Invasion" and how it would affect New York's Irish population. In a cartoon published on March 17, 1880, Joseph Keppler depicted Chinese immigrants, portrayed as rats, fleeing the sinking ship of California for the island of Manhattan. In the cartoon's subsequent frames, Chinese policemen are seen beating up on the Irish, evicting them from trains, and, in middle class homes, sending Biddy on her way (pictured on the previous page).[223]

A letter to the *New York Herald* chimed in by suggesting that perhaps Chinese immigrants could return value to the intelligence offices that were responsible for placing servants in middle-class homes. The author felt that in view of the threat to expel the Chinese from San Francisco, "the docile and industrious Celestials" could "be educated to become efficient and reliable househelp," since as a class they would use

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[221] "Mrs. Hooker's Millennium,"*New York Times*, March 1, 1880.
[222] "Chinamen Coming East," *New York Times*, March 4, 1880
[223] Joseph Keppler, "The Chinese Invasion," *Puck*, March 17, 1880.

the intelligent offices honestly and without deceit – unlike the immigrant girls who used it to float from job to job after being fired.[224] The presence of Chinese immigrants in New York would help to repair not only the employer/employee relationship, the author hoped, but also reform the entire system by which the hiring and placing of servants was conducted.

Two days earlier, a story noted that no less than a half-dozen women from "Madison-avenue and other fashionable up-town quarters" had come to Mott Street seeking servants, and that it was expected that an intelligence office to place Chinese arrivals in domestic positions would be opened in the near future. The article's anonymous author also claimed to have heard a rumor that the transcontinental railroad companies, sensing the possibility for profit in a widespread Chinese exodus from California, had lowered their fares for passage from San Francisco to New York from 66 dollars to 35 dollars. While it seems doubtful that this actually occurred (there is no evidence verifying this), it shows how Americans thought about the market for domestic servants as dynamic system that could potentially be facilitated by the transportation of laborers over vast distances.[225]

When it became clear that Kalloch's threat to evict Chinese immigrants from San Francisco was not to be realized, the publicity surrounding the mass exodus of Chinese to New York dwindled. By the end of the month, the *New York Times* reported that despite the earlier hype (for which it was partly responsible) only 60 to 70 Chinese emigrants had arrived in the city from San Francisco.[226] However, as part of the ongoing antipathy that the East Coast newspapers displayed towards the Workingmen's

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[224] S.H.P., letter to the editor, *New York Herald*, March 14, 1880.
[225] "The Chinese in New York," *New York Times*, March 6, 1880.
[226] "Chinese Emigration," *New York Times*, March 20, 1880

Party of California, and to Denis Kearney, its prominent Irish-born member, coverage of the merits of Chinese servants in comparison to Irish servants experienced a brief revival. After publishing the letter to the editor, "What Happened When Bridget and Maggie Retired and Ching Took Charge of the House," in which the Californian author described how his Chinese servant proved to be a great improvement over the Irish servants previously employed by his family, the author wrote an additional letter to the editor in order to field inquiries on where to obtain Chinese servants in New York. The author corresponded with the Chinese counsel in San Francisco and proposed sending servants under the supervision of an English-speaking Chinese immigrant who could serve as a go-between, and who eventually might establish a full-time intelligence office.[227] The same author prompted one final response from a Baptist woman in New York in charge of a missionary Chinese class at the Trinity Baptist Church on East Fiftieth Street, who offered her students as possible employees.[228] The demand for Chinese servants was not relegated only to the *Times'* readership. In July 1880, *Harper's Bazar* responded to a letter writer requesting information on where she could hire Chinese servants in New York City by stating that it knew of no agency that performed this service.[229]

The idea that Chinese servants were fixtures in the wealthy neighborhoods of New York remained a popular myth that journalists seemed happy to reproduce,

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[227] "Californian," letter to the editor, *New York Times*, April 11, 1880.
[228] Augusta Carto, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, April 15, 1880.
[229] , "Answers to Correspondents," *Harper's Bazar*, July 17, 1880, 455. The fact that all of the references pertaining to a Chinese servant employment agency in New York City occurred within the span of six months in 1880 immediately surrounding the crisis in San Francisco, leads me to believe that this was a phenomena that never took a permanent form. Despite my attempts at finding additional information on these agencies, I have yet to find anything.

particularly when it could be used as a source of entertainment. In an article on the difficulties female census workers faced written in June 1880, the author noted, that,

> The Chinese servants on Fifth-avenue, and in the aristocratic quarters up town, are specially fearful of the census. A lady enumerator, who is making the tour of Madison-avenue, says that the Ah Foos and the Hop Lings dodge out of sight the moment she appears, hide behind other members of the families, run down into the kitchen, or up into the attic, affording general amusement. The prevalent idea among them appears to be that the enumerators have come to take them back to China.[230]

Given the general sentiment of the time period, if the servants are indeed real examples and not fictionalized, hiding from a government official does not seem too far-fetched. As the above passage reveals, even white Americans ostensibly sympathetic to Chinese immigrants, and desirous of Chinese labor, found it difficult to avoid lapsing into racial stereotypes of the period. In this case the Chinese appear again as rodents, fleeing from a possible predator.

While the articles from this period occasionally provided details on how to procure Chinese servants and how much to pay them, often this information was secondary to the larger point about the woeful inadequacies of their Irish servants. Although there does appear to be genuine interest in hiring Chinese servants, evidenced by the regular letters newspapers received on the subject, the responses generated by these letters are brief and lacking in details. As an imagined solution, the belief that there would one day be a real market in domestic labor, and that this economy would allow middle class families on the East Coast to dispense with the labor of their Irish servants, was one way the media attempted to answer the domestic servant question in a

[230] "Census-Takers' Troubles," *New York Times,* June 5, 1880.

manner that undoubtedly also sold newspapers, magazines, and fiction and plays as well.

The Liberal Ideal: Attaining Domesticity through Chinese Labor

The middle class women and men who sought to bring Chinese servants to New York from California, and to employ them in their homes, defended their prerogative to do so in the language of nineteenth-century liberalism. First advanced by political economists such as Adam Smith around the end of the eighteenth century, and refined by theorists such as John Stuart Mill in the nineteenth century, "classic" (or "classical") liberalism held that the main purpose of society was to protect an individuals' rights, to facilitate their ability to acquire and protect private property, and to ensure that the free market operated in an unabated manner.[231] Liberalism provided an intellectual theory that addressed the domestic servant question and middle class concerns that the labor market had left them at the mercy of Irish immigrant women. If Irish servants were not up to the tasks demanded of them, rather than being forced to undertake the civilizing mission of transforming "Biddy" into a manageable worker, employers had the right to seek labor from other sources. Such arguments relied on the notion of a free market economy, where the forces of supply and demand dictated the price of labor and the wages servants earned.

Liberal arguments appeared in both pro- and anti-Chinese forms. Some liberal thinkers, such as a young Henry George, used liberalism to attack Chinese labor. Claiming that the Chinese had inherent advantages that made it impossible for whites to

[231] For an overview on classical liberalism as a political ideology, see, Sally Razeen, *Classical Liberalism and International Economic Order: Studies in Theory and Intellectual History* (London: Routledge, 1998).

compete with them on a level playing field, George argued that Chinese laborers interfered with the free market. Nonetheless, even for people like George, who claimed that he was against the Chinese on economic terms, it was difficult to prevent racial ideology from entering the picture. Alexander Saxton notes that George argued that it was the barbarianism and slave-like existence of the Chinese that allowed them to live so cheaply and compete unfairly with whites. John Stuart Mill responded to a letter from an intellectually enamored George by asking if the Chinese were assimilable. Mill argued that if this was the case, it would allow them to be incorporated into the nation's political economy in a "natural" manner alongside white workers.[232]

Middle class employers argued that they were actually willing to pay extra for the luxury of Chinese labor, and acknowledge through higher wages its perceived superiority. In response to arguments put forth by working class men and women that the real attraction of Chinese labor was its cheapness and the fact that Chinese "coolies" could not negotiate their own contracts and conditions, middle class employers and Chinese immigrants denied this was the case. Jean Baptiste, a Chinese immigrant from the Portuguese colony of Macao, claimed in an interview with the *New York Times* that in San Francisco, Chinese servants typically asked for wages that were 20 to 25 percent higher than those paid to Irish and German girls, and employers were perfectly content to pay the extra amount. Another correspondent for the *Times*, reporting from San Francisco, made a similar claim that Chinese labor, at least in the context of domestic service, was more expensive but worth the extra money, since, as the author put it tongue-in-cheek, "before the incursion of these barbarians, domestic service was an

[232] Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 102.

outrageous tyranny."[233] In 1876, the *San Francisco American Free Press* claimed that Chinese men on the West Coast charged five to eight dollars per week as servants compared to the three to six dollars that white women on the East Coast demanded, leading the paper to conclude that "whatever curses the Chinese may bring to these shores, *cheap domestic labor* is not yet one of them."[234]

Middle-class Americans' willingness to share publicly that they paid Chinese servants more, also speaks to what John Tchen has described as "patrician orientalism" when it came to Chinese objects and goods. In the nineteenth century, patrician Orientalism meant the display of luxury goods from China, which symbolized wealth, education, and high culture in the new republic.[235] Robert Lee argues that by the 1870s, with Chinese immigrants no longer a numerically insignificant minority, the "construction of racial difference as distant and exotic was displaced (but not completely replaced) by a construction of racial difference as present and threatening," although it is evident that among the employers of Chinese servants, the older form of orientalism persisted.[236]

For many, the problem was not that they potentially had to pay Chinese servants more, but that they could not get Chinese servants at all. Middle class liberals argued that the monopoly Irish servants purportedly exercised over domestic service ran counter to the principle of fair competition. In a column published in *The Graphic*, an illustrated weekly based out of London, the magazine's American correspondent argued

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[233] "The Chinese in New York," *New York Times*; Grace Greenwood, "A Tourist in the Far West," *New York Times*, February 9, 1878.
[234] Cited in *The Other Side of the Chinese Question in California* (San Francisco, 1876), 12-3.
[235] Patrician orientalism existed alongside more popular forms of "commercial" orientalism in New York, where white workers could go to museums, music halls, and theatres to witness and be entertained by exotic features of Chinese culture. Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown*, 3-24.
[236] Lee, *Orientals*, 28.

that not only did Biddy possess a monopoly in the occupation of domestic service – she craftily acted upon this knowledge to the detriment of her employers. "Servants are scarce, and Biddy knows it," the author commented. Such scarcity meant that whatever problems Biddy caused, she was still preferable to no servant at all. The author of the article published in *The Graphic* noted that "[Biddy] is aware that a threat to leave creates horrid visions in the mind of the master of the house of building kitchen fires before daylight with the thermometer standing at 'four below,' of awaiting in merciless suspense the end of the interregnum of soiled linen, of chopping the kindling wood, and holding ineffectual sway in the nursery."[237]

Given such a scenario, liberals highlighted how domestic service was an occupation that was absolutely reliant on the free-market benefits of unrestricted immigration. An 1870 editorial in the *New York Times* argued that efforts to restrict Chinese immigration not only violated the spirit of economic liberalism and free trade, but they also had the effect of making Irish workers even more set in their bad habits. As the *Times* asked rhetorically, "Shall a law be passed securing to Biddy an exclusive right to the kitchen, and denying to John a chance of service there?"[238]

E.L. Godkin: Domestic Service and the History of Civilization

More than perhaps any other author of the era, E.L. Godkin sought to determine where domestic service stood in relationship to the intersection of race, immigration, and liberal political economy. Godkin, the son of a Protestant minister and the

[237] It seems that the correspondent failed to grasp the irony that while he was free to complain about the tasks that were required of servants, Biddy was expected to complete this labor in perfect quiescence. "American Notes," *Graphic*, March 15, 1873.
[238] "The Chinese in the American Labor Market," *New York Times*, July 7, 1870.

descendant of English settlers who had arrived in Ireland as colonists, identified as an Irish immigrant although he shared little in the way of common experience with the mainly Catholic Irish who arrived in the United States in the decades that followed the Famine. Godkin first came to the United States as a journalist and not as an exile of poverty. As a correspondent for various English newspapers and later a writer for the *New York Times*, he wrote frequently on slavery, American foreign policy, and the endemic corruption he saw in New York's Tammany Hall. In 1865 Godkin founded and assumed the role of editor at *The Nation*, serving in that position until 1899. William Armstrong, Godkin's biographer, notes that "Godkin earned followers in the intellectual community because he made the *Nation* a repository for the conventional wisdom of the 'best people.'" The *Nation's* standing gave it a widespread influence. As the reviewer of Godkin's *Reflections and Comments* put it in 1896, "Mr. Godkin's clientele, his ten or twenty thousand readers…are not ten or twenty thousand persons forming a stray drop in the bucket of the population."[239]

Godkin considered domestic service to be a topic of central importance to Americans since it had direct bearing on the locus of American character: the family. Godkin's writings seamlessly integrated the ostensibly private realm of domestic service with the political and public concerns of the nation. Godkin saw no division between questions surrounding how Americans were going to incorporate different immigrants into the nation's economy and civil society, and the difficulties that mistresses complained about in regard to finding proper servants.

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[239] William Armstrong, ed., *The Gilded Age Letters of E.L. Godkin* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1974), 144; H.T. Peek, "Mr. Godkin and His Book," *Bookman* (February 1896): 482.

Armstrong has argued that the issue of Chinese immigration exposed a paradox in Godkin's liberal arguments. Even though Godkin believed that Chinese immigrants were nothing more than slave laborers, he nonetheless supported Chinese immigration. Armstrong concluded that in the case of Chinese immigration, Godkin was willing to temporarily sacrifice his liberal ideals, for the greater good of civilization. "Godkin would argue that race and political economy are not goals in themselves, but means to a great end – civilization," Armstrong argued. "If an influx of Chinese laborers could free their Anglo-Saxon 'masters' to get on with the unfinished business of civilizing the United States, that was the end to be desired."[240]

Armstong, writing in the 1960s and 70s, believed that Godkin's liberalism was "paradoxical" in regard to the Chinese because he supported their immigration despite the fact that they were "coolies" and not "free labor." Armstrong's failure to interrogate whether the Chinese were indeed "coolies" or only represented as such, illustrates a glaring flaw that is apparent in much of the scholarship on Chinese immigration. In other words, Godkin was not confronted by a paradox, but rather he created one through the language of race. For Godkin specifically, the imagined utility of the Chinese servant could not be isolated from the argument he sought to make about where Biddy fit into civilization.

In an 1869 editorial published in *The Nation*, during the time when middle-class women were increasingly calling for Chinese servants to be brought across the continent, Godkin weighed in on the popular notion that Chinese men might replace the Irish servant girl. Godkin mockingly described how no one could have "failed to notice

[240] William Armstrong, *E.L. Godkin: A Biography* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1978), 120-1. See also, Armstrong, "Godkin and Chinese Labor: A Paradox in 19th Century Liberalism," *American Journal of Economics and Society* 21 (1962):91-102.

the thrill of delighted, eager expectation which has passed through it by the mere talk which we have already had of the approach of the barbarians. If the barbarians only knew what welcome awaits them, the Central Flowery Land would suffer a perceptible diminution of its population."[241] To Godkin, it was ironic that middle class Americans celebrated the racial servility of Chinese immigrants. Godkin waxed nostalgic for a time when immigrants were valued for their industry and independence – that the Chinese were welcomed for "their fitness for servile duties and in their want of social ambition" represented a "severe blow to the American social ideal."[242] Despite his reservations, Godkin concluded that in light of the ongoing domestic service question a compromise had to be found. In an article he wrote for the London *Daily News* Godkin reiterated his opinion that Chinese immigrants were docile and mechanical in their willingness to serve others, and certainly not equal to members of the Anglo Saxon race. Yet as Godkin was willing to concede, their servility constituted their appeal: "Mistresses of the household absolutely sigh for them. In this field a plentiful supply of them would really do a great deal for American civilization, by making home life easier and smother, and more generally attainable."[243]

In his observations of female Irish domestic servants, Godkin certainly did not see overly servile behavior to be the problem. Godkin's take on how to "civilize" Irish women was much more straightforward. In domestic service, employers had a captive audience in the Irish girls they employed, and an opportunity to impart direct lessons on how to assimilate and acculturate them into a higher standard of American culture – even if this resulted in Irish immigrants leaving service altogether. Drawing a crude

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[241] E.L. Godkin, "The Coming of the Barbarian," *The Nation*, July 15, 1869, 45.
[242] Ibid.
[243] *Daily News* (London), September 14, 1870. Cited in Armstrong, "Godkin and Chinese Labor," 95.

historical analogy, Godkin joked that the Irish servant's cooking could ultimately convince American employers of the necessity of Oliver Cromwell's seventeenth-century massacre of Irish civilians in the city of Drogheda. In the same way Cromwell felt it necessary to impose his rule – in this case through human slaughter – so should a mistress not back away timidly. Godkin claimed that blaming Biddy for her flaws was not fair, given her "ignorance of civilized life." Noting, that, "Bridget is the legitimate product of our economical, political, and moral conditions," Godkin urged middle-class women to pay more attention to their domestic affairs and who was running them.[244] One way to accomplish this of course would be to more carefully control Bridget and her behavior.

Godkin, never one to shy away from historical analogies, also compared the domestic service question in the United States to what the Roman Empire faced when its civilization was overtaken by Germanic barbarians. Describing the invasion of Irish servants, Godkin noted,

> It has fallen to the lot of the Americans to be forced suddenly to receive into their houses a great body of aliens, fresh from a mode of life not very much superior to that of the ancient Germans, as described by Tacitus, and to trust to them for the performance, without any preparation of the thousand small domestic duties which so much human happiness depends. The result has been a body of comedy which, if preserved, would not only be one of the most amusing pieces of literature in existence, but would throw more light American civilization and manners in our day than anything the celebrated coming historian will find to his hand.[245]

Praising the "highly developed imitative faculty" of the Chinese servant, Godkin predicted that it was only a matter of time before he "superseded Bridget." Comparing

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[244] E.L. Godkin, *Reflections and Comments, 1865-1895* (New York: Scribner's, 1895), 58; 65-6.
[245] Godkin, "Social Distinctions From Bridget's Standpoint," *The Nation*, August 5, 1869, 107.

Irish and Chinese immigrants, Godkin concluded that "untrained intelligence is apt for a good while to run into more zeal, which in housekeeping, as in diplomacy, is a dreadful thing."[246] Godkin believed that the racial qualities of the Chinese servant kept him under restraint and mindful of his place in the home.

Godkin's ambivalence about whether Irish immigrant women could be trained to be good domestic servants directly related to his belief, discussed in chapter two, that it was not in their advantage to be good servants, since "Americans hold it to be the duty of either man or woman to escape at the earliest possible moment."[247] This is not to say that Godkin embraced Irish Catholic immigrants as equals to Anglo Americans. On numerous occasions he question whether male Irish immigrants, alongside freed black slaves, should be eligible for suffrage as "ignorant foreigners" lacking in education and civilized refinement.[248]

Godkin argued that as American civilization advanced and changed, so would the sources from which middle class families drew their labor. "We cannot, if we would, go back to the early, happy time, when the mill girls wrote poetry and read French," Godkin wrote, "and the farmer's hired man could deliver a Fourth of July oration on a pinch."[249] Yet Americans could allocate different jobs to different immigrant groups based on measured assessments of what each race had to offer. Godkin felt that the political and economic management of the home was an essential national interest.

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[246] Ibid.
[247] Godkin, "Waiters and Waitresses," *The Nation*, December 10, 1874, 379.
[248] E.L. Godkin, letter to Charles Eliot Norton, February 28, 1865, *The Gilded Age Letters of E.L. Godkin*, 22.
[249] Godkin, "The Coming of the Barbarian," 45.

The Enemy from Within

Fed up with what they characterized as the intractable bullishness of their Irish employees, middle class employers promoted the idea that John Chinaman was a racial savior. Their widely publicized cries for relief, however, were met with both resistance and disdain. Opponents of Chinese immigration, especially those located on West Coast, argued that the veneration of male Chinese servants was at best humorous, and at worst, dangerously naïve.

The belief that the Chinese domestic servant could endanger his employer and employer's family was presented in both relatively benign and malicious ways. The 1873 song "Heathen Chinee," performed by a white minstrel troupe in yellowface, for example, articulated common cultural stereotypes about Chinese cooking habits. In the song the main character –singing in Pidgin English – describes how he will prepare for his lady employer a meal: "Take a little pussey cat and a little bow-wow. / Boil em in a pot, slew wit a little mouse."[250] Robert Lee has argued that the perceived consumption of domestic animals such as cats and dogs by Chinese immigrants, and of vermin like mice and rats, marked the Chinese as being barbarous.[251] Domestic servants, cooking for their white employers, could bring these culinary tastes into white homes and eventually into white mouths. Even middle-class newspapers that in other contexts praised Chinese servants could not resist reveling in the "disgusting" habits of the Chinese. In 1868, for example, the *New York Observer* published a crude joke about a Boston family discussing the impending arrival of Chinese domestic labor on the East

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[250] "Heathen Chinee" (1873), cited in Krystyn Moon, *Yellowface: Creating the Chinese in American Popular Music and Performance, 1850s-1920s* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 47.
[251] Lee, *Orientals*, 38-9.

Coast, and how they would no longer need to keep a cat, since their Chinese servant would eat all the rats.[252]

Critics of Chinese servants also called attention to how the purportedly unclean and uncouth Chinese took liberties with hygiene and sanitation when it came to food preparation. *Thistleton's Jolly Giant*, a rabidly anti-Chinese publication based in San Francisco, regularly included illustrations depicting Chinese cooks expectorating onto dishes in order to provide a "sauce."[253] In a February 23, 1878 article, *Thisleton's* provided coverage of a lecture given by Dr. Blach on a Chinese leper by the name of You Gown, who had allegedly masked his medical condition and worked as a servant for white families (pictured on the following page). "This is the kind of servants some of our aristocratic people hire to nurse their children, cook their food, make their beds, and wash their clothes," the article commented bitterly, "while our white men and women starve for the want of employment."[254]

The willingness of Chinese men to work in jobs that had been traditionally gendered female – the laundry business, needlework, and domestic service – did not just reveal their emasculated racial state, but in the minds of their detractors, held economic repercussions as well. The anti-Chinese author and member of the People's Protective Alliance, M.B. Starr, asked in his book *The Coming Struggle*: "Will you shut out a Christian man or woman and place in the bosom of almost every family an artful, cunning idolater to cook our victuals, wash and iron our apparel, nurse and talk with our

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[252] "Odds and Ends," *New York Observer*, August 20, 1868.
[253] "Chinese Cook Squiting Sauce Over Dumplings," *Thistleton's Jolly Giant*, August 1, 1873. Variations on this image and theme appeared numerous times in the magazine.
[254] "Yow Gown – The Leper Who was Before the San Francisco M.D. Society," *Thistleton's Jolly Giant*, Feb. 23, 1878.

Thistleton's Jolly Giant, "Yow Gown – The Leper Who was Before the San Francisco M.D. Society," Feb. 23, 1878.

children, and mingle freely with its most susceptible members, as brothers are not permitted to do?"[255] Opponents of "John Chinaman" believed that by taking service jobs,

he forced unemployed white women into the only work left available to them, prostitution.

Speaking before a San Francisco audience in 1873, Irish-born California Senator Philip Roach sought to expose the alleged preference of employers for Chinese servants over Irish servants as a matter of pure greed. According to Roach, "the love of the almighty dollar has induced many families to employ the sleek-looking China boy, or full-grown man, to be their house servants." Attempting to refute the reputation of Irish servants for feeding their friends and family members at their employer's expense, Roach noted that "they prefer him [the Chinese servant] to the Irish girl who is blessed with having cousins that are 'decent boys' enough to come to see her in the kitchen." Roach 's comparisons cast the Irish servant in the light of familial connections and emotions, while the Chinese male servant is nothing more than cheap labor. More importantly, Roach notes, "Bridget and Katrina [the German counterpart to the Irish servant] will set the children no evil example; they will not be corrupters of their morals, which is a danger to be dreaded from the employment of male servants in the bedrooms, be they Europeans or Asiatics."[256]

In an address published by the *Indianapolis Times* in February 1878, the Workingmen's Party of California invoked an image of a genderless swarm of "slaves" to describe Chinese immigrants: "They are in every place, they seem to have no sex.

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[255] M.B. Starr, *The Coming Struggle: What People on the West Coast Think of the Coolie Invasion* (San Francisco: Bacon and Company, 1873), 22.
[256] Cited in Ibid., 63.

Boys work, girls work; it is all alike to them." Competition against the malleable Chinese man, with no compunctions about doing women's work and with no family of his own to support, was too much for the white family to overcome. "The father of a family is met by them at every turn," argued the Workingmen's Party of California, "Would he get work for himself? Ah! A stout Chinaman does it cheaper. Will he get a place for his oldest boy? He cannot. His girl? Why, the Chinaman is in her place too! Every door is closed."[257]

Thisleton's magazine went a step further and claimed that the only reason a white woman would seek out a Chinese servant would be for the purpose of masking an affair from her husband. As the article's logic followed, if a white woman hired a Chinese servant, let him help her to change clothes, and engage in other intimate acts, her morals were already lost. Furthermore, claiming that Chinese servants acted as "slaves" in aiding in the duplicitous acts of married women, the magazine warned that "if Mrs. Shoddy is a little too impressive with a gentleman friend in her husband's absence, John never tells…When you see a Chinese 'maid of all work' in a family, be sure there is something the mistress does not like to have seen and talked of."[258]

In *Chinese Servants: Full Particulars of What a Chinese Servant Did to Pretty Lillie Leslie and How he was Caught*, a five-page pamphlet written, printed, and presumably distributed by James Bowles of San Francisco sometime in the early-1880s,

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[257] Denis Kearney and H. L. Knight, "Appeal from California. The Chinese Invasion. Workingmen's Address," *Indianapolis Times*, February 28, 1878. As Susan Johnson has illustrated, the "emasculation" of the Chinese male was not always seen as a problem, even by white laborers. During the Gold Rush, white miners generally accepted the presence of Chinese men in mining camps, since they were willing to cook and wash laundry, female occupations that white males shunned. It was not until white women began arriving in California in large numbers that the willingness of Chinese men to work as servants and in the laundry business was seen as a threat. Susan Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 99-140.
[258] "Innocent John," *Thistleton's Illustrated Jolly Giant*, November 3, 1877.

the story's narrator offered a "true" account of what happened to one East Coast family living in San Francisco, who failed to exercise caution in their employment of Chinese labor. In the story, Lillie Leslie, the daughter of a Boston couple who have relocated to San Francisco, is living with her parents in a home at Mission and 4th Streets. In the pamphlet, Mr. Palmer, a friend of the Leslies, explains in a rambling, stream-of-conscious style,

> Mr. Leslie, his wife and daughter were completely infatuated with them. They believed that the ministers had a great duty to perform; that is to make Christians of the heathen Chinee, and this seemed to be their whole aim and object in life. They cared nothing for the poor of their own race and the poor servant girls they had no care or sympathy for them whatever…. So that they can take the heathen Chinee, the lascivious rascal, gambler, opium smoker, thief and murderer, into their homes, to do the work that purely belongs to their own race, their own sex, and have the lascivious rascals around their skirts all the whole day long. In the kitchen, in the dining room, in the bed rooms in the bath room, in the parlor, he goes everywhere about the house with perfect freedom, and is petted in a most remarkable manner, when it is known everywhere that he is such a lecherous rascal.[259]

Lillie, like her parents, takes an interest in converting the Chinese and frequently attends Church with Charlie Lee, the family's servant.

The story takes a dramatic turn when Mr. Palmer one day happens home early, and finds Lillie Leslie and Charlie Lee in the basement the two families share, "stretched upon the soft sand, locked in each other's arms." Palmer commences to beat Charlie Lee, who confesses that he has been taking advantage of Leslie since she was eleven-years old. After beating Charlie Lee within an inch of his life, Palmer decides to spare him, only so that Lillie Leslie's shame will not be known to the whole community. The story ends with a call to arms for white men, urging them to

[259] James Bowles, *Chinese Servants: Full Particulars of What a Chinese Servant Did to Pretty Lillie Leslie and How he was Caught* (San Francisco: James Bowles Books and Stationary, n.d.). Bancroft Library Collection, University of California, Berkeley.

investigate what is going on in their own basements and bedrooms.[260] The narrator implies that the Leslies are to be blamed for their naïve view of the Chinese – a foolish assumption that befits their Boston heritage and missionary attitudes – Lillie Leslie nonetheless symbolizes the larger vulnerability of white womanhood, and the need to protect it. The figure of the naïve, female Easterner who doted over Chinese men and put herself at risk sexually would remain popular even after the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed in 1882. For example, an article that appeared in the *Argonaut* in 1892, mocked "our pious Eastern brethren who are laboring to convert the Chinese through the medium of good-looking young women of American birth."[261]

Pamphlets like Bowles and publications like *Thisleton's* sought to appeal to an audience that while ostensibly disgusted by male Chinese proximity to white women, nevertheless likely enjoyed the salacious texts and images used to describe these encounters.[262] As images from a cartoon published in *Thisleton's Magazine* (pictured on the following page) illustrate, depictions of intimate relations between Chinese men and white women were sexually charged.[263] *The National Police Gazette*, a nineteenth-century tabloid dedicated to covering murders, abortion, prostitution, and other topics

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[260] Ibid.

[261] *The Argonaut*, May 9, 1892. As Mary Ting Yi Lui has documented, concerns surrounding intimate interactions between white women and Chinese men were not relegated to the West Coast. The 1909 murder of Elsie Siegel, a missionary and Sunday school teacher who worked with Chinese immigrants in New York City, was popularly seen as the natural consequence of her actions. Mary Ting Yi Lui, *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery: Murder, Miscegenation, and Other Dangerous Encounters in Turn-of-the-Century New York City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[262] As Timothy Gilfoyle has documented, in other contexts, depictions of sexual encounters between servants and their employers were commonplace in more explicitly erotic texts. Timothy Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1820-1920* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 61.

[263] These images were separate panels in a cartoon titled "Innocent John." As the artist attempted to communicate, "John Chinaman," the domestic servant, was not so innocent after all. It is likely that *Thistleton's* also realized that while the idea of Chinese men interacting with white women would disgust the publication's readership, the images of scantily clad women themselves would undoubtedly hold a certain appeal to its male readership. "Innocent John," *Thistleton's*.

Panels from "Innocent John."
Thistleton's Jolly Giant, November 3, 1877

that the more "respectable" media considered obscene, weighed in on the employment of Chinese servants in a typically lurid fashion. In "Peculiarities of Chinese Servants," the paper described how one of the most prominent physicians in San Francisco society was "surprised" to witness his wife giving birth to a child who "was the exact type of the Chinese servant" the family employed. In case its readers somehow missed the point about what had taken place, the *Police Gazette* added for context: "The most respected and high-toned women [in California] will have no other but a Chinese servant, and it is a common thing for these women to undress and dress while the Chinese servant is cleaning up the room."[264]

References to the sexual threat that male servants posed was a topic that emerged in the typically more prudish middle-class fiction of the period as well, especially in California. In Mary Mote's short story, "Poor Ah Toy," in the beginning of the story, Ah Toy's devotion to his employer Fanny Siddons is portrayed as a positive trait, as he masters all of her instructions and becomes the ideal servant. When Fanny takes a white suitor, however, it becomes apparent that Ah Toy has fallen in love with her, and when he jealously tries to take her hand and kisses her fingers, she immediately dismisses him for this act of sexual transgression. The story ends with Ah Toy hanging himself in the stable of Fanny's brother, with whom she is living – a tragic yet predatory character who did not know his place.[265] Even among white employers of Chinese domestic servants who otherwise praised their qualities, uncertainty remained as to whether Chinese men should be granted intimate access to white women. An 1876

[264] "Peculiarities of Chinese Servants," *National Police Gazette*, April 16, 1881.
[265] Mary Mote, "Poor Ah Toy," *The Californian* 5 (April 1882): 371-82.

article in *Scribner's*, for example, noted, "No matter how good a Chinaman may be, ladies never leave their children with them, especially little girls."[266]

Henry Grimm's play "The Chinese Must Go," which by its title identified with Denis Kearney and the Workingmen's movement to restrict Chinese immigration, bluntly dramatized the dangers of male Chinese domestics in the white home. In the play, the Blaine family's domestic servant, Ah Coy, has gotten their daughter Lizzie Blaine addicted to opium. Not only did this scenario raise the issue of Chinese workers bringing foreign substances into the white home to pernicious effect, the sharing of narcotics also implied a degree of unrestricted intimacy. In the play, Grimm effectively links domestic disorder with problems outside the home. Ah Coy's fellow Chinese immigrants have monopolized industrial work in San Francisco and as a result, Lizzie's brother, Frank Blaine has resorted to violence and crime typical of a hoodlum.[267]

Of all the authors writing in the period, Robert Woltor perhaps offered the most extreme prediction regarding the threat that the employment of Chinese servants posed. Woltor claimed that Chinese immigrants would use their domestic access as servants to violently wrest power from white Americans. In his novel, *A Short and Truthful History of the Taking of California and Oregon by the Chinese in the Year A.D. 1899*, written by an anonymous "survivor," Woltor's narrator presents himself as one of the few whites who managed to escape a Chinese invasion. In Woltor's fictional account, domestic servants play a sinister and prominent role. Woltor reminisces that while it was "a comfort to have a servant always noiseless, both in tongue and foot," from the

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[266] Sarah Henshaw, "California Housekeepers and Chinese Servants," *Scribner's Monthly* 12 (August 1876): 739. As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, many white women refused to belief that their employment of male Chinese servants violated social and sexual taboos, because they perceived Chinese men to be asexual or belonging to a third sex that was neither male nor female.
[267] Henry Grimm, "The Chinese Must Go," in Williams, ed., *The Chinese Other*.

vantage point of surviving the Chinese invasion he notes that white employers had become too comfortable and reliant on the apparently docile and perfectly servile Chinese servant. Ominously, "even rosy-cheeked nurses had lost their trade, and Christian babes were nursed in the arms of heathen youths."[268]

The comfort that white employers showed to their Chinese servants has dire consequences. On the evening of the planned Chinese invasion – when the Chinese naval fleet is stationed in the San Francisco Bay under the false pretense of a diplomatic visit – Chinese domestic servants simultaneously poison their employers across the city. "When on that evening," the narrator recalls, "brave men, rich and poor, tired and hungry, some surrounded by their families, sat down to their evening meal, little did they think that they were about to devour a feast initiative of consequences which would gouge an indelible mark in the calendar of awful records." In the story, those who survive their poisoning are subsequently shot by their servants, who have been secretly hoarding arms. At San Francisco's Presidio a similar scene plays out, since the officers of the military have also come to rely on Chinese servants to prepare their meals, and therefore are also vulnerable. With a large portion of San Francisco's male white defenders dead, the Chinese army has no problem seizing the city.[269]

Woltor's fictional account offers the most paranoid and drastic attack on Chinese domestic servants. The story's moral is that by inviting the racial enemy into their homes, whites had put themselves at risk. Access to white meals, children, and to the home itself, put Chinese immigrants in a strategic position. Servility had provided the Chinese with a perfect disguise. In presenting this threat, Woltor provided an

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[268] Robert Woltor, *A Short and Truthful History of the Taking of California and Oregon by the Chinese in the Year A.D. 1899* (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft, 1882).
[269] Ibid.

equally dramatic and parallel critique for thinking about the safety of domestic borders – of the United States – and what was at risk when white employers invited in the labor of Chinese immigrants.

Conclusion

Fictional accounts such as Woltor's directly challenged proponents of Chinese servants. Woltor sought to expose the calculating political economy of middle-class employers to be a losing game with unimaginable risks to the family and the nation. As the argument went, even if employers could save money and grief by hiring Chinese servants, these short-term financial and emotional gains were nothing compared to the sexual consequences that white women might face, and, more broadly, to the damage that the employment of Chinese men did to the economic and moral prospects of white women. Accordingly, a bit of insolence on the part of Biddy was to be welcomed as trouble of a much more innocuous nature. The next chapter examines in closer detail how Irish immigrant leaders and politicians aligned with the working class, readily embraced this view and presented Irish servants to be white women who could not be simply abandoned in favor of cheaper and more slavish labor.

In his important book, *Thinking Orientals*, Henry Yu writes that,

> Asians have been understood within American social thought in two major ways – as a racial "problem" and as a racial "solution." From the time Chinese arrived in the mid-nineteenth century, migrants from Asia were considered a threat to white labor and American society. Categorized as Orientals, these immigrants were demonized as exotic and non-American. From violent lynchings through the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, Asian Americans were treated as a problem. Since the 1960s, they

> have seemingly become the opposite, sanctified as the "model minority" solution to racial and economic ills.[270]

Yu is correct to measure a general shift in how white Americans perceived of Asian immigrants and Asian Americans, yet the widespread praise that middle class authors heaped upon Chinese domestic labor in the nineteenth century illustrates that public discourse at the time could accommodate contrasting beliefs about whether Chinese immigrants were a problem or a solution. Between 1869 and 1882, middle-class employers in Eastern cities were thrilled to imagine the possibility of replacing truculent Irish servants with docile Chinese men, and looked to San Francisco for examples on how this could be accomplished. Although this labor solution remained primarily an imagined one for Easterners, it reveals the complicated ways in which native-born Americans sought to use immigrant workers against each other, and for their own personal benefit. In the "empire of the home," as they sought an ideal domestic situation, middle-class Americans presented Chinese labor to be perfectly manageable and Chinese servants to be the ideal subjects in a relationship where only one party could govern.

[270] Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 7.

Chapter 4

"An Alien Mob of Idlers, Tramps, and Criminals"
Irish Immigrants and the 1870s' Anti-Chinese Movement in San Francisco

Introduction: White Solidarity?

Speaking before a crowd gathered at San Francisco's Union Hall on September 21, 1877, Denis Kearney, who only weeks earlier had propelled himself to a leadership position in the newly formed California Workingmen's Party, posed a rhetorical question: "Don't these capitalists know that the Anglo-Saxon spirit is not dead, that the doctrine of the survival of the fittest is hourly growing more salient, and that we are superior to these Mongolians and will survive them?"[271] In accordance with the popular racial ideology of the period, Kearney invoked the Anglo-Saxon spirit as the driving force behind the white settlement of the American continent, the successful transformation of California into a prosperous economic state in the Union, and, most importantly, as the source of strength that would help whites "survive" the recent economic depression and the menace of Chinese immigrants arriving on the West Coast.

While Kearney explicitly identified the Workingmen's movement, and his leadership, with the defense of the Anglo-Saxon race, these claims were met with widespread derision among middle-class Americans who felt that an Irish immigrant had no place telling them how to act. Kearney, born in County Cork, Ireland, had only become a naturalized American citizen a year earlier in 1876. His opponents frequently referred to him as an "Irish drayman," a reminder of not only his "true" nationality but

[271] *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 22, 1877.

also a jab at his former occupation and credentials as a political leader.[272] The question of who had taken to San Francisco's streets to violently protest Chinese immigration in July 1877 (and on through the fall and winter) was a topic of constant discussion in not only the city's newspapers and periodicals, but in the national media as well. Striking a tone that it would maintain throughout the late-1870s and into the next decade, Frank Pixley's San Francisco newspaper, the *Argonaut*, editorialized that, "ninety-nine one-hundredths of the labor agitators in San Francisco are men of foreign birth." Responding to media coverage from the East Coast that portrayed the anti-Chinese movement in California as pushing the state to the brink of anarchy, the *Argonaut* offered the defensive rejoinder that: "the Eastern press should [not] catch up the insane ravings of an alien mob of idlers, tramps, and criminals, and call it the public sentiment of the Pacific Coast."[273]

Matthew Jacobson has argued that upon arriving in California, the Irish no longer had to face accusations, as they had in Boston and New York, that they were racially inferior, but instead could prove their whiteness by "gallantly defending U.S. shores from an invasion of 'Mongolians.'" Two decades earlier, the historian Reginald Horsman made a similar point about the relationship between westward expansion and the ideological construction of the Anglo-Saxon race: "An Irishman might be described as a lazy, ragged, dirty Celt when he landed in New York, but if his children settled in California they might well be praised as part of the vanguard of the energetic Anglo-

[272] In illustrations in the *Wasp*, for example, cartoonists typically portrayed Kearney in Napoleonic garb, riding a donkey. The donkey – used to pull drays or wagons – showed Kearney's class background in contrast to his assumed position as an important political leader.
[273] *The Argonaut*, March 8, 1879; and, "Let the Dance Begin," *The Argonaut*, December 29, 1877.

Saxon people poised for the plunge into Asia."[274] In 1909, the historian Mary Coolidge made a similar observation about the role that Irish immigrants played in the Chinese restriction movement and their ability to influence federal policy. "The preponderance of Irish names in the leadership of mobs, anti-coolie clubs, [and] persons arrested for attacks upon the Chinese," Coolidge asserted, "bears witness to the rapidity of their assimilation."[275] Yet attacks on the "alien" influence that corrupted the legitimacy of the anti-Chinese movement and the numerous articles that blamed the Irish for bringing their specific interests to the effort to end Chinese immigration, seem to call into question the point that Jacobson, Horsman, and Coolidge collectively make.

Despite his disdain for the "alien mob" and its anti-Chinese agitation, Pixley, for example, was not a proponent of allowing Chinese immigration to continue unrestricted. In 1876, Pixley represented San Francisco in the United States' Congressional investigation on Chinese immigration and had proved to be a staunch advocate of restriction. Pixley was adamant that it was the federal government's obligation to come to San Francisco's aid by limiting Chinese immigration and stated that if politicians failed to enact measures to limit and eventually end Chinese immigration, then Californians would have no choice except to attack and burn the immigrant ships before they docked in San Francisco's harbor.[276] Yet like many members of San Francisco's middle and upper classes, Pixley was equally critical about the role that Irish immigrants and other aliens were to play in the politics of the city.

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[274] Matthew Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 5; Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 4.
[275] Mary Coolidge, *Chinese Immigration* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1909), 270.
[276] United States Congress, Joint Special Committee to Investigate Chinese Immigration, *Report of the Joint Special Committee to Investigate Chinese Immigration* (Washington: Govt. Print Off., 1877), 370.

Although Kearney claimed that the Workingmen's Party would take up the mantle of Anglo-Saxon civilization in defending California from the Chinese, in the late-1870s, it was a matter of fierce and constant debate as to where the Irish fit into the broader conception of the white race and whether they had the right as immigrants and newly naturalized citizens to speak and act against the Chinese.

Like most of the United States, the city of San Francisco suffered through an economic depression during the 1870s. Between 1873 and 1875, approximately 155,000 white migrants arrived in California, spurred on by the onset of the economic depression in the East, a grasshopper plague that had destroyed harvests in the Plains' states, and by expectations brought on by the completion of the transcontinental railroad.[277] Yet the completion of the transcontinental railroad also had an adverse effect on Western cities, forcing San Francisco manufacturers to compete with well-established competitors east of the Mississippi River, who could now ship their goods to the West Coast. In addition, a multi-year drought had severely hurt California's agriculture, leaving unemployed farm laborers to come to San Francisco to seek alternative employment.[278] The influx of migrants and scaled back investment due to the financial crisis led to widespread unemployment in San Francisco. Frank Roney, the future California labor leader who kept a diary in 1875 and 1876, described being laid off from multiple foundries. Roney, a skilled laborer, was forced to work odd jobs as a manual laborer building sidewalks in order to survive. Unable to afford coal during the winter, Roney and his family moved from one unheated tenement to another in the area

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[277] Michael Kazin, "Prelude to Kearneyism: The July Days in San Francisco, 1877," *New Labor Review* 3, no. 1 (June 1980): 5-47.
[278] Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 70-1.

around Market Street and the Mission, constantly seeking out the cheapest available rent.[279] By the end of the decade, Roney, like many other white laborers, would come to blame unrestricted Chinese immigration for his plight. The economic crisis of the 1870s made the "Chinese Question" unavoidable in California.

On May 6, 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which banned both skilled and unskilled Chinese laborers from entering the United States. In 1880, American diplomats had renegotiated the 1868 Burlingame Treaty with China and removed provisions that had previously protected Chinese immigration to the United States, setting the stage for federal legislation. Erika Lee notes that the Chinese Exclusion Act is "one of the best examples of what historians have identified as a 'quintessentially western story' of westerners relying upon the federal government to solve regional problems."[280] National political figures representing both the Democratic and Republican parties sought to curry favor with Californians and other western voters of the period. They enthusiastically embraced the issue of Chinese exclusion in their political platforms. In 1879, a state-wide referendum held on the issue of Chinese immigration found that 154,638 Californians opposed unrestricted Chinese immigration, while only 883 favored its continuance.[281]

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[279] "Diary, 1875-76," Frank Roney papers, BANC MSS C-B 366, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[280] Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 30.

[281] Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill; London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 174. Although Gyory is an incredibly diligent researcher and offers a provocative account of the efforts to restrict Chinese immigration, it is difficult to agree with his conclusion that working-class white Americans outside California were largely indifferent to the racism that underscored such efforts. In brief, Gyory argues that politicians seized upon the anti-Chinese movement in order to avoid having to deal with more contentious labor issues. White working-class Americans outside of California were opposed to what they considered to be "coolie" and "slave" labor, but otherwise they had no problem with Chinese immigration. Somewhat ironically, in attempting to rescue American workers from allegations that they were racist, Gyory makes them into simple dupes of politicians.

Martha Gardner notes that "in both word and deed, white women were central to the anti-Chinese movement in San Francisco. In word, stories of the victimhood of white working women provided the growing labor movement a fictionalized emotional center."[282] She points out that working class women orators like Anna Smith were fixtures at the myriad anti-Chinese rallies of the 1870s and early-1880s, and their participation in the movement gave credibility to the stance that competition with Chinese laborers denied both male and female white workers the opportunity to support themselves and their families. Gardner argues that by 1882, white women had formed alliances across class and ethnic lines that had been created to address the question of Chinese labor. Looking specifically at domestic service, she cites the Woman's Protective League of California, an organization whose middle class members pledged not to hire Chinese servants and set up placement agencies to facilitate the employment of white women. "Once separated by religious and class differences," Gardner argues in her article, "white middle-class female employers now found common cause with their Irish working-class sisters."[283]

Even though it is clear that a majority of Californians supported restrictions on Chinese immigration by the end of the 1870s, it is difficult to agree with Gardner's claim that by the early-1880s, the campaigns of working class women and men had successfully convinced middle class white employers that it was their social and racial obligation to hire white servants in place of Chinese servants. Gardner bases her assessment of white female solidarity in San Francisco on two articles that appeared in *The Truth*, a pro-labor newspaper. As she herself acknowledges, the newspaper was

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[282] Martha Mabie Gardner, "Working on White Womanhood: White Working Women in the San Francisco Anti-Chinese Movement, 1877-1890," *Journal of Social History* 33, no. 1 (Autumn 1999):75.
[283] Ibid., 84.

hardly an unbiased source.[284] Working-class publications and newspapers certainly proclaimed that their livelihoods and domestic lives were endangered by Chinese immigration, and chastised middle-class San Franciscans for hiring Chinese domestic servants. It is less clear however, to what extent if at all San Francisco's upper and middle classes accepted these arguments.

Reservations about Irish involvement in the anti-Chinese movement in San Francisco made Anglo American residents of the city reluctant to support the particular claims that white laborers advanced. In the Republican and politically independent media of the era, such as widely read publications like the *Argonaut* and the *Wasp*, the editors favored restrictions on Chinese immigration, but on their own terms. These publications were explicitly skeptical about whether Chinese servants should be included within a broader categorization of Chinese immigrants who as "coolie" laborers threatened to destroy the prosperity of San Francisco.

A cartoon that was published in the *Wasp* in 1882, for example, chastised the Irish servant causing the predicament whereby middle class employers accepted Chinese labor as a welcome alternative. In the cartoon, a group of Irish women emerge from an employment office to present a "catechism" (an allusion to the Irish servants' Catholicism) to a prospective employer. Among the questions the servants ask are "how manny avenings can I have out o' the wake for coortin?" and, "will there be anny more childer?" In the background, Irish servants are depicted reading while on the job, attending Mass, and napping in a rocking chair while a Chinese man busily launders clothes. The artist's point is that Irish servants made so many demands on their employers that even a sinister looking Chinese man – in the cartoon, hovering in the

[284] Ibid., 80-1.

Frederick Keller, *The Wasp*, "The Servant Question," 1882

background above the text "no questions asked" – was preferable (pictured on the previous page).[285]

Rather than accepting the notion that white labor was always preferable to Chinese labor, publications like the *Wasp* used the crisis of the late-1870s to pose broader questions about the role of immigrants – both Asian and European – on the West Coast. These publications blamed Irish immigrants (and to a lesser degree, Germans) for the dilemma that the white middle class faced, not only in terms of having to choose between Irish and Chinese labor, but also for the violence and other acts of protest against the Chinese that they perceived as a direct threat to civil society. The *Argonaut* made this point in a fictional historical account written from the vantage point of the future. According to the author, by the mid-part of the twentieth century, Americans had become a population of tramps because they had abandoned their homes and "could not live together in families for want of servants." In case its readers failed to recognize who was at fault for such a dsytopic scenario, the *Argonaut* offered an impromptu history lesson from the imagined future: "After the famine in Ireland, Irish women were very glad to take positions as domestic servants…about a hundred years ago the women became above this employment, and the men turned to agitators."[286]

Visions of a White, Workingman's Continent

White laborers' interpretations of the economic crisis of the late-1870s portrayed the events that occurred in this period in California as marking the state's fall from Eden. The state's boosters had touted California as a land of infinite promise, with

[285] Frederick Keller, "The Servant Question," *The Wasp*, 1882.
[286] "America in 1976: Tale of a Grandfather," *The Argonaut,* January 5, 1878.

resources so rich anyone could make a fortune. By the late-1870s many white laborers believed instead that the greed of capitalists – and the "slave" labor of the Chinese they exploited – had ruined this potential.[287]

Since manifest destiny and other ideologies of American expansion coincided with the mass immigration of Irish Catholics to the United States, these contemporaneous histories need to be linked in a manner that examines the relationship of Irish migration to American imperial endeavors. Eiichiro Azuma has shown how Japanese immigrants to the United States possessed what he calls "inter-National perspectives," whereby they "operated under the tight grips and the clashing influences of these state powers, each of which promoted its respective project of nation-building, racial supremacy, and colonial expansion."[288] Azuma's framework is helpful for looking at Irish immigrants in the United States. While there was no Irish state until 1922, Irish immigrants nonetheless found themselves to be both the subjects of Anglo American visions of the West, and Irish Catholic notions of "racial destiny." In the second half of the nineteenth century, Irish elites melded a generic white vision of California and the opportunities it represented, to a discourse that defended the Irish race and its contributions to civilization. During the late-nineteenth century, in response to Anglo and Anglo-American attacks that the Irish were inferior and incapable of self-rule, Irish Catholic elites offered a countervailing notion of what Irish migration meant in a global context. In these authors' minds, Irish exile was a tragedy brought on by British misrule, but the resulting Diaspora nonetheless had positive consequences owing

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[287] Robert Lee, *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 15.
[288] Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 5.

to the religiosity, industry, and virtue of the Irish people. At the same time, as discussed in chapter three, the Irish Catholic media passionately defended Irish immigrant domestic servants as tireless workers and key financial contributors to kin still struggling in the repressed homeland. In the context of American nation-building, Irish authors saw nothing incompatible about being both Irish and being essential and patriotic agents in American continental expansion.

Kearney claimed the mantle of Anglo-Saxon leadership in order to distance himself from any identification with the Irish, yet other Irish Catholic politicians and leaders were reluctant to embrace this term. As an editorial in the influential Irish Catholic newspaper, *The Boston Pilot*, noted in 1878, "The American people of to-day are not Anglo-Saxon. They are made up of elements in which Anglo-Saxon blood is only a drop."[289] California's history as a former colony of Catholic Spain caused Irish Catholics to imbue its status as a destination for Irish migrants with a special meaning. Maguire, author of *The Irish in America*, argued that the state's Catholic history made it compatible with the spread of the Irish Catholic faith. Like many Irish and Irish American authors of the period, Maguire catalogued the many Irish who had succeeded in California, like Jasper O'Farrell, the engineer who designed the famously steep streets of San Francisco, and Peter Donahue, who created the city's first foundry and later owned the Union Ironworks. "There is not a State in the Union in which the Irish have taken deeper and stronger root," Maguire asserted, "or thriven more successfully, than California, in whose amazing progress – material, social, and intellectual – they have had a conspicuous share."[290]

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[289] *Boston Pilot*, June 1, 1878.
[290] John Francis Maguire, *The Irish in America* (1868; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1969), 262.

The Irish Race in California, written by Hugh Quigley, also devoted its pages to listing successes of California's Irish capitalists, politicians, journalists, and military men (while conspicuously ignoring the Irish laboring population). By listing the prominent Irish who had contributed to California's success, Quigley sought to undermine popular depictions that the Irish were racially unfit to achieve such accomplishments. Such success, Quiqley proclaimed, "Proves that the old energy of the race is still inexhausted, and speaks volumes in favor of [Irish] industry, enterprise, and perseverance."[291] Irish successes in California provided evidence that refuted Anglo claims that the Irish race lacked the positive qualities necessary to the advancement of white civilization. Adopting a broader perspective, some authors argued that the Irish Diaspora had revitalized a more ancient and historic role of the Irish race. The Irish Catholic priest Augustus Thébaud wrote, for example, that while the conditions of poverty that forced the Irish to leave Ireland represented an enormous tragedy, the success of the Irish spreading Catholicism harkened back to the role of Ireland during the Dark Ages, and befit the race's divinely ordained destiny.[292]

All of this suggests that Irish immigrants in the American West – and perhaps more importantly, their boosters – were adamant that the Irish receive credit for their contributions to an American empire that stretched uninhibited from ocean to ocean. As Eric Love has argued, for Irish immigrants and for many white laborers, the American nation's imperial pursuits were best served if they focused on conquest and settlement, and not the exploitation of racialized labor, which would undermine the ability of white

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[291] Hugh Quigley, *The Irish Race in California* (San Francisco: A. Roman and Co., 1878), 151. In the introduction to his book, Quigley also claimed that ancient Celts had discovered America, as evidenced by the similarities between earthen mounds found in the Ohio Valley and ones in Ireland.
[292] Augustus Thébaud, *The Irish Race in the Past and Present* (New York: P.F. Collier, 1879), 409.

men and women to make a living.[293] In California, where industrialists and landowners could employ Chinese immigrants with ease, the danger of cheap racial labor replacing white labor was all the more prevalent.

Although Irish Catholic authors tended to highlight the accomplishments of San Francisco's Irish immigrant middle class and its Irish-born industrialists, the city's working-class population was even more heavily Irish in its composition. The neighborhood below Sixth Street and south of Market Street (today's swanky SoMa district) was known as "Cork Town" in the 1870s – a clear reference to the area's Irish population.[294] R.A. Burchell notes that when both Irish immigrants and their children are included, the San Francisco's Irish community constituted one-third of city's total population in 1880. In comparison, the Chinese community in San Francisco in 1880 numbered approximately 21,200 people, or nine percent of the total city population of 234,000.[295]

In *The San Francisco Irish*, Burchell argues that the presence of Chinese immigrants allowed Irish migrants to be accepted into San Francisco's cultural, political, and social life, because the Chinese defined for white Americans the "limits to

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[293] Eric Love, *Race over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).
[294] Kazin, "Prelude to Kearneyism," 10.
[295] R.A. Burchell, *The San Francisco Irish, 1848-1880* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 3-4. Although it has not received the same volume of scholarly attention that Eastern cities has, in the nineteenth century, more than any other American city of the era, San Francisco was truly a city of immigrants and migrants. Before the Gold Rush, in 1848, the city's population was less than a thousand people. In 1870, San Francisco's population was close to 150,000 people, with foreign-born residents accounting for approximately forty-nine percent of total. David Ward, *Cities and Immigrants: A Geography of Change in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press. 1971), 51-83. In addition, it is important to note that statistics surrounding San Francisco's foreign-born population can be quite misleading. For example, although foreign-born by definition of being born outside the United States, Hispanic residents of Alta California's pre-annexation population were nonetheless born in the territory that would comprise the state. In addition, although foreign-born, many Irish and other European immigrants did not arrive in San Francisco directly, but migrated from the East along with native-born Americans.

the city's cosmopolitanism." Burchell cites San Francisco as an early example of American pluralism, at least for white migrants to the city; lacking the established Anglo elite that cities like New York and Boston possessed, San Francisco did not pose built-in limits on Irish advancement into positions of municipal leadership.[296]

Burchell's argument fails to acknowledge, however, that most members of the Anglo American middle class, as well as the Protestant leadership in San Francisco, did not believe that the heavily Irish working-class community in the city was helping to advance a cosmopolitan version of civilization. The events of the late-1870s indicate that when faced with the radical politics advanced by the Workingmen's Party, which targeted both capitalism and the Chinese, San Francisco's middle class population attempted to delegitimize its voice by labeling it the Party of foreign-born Irish agitators. Similarly, while Burchell notes correctly that the Irish community in San Francisco enjoyed political success, particularly through their involvement with the Democratic Party, political success did not equal cultural acceptance.[297]

"Irish" Violence

In the 1870s, middle and upper class Americans tolerated and even promoted certain types of violence. With the expansion of the United States, Americans of all classes widely praised the violence that the removal of American Indians from lands

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[296] Burchell, *San Francisco Irish*, 181.

[297] Burchell, *San Francisco* Irish, 116-54. This is arguably the case in Eastern cities where the Irish settled as well. Although Irish immigrants and their children were well represented in Tammany Hall in New York and in the Boston Democratic Party, Anglo American commentators frequently attacked not only their credentials, but their right to engage in governance. In his empirical examination, Stephen Erie argues that Irish political power had little material impact on Irish social mobility in San Francisco. While Irish immigrants did make economic gains during the late-nineteenth century, Erie questions whether it was a result of their role in the municipal government. Steven Erie, "Politics, the Public Sector, and Irish Social Mobility," *Western Political Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (1978): 274-89.

necessitated. With most of the resources of the West effectively captured by whites at the end of the 1870s, however, the main threat to "progress" was no longer the savagery of American Indians or foreign competitors for the land, but rather the savagery of white workers and laborers who were willing to engage in subversive acts in order to advance their collective position.[298] In the context or urban life, while most middle and upper class Americans were distant from the violence of nation-building and westward expansion, urban violence posed an immediate hazard to the delicate and intricate balance of city life, and could not be tolerated.

When the anti-Chinese movement gained force in California, members of the Eastern media were quick to draw connections to other instances of violence that they claimed the Irish had precipitated. In 1871, *Harper's Weekly* published a Thomas Nast cartoon titled "The Chinese Question" (pictured on the following page). In the cartoon, the figure of Lady Columbia rests her hand on the head of Chinese man, protecting him from an advancing mob of thuggish-looking men armed with pistols and daggers. In "The Chinese Question," the members of the mob are not explicitly identified, although its leader sports a stovepipe hat and possesses the simianized facial form that had come to symbolize the Irish laborer. At the bottom of the cartoon, the caption reads: "Hands off Gentlemen! America means fair play for all men." Faintly visible in the background of the cartoon, a burned-out building labeled "Colored Orphanage" serves as a visual reminder to the role that Irish immigrants played in the 1863 New York City Civil War Draft Riots, during which an angry mob destroyed the city's African American orphanage. The manner in which Nast juxtaposes the scared Chinese laborer with the

[298] For an expanded and more detailed version of this argument, see Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 21.

THE CHINESE QUESTION.—[SEE PAGE 147.]

COLUMBIA.—"HANDS OFF, GENTLEMEN! AMERICA MEANS FAIR PLAY FOR ALL MEN."

Thomas Nast, "The Chinese Question,"
Harper's Weekly, February 18, 1871

ferocious mob of laborers makes it clear who he thought was less of a threat to American society.[299]

By pairing Irish workers with both the Draft Riots and anti-Chinese violence, Nast identified what he believed to be a prevailing source of social disorder.[300] Nast was not alone in his opinion. Middle and upper class Americans associated mob action with the Irish, who they felt were predisposed to use violence to advance their interests. George Templeton Strong, a New York lawyer and prominent member of the Republican Party, who kept an active diary for nearly forty years, commented after the Draft Riots that "England is right about the lower class of Irish. They are brutal, base, cruel, cowards, and as insolent as base." With literary flourish he added, "No wonder St. Patrick drove all the venomous vermin out of Ireland! Its biped mammalia supply that island its full average share of creatures that crawl and eat dirt and poison every community they infest."[301] The *Freeman's Journal*, an Irish nationalist newspaper published in Dublin, printed a letter to Horace Greeley, the editor of the *New York Tribune*, rebuking the accuracy of the claim that during the Draft Riots, Irish servants would "turn incendiaries in a body, and burn down their masters' homes." That the

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[299] Thomas Nast, "The Chinese Question," *Harper's Weekly*, February 18, 1871. As Iver Bernstein argues, although the Draft Riots – which began as a protest against the ability of wealthy New Yorkers to purchase their way out of conscription – initially included German and native-born workers in the ranks of the mob, by the second day it had become a largely Irish affair. Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[300] As Tchen notes, Nast drew over 30 cartoons on the "Chinese Question," between 1868 and 1886. As Tchen argues of Nast's political views, even if he believed that all groups should have equal rights in the United States, he did not believe that the Catholic Irish and heathen Chinese were somehow physically or racially equal to Protestant Americans. Nast readily embraced conventional stereotypes surrounding the Chinese, as the physical appearance in his cartoons illustrate. John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882* (London and Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 197-214.

[301] Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas, eds., *The Diary of George Templeton Strong* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1988), 244-5

Tribune would publish such a claim in the first place, demonstrates how Anglo Americans feared that Irish domestics would bring violence into the home.[302] The belief that the Irish – as a race – "poisoned" the social climate of the places where they settled was echoed by numerous sources in this period. When an anti-Chinese pogrom erupted in Los Angeles in 1871, for example, the *New York Times* did not hesitate to attribute the outbreak of violence to the recent arrival of Irish immigrants in the city.[303] In Pennsylvania during the 1870s, Irish immigrant coal miners – the "Molly Maguires" – were blamed for importing assassinations and other forms of violence that had been a common feature of rural Ireland, and using it to sow industrial sabotage.[304]

In this context, it is not surprising that Anglo Americans and the middle class media in San Francisco viewed the efforts of the Workingmen's Party to end Chinese immigration as both an example of class-based social disorder and violence, and as the natural result of Irish immigrants' presence on the West Coast. The Eastern press was relentless in depicting violence to be one of the prominent legacies of Irish immigration to United States. Middle class San Franciscans came to adopt this perspective as well, and called into question whether Irish immigrants had a right to engage in political and social protest designed to limit Chinese immigration.

The Irish "Know Nothings"

By the 1860s, it had become common practice for observers to predict impending racial clashes between Irish and Chinese immigrants in California. Upon

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[302] "Irish Servant Girls of New York," *The Freeman's Journal*, August 14, 1863.
[303] Jean Pfaelzer, *Driven Out: The Forgotten War Against Chinese Americans* (New York: Random House, 2007), 53.
[304] On the Molly Maguires, see Kevin Kenny, *Making Sense of the Molly Maguires* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

traveling to San Francisco the British author George Augustus Sala noted that "the Chinese question is likewise integrally and inevitably an Irish question." He added cynically, "the abrogation of all and any treaties with the Chinese Government would not settle the Irish question, which is one chronic in outcomes of discontent, bad blood, and turbulence."[305] Ending Chinese immigration would do nothing in terms of putting the Irish in their place, as it was their very nature to cause social disorder. By the late-1860s, when white laborers in San Francisco began increasingly advocating for the restriction of Chinese immigrants, the role of the Irish in these efforts became a convenient way for explaining whose interests would be best served by preventing Chinese labor from entering the nation.[306]

Individuals willing to defend Chinese immigration refuted anti-Chinese arguments by applying their logic to Irish immigrants, whom they felt were held to a different standard. In 1870, when Pixley attacked Chinese immigration during a speech at the San Francisco Mechanics' Hall, H.C. Bennett, the Secretary of the Chinese Protection Society, responded that only twenty years earlier nativists, "from Maine to

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[305] George Augustus Sala, *America Revisited: From the Bay of New York to the Gulf of Mexico, and From Lake Michigan to the Pacific* (London: Vizetelly & Co., 1885), 210. Although his account was published in 1885, Sala visited San Francisco in the early-1870s.

[306] As had been the case in the early days of Chinese immigration to New York City, some commentators did not see the Chinese and Irish in California as antagonists so much as they saw them as possessing similar relationships to the growth of the state. The British writer, politician, and self-styled "race" expert Charles Dilke believed that, "Irish laborers – men who, for the most part, work hard, feed little, and leave their minds entirely unplowed – are all alike; Chinamen, who all work hard, and work alike, who live alike, and who go further, and all think alike, are, by a mere law of nature, indistinguishable one from the other." Dilke also found the Irish to be a convenient analogy for explaining what would happen if Chinese immigration was allowed to continue in an unhindered manner: "The Irish of Asia, the Chinese have commenced to flow over on to the outer world. Who shall say where the flood will stop? Ireland, with now five millions of people, has in twenty years poured an equal number out into the world. What is to prevent the next fifty years seeing an emigration of a couple of hundreds of millions from the rebellion-torn provinces of Cathay?" Charles Wentworth Dilke, *Greater Britain: A Record of Travel in English-Speaking Countries During 1866 and 1867* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1869), 192; 194. Dilke would also comment after attending a Chinese theatre that the Chinese were the Irish of the Pacific in the manner in which they performed and had "soul."

California," had "denounced the Irish just as the Irish here denounce the Chinese."[307] In response to Pixley's assertion that as sojourners, Chinese immigrants took money out of the American economy, Bennett pointed out that Irish immigrants sent millions annually in remittances and that "few blame them for spending millions to aid the Fenians." Love for the homeland, a trait shared by both the Chinese and the Irish in Bennett's opinion, was a noble virtue.[308]

The Revered A.L. Stone made a similar point during a sermon at San Francisco's First Congregational Church, when he reminded his congregation that the Chinese were not alone in sending their wages outside of the country. Stone noted that Irish immigrants had sent "immense" sums to relatives in Ireland and to the Catholic Church. He added that if Americans were wary of whether Chinese immigrants would assimilate, similar concerns could be voiced about the Irish as well, who "keep mostly to themselves" and "are easily discriminated, by feature and speech and social relations."[309] Although Stone titled the sermon "The Chinese Question," it is evident that in examining the status of Chinese immigration, the Irish were never far from his mind. Addressing competition between Irish women and Chinese men in the occupation of domestic service at the conclusion of his talk – Stone noted that, if anything, the Irish should welcome the Chinese, since it might allow them to advance from the "lowest caste" in the United States. "Can they not see that the introduction of a class below

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[307] H.C. Bennett, *Chinese Labor: A Lecture, Delivered Before the San Francisco Mechanics' Institute* (San Francisco, 1870), 14.
[308] Ibid., 32.
[309] The sermon was subsequently published in the *Alta*. Rev. Stone, "The Chinese Question," *Alta*, June 16, 1873.

them, the alienation of the more servile occupation, lifts them one step upward in the social scale?"[310]

Attempts to highlight the common traits and experiences shared by Chinese and Irish immigrants were nonetheless relatively rare in comparison to more mocking attacks that sought to expose why the Irish were so invested in the expulsion of the Chinese. The Reverend Otis Gibson was an influential supporter of Chinese immigrants and the head of San Francisco Methodist Mission, which sought to convert Chinese men and women to Christianity. Missionaries like Gibson were not simply men of words, but engaged their anti-Chinese opponents on the level of the street. In the 1870s, Gibson formed the Chinese Protection Society with the goal of protecting the Chinese community in San Francisco. Gibson argued that the Society, composed of private citizens, was charged with the task "to do what the regular police force either could not or would not do."[311] When riots erupted in July 1877, one of the angry mob's first targets was Gibson's Church, which it set on fire.

Gibson possessed a great deal of antipathy to the Catholic Church, reflective of the era's tumultuous sectarian battles that pitted Catholics against Protestants in debates over schooling, political influence, and voting. When Father James Bouchard, a Jesuit Priest in San Francisco, gave a speech in February 1873 that asserted the superiority of white workers over the Chinese, and proclaimed that it was the moral obligation of white employers to hire white laborers only, Gibson responded in scathing fashion. Gibson argued that Catholics hardly had the right to call anyone else slaves, especially coming from a "class and a sect known to be opposed to free, civil, and religious

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[310] Ibid.
[311] Otis Gibson, *The Chinese in America* (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1877), 51.

institutions in all lands," adding that, "Popery is more dangerous to Republican institutions than Paganism." Gibson responded to Bouchard's statement that hiring male Chinese servants to attend to white women was scandalous and indecent by accusing the Catholic Church of greed: "if the places now filled by those twenty-five hundred Chinese domestics were filled by communicants of the Roman Catholic Church, that circumstance of itself might place about $2,500 per month into the Treasury of that Church (mostly Protestant money) to aid in building up the traditional institutions of Popery in our midst." By invoking the Catholic practice of tithing Gibson implied that it was in Bouchard and the Church's financial interest to oppose Chinese immigration and labor competition, since their own coffers depended upon Catholic workers. In response to Bouchard's assertion that Chinese servants were driving white woman to prostitution, Gibson declared that this was "absurd" since "the inefficiency and vulgar impudence of domestic servants in America is proverbial; especially is this true in the case of those who are of the Roman Catholic religion."[312] Gibson felt that Irish Catholic servants were perfectly capable of descending into prostitution on their own volition, and did not require the competition of the Chinese to assist them.

Gibson offers an extreme example of the hostility directed at the Irish, although his arguments did not stand alone. The San Francisco *Commercial Herald* observed that the earning of Irish immigrants left the United States in the form of remittances, as was the case with Chinese immigrants. Unlike the Chinese, however, the Irish "were collecting very large sums to inaugurate a war against a friendly country [Great Britain] with which we have the closest commercial and other relations." The same editorial claimed that the anti-Chinese movement originated with the "servant girl faction." In

[312] Gibson, "Chinaman or White Man, Which?" Reply to Father Buchard," in Gibson, 9-10; 13.

case the newspaper's readership felt guilty about employing Chinese men over white women, the editorial reminded them that prior to Chinese competition in the profession many middle class Californians had been forced to put off marriage, since profiteering Irish servants had charged so much in wages that it made it nearly impossible for a family to hire domestic help.[313]

One of the main arguments that opponents of Chinese immigration made, was that the Chinese had neither the ability nor the desire to assimilate into American society. Yet one of the effects of this focus of the "Chinese Question" was to in turn draw attention to the issue of Irish immigrant assimilation. Colonel F.A. Bee, the white lawyer who represented the Six Companies and interests of the Chinese merchant community during the Congressional investigation into Chinese immigration, responded to claims that the Chinese were a danger to the nation's social welfare by joking "that they don't take kindly to whisky and politics ought to cover all other shortcomings."[314] Bee's coded language, raising the spectacle of Irish drunkenness and political corruption, directly engaged white workers' arguments that the Chinese, unlike European immigrants, had no desire to make a home in the United States and become part of its social fabric. Bee's reference to politics suggests that Irish immigrants, far from benefitting American democracy, had abused and damaged the system.

A cartoon that appeared in *Harper's Weekly* in 1879 made a similar point (pictured on the following page). In the cartoon, a Chinese immigrant dressed in the fashion of an Irish laborer, "gains favor" by visiting a liquor store and by participating

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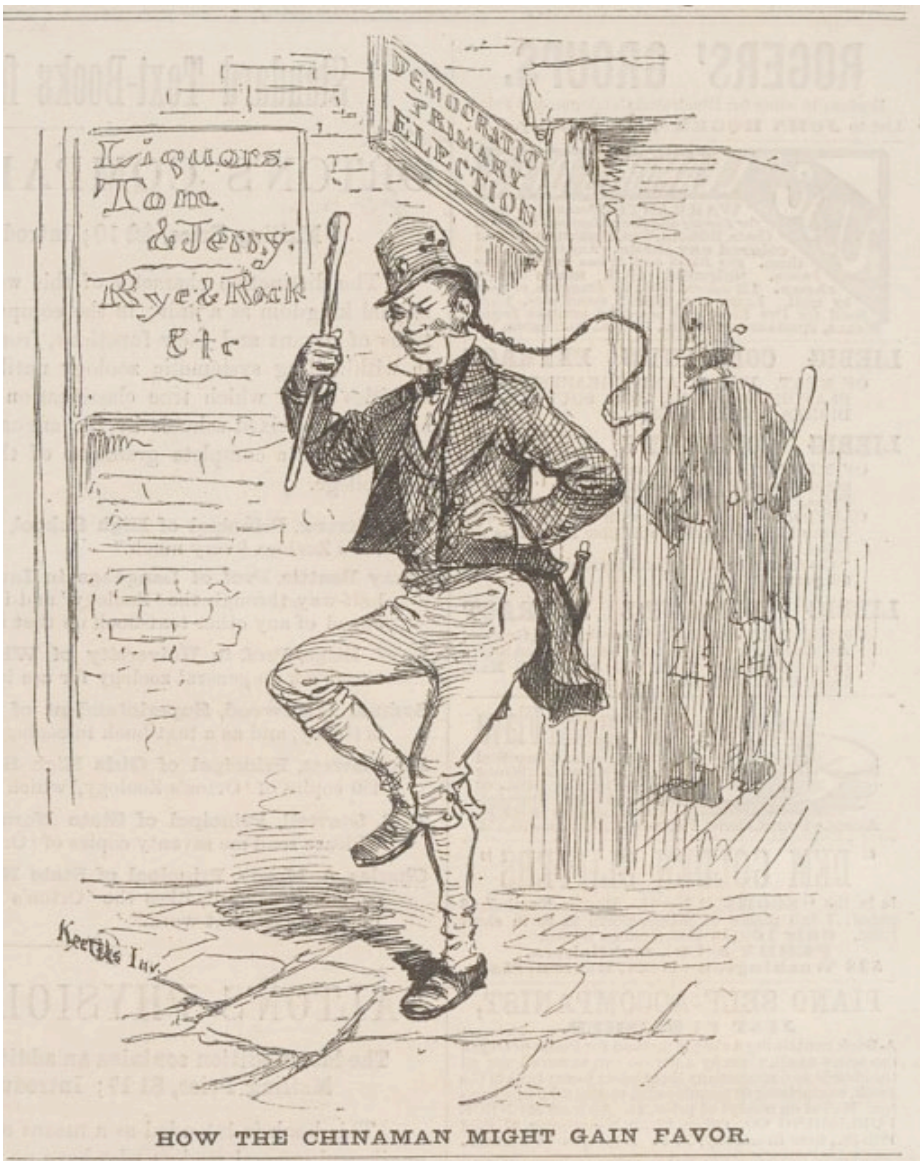
[313] *Commercial Herald*, November 29, 1877.
[314] F.A. Bee, *Opening Argument of F.A. Bee before the Joint Committee of the Two Houses of Congress on Chinese Immigration* (San Francisco: 1876), 17.



"How the Chinaman Might Gain Favor,"
Harper's Weekly, April 12, 1879

in a Democratic primary election.[315] Of course, such an image was meant to be ironic since the language of the 1870 Naturalization Act prohibited Chinese immigrants from naturalizing and participating in politics. Bee's statement and the cartoon in *Harper's* point out that suffrage and political participation were not the only measures of worth for an immigrant group, and, in the case of the Irish, had proved to be one of their greatest liabilities.

The Rise of Kearney and the California Workingmen's Party

On July 11, 1877, during the economic depression that had begun with "Panic of 1873," President John Garrett of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad ordered a ten percent pay cut for all railroad employees earning more than a dollar a day – a decision that affected thousands of workers across the country. Rather than accept the pay cut, employees of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad went on strike. In response to the labor action, and at the behest of Garrett, President Rutherford B. Hayes ordered federal troops to take control of the railroads and force them to resume operation. In cities like Pittsburgh and Baltimore, strikers and residents clashed with police officers, federal troops, and private armies, triggering similar outbreaks across the nation.[316]

It was on July 24, 1877, during a speech by a Chicago organizer of the Workingmen's Party, James D'Arcy, that violence first broke out in San Francisco. The labor historian Ira Cross has subsequently argued that the organizers of D'Arcy's speech, who were members of the Marxist-oriented Workingmen's Party of the United

[315] "How the Chinaman Might Gain Favor," *Harper's Weekly*, April 12, 1879, 269.
[316] On the railroad strikes of 1877, see Philip Foner, *The Great Labor Uprising of 1877* (New York: Monad Press, 1977).

States, tried to keep the proceedings focused on the railroad strike and attempted to ban members of an anti-coolie club from seizing the platform and turning the demonstration into an anti-Chinese rally. Cross claimed that when representatives of the anti-coolie club were unable to take the stage, they turned their rage on Chinatown instead, attacking random Chinese pedestrians along the way.[317] For the next three days members of the mob participated in spontaneous acts of violence against Chinese immigrants and specifically targeted Chinese laundry businesses, successfully burning one to the ground. (As noted earlier, the mob also successfully mounted an attack on Otis Gibson's Methodist Mission on Washington Street.) When a suspicious fire ignited on the wharves below Rincon Hill, members of the mob began to converge near the offices and docked ships of the Pacific Mail Steamship company, which conducted the majority of the trade in transporting Chinese immigrants to the United States. Rioters attempted to prevent local firemen and Pacific Mail officials from quelling the fire, in the hope that it would fully consume the company's docks and steamships.

Only after reinforcements arrived from William Coleman's vigilante Committee of Public Safety was the Pacific Mail Steamship's property secured. In response to the violence in San Francisco and the threat to private property, municipal elites and leaders, under the direction of Coleman, had formed the Committee to regain control over the city. This Committee took matters of justice and policing into its own hands – most famously, Coleman organized a "pick handle brigade" in order to confront the mob in the streets. During the height of the riots, Coleman dictated orders to the police

[317] Ira Cross, *History of the Labor Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1935), 90. For Cross's account of the events of 1877 and Denis Kearney's assumption of power over the California Workingmen's Party, see pages 88-129. As will be discussed in greater detail below, although the Workingmen's Party of the United States and the Workingmen's Party of California shared a name, they were not affiliated with each other.

chief, a clear reflection that the city's middle and upper classes trusted Coleman more than the largely Irish police force.[318] At their conclusion, four people were dead as a result of the riots.[319]

Henry George, the author of *Progress and Poverty* and later a candidate for mayor of New York City, was in San Francisco in the late-1870s and directly involved with the Workingmen's Party until his faction split with Denis Kearney's in May 1878. In an article published by *Popular Science Monthly* in 1880 on the "Kearney agitation," George was only too happy to call to the attention of readers that Kearney had actually served as a member of the pick handle brigade and had readily made his services available to the Public Safety Committee. George painted a picture of Kearney as a successful drayman who in owning his own business considered himself a capitalist on the rise. Prior to August 1877, George claimed, Kearney had sought to emulate the city's wealthy population in manner and opinion had acquired a reputation for making blusterous speeches at San Francisco's Lyceum for Self-Culture on how poverty was the cause of the individual himself. In George's opinion, Kearney's decision to join the Workingmen's Party was simply opportunistic.[320]

On August 18, 1877, his pick handle brigade days behind him, Kearney was present at an organizational meeting of labor representatives in California in which the state Workingmen's Party was born. Kearney was appointed secretary of the new party

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[318] Letter from William Tell Coleman to Henry Hiram Ellis, July 27, 1877, Henry Hiram Ellis Papers, BANC MSS C-B 653, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. As had been the case in the 1850s, when a Committee of Vigilance also governed San Francisco for a period of time, wealthy, mainly Protestant San Franciscans did not trust Irish factions of the police to mete out justice. On the San Francisco Vigilance Committees, which formed in 1851 and 1856, see Robert Senkewicz, *Vigilantes in Gold Rush San Francisco* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

[319] Kazin, using newspaper accounts, provides the most detailed account of what occurred between July 24 and 26. Kazin, "Prelude to Kearneyism."

[320] Henry George, "The Kearney Agitation in California," *The Popular Science Monthly* (August 1880): 433-453.

and was the most prominent speaker at the first organized sand lot meeting of the Party on September 14.[321] On October 28, the Workingmen's Party of California brought thousands of people to the summit of the affluent Nob Hill neighborhood, where they lit a bonfire and rallied in front of the heavily-guarded homes of railroad barons Leland Stanford and Charles Crocker. A travel correspondent for the *New York Times* noted in February 1878 that Leland Stanford's "persistence in employing [the Chinese] as laborers and domestics" made him a key target for Workingmen rallies. "Almost every street harangue of the Kearneyites ends," the author noted, "with a proposition to sack and burn 'Stanford's palace.'"[322] The San Francisco police arrested Kearney and other leaders of the Party on November 3, 1877, after a grand jury indicted them for violating a state statute that prohibited using language for the purpose of inciting violence. The case against Kearney was eventually dismissed, however, and in the short term his persecution only served to increase his popularity. On Thanksgiving Day, 1877, the Workingmen organized a parade of over 10,000 people through the streets of San Francisco.

Kearney and the "Destiny of the American Republic"

The vast majority of whites in California had come to oppose unrestricted Chinese immigration by the end of the 1870s, yet members of the middle class tried to distinguish their "rational" approach on the subject from the "foreign" and "Irish" violence that had erupted in the streets. The *Wasp* explained in its satiric fashion that "at

[321] The "sandlots" refer to the area around San Francisco's City Hall, which in the late-1870s was under construction. Construction had been halted during the economic depression of the decade, leaving a series of empty lots that were reduced to sand in the absence of rain

[322] Grace Greenwood, "A Tourist in the Far West," *New York Times*, February 9, 1878.

first the cry [for Chinese exclusion] came from the Irish servant-maid who found in John a rival who prevented her from insolently bouncing her mistress." Presenting its own view on the "Chinese question" as being free of such biases, the magazine argued that the Anti-Chinese movement had nevertheless come to include the "intelligent middle class who do not desire to see a landed aristocracy and a pauper peasantry spring up in this country."[323] Yet even as middle class voices conceded the need to restrict Chinese immigration in the future, they did so in a manner that made it clear that they desired to set the terms of how this was to be achieved. An editorial published in the *Alta* in 1879 asserted that San Francisco's leading politicians would come to their senses and rally to oppose a proposal by the Workingmen's Party to immediately expel all the Chinese living in the city, because Chinese servants "are in the families of all political parties, employed everywhere, and their patience, industry and faithfulness to their employers are the theme of admiration of all who know them." "Where would 20,000 additional household servants be obtained?" the same editorial asked with disbelief, and "who would like to be compelled to change at brief notice?"[324]

The *Alta* assumed that the middle class home owners able to employ servants – a category it argued transcended political loyalties – would come to its senses on Chinese immigration when an issue as important as domestic service was at stake. The preservation of domestic peace and tranquility meant that the middle class could not remain complacent in yielding control of the "Chinese question" to working-class foreigners. Such arguments explicitly refuted the rhetoric of the Workingmen's Party,

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[323] "The Chinese Question," *The Wasp*, December 21, 1878.
[324] Augustus Layres, *Evidence of Public Opinion on the Pacific Coast in Favor of Chinese Immigration* (San Francisco: The Friends of Truth, Right, and Justice, 1879). This number vastly overestimates the number of Chinese servants employed at the time, and is closer to the entire Chinese population in San Francisco.

which had identified domestic service as an arena where Chinese labor had caused disastrous results, both economically and morally. "Twelve Hundred More," a rally song used by the Workingmen's Party of California in its parades, included the rhyming verse: "Twelve hundred pure and virtuous girls, / In the paper I have read, / Must barter away their virtue / To get a crust of bread."[325] As the song's lyrics reference, politicians seeking to capture working-class votes through their anti-Chinese platforms frequently asserted that if driven out of domestic service by Chinese competition, white women would be forced to resort to prostitution in order to survive. For women workers, the Workingmen's Party argued that economic and sexual exploitation went hand-in-hand. Not only did white women lose valuable wages to Chinese laborers willing to work for less, in the absence of respectable employment as servants, launderers, seamstresses, or factory workers, were driven to personal degradation.

As had been the case with earlier expressions of anti-Chinese sentiment, the Workingmen's Party argued that Chinese servants, as members of an emasculated race, were so docile that they were virtual slaves. Unlike the white women who worked as servants, the Chinese immigrant was "so perfectly pliant and neutral that Madam and the children come to regard him as a thing, as a dog or a monkey." His very servility made him the plaything of his employer – as the author of a Workingmen's pamphlet put it, "a husband is a sort of master, who controls, and will sometimes please himself; and who would not descend to put his hand to all these pleasant details; but John is patient and pains-taking, performs every office, and still obeys the word of command."

[325] Gardner, "Working on White Womanhood," 84. Lyrics for "Twelve Hundred More" are printed in Lewis H. Carlson and George A. Colburn, *In Their Place: White America Defines Her Minorities, 1850-1950* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1972), 170-7.

At the same time, the pamphlet implied that "John" was only too happy to dote over his mistress's body and attend to her every physical need.[326]

In the late-1870s, however, the Workingmen's Party consistently struggled to convince middle class audiences that the Chinese were a true threat. The *Wasp* and the *Argonaut*, founded in 1876 and 1877 respectively, emerged onto the cultural scene of San Francisco at a time when the city was in the midst of not only the economic depression of the period and when anti-Chinese protests had become almost a daily feature. A humor magazine, the *Wasp* nonetheless tried to capture a "serious" audience by publishing "California" authors such as Mark Twain, Bret Harte, and Ambrose Bierce (who started his career with the *Argonaut* but fell out with Pixley and became the editor of the *Wasp* in 1879), and by devoting specific attention to California and San Francisco politics, topics that national magazines based on the East Coast only touched on in a cursory fashion. Both the *Wasp* and the *Argonaut* marketed themselves to the state's middle and upper classes by including society gossip, reviews of "high" art and literature, and by focusing on fashion. During the 1880s, a subscription to the *Wasp* cost five dollars a year, while the *Argonaut* sold for four dollars a year. Both publications had an estimated circulation of somewhere between 14,000 and 18,000 subscribers.[327]

The editors of the *Wasp* and the *Argonaut* were comfortable with the sentiment that Chinese competition hurt an amorphous, ethnically anonymous white working-class. But whenever that imagined working class overtly protested what they felt to be their plight, they portrayed it as obnoxiously Irish and in fact deserving of its poverty

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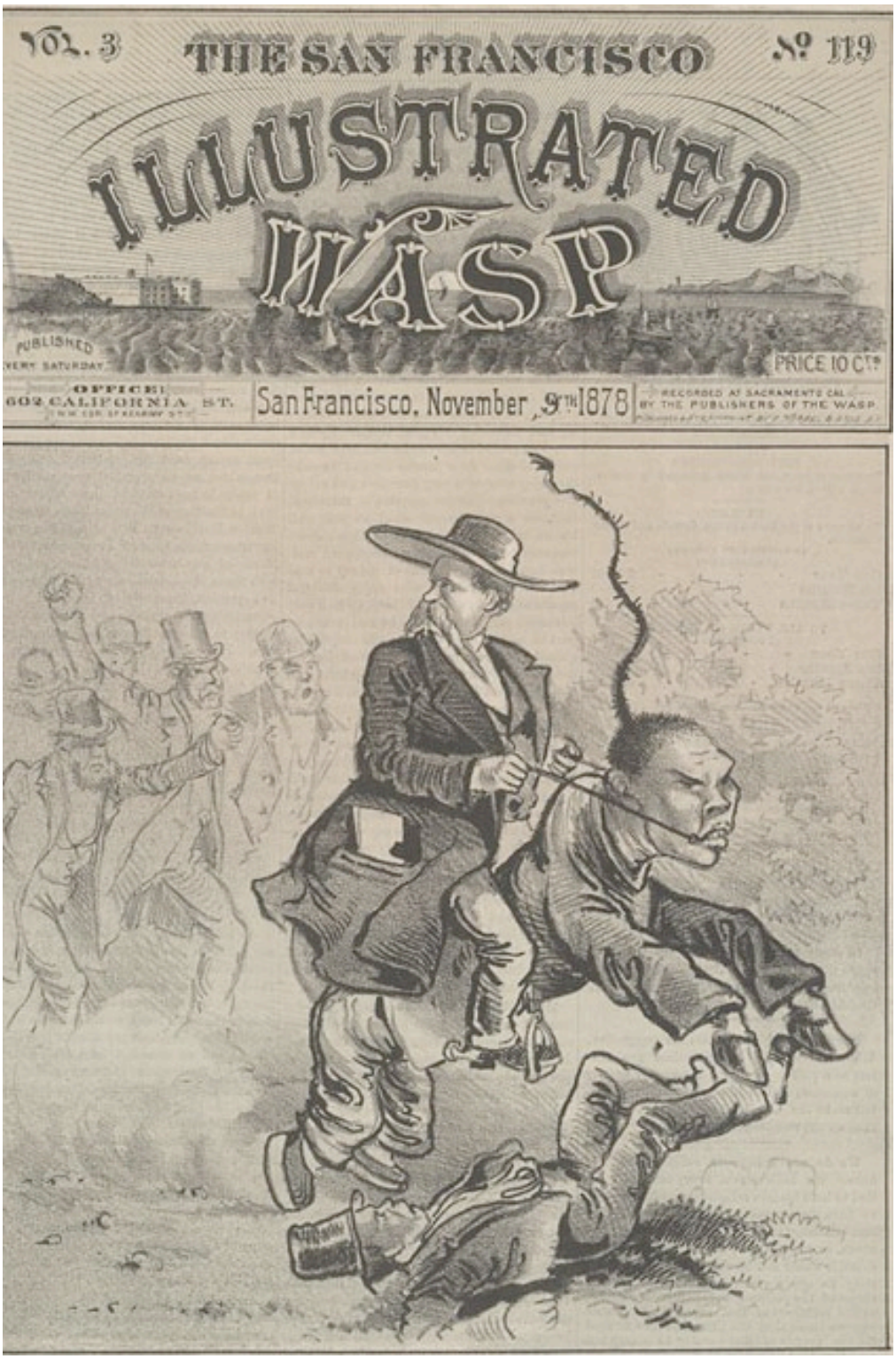
[326] Workingmen's Party of California, *The Labor Agitators, or, the Battle for Bread* (San Francisco: George Greene, 1879), 25

[327] Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 3: 56-7; and, 4: 106.

and lack of economic opportunity. The *Argonaut* described the Workingmen's Party in stark terms: "When an organization, composed almost entirely of aliens, who are themselves here by the sufferance of a generous hospitality, band themselves together in defiance of the law to drive out a class, who, however objectionable, have the same legal rights as themselves, it is an act of insolent audacity that ought to move the indignation of every honest man."[328] *The Argonaut* suggested that a type of nativism might be revived to "stamp out this ignorant and foreign mob" and that would "place the destiny of the American Republic in the hands of American-born citizens."[329]

Middle class publications argued that the city was best served if the native-born middle and upper classes of San Francisco maintained control over the movement to restrict Chinese immigration. Nationally, middle-class involvement in the anti-Chinese movement would shield the political effort from accusations – mainly originating from the East Coast – that it was solely the domain of "low" Irish laborers and leaders. By attacking the role of the Irish in anti-Chinese demonstrations and politics locally, middle class residents of San Francisco sought to keep Irish immigrants in their place and prevent Irish and working-class voices from forcefully asserting their social agenda. For example, when Bee, the lawyer representing the Six Companies, allegedly commented to the *Washington Post* in November 1878 that the Chinese were a better class of immigrants than the Irish, the *Wasp* disagreed on the whole with Bee's opinion but noted that going to the sandlot to profess their "dignity" hardly aided the Irish in

[328] *The Argonaut*, March 2, 1878.
[329] *The Argonaut*, April 6, 1878.



A cartoon depicting Colonel Bee "astride his hobby horse."
The Wasp, November 9, 1878

contesting such opinions. Accompanying the article, the *Wasp* ran a cartoon depicting Colonel Bee, astride his "hobby horse" – in the image depicted as a Chinese man – trampling an Irish laborer (pictured on the previous page).[330]

Both the *Wasp* and the *Argonaut* openly sympathized with Chinese immigrant merchants and businessmen, whose class status put them above the typical white laborer. *The Argonaut* even went as far as to publish a poem purportedly composed by Sing Lee, a corresponding secretary for a Chinese wholesaler, which concluded with a modified variation on Kearney's famous pledge that "The Chinese Must Go" – "if they don't behave themselves – 'the Irishman must go!'"[331]

Strategically, on numerous occasions Kearney and other leaders tried to distance the Workingmen's Party from allegations that it was a "foreign" movement. In their own words they tried to "keep out the Mc's and O's if possible."[332] During Kearney's East Coast tour in 1878, the *New York Times* described how at a rally in Brooklyn, an Irish harp and flag that a member of the audience had brought with him were lowered by the rally's organizers since it was feared that visually they overshadowed the American flag.[333] In a speech at Faneuil Hall in Boston during the same trip, Kearney proclaimed, "We don't meet here as Irish, English, Scotch, or Dutch, nor are we Catholics, Protestants, Atheists, or Infidels. Let there be no sect."[334] By attempting to root the image of the anti-Chinese movement in the universal cause of the white workingmen, and not in the specific grievances of Irish immigrants, Kearney sought to

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[330] *The Wasp*, November 9, 1878.
[331] *The Argonaut*, December 21, 1878.
[332] *Daily Morning Call*, May 19, 1878.
[333] "Kearney in Brooklyn," *The New York Times*, September 8, 1878.
[334] *Speeches of Dennis Kearney* (New York: Jesse Haney, 1878), 13.

legitimate its voice. Yet the Workingmen's Party could not escape the perceived affiliation of its politics with Irish interests. For example, during the municipal elections that took place in San Francisco in September 1879, the *Alta* publicized that in contests for ward supervisors, Workingmen candidates in six of the cities' twelve wards were originally born in Ireland, and that 41 individuals on the whole ticket were foreign-born, 24 from Ireland.[335]

Robert Seager has argued that Protestant ministers' attempts to link anti-Chinese agitation to the Irish and the Catholic Church increased when the Workingman's Party came into existence in the fall of 1877 as a formidable political party. Because Kearney was Irish he was immediately labeled a "Romanist," despite the fact that he had no close connections to the church and had been widely discredited by the Catholic clergy in San Francisco.[336] Some publications, like *Thisleton's Jolly Giant*, simply applied preexisting nativist and anti-Catholic sentiments to the Workingmen, ignoring the friction that marked the relationship between the Church and Kearney. *Thistleton's* – although it was among the most vitriolic opponents of Chinese immigration – also sought to portray Kearney and the Workingmen as part of a Papist plot to overturn republican rule. An illustration from the publication depicts the Pope and the Devil overseeing a Workingmen's rally led by Kearney, while members of the audience demonstrate against free public schools and for the "popish flag" (pictured on the following page). An accompanying article stated that the "foreign Irish Papist Sand-lot

[335] "Who Shall Rule," *Alta*, September 1, 1879. Political allegations of this nature were hardly new, although they were typically directed against the Democratic Party, which during the late-1870s had seen much of its usual constituency switch their votes to the Workingmen.
[336] Robert Seager, "Some Denominational Reactions to Chinese Immigration to California, 1856-1892," *Pacific Historical Review* 28, no. 1 (1959): 49-66.

Section from *Thistleton's*, "The Alien Kearneyites at the Sandlot," March 27, 1880

element …want to make the Chinese question an excuse for sacking and murdering the American people, who fail to bow to Popery."[337]

In fact, Kearney's radical pronouncements of social change earned him myriad enemies within the Catholic Church. When anti-Chinese riots initially broke out in July 1877, San Francisco Archbishop Josephy Alemany noted that the Catholic community had "suffered greatly" as a result of having to compete with the Chinese, but added "the remedy lies not in the mad torch of anarchy."[338] San Francisco's *Monitor*, an Irish Catholic newspaper, suggested after police had arrested Kearney in early-November 1877 that flogging would be proper punishment for him and the other proclaimed leaders of the movement. "We are certain there are plenty of real workingmen in this city," the *Monitor* claimed, "who, so keenly do they feel the disgrace put upon them by representing them as incendiaries, pillagers and murderers…would cheerfully aid in carrying out the sentence of the law in this fashion." In the same issue, the editor expressed outrage over an editorial that had appeared in the *Chronicle* that had compared Kearney to the Irish politician Daniel O'Connell, arguing that to establish such a historical lineage was tantamount to slander.[339]

Irish Catholic leaders in San Francisco were much more comfortable arguing against Chinese immigration when it could seize upon the issue of respectability, and avoid addressing more radical claims that working class residents of the city sought to advance. Focusing on white domestic servants purportedly displaced by Chinese

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[337] George Thistleton, the publication's founder, was a member of the Loyal Order of Orangemen and had been jailed (although ultimately acquitted) for libel, after he alleged that an undercover reporter of his had exposed "indecencies" taking place at an Irish Catholic wake. *Thistleton's* consistently published articles accusing priests of fathering illegitimate children and appearing drunk in the city. "The Alien Kearneyites at the Sandlot – Sunday, March 21st 1880,"*Thistleton's*, March 27, 1880.
[338] *Chronicle*, July 26, 1877. Cited in Kazin, "Prelude to Kearneyism," 23.
[339] *San Francisco Monitor*, November 10, 1877.

immigrants, the *Monitor* argued that white employers had an obligation to hire white employees. The *Monitor* claimed that "as a body" San Francisco's wealthy Catholic population did not employ Chinese servants and lashed out against Protestant critics who suggested that Catholics were found disproportionately on the city's alms rolls. Protestants could do real charity for Catholics, the *Monitor* argued, by refusing to employ Chinese servants or visit Chinese businesses that had traditionally been sources of work for working-class white women. "How many honest, industrious women would be helping to support their families by washing or needle work if the Mongolian laundries were not patronized?" the paper inquired. Instead, "how many young girls would be earning a respectable living for themselves by working out if the Chinese were not employed as domestics?"[340]

On a national level, John Boyle O'Reilly, the influential editor of the *Boston Pilot*, which was the widest read Irish Catholic newspaper in the United States, voiced similar thoughts: "There can be no doubt that the first effect of extensive Chinese labor in an American city is the lowering of wages of white workers, even to starvation rates." Citing the report of a member of the San Francisco Benevolent Society, the editorial noted, that "the women are beaten down to the lowest rate of wages and if they murmur the answer comes, 'Do as you please; we can get a China boy for five cents less.'"[341] In another anti-Chinese editorial, the *Pilot* managed to blame the British as being partly responsible for what it portrayed as the unfair labor competition that pitted the civilized Irish against the barbarian Chinese. Noting that the majority of Chinese immigrants came from the colonial port of Hong Kong, and that some of the British

[340] *San Francisco Monitor*, March 21, 1878.
[341] "The Effect of Chinese Labor in California," *Boston Pilot*, November 8, 1877.

colonies in Australia had begun to effectively ban the immigration of Chinese, it argued that "it is high time the British Government were given to understand that the working-classes of the United States have rights as well as those living in British colonies from which Chinese labor is excluded." Adding its own historical perspective, the *Pilot* concluded that "It is substantially the same old story. England is now practically the agent for supplying the American market with Chinese labor, as she once was the wholesale purveyor of negro labor."[342]

Whereas magazines like the *Wasp* and *Argonaut* were concerned with so-called Irish hoodlums representing the interests of California as a state, the Catholic Church worried, correctly as it turned out, that anti-Chinese violence would be depicted as the fault of Irish Catholics. Following the success of the Workingmen's Party in electing a majority of delegates to California's Constitutional Convention, the *Boston Pilot* reluctantly praised the party but reminded them that they were now being watched by the entire nation, and that they had to "bear in mind that permanent reform can only be affected by cool and intelligent action under the law." Nonetheless, on the very same page of the newspaper the *Pilot* criticized the Workingmen for electing Irish-born C.C. O'Donnell as a representative to the Convention, since he had publicly urged workingmen to "arm themselves and slaughter Chinese in the streets."[343] Prior to Kearney's nationwide speaking tour the *Pilot* had issued a similar warning, pleading with him to recognize the "gravity of such an undertaking" since any militant language or pledges would "utterly destroy the possibility of popular success."[344]

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[342] "The Chinese Question Again," *Boston Pilot*, March 23, 1878
[343] "The First Victory for the Workingmen," *Boston Pilot*, June 29, 1878; Editorial, *Boston Pilot*, June 29, 1878.
[344] "Danger Ahead for the Workingmen," *Boston Pilot*, July 6, 1878.

Representatives of the Catholic Church attempted to navigate a complicated terrain. It knew that it could engage in the type of racialized denunciation of the Chinese that had become a part of public discourse. Describing "John Chinaman" the *Boston Pilot* would editorialize that he "lives in swarms in dirty cellars, supports nobody but himself, and so can underbid civilized men and starve their families."[345] But the Catholic Church also knew that any violence that befell the Chinese and disrupted the public order would be blamed largely on the Irish Catholic population in San Francisco.

In July 1878, Kearney had left California in order to embark on a national tour, and would not return to the state until November of that year. Andrew Gyory notes that the speeches Kearney delivered in cities throughout the country, which included stops in St. Louis, Cincinnati, Boston, New York, and Brooklyn, typically touched upon three main themes: the plight of labor, his support for the Greenback Party's presidential candidate Benjamin Butler (and as Gyory addresses, his hopes that if successful Butler would make him Vice President), and the need to end Chinese immigration. Kearney's Irish heritage continued to factor into his reception. Journalistic observers of Kearney's speeches called him a "bullet-headed Irishman" and made reference to Kearney's thick Irish brogue.[346]

While Kearney initially enjoyed large audiences and enthusiastic responses, eventually his inflammatory rhetoric got the best of him. In August 1878, the *Boston Pilot*, after guardedly praising Kearney as a leader of the workingmen in June and July, turned on him when it felt that his rhetoric had become too communistic and that his

[345] *Boston Pilot*, July 6, 1878.
[346] Gyory, *Closing the Gate*, 112.

attacks on capitalism defied what the paper labeled "democratic principles."[347] The New York-based *Irish-American* echoed this opinion, and, explicitly acknowledging Kearney's appeal to Irish immigrants, pleaded to its audience: "Let our people avoid such men as they would the plague."[348] For the *Pilot* and *Irish-American,* their rejection of Kearney was based on his radical views on economic reform, not his opinions on race and labor. Irish Catholic leaders were perhaps most concerned with negative attacks that targeted the Irish community in a general, prejudicial fashion, simply because Kearney was an Irish immigrant.

Hoodlums[349] and Their Historical Legacy

In 1879, the California Constitutional Convention issued a new constitution for the state. Voters in California had given representatives of the Workingmen's Party a majority of the delegates sent to the convention, yet their success in legislating against the Chinese was limited. The new constitution for the state of California contained a number of anti-Chinese provisions, such as a ban on both private and public corporations employing any "Chinese or Mongolian," but these victories were symbolic. The employment ban, for example, violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and the rights guaranteed to Chinese immigrants in the United

[347] "Dennis Kearney, Where are the Facts?" *Boston Pilot*, August 17, 1878.
[348] "Kearney, The 'Agitator,'" *Irish-American*, September 14, 1878.
[349] The word "hoodlum" is actually indigenous to San Francisco, although its exact etymology has been lost. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it originated sometime between 1870 and 1872 and specifically referred to an unemployed young man, usually in a gang, who travelled the streets looking to start trouble. William Tell Coleman told the historian Hubert Bancroft that he thought the word could be traced back to a gang of young men who frequented Hood's Saloon in San Francisco, a base from which they plotted crimes. As a result they were referred to as "Hood's Boys" and then "Hood'ums," before the word finally morphed into its current version. Biographical Sketch of William Tell Coleman. The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. BANC MSS C-D 755: fol. 1. See also, *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "Hoodlum," http://dictionary.oed.com.floyd.lib.umn.edu/cgi/entry/50107786?single=1&query_type=word&querywork=hoodlum&first=1&max_to_show=10 (accessed November 11, 2008).

States as agreed upon in the Burlingame Treaty.[350] Alexander Saxton describes the process of enacting anti-Chinese provisions in the Constitution as a "stage performance for the edification of constituents."[351]

In San Francisco's municipal elections, which took place in the autumn of 1879, the Workingmen proved a bit more successful, when voters elected the colorful preacher Isaac Kalloch to the office of Mayor in 1880.[352] Under Kalloch's rule the Workingmen issued a memorial on March 10, 1880 that declared Chinatown a "public nuisance" that threatened the entire city with disease, and promised to remove the entire Chinese population from the city in order to ensure the health of San Francisco's white residents.[353] Threatened with the resumption of vigilante rule from the Citizens Protective Union, which had formed in response to Kalloch's pledge, the pragmatic mayor retreated from his position. The Protective Union's council claimed in a letter to residents of San Francisco that while "the whole people of California recognize the evils of Chinese emigration," the methods of the current agitation had "brought dishonor upon American civilization."[354] Police arrested Denis Kearney on March 11 after he stated that sugar baron Claus Spreckels, who was a member of the Protective

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[350] As Charles McClain notes, the version of the article incorporated into the new constitution, and approved by voters, actually represented a toned down version from the one originally proposed. When the state attempted to enforce the law against a quicksilver mining company that employed Chinese workers, the federal circuit court ruled against it. Charles McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 79-92.
[351] Saxton, *Indispensible Enemy*, 128-9.
[352] Kalloch's tenure as mayor as San Francisco is best remembered for the fact that immediately prior to the election, Charles De Young, who was the editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle* and angered by the fact that he was not nominated as the party's candidate, tried to murder Kalloch after Kalloch insinuated that De Young's mother had worked as a prostitute. Kalloch survived and his son avenged his name, murdering De Young in his office (after apparently firing a whole barrage of bullets that missed) on April 3, 1880. For a full account of this violent yet entertaining chapter in San Francisco's history, see, Jerome Hart, *In Our Second Century: From An Editor's Notebook* (San Francisco: Pioneers Press, 1931).
[353] Workingmen's Committee of San Francisco, "Chinatown Declared a Nuisance," March 10, 1880, www.druglibrary.org/Schaffer/HISTORY/1870/wpccontents.htm (accessed November 11, 2008).
[354] "San Francisco Troubles," *New York Times*, March 10, 1880.

Union, was the "biggest damned thief who ever went unhung."[355] Unlike the case in previous incidents where Kearney had been arrested yet ultimately acquitted on the charge of attempting to incite violence, on March 16 he was convicted and sent to prison. As the *New York Herald* observed smugly: "the party of law and order is triumphant and the hoodlum faction cowed and demoralized."[356] Following his time in prison, Kearney by-and-large faded from the local political scene. The Kalloch administration served only two years in power, and lost the next election to the Democratic Party.

When the British politician and political scientist James Bryce traveled to San Francisco in the fall of 1881, as he would later recall in his book *The American Commonwealth*, people in the city spoke of Kearney "as a spent rocket" who "was so insignificant that no one cares to know where he goes or what he does."[357] Kearney later wrote to Bryce in person to protest this unflattering depiction. Arguing that the Workingmen's Party had been instrumental in making the anti-Chinese movement a national issue that attracted widespread support among the nation's white population, he refuted Bryce's claim that he was a demagogue, noting, "My only crime seems to have been that I opposed the mongolization of my state in the interest of our own people and their Civilization."[358]

Clearly Californians did not know how to frame Kearney's historical significance. Among the city's middle and upper class populations, to attribute to Kearney any credit for assisting in bringing about the Exclusion Act, passed in 1882 by

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[355] "The Latest Move," *New York Herald*, March 12, 1880.
[356] "Kearney's Hearing Sentence," *New York Herald*, March 17, 1880.
[357] James Bryce, *American Commonwealth* (London; New York: Macmillan, 1888), 240.
[358] Cited in Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., "The Demagogue and the Demographer: Correspondence of Denis Kearney and Lord Bryce," *Pacific Historical Review* 36, no. 3 (1967): 280.

Congress, would be to acknowledge the agency of the "Irish drayman" in defending American civilization. The association of Kearney with violence was so strong that when Coleman, the leader of the Public Safety committee, conducted an oral history with Hubert Bancroft, who was in the process of compiling his history of California, he recalled of the July Days of 1877 that "the atmosphere was full of clouds of danger, of mistrust, and it was reported that the Kearneyites, and the labor people, and all the malcontents were organizing in South San Francisco, in the Tar flat region, and points at North Beach." Coleman either ignored or confused the fact that in July 1877 Kearney was enlisted as a member of the pick handle brigade trying to quell the mob he allegedly led.[359]

Ambivalence over Kearney and his importance, or lack thereof, existed among trade unionists and organized labor as well. From its inception as a political party, a strong divide existed within the California Workingmen's Party as to whether it was to focus the bulk of its attention on the "Chinese question," or whether it would concentrate solely on issues such as wages, the ten-hour day, and the right of unions to establish closed shops. The Workingmen's Party was hardly a monolithic entity. By highlighting its anti-Chinese credentials the California branch was anomalous to the party as a whole and as Saxton argues it bore little resemblance to the national party in "program nor in leadership."[360] Frank Roney accused Kearney of being a "'piece'

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[359] Biographical Sketch of William Tell Coleman. The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. BANC MSS C-D 755: fol. 1.

[360] Saxton, *Indispensible Enemy*, 116. As Saxton notes, the national Workingmen's Party began as an effort to bring together Marxian and Lasallean socialists following the fall of the First International. As Philp Ethington notes, Kearney's faction of the Workingmen's Party, in response to accusations that it sought to redistribute capital in California and socialize the state's agriculture, repudiated in its platform the communist stance of the Workingmen's Party of the United States. Philip Ethington, *The Public City: The Political Construction of Urban Life in San Francisco, 1850-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 267.

striker," someone who entered politics for the sake of controlling patronage, and claimed that the national organization of the Workingmen's Party refused him membership because "in all the debates in Social Hall affecting the Labor question he has invariably taken the side of the monopolist against the Working Man and was therefore deemed ineligible to associate with men whose lives had been spent in this cause."[361]

In the article Henry George wrote for *Popular Science Monthly* in 1880, the young intellectual tried to convince his readership that it was in their interest to develop scientific ways to deal with poverty and economic inequality, in order to prevent demagogues like Kearney from seizing power. By appealing to the rationality of educated and well-to-do whites, George tried to distance his own political aspirations from street violence and public protest. George informed his readers that "had this movement involved anything which could properly be styled socialistic or communistic, it would have seemed to me hopeful, for socialism and communism involve some sort of theories which show at least a grouping for real remedies."[362] Ira Cross wrote about Frank Roney, the Irish-born labor leader who also split with Kearney, that,

> To him at all times men were of equal worth regardless of race and ancestry. He stood for men, not for race or creed. It was therefore difficult for him to modify his ideals and wage a campaign against the Chinese in California and against Chinese-made goods, as he did while a member of the Workingmen's Party of California and as a secretary of the League of Deliverance. But he did so because he felt that he was not fighting the Chinese as Chinese, but as workers who were lowering the plane of living of the California people.[363]

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[361] "History of the Workingman's Party of California, undated," Frank Roney papers, BANC MSS C-B 366, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
[362] George, "The Kearney Agitation," 450. In the same article George dismissed Kearney's popularity as the result of a newspaper war between the *Chronicle* and the *Call. The Chronicle*, by supporting Kearney and the Workingmen's Party, felt that it could urge the Workingmen to boycott the *Call*.
[363] Cross, "Introduction," in *Frank Roney: Irish Rebel and California Labor Leader*, xxv.

In attempting to locate working-class anger against the Chinese in a rational, material framework that downplayed the racism of the movement, contemporaries and historians also sought to save the movement from accusations that it was composed solely of "hoodlums."[364]

This formulation – separating Kearney and anti-Chinese agitators from the honest laborers who were truly deserving – would become popular with historians outside of the labor movement as well. Writing in the late-1880s, the historian Bancroft praised the Workingmen's Party for ousting Kearney during the state Constitutional Convention in 1879 (while conveniently ignoring that most of the delegates actually remained loyal to Kearney), noting that the task of Chinese exclusion "was too great to be intrusted [sic] to an ignorant Irish rabble, even though that rabble sometimes paraded the streets as a great political party."[365] Blaming "foreign agitation" remained a convenient way to explain mob violence against the Chinese well into the next decade. In 1885, when anti-Chinese riots erupted in Rock Springs, Wyoming and a white mob killed 28 Chinese men, the *Overland Monthly* proclaimed that the event did not represent an American crisis in the strict sense, in that "the riots were simply an onslaught of our European aliens upon our Asiatic aliens."[366]

An editorial in the *Argonaut*, published in 1893, a year after the Geary Act had renewed the Exclusion Act for an additional ten years, described Kearney as an ineffectual leader and a blowhard, interested only in his own power. Noting that the Columbian Exposition at the Chicago's World Fair would contain an exhibit focusing

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[364] For a more recent attempt to sort out the ethnic composition of who joined the Workingmen's Party – an attempt that offers no satisfactory conclusion – see Neil Shumsky, *The Evolution of Political Protest and the Workingmen's Party of California* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1991).
[365] Hubert Bancroft, *Popular Tribunals* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1887), 738.
[366] H. Shewin, "Observations on the Chinese Laborer," *Overland Monthly* 7 (January 1886): 92.

on Kearney and the sandlots' movement, the *Argonaut* readily offered advice on how it might be arranged: "[Kearney] was a morbid growth on San Francisco's skin when her blood was bad – a pimple on the body-politic. Now that he has been sloughed off with her diseased skin, he excites only a pathological, not to say pustular, interest. He ought to be put into a large glass jar – in alcohol."[367]

Joaquin Miller, the Californian novelist known as the "poet of the Sierras" claimed in 1904 that the exclusion of Chinese immigrants "was about the worst thing that ever happened to this fertile state so much in need of reliable labor," and had originated with "the Irish washer woman…and their kindred, under the lead of Denis Kearney and like foreigners."[368] That same year, an article in the New York-based *Baptist Home Mission Monthly*, a magazine for domestic missionaries, lamented that "if the 'sand lots' agitators had not succeeded in their un-American movement, the domestic problem would have worn a different face, and multitudes of American housewives would not be in their present plight, which is driving them into apartment hotels and boarding houses."[369] By tracing a line from Kearney to the Exclusion Act to the servant problem that persisted in the early-twentieth century, authors kept alive the "real" reasons that groups like the Irish had been so adamant about Chinese restriction. As the next chapter will address, arguments in this vein offered up the shortage of Chinese servants in the United States as a symbol of the injustices leveled against middle-class domestic interests.

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[367] *The Argonaut*, May 1, 1893. Unfortunately, my research has not turned up any images of Kearney or the exhibit at the World's Fair, or any subsequent coverage.
[368] Joaquin Miller, "The Chinese Exclusion Act," *Arena*, October 1904, 352-3. Miller had a selective memory. In an 1880 article for *The Independent*, Miller had actually defended Kearney as the "rude mouthpiece" for the common consensus that something had to be done about Chinese immigration. Miller, "The Pacific Revisited," *The Independent*, April 29, 1880.
[369] *The Baptist Home Mission Monthly*, "The Chinese in America," December 1904, 447.

Conclusion

While the Workingmen's Party of California presented its efforts to end Chinese immigration as being paramount to the defense of American civilization, the Party's actions – in particular, the public face that it presented in Kearney – were burdened by its associations with the "Irish." Middle and upper class voices condemned what they considered to be the Irish influence in the Party's radical protest, and their belief that it was Paddy's and Biddy's laziness, intemperance, and preference for violence over work that gave the anti-Chinese movement its real support. Accordingly, San Francisco's civic elite announced that the reform of Chinese immigration had to be achieved in a manner that would reform the Irish as well. As the next chapter explores, the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 did not put an end to this line of reasoning. In the 1880s and into the twentieth century, white employers of Chinese servants argued that Chinese Exclusion represented the triumph of ignorant hatred – advanced by "foreign rabble" – over the more important domestic needs of the nation's native-born middle class.

Chapter 5

Domestic Service in the Age of Exclusion

Introduction: Chinese Servants, an "Extinct" Race?

In 1906, John Silas Reed, a member of a prominent Portland, Oregon family, enrolled in Charles Townsend Copeland's freshman English class at Harvard University. In response to a composition assignment that asked students to address a subject or character from their personal lives, Reed chose to write about his family's longtime Chinese servant, Lee Sing. Reed's essay, which was reprinted in its entirety in an issue of the *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, offers insight into how a certain class of white residents in the American West viewed their Chinese domestic employees at a time when, as Reed stated, the "ancient and honorable race of Chinese cooks [was] alas, almost extinct."[370]

According to his biographer, Reed had difficulty adjusting to life at Harvard. Despite his family's wealth and importance in Portland, the rituals that dominated the social lives of his mainly Eastern classmates were alien to him.[371] Presenting himself as a young man of the American West, Reed introduced his chosen topic by explaining to his professor that Chinese servants were an integral part of domestic life in Western

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[370] Fred DeWolfe, "Portlander John Reed Remembers Lee Sing, His Family's Chinese Servant," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 97, no. 3 (1996): 364.

[371] Reed lived a short yet fascinating life. At Harvard, Reed would give up on trying to fit in with the University's social elite and turned instead to radical politics. In 1917, while in Russia, Reed would participate in the Bolshevik uprising and serve as the representative of the American Communist Party to the newly-formed Soviet Union. Reed authored a firsthand, journalistic account of the October Revolution, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, which was first published in 1919 and is still considered one of the best accounts of the events. When Reed succumbed to typhus during a journey to the Soviet Union in 1920, he received the honor of being the only American to be buried in the Kremlin. Eric Homberger, *John Reed* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990). Reed's remarkable life would later be depicted in the 1981 film *Reds*.

cities such as Portland, and had "furnished the peculiar flavor of Far-Western households when I was a small boy." Offering his professor a comparative perspective, Reed stated, that "the old-time Chinese of Oregon and California had the *knack* of fine cooking, I believe, more than the Virginia darky of ante-secession days, perhaps even more than the French."[372]

Reed's essay takes the form of a series of recollections that document the way things were when every affluent Western family had a Chinese servant. "Every kind of Chinese; not only coolies, but scholars, soldiers, outlaws, and those who would be mandarins in their own land, cooked for our family," Reed wrote, and "none of them were servile like the Japanese."[373] Reed's mention of the Japanese in the context that they were more servile than the Chinese, illustrates how Japanese immigration, which had surpassed Chinese immigration by 1906 as a result of the Exclusion Act's enforcement, had affected hiring practices. Reed's comment that the Japanese were more servile than the Chinese is in line with the sentimental tone of the essay; as Evelyn Nakano Glenn writes, "As the Chinese servant became extinct, paeans of praise were sung in his memory."[374] Downplaying the division of power that separated employer from employee, Reed asserted that "these strange yellow men, in their unfathomable connections with mysterious Chinatown, in their imperturbable dignity, their calm assumption of superiority over the white race, their sardonic humor and laughable solemnity, remained in a way our friends rather than our servants."[375]

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[372] DeWolfe, "Portlander John Reed Remembers," 364.
[373] Ibid.
[374] Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 107.
[375] DeWolfe, "Portlander John Reed Remembers," 364.

Even though Lee was allegedly a friend, a close examination of the essay reveals that the young author knew little about the details of Lee's personal life and was content to fall back on the popular stereotype of the "inscrutable" Chinese man. In the text he fails to inquire into why scholars and mandarins were obliged to work as domestic workers in the United States. There is no mention of whether Lee was born in the United States and therefore a citizen who could leave and re-enter the country without restrictions, or whether he had arrived as an immigrant. Despite an implied intimacy, Reed was unable to make sense of Lee's history. Reed described how Lee attended mission school "for business purposes" and that he "was a rich man, and owned a Chinese store downtown."[376] While these may have been innocuous details for Reed, Lee's attendance at the mission school follows a pattern: Chinese servants and cooks were inclined to learn English in order to more easily find work, since the ability to communicate with white Americans was a necessary job skill. Although only speculation, it also seems unlikely that a "rich" businessman would need to work as a servant. Reed fails to address that it was common practice during the Exclusion Era for Chinese in the United States to establish a small stake in some business interest in order to qualify for a "Section Six Certificate" (named after the relevant section of the 1882 Act) that certified their merchant status, thus allowing them to depart and re-enter the United States.[377]

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[376] Ibid., 365.

[377] Ultimately, immigration officials became aware of this practice and through legal cases, put pressure on Congress to legislate a new definition of who could claim merchant status. As Charles McClain argues, Chinese exclusion was a fiercely contested topic in state and federal courts, in part because the federal government had never before attempted to legally restrict a whole class of immigrants. Courts took a lead role in interpreting specific terms of the Exclusion Act, such as what was meant by "laborer" and "merchant," in turn causing Congress to amend the original Act on numerous occasions to clarify its intentions. Charles McClain, *In Search of Equality: The Chinese Struggle against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), in particular 167-9. See

Reed observed that "Sing's besetting sin was drink, and he would steal anything that looked alcoholic," a vice that the Reed family forgave when Lee went on a drunken binge to celebrate the birth of John's younger brother. When Lee takes a vacation for a month to "dlink whiskey," (throughout the essay, Reed uses dialogue to attempt to recreate Lee's awkwardness with the English language), he nonetheless delivers on a promise to find a temporary replacement, and a cousin of Lee's immediately comes and assumes his duties. Reed is amazed when Lee's cousin appears mysteriously at the family's front doorstep.[378] However, family connections, and the employment networks generated through these connections, played a crucial and efficient role among the Chinese community in the United States. Many cooks and servants gained their start in the profession through training and positions provided by kin.

Despite the passage of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which prevented Chinese laborers from entering the United States, Americans continued to examine the economic and social roles performed by Chinese immigrants living in the United States. Congress's claim that it was defending white labor from competition with Chinese immigrant labor was called into question in the context of domestic service. After 1882, when Chinese immigration declined significantly as a result of the Exclusion Act, white employers not only maintained their previous stance that Chinese domestic labor was

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also, Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 90-1. For a review of the historiography on how legal historians have addressed Chinese exclusion, see, Richard Cole and Gabriel Chin, "Emerging from the Margins of Historical Consciousness: Chinese Immigrants and the History of American Law," *Law and History Review* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 325-64.

[378] DeWolfe, "Portlander John Reed Remembers," 365.

desirable, but increasingly romanticized the disappearance of "John Chinaman," as Reed did in his essay.[379]

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, and at the start of the twentieth century, individuals and groups sympathetic to Chinese immigration found in the figure of the Chinese domestic servant a specific symbol of American injustice. Relying on the representations and stereotypes that presented the Chinese servant as unassailably devoted, loyal, and efficient, Protestant missionaries, authors critical of the white working class, and political commentators concerned with the threats posed by increased immigration from Eastern Europe and Italy, as well as Japan, all looked to the Chinese servant as proof that the Exclusion Act and subsequent legislation had been passed in error. (Nor did anger at Irish immigrants for their involvement in Chinese exclusion disappear entirely, as the twentieth-century statements of individuals like Bancroft and Coolidge demonstrate.) White Americans who were sympathetic to the Chinese expressed legitimate concern over the plight of Chinese immigrants, and, more specifically, domestic servants. Yet their advocacy also reflects resistance by influential individuals and groups to what they felt was a government imposition on their right to employ the workers they believed best suited their material and cultural needs.

In the years leading up to the Exclusion Act, Americans who wished to continue employing Chinese servants argued that the only proof necessary to demonstrate that Chinese servants were acceptable, was in the fact that they were employed by the nation's leading citizens. The authors of *The Other Side of the Chinese Question*, a pro-Chinese pamphlet that was published at the same time as the 1876 Congressional report

[379] Although the Chinese population in the United States increased slightly between 1880 and 1890, from 105,465 to 107,488, by 1900 the number had decreased to 89,863, and by 1920 stood at 61,659. Lee, *At America's Gates*, 238.

on Chinese immigration, noted, "Can it be that our wealthy and honored citizens will confide their households to filthy, diseased, immoral and criminal servants? Either our citizens are not what they seem or it is not true what you say in regard to the Chinese."[380]

White employers believed that exposure to middle-class culture, Christianity, and proper domestic practices served to transform "their" Chinese servants. Chinese immigrants may have entered white homes as "heathens" and "barbarians," but the domestic environs of the white home, combined with the tutelage of their Christian employers, imbued them with "civilized" traits. This belief led some members of the white middle class to create a nuanced argument about whether the Exclusion Act should apply to servants. The belief that Chinese servants living in Christian homes should enjoy special privileges, allowed an editorial that appeared in the *Methodist Review* in 1892 to both praise the Exclusion Act for keeping out "undesirables" from China and to critique it for reducing the number of available Chinese servants to work in white homes. The editorial found no contradiction in defending the employment of Chinese servants, since the interaction between Chinese servants and their white employers was one of the few forces working against the immorality and heathen practices that otherwise marked Chinese communities. Describing the bachelor men who predominated in Chinatowns, the editorial argued that "the absence of home life, with attendant demoralizing conditions," moved the Chinese further away from civilized behavior. On the other hand, the domestic world of the white family

[380] *The Other Side of the Chinese Question in California; A Reply to the Charges Against the Chinese* (San Francisco, 1876), 20.

represented a positive influence in the lives of Chinese men, and took advantage of their servile traits.[381]

Philip Deloria has shown how during the same period in the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century, it was common for popular representations to portray American Indians and their cultural practices as vanishing – rather than acknowledge that American Indians had adopted to new circumstances. Representations of vanishing Indian life were based on white Americans' expectations that it was natural for American Indians to act and live a certain way. As Deloria notes, when American Indians defied white expectations about how they were supposed to act, white Americans dismissively labeled their behavior as "anomalous." "Native actions have all too often been interpreted through the lens of Euro-American expectation," Deloria points out, "formed in ways that further the colonial project."[382]

This critical framework is helpful in thinking about the goals behind white employers' representations of their Chinese servants, and to examine what was at stake when the plight of Chinese servants in the United States was transformed into a social cause, or when authors claimed that Chinese servants were disappearing from the cultural landscape of the American West.[383] White employers' political interventions on

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[381] A.J. Hanson, "The Chinaman in America," *Methodist Review* 8 *(*September 1892): 714; 718. As Nayan Shah argues, the "bachelor" culture of Chinatown remained a prominent concern in the eyes of white reformers well into the twentieth century. Conversely, traditional domestic arrangements involving a husband and wife were seen as positive steps on the road to assimilation. Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[382] Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004), 7.

[383] Again, there are obvious comparisons to the ways in which white Southerners discussed black servants following the Civil War. As David Katzman notes, it was common for white Southerners to draw a distinction between black servants who had labored for their families as slaves, and freed blacks working as servants who allegedly lacked the same deference. Although black servants did not "vanish" from the cultural landscape of the South, white Southerners conveyed a sense of loss that was highly racialized. David M. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 192-3.

behalf of their Chinese servants did not reflect a vested interest in the rights of their servants as equals. Chinese servants inspired sympathy and support by being cast in the role of racial and social inferiors who willingly recognized their place.

In spite of the sentimental importance that white employers continued to attach to their Chinese servants, increasingly, Chinese born immigrants and the American-born Chinese community took advantage of alternative economic opportunities. By the start of the twentieth century, it was increasingly likely that Chinese immigrants and members of the American-born Chinese community worked as cooks and servants who lived outside of their employees' homes. In addition, Chinese immigrants could be found doing service work in hotels, restaurants, and other public institutions.[384] The statements of Chinese cooks captured during interrogations with immigration officials reveal that Chinese cooks represented a transient population that shared job information through real and "fictional" family networks.[385] Outside of private homes, Chinese cooks were able to find employment at restaurants and hotels, and avoid the direct supervision that families like the Reeds were able to exercise over Lee Sing. Chinese cooks increasingly earned a living and were able to survive economically without having to submit to the paternalism, evangelicalism, condescension, and expectations that marked the experiences of live-in servants in previous decades.[386]

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[384] Throughout this chapter, I use the term American-born Chinese rather than the more contemporary phrase, Chinese Americans, which typically connotes a type of cultural acceptance by the hegemonic social group in addition to legal citizenship.

[385] Chinese immigrants worked as cooks outside of private homes prior to 1882. As Sucheng Chan notes, during the California Gold Rush Chinese immigrants operated many of the restaurants that accompanied the creation of mining camps. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, Chinese cooks worked in cities and towns across the United States. Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), 34-5.

[386] The goal of this chapter is not to attempt to determine whether work as a cook or live-out servant was preferable to work as a live-in domestic servant for Chinese immigrants. A lack of sources and the relative nature of such a question make this an impossible task. Rather, the point is to explore why white

Legislating Chinese Restriction

With the passage of the initial 1882 Exclusion Act, Chinese servants were classified as laborers. After 1882, Chinese immigrants could not enter the United States with the stated intent of working in domestic service, unless they could prove to immigration officials that they had been born abroad to an American-born Chinese citizen of the United States, in which case they could enter the country regardless of their class status. Until 1888, when Congress passed the Scott Act, Chinese immigrants who had arrived prior to 1882 and were working as servants, were also allowed to leave the United States and re-enter the country, as long as they obtained a government certificate documenting their status.[387]

The 1888 Scott Act closed the alleged "loophole" that allowed Chinese immigrant laborers to leave and re-enter the United States. The Scott Act, which was introduced by William Scott, a Democratic Congressman from Pennsylvania and the chairman of the party's national committee, banned all Chinese laborers from entering the United States, even those who had resided in the country prior to 1882 and had been issued certificates of identity by the Chinese consul or United States Treasury Department stating that they were allowed to re-enter. The Scott Act violated the 1880 Sino-American treaty between the United States and China, which in exchange for China's pledge to attempt to limit immigration to the United States the American

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Americans continued to dwell on a particular form of domestic service performed by Chinese immigrants, while remaining largely indifferent to the other forms of labor they undertook.

[387] In 1884 the Ninth Circuit Court in San Francisco upheld the treaty rights of Chinese immigrants who departed the United States prior to June 6, 1882 (when the Chinese consul first started issuing certificates of departure), to re-enter without a certificate, since at the time they had left the United States there were no certificates available to acquire. As long as they could provide satisfactory evidence that they had previously resided in United States, Chinese immigrants abroad, regardless of their class status, were allowed to return to their American homes and jobs. See McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 147-172.

government had agreed to protect the rights, livelihood, and safety of Chinese immigrants residing there. As a result of the Scott Act, 20,000 to 30,000 Chinese, who had lived in the United States, were banned from returning legally. The Chinese community, led by the Six Companies, sought to contest the legality of the Scott Act in the case *Chae Chan Ping v. the United States*, but the Supreme Court sided with Congress. Ultimately, as the legal historian Charles McClain notes, "the effect of the [Scott] act was of course to make it impossible for any Chinese laborer then in the United States to ever visit China and return to this country."[388]

In May 1892, Congress leveled the next legislative blow against the Chinese living in the United States with the passage of the Geary Act. The Geary Act, named after Senator Thomas Geary of California, extended the provisions of the 1882 Exclusion Act an additional ten years. More damagingly, it included additional legislation that required all Chinese in the United States to apply within a one-year time period for a certificate of registration, and in the process to prove their legal residence. To prove their residence, Chinese living in the United States were required to produce one white witness (originally the law called for two) to testify to their residency. Failure to obtain a certificate could result in deportation, with the option of the court first sentencing the violator to a year of hard labor.[389]

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[388] Ibid., 192. As McClain notes, the Supreme Court ruled that while the Scott Act violated the treaty agreement between the United States in China, the popular sovereignty represented by Congressional legislation took precedent over treaties. In 1894, much to the anger of exclusionists, the Scott Act was modified by the Gresham-Yang Treaty signed between the United States and China. The Gresham-Yang Treaty allowed laborers who had previously resided in the United States to return, but only if they had property worth more than a $1,000, or were owed a debt of $1,000 or greater.

[389] Outraged that the American government intended to subject the Chinese community to such regulations – and in particular that merchants would not be exempt from having to register – resistance to the Geary Act was led by the Six Companies, which raised money to hire a team of prominent lawyers and was eventually able to bring the case of *Fong Yue Ting vs. the United States* to the Supreme Court. The Six Companies and the defendant were unsuccessful in their appeal to get the Geary Act overturned.

The McCreary Amendment to the Geary Act, which required that photographs be taken as part of the registration process, also defined precisely who the United States government considered to be a merchant: "a person engaged in buying and selling merchandise at a fixed place of business and performing no manual labor." In 1901, the definition of who constituted a merchant was narrowed further, with restaurant proprietors and laundry businesses now also excluded as laborers. The new restrictions on who would be considered a merchant functioned not only to prevent Chinese immigrants from falsely representing themselves as merchants, but also to affect a broader exclusion policy against the Chinese in general.[390]

The photographic identification required by the Geary Act was the first instance of this relatively new technology being employed in the United States as a means of monitoring and policing a specific group or community. By 1917, Mexicans entering the United States were also required to carry registration cards with their photographs, and the policy was extended to all immigrants in 1924. Immigration officials believed that photographs were essential in registering Chinese immigrants, who otherwise would simply trade and sell registration cards with impunity.[391] Geary himself argued that "all Chinese looked alike" and that written descriptions would not be nuanced enough for determining whether a Chinese immigrant was whom he or she claimed to be. Geary nonetheless tried to play down complaints by the Chinese community that registration singled them out among immigrants. As he explained in an article in the

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As McClain summarizes in his explanation of the logic behind the Supreme Court's decision to find the Geary Act constitutional: "If Congress had the unqualified right to expel Chinese aliens or to permit them to remain in the country, as it chose, it clearly had the power to provide for a system of registration and identification." Ibid., 211.

[390] As Lee notes, in 1924 the definition of a merchant was further limited to include only Chinese immigrants conducting international trade. Lee, *At America's Gates*, 90-1.

[391] Anna Pegler-Gordon, "Chinese Exclusion, Photography, and the Development of U.S. Immigration Policy,"*American Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 51-77.

Californian, the Chinese were doing what thousands of professionals were also required to do. "Yet no man contends because the physician, dentist, plumber and others, have to comply with these laws and obtain these certificates, that there is any badge of degradation or ignominy attached to the members of their particular calling."[392]

Anti-Chinese newspapers, especially the San Francisco *Morning Call*, took advantage of the Geary Act and its registration requirement to incite fear of widespread Chinese resistance to the law. The *Call* ran a campaign claiming that the real reason that Chinese were not registering under the Geary Act was that the Six Companies were threatening to deny Chinese immigrants living in the United States the ability to leave the country if they registered or refused to contribute money to the legal fund that the Six Companies had created. The *Call* also speculated on what would occur if the Six Companies continued their resistance outside of the courtroom. In March 1893, the *Call* published an article under the headline "To Herd Heathen," describing the plans of John Quinn, San Francisco's Internal Revenue Collector in charge of registering the Chinese, to post armed sentries at every point of exit from Chinatown, and to arrest everyone without the proper papers. An article published a day later defended Quinn's military plans for Chinatown against accusations that they were premature and sensational by claiming that Chinese residents had already begun arming themselves and that a possible war was imminent.[393]

According to the *Call*, Chinese servants were among the only members of the Chinese community in San Francisco who had registered punctually. With the registration deadline of May 5 a little more than a month away, the *Call* noted that a

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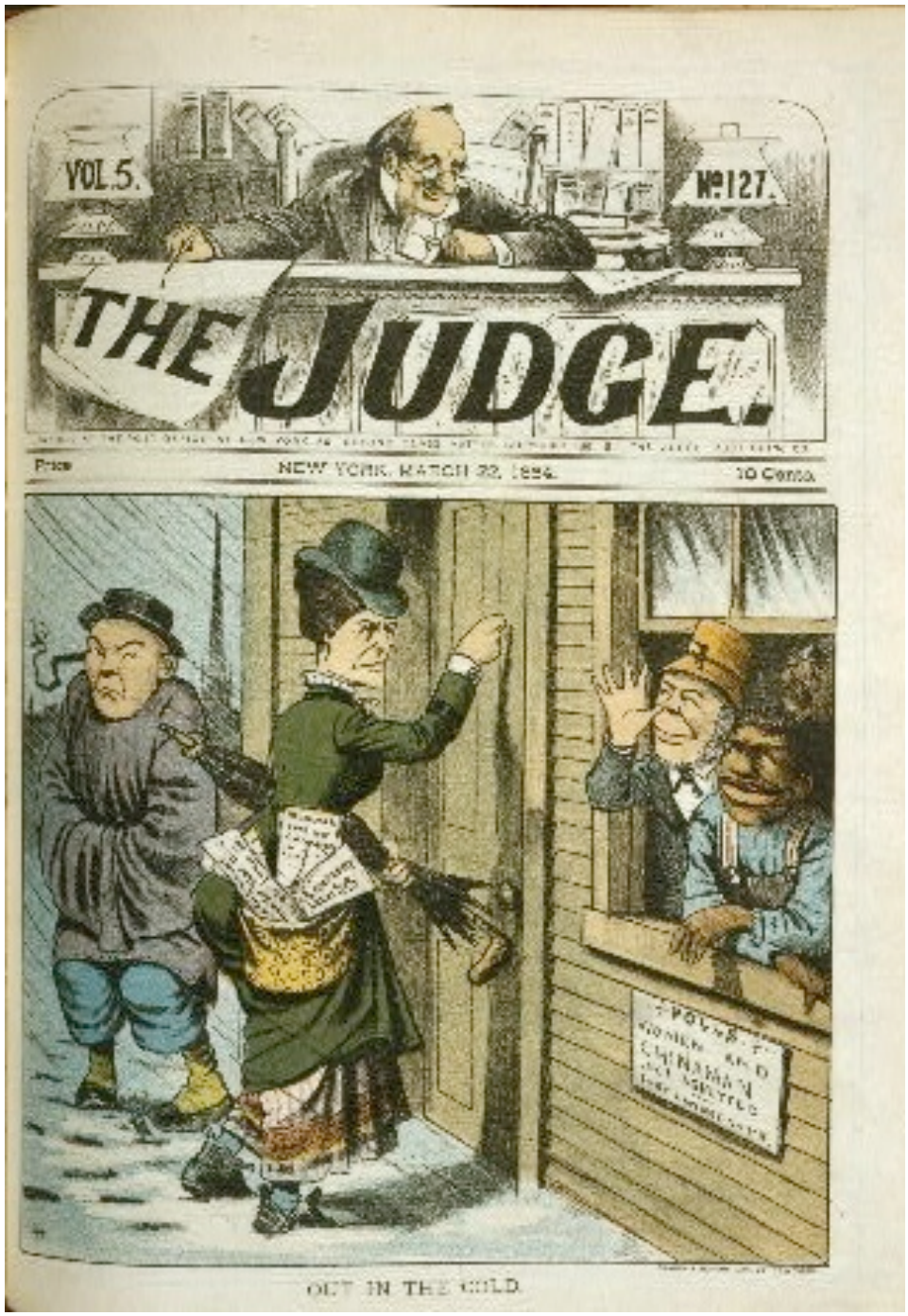
[392] Thomas Geary, "The Law and the Chinaman," *Californian* 4 (July 1893): 311.
[393] "To Herd Heathen," *Call*, March 27, 1893; "There May Be Trouble," *Call*, March 28, 1893.

large number of servants had registered, which it attributed to the influence of their white employers to arrange secret registrations unknown to the Six Companies.[394] An article in the *Overland Monthly* made a similar point. In "The Chinese through an Official Window," Elizabeth Bales described a Chinese servant whose mistress forced him to register in accordance with the Geary Act, even though he allegedly claimed that doing so would put his life at risk since it would violate the order of the Chinese Six Companies to resist.[395] It was commonly believed that the Chinese servant, unlike the typical Chinese laborer, could be controlled by his white mistress. Whereas the Chinese "coolie' was a slave to the interests of the Six Companies and therefore outside the scope of white influence, officials did not have to worry about the Chinese servant participating in conspiracies designed to undermine federal law.

"Out in the Cold"

Chinese exclusion and registration did not end debates on whether European immigrants had gained too much power and influence. In a cartoon titled "Out in the Cold," for example, which ran in the New York-based publication *Judge* in March 1884, a Chinese man stands outside in wintry conditions, while, in the comfort of a warm home, an Irish man and an African American man, depicted as ape-like brutes, thumb their noses at him (pictured on the following page). Joining the excluded Chinese man on the outside and looking at the Irish and African American men on the inside with disdain, is a white, middle-class woman, who is dressed in "mannish" clothes used

[394] "Dodging the Law," *Call*, March 31, 1893.
[395] Elizabeth Bales, "The Chinese Through an Official Window," *Overland Monthly* 22 (August 1893): 138-47. White newspapers and magazines frequently published sensational accounts that portrayed the Six Companies as criminal enterprises, who directed sinister armies or "tongs."



Grant Hamilton, "Out in the Cold," *Judge*, March 22, 1884

to identify female reformers and suffragists of the period and wears a look of frustration on her face. The four figures, taken together, convey a sense of confusion – if inferior Irish and African Americans are allowed to participate in American society and political life (the text on the front wall of the house reads "polls"), why were women and the Chinese not afforded similar privileges?[396]

In the 1860s and 1870s, commentators typically measured Chinese immigrants against Irish immigrants and, in cases where they sought to defend Chinese immigration, used the Irish to argue that comparatively Chinese immigrants caused relatively few social problems. By the mid-1880s, other European immigrant groups had emerged as the objects of equally pointed comparisons. Although Irish immigration to the United States continued in substantial numbers well into the twentieth century, by the 1890s and in the first decades of the twentieth century, Southern and Eastern European immigrants were widely believed to be the more imminent threats to the nation.

Like the Irish, these newer European immigrants were not Protestants and many carried with them radical traditions and politics directly opposed to the interests of the Anglo-American ruling classes. John Higham has argued that whereas nativism in the nineteenth century focused on maintaining Protestant hegemony in the United States in the face of a Catholic threat, the new nativism "aimed from the outset to define the nation's enemies rather than its essence." Higham asserts that while Anglo Americans saw Irish immigrants as outsiders whose "papist" institutions, willingness to work for lower wages, and political agitation ran counter to the American brand of

[396] Grant Hamilton, "Out in the Cold," *Judge*, March 22, 1884.

republicanism, it was not believed that the "inferior" Celts would dilute the nation's racial core.[397] By the 1880s and especially with the onset of the economic depression of the 1890s, which lasted from roughly 1893 to 1897, Eastern and Southern Europeans were seen as not only posing social and economic problems to the nation, but directly compromising its very essence. The new nativism of this period was not limited to Anglo-Americans alone, but included in its ranks the descendants of Irish, German, and Scandinavian immigrants, who increasingly identified their interests as American interests. Donna Gabaccia notes that the American Federation of Labor and other mainstream unions, which in the American West gained power by aligning themselves with the anti-Chinese movement in the 1870s and 1880s, did not always welcome newer immigrants such as the Italians, whose willingness to work as contract laborers or outside of unions put them on the same level as the Chinese in the minds of organizers.[398]

In 1921, the United States Congress would institute a system of temporary quotas designed to greatly limit undesirable immigrants from Eastern and Southern European nations – later made permanent by the Immigration Act of 1924.[399] In the period leading up to 1921, the Chinese served as a bridge between the nativism of the nineteenth century, which targeted mainly the Irish, and the nativism of the later period. A concrete example of the government's ability to restrict a group of immigrants – the

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[397] John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1955), 11. Although Higham does not address this, I would argue that this does not mean that Anglo Americans saw Irish immigrants solely as a religious threat. Their racial characteristics, in the eyes of Anglo Americans, made them equally dangerous.

[398] Donna Gabaccia, "The 'Yellow Peril' and the 'Chinese of Europe': Global Perspectives and. Race and Labor, 1815–1930", in Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, eds., *Migration, Migration History, History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997), 191.

[399] On the development of the 1924 Immigration Act, see Mae Ngai, "The Architecture of Race in American Immigration Law: A Reexamination of the Immigration Act of 1924," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 1 (June 1999):67–92.

Chinese maintained a prominent presence in debates on the new threats posed by unrestricted European immigration.

Unlike pro-Chinese voices who accused European immigrants of posing a far greater threat to the United States precisely because of the rights they held, such as their ability to vote and hold office, nativists who sought a more comprehensive ban on all non-Anglo, non-Protestant immigrants, looked to the anti-Chinese legislation as an example of what could be accomplished. The limitations put on Chinese immigration were seen as a success precisely because they illustrated what the United States could accomplish in terms of restricting undesirable European immigrants in the future. Responding to an editorial by Henry Dana of the *New York Sun* that claimed that the Geary Act represented an extremist opinion only popular in California and that European immigrants posed a greater threat to the nation, the *Argonaut* stated: "It must be obvious that the presence of objectionable immigrants from other countries is no argument against the exclusion of the Chinese. It is not a valid argument in favor of the Chinese to say that immigrants from Italy, and Hungary, and Poland, and other countries in Europe are just as bad, or even worse."[400]

Service and Justice

[400] *The Argonaut,* April 18, 1892. *The Argonaut* also editorialized, "The larger proportion of immigrants who swarm to the country from the Mediterranean and the Baltic, from Russia and Poland, from Hungary and Armenia, subsist at lower cost than the Chinese, and labor for lower wages. They bring their families with them, and squalor and filth mark their locations in whatever community they dwell. They are admitted to naturalization and allowed to vote, and thus become an evil and dangerous to the public weal. They are more burdensome upon the public charge than the Chinese, in hospitals and prisons, and create greater disturbances and cause more trouble than the non-voting Chinese. The absolute exclusion of both, and of all of the kind, is the consummation of legislation devoutly to be wished by the American people." *The Argonaut*, February 29, 1892.

Many nativist Americans had no problem finding common ground in expressing their belief that all immigrants threatened the American way of life. White Americans sympathetic to Chinese immigration, on the other hand – many of whom were affiliated with Protestant evangelicalism – argued that the Exclusion Act and the Geary and McCreary legislation had targeted the wrong group of immigrants.

For religious authors and missionaries already predisposed to being sympathetic to the Chinese, "service" was a powerful means by which Chinese immigrants further set themselves apart from their antagonists. Reverend T. Gerrish, for example, a correspondent for the Boston-based Methodist newspaper, the *Zion's Herald*, described being shocked by what he saw during a trip to the Pacific Northwest in 1886. Referencing the spate of anti-Chinese violence that had broken out in Rock Springs, Wyoming and Tacoma, Washington, Gerrish noted that, "when I learned from the most respectable citizens of Portland that [the Chinese] were the most capable and trustworthy domestics that could be employed; when I saw their beautiful gardens which their patient toil had brought forth from unproductive ground covered with sage brush…I felt mortified to think of the treatment our government had permitted the hoodlums of the West to inflict upon them." Gerrish concluded by attacking the empty rhetoric of "those hoodlum patriots of Wyoming, Seattle, and the sand-lots of San Francisco, [who] quote the words of men whom we had been taught to regard as the chiefest of our statesmen in defense of their foul and murderous attacks."[401] Gerrish observed that even though Chinese servants provided efficient help and as gardeners wrought beauty out of a barren landscape, they lived as "victims" of the United States' unjust policies, and at the mercy of "hoodlums" who falsely claimed to be acting in

[401] Rev. T. Gerrish, "A Flight to the Northwest," *Zion's Herald*, Oct. 27, 1886.

American interests. Other religious writers, such as the travel correspondent for the *New York Evangelist*, mapped the Western landscape that they traveled with an eye to identifying allies against the abuse of Chinese immigrants. In Los Angeles, for example, the *Evangelist's* correspondent praised Mr. Strohbridge, the owner of the St. Charles Hotel in Los Angeles, a practicing Congregationalist Christian who had pledged to weather a boycott against his establishment rather than dismiss the Chinese servants he employed.[402]

The passage of the Exclusion Act in 1882 added fuel to the attacks made by middle class authors about the work ethic of white working class. In refuting the need for the Geary Act, John Bonner argued in the *Californian* that foremost among the falsities promoted about the Chinese was their reputation for laboring for wages that undercut white workers. Bonner offered a portrait of Chinese domestic servants being so coveted that any demands they made of their employers – whether to take a cut off of the purchase of household supplies or to be fed lavish meals – were readily met. As he put it:

> Chinese cheap labor has always been a myth….Of the 65,000 Chinamen now in California, some 20,000 live in San Francisco, and are chiefly engaged in domestic service. A competent Chinese cook gets $35 or $45 a month, and makes half as much more by the percentage he receives on the house supplies he purchases, the prerequisite being no secret, but a matter understood all round. The 'second boy,' who corresponds to the housemaid of the East, and makes beds, sweeps rooms, waits on table and answers the doorbell, gets $25. Both are boarded and lodged; and, though the Chinese are supposed to live upon rice, the Chinese servants in San Francisco expect hot meat twice a day, and have a pretty taste in pork chops and wings of duck.[403]

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[402] Edward Lawrence, "The Scene of the H.H.S. Ramona," *New York Evangelist*, June 10, 1886.
[403] John Bonner, "Labor Question of the Pacific Coast," *Californian* 1 (1892): 414.

Bonner depicted Chinese servants as providing superior labor for those who could afford it, which in turn increased the demand among white employers to hire Chinese domestics. Even as it promoted the use of the police in enforcing the Geary Act and cracking down on Chinese who failed to register, the *Call* acknowledged that while there was a "fair supply" of white servant girls willing to work for $25 a month and some for as low as $15 a month, "Chinamen are scarce at $35."[404]

By the 1890s, certain publications based in California such as *The Californian* and the *Overland Monthly*, argued against further restrictions on Chinese immigration and more radical schemes to deport the Chinese living in the state, even while acknowledging, as Joaquin Miller put it, that "it is social and political death to say these things in San Francisco."[405] As was the case prior to the passage of the Exclusion Act in 1882, Eastern supporters of Chinese immigration were much more vocal in their attacks on exclusionist policies. Missionary publications often implicated in a sweeping fashion the state of California as a whole, claiming that the regional fanaticism of Californians against the Chinese had set the tone for national policy. In an editorial that praised the actions of 63 New York City businessmen and merchants who had written to the President urging that he veto the bill that would become the Chinese Exclusion Act, the *Christian Union* called into question why California as a state should have the privilege to direct immigration policy for the whole country. "Why should she [California]

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[404] "Chinese to Shut Up Shop," *Call*, November 22, 1892. As was the case in the 1870s, it is difficult to discern whether male Chinese servants had acquired more experience and possessed better skills than their white female competitors, or whether white employers valued Chinese domestic servants primarily for how they symbolized status.
[405] Joaquin Miller, "If I Were California," *Californian* 5 (December 1893): 88.

demand that New York shall not employ Chinese servants because she does not wish them?"[406]

Even though Eastern authors, particularly those representing religious newspapers, continued to stigmatize the American West as an intolerant place for Chinese immigrants and their descendants, by the 1880s, the same class of writers and journalists could not ignore instances closer to home. Most notably, Esther Baldwin, who was known by her contemporaries as the "Chinese Champion" and who would serve as the President of the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions for the Methodist Church, emerged as a vocal and passionate critic of the treatment Chinese immigrants received in East Coast cities such as Brooklyn. In the late-nineteenth century, the generosity that Protestant missionaries displayed to the Chinese living in the United States was from the very start caught up in a larger, transnational strategy. Missionaries believed that when immigrants returned from California to China, they would partake in spreading the gospel. It is not surprising that prominent Protestant missionaries like William Speer, Otis Gibson, and A.W. Loomis had all lived transnational lives, working on the conversion of the Chinese both at home and abroad.[407]

Esther Jerman was born in Marlton, New Jersey in 1840, and married the widower Stephen L. Baldwin in 1862. Less than six months later, she departed with her husband on a missionary trip to China, where they worked in Fuzhou Province. During periodic trips home in the 1870s, Stephen Baldwin spent time with Chinese workers at James Hervey's steam laundry plant in Belleville, New Jersey – where he evangelized

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[406] *Christian Union*, April 20, 1882.
[407] On nineteenth-century American missionary ideology and Chinese immigrants, see Timothy Tseng, "Ministry at Arms' Length: Asian Americans in the Racial Ideology of Mainline Protestants, 1882-1952" (PhD diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1994); and, Jennifer Snow, *Protestant Missionaries, Asian Immigrants, and Ideologies of Race in America, 1850–1924* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

to the Chinese workers who had been recruited to work there – and conducted a speaking circuit in the New York City metropolitan area on the "Chinese question," in order to raise money to continue his missionary work in China.[408] Due to Esther's failing health, however, the Baldwins returned from China for good in 1880.

During her time in China, Esther Baldwin, like most American missionaries working there, relied on the local Chinese population for domestic labor. (Baldwin gave birth to six of her seven children in China, making her need for domestic assistance even more pressing.[409]) In an article published in the *Independent* in July 1882, Baldwin described how one Chinese servant, Wo, had requested to accompany her family on their return to the United States. Despite travelling through many countries on their way home from China, Wo went unnoticed and unmolested. Upon his arrival with the Baldwin family in the United States, however, Wo found himself in constant danger. Armed thugs and hoodlums harassed Wo when he ran errands with Baldwin's young son, and his mere presence on the streets of the unnamed town where Baldwin was residing attracted "rabble" and a "train of ragamuffins" who berated him and threatened Wo whenever he entered a public setting. Baldwin moved to Brooklyn, New York, expecting the environment to become more tolerant, but Wo continued to be the target of "vile language and mud and stones." To underline the danger of the situation,

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[408] Frances Elizabeth Willard and Mary Ashton Rice Livermore, *American Women: Fifteen Hundred Biographies with Over 1,400 Portraits* (New York: Mast, Crowell & Kirkpatrick, 1897), 48. See also, Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown*, 185-6.

[409] W.S. Robinson, "Mrs. Esther E. Baldwin," in *Minutes of the Newark Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church; Held in the Central Methodist Episcopal Church, Newark, New Jersey; March 30 to April 3, 1919* (1919), 91. I am grateful to Frances Bristol, Reference Archivist for the General Commission on Archives and History of The United Methodist Church, for making this source available to me.

Baldwin noted that at one point, a large stone that an angry youth aimed at Wo nearly hit her own son with enough velocity to kill him.[410]

In Baldwin's estimation, what made her situation particularly egregious was that Wo, a practicing Methodist, was not welcomed in a purportedly Christian land. In *Must the Chinese Go?*, a pamphlet that Baldwin wrote and first distributed in 1881, and which was reprinted in 1882, 1886, and 1890, she recounted a similar story to the one that appeared in the *Independent* article although "Wo" had become "Ka Kü."[411] In the expanded versions of the story, Baldwin provided a more extensive account about the summer she had spent in Brooklyn convalescing from an illness. Bedridden, she was unable to offer Ka Kü any protection from the violence that he experienced in public. As a result, Baldwin's son was forced to stay inside for the duration of the summer and could not play in the streets or nearby Prospect Park, "the site of a battle that was *supposed* to help make us a free people." (Prospect Park occupies the site where the Battle of Brooklyn occurred during the American Revolution.) Baldwin noted that had similar attacks occurred on an American stationed in China, American officials would have immediately put pressure on the Chinese government to redress the situation.[412] Baldwin, while concerned about Ka Kü's and her son's safety, viewed the consequences of the violence against her Chinese servant as symptomatic of how anti-Chinese sentiment in the United States subverted the moral authority of missionaries abroad.

In assigning blame, Baldwin commented sarcastically that European immigrants resented the Chinese because "they are so 'stupid and servile' as to suppose that, being

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[410] Mrs. S.L. [Esther] Baldwin, "My Experience," *The Independent*, July 27, 1882.
[411] In the 1890 federal census, Fong Ka Ku, a 43-year old Chinese-born male, is listed as living in the Baldwin residence at 1218 Pacific Street in Brooklyn.
[412] Mrs. S.L. [Esther] Baldwin, *Must the Chinese Go? An Examination of the Chinese Question* (1881; repr., New York: H.B.Elkins, 1890), 65.

paid to do a certain work, they are under obligation to perform it."[413] In *Must the Chinese Go?*, European immigrants consistently appear as ingrates whose perceived ownership over the United States, and participation in its governance, stand in stark contrast to their actual contributions. In the book, Baldwin relates a conversation with "an Irish washer-woman, who had manifested much indignation that I had *presumed* to bring home with me a Chinese servant," and who concluded her rant by telling her "'*We* have a right here, *they* haven't.'"[414] (The emphases are Baldwin's.) Baldwin's advocacy on behalf of the Chinese called on the Protestant middle and upper classes to see anti-Chinese violence as the crux of the larger issue of social turmoil and class strife. Baldwin argued that it was cowardly for "good Christian men" to take a stance against foreign laborers only when capital was directly threatened: "The same element that persecutes and murders the Chinese is just the very element to make this nation wail in revolution and blood."[415]

At times, Baldwin also assumed the role of cultural translator for the Chinese, a role she demonstrated in an 1882 letter to the editor of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. Responding to an article that the *Eagle* had printed, which had accused Chinese immigrants of abandoning their countrymen who had become too old or sick to financially support themselves, Baldwin called the article a libel, explaining that the Chinese practice of "ancestor worship" meant that Chinese immigrants were extraordinarily devoted to the care of their extended kin.[416] In her capacity as a

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[413] Ibid.
[414] Ibid., 67.
[415] Ibid., 68.
[416] Baldwin, "In Defense of the Chinese," *Brooklyn Eagle*, January 14, 1882.

missionary, Baldwin readily claimed expertise about the Chinese based on her personal experiences.

Although Baldwin's sympathy for Chinese servants predated the 1882 Exclusion Act, in 1886 she took up a more active role in her protests, by petitioning Congress to allow her to bring a Chinese servant into the United States. (Her petition makes no reference to the fate of either Wo or Ka Kü.) The *Congressional Record* contains a one-sentence reference to Baldwin's petition, and notes only that Senator George Hoar, a prominent Republican from Massachusetts who had opposed the Exclusion Act, introduced it before Congress where it was immediately referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.[417] In sympathetic newspaper and magazine accounts, however, the petition generated publicity for Baldwin's cause.

The *New York Evangelist* noted that in the petition, Baldwin claimed to have tried "twelve girls in twelve months," representing a number of different nationalities, but none had proved satisfactory. It added, "Mrs. Baldwin promises to import neither a pauper, criminal, nor idle person, nor one who ever will become such, or fall upon the public for support or burial; that he will be a person who will not degrade white labor by accepting low wages, as she promises to pay him the highest prices in the neighborhood."[418] Mary Abigail Dodge, a well-known author who wrote under the pseudonym Gail Hamilton, noted that Baldwin's desire to import a Chinese servant revealed as much about the missionary imperative as it did the nature of available domestics in the United States. With irony, she noted that "In this Christian country private virtues are so submerged beneath ingratitude, selfishness, dishonesty,

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[417] "Petitions and Memorials," 49th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record – Senate* (June 23, 1886): 6036.
[418] *New York Evangelist,* "Just One Chinese Servant," July 29, 1886.

extravagance, impertinence, disobedience, that we fly for refuge to the peace, comfort, love, fidelity, found only in the heathen character and heathen service."[419]

Although Baldwin held "progressive" views on how Chinese immigrants should be treated, her support of the Chinese also made them into caricatures of loyalty, virtue, and humble deference to their white superiors. Domestic service provided this crucial link, since it showed Chinese immigrants to be both diligent workers and individuals who willfully submitted to their employers' supervision. Baldwin's Chinese servants, with their interchangeable names, narratives of Christian conversion, and perfect loyalty to their employers, were her social creations and political symbols. Accordingly, the servants readers encountered under Baldwin's tutelage are universally portrayed as good Christians and industrious helpers. Baldwin's personal mission supported her larger critique of immigration policy. In her opinion, immigration policy was unjust because it failed to cater to the segment of the population that knew how to govern over Chinese immigrants in a manner that was both economically and religiously beneficial. Baldwin critiqued the exclusion acts for their role in denying her this relationship with her Chinese servants and could not envision a defense of Chinese immigration outside of this context.

Unlike Baldwin, who maintained a visible public profile, relatively few biographical details exist about Mary Sue Daggett and her career as an author. According to a profile that appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, Daggett was born in Ohio and lived and wrote in Pasadena after coming to California. She used Sue Chang, a Chinese servant who first appeared as a character in 1899 in a short story published by

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[419] Gail Hamilton, "Heathendom and Christendom Under Test," *The North American Review* 143 (December 1886): 539.

the *Los Angeles Times Sunday Magazine*, in a variety of different stories.[420] When *Yellow Angel*, her book devoted to Sue Chang, was published in 1914, it received national attention and was reviewed in the *Boston Globe* and *New York Times*.[421] In *Yellow Angel*, Daggett offered a collection of separate but interrelated stories narrated from the perspective of the unnamed mistress of Temple Hill, a ranch located in the hills outside of Los Angeles.

In the book, the belief that white women could transform the lives of their Chinese servants is most evident. Despite learning how to be a good Christian, Sue Chang also remains a perfectly loyal and faithful servant whose cleanliness and culinary skills have no equal. As the narrator puts it, "Occidental ideals hastened Celestial evolution, but had not ruined his cooking."[422] Whereas at the beginning of the book Sue Chang laments the fact that the local Presbyterian Church where he worships has forbidden Chinese converts to participate in the Chinese New Year festivities taking place in Chinatown in Los Angeles, by the end of his time at Temple Hill he has turned away from the "senseless traditions and ways of departed, worm-eaten ancestors."[423]

At the conclusion of *Yellow Angel*, Sue Chang decides to return to China in order to assist the nation's newly formed republican government, and to act as a reformer spreading Christianity, civilized Western habits, and the principles of self-government to the inhabitants of China.[424] Sunday schools and Protestant leaders in the

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[420] "With the Authors," *Los Angeles Times*, September 21, 1913
[421] The book's national reception was something that the *Times* noted in its admiring review. "Yellow Angel," *Los Angeles Times,* February 22, 1914.
[422] Mary Sue Daggett, *The Yellow Angel* (Chicago: Browne & Howell Company, 1914), 147.
[423] Ibid., 105.
[424] That Sue Chang the character would want to return to China to assist in the creation of the Republic of China is not completely off base. As Yong Chen argues, in 1911 the Chinese community in the United States "embraced the Republican revolution with great enthusiasm because it seemed to signify that their

United States encouraged converted Chinese immigrants to return to China. Unlike Italian and Jewish immigrants, who were subjected to similar efforts at conversion, legally, Chinese servants could not become good American citizens.[425] In this regard, Daggett portrayed Sue Chang to be the "progressive" ambassador of his employers' and the church's influence. The *Los Angeles Times'* review of *Yellow Angel* noted that the story portrayed "his gradual development from the simple ideals of the fatherland, to the wider outlook of the Chinese American."[426] *Yellow Angel* ends with Sue Chang delivering a speech on "Progress." As he recites his fond memories of Temple Hill and all that he has learned there, he also looks forward to his imminent return to China. The "wider outlook of the Chinese American" that the reviewer from the *Los Angeles Times* referenced is paradoxical in Sue Chang's case. His improvement and assimilation does not result in his acceptance into the broader American society or confer upon him legal or even social citizenship, but beckons instead his return to China in order to fulfill a Christian mission.

Sue Chang's pending return to China is not without regret, since during the course of the novel he has come to see himself as part of the family at Temple Hill. The narrator gleefully describes how Sue Chang actively follows the lives of his employers' children as they leave to go to college, get married, and have their own children. In his excitement, he sends photographs of the narrator's grandchildren to his relatives in

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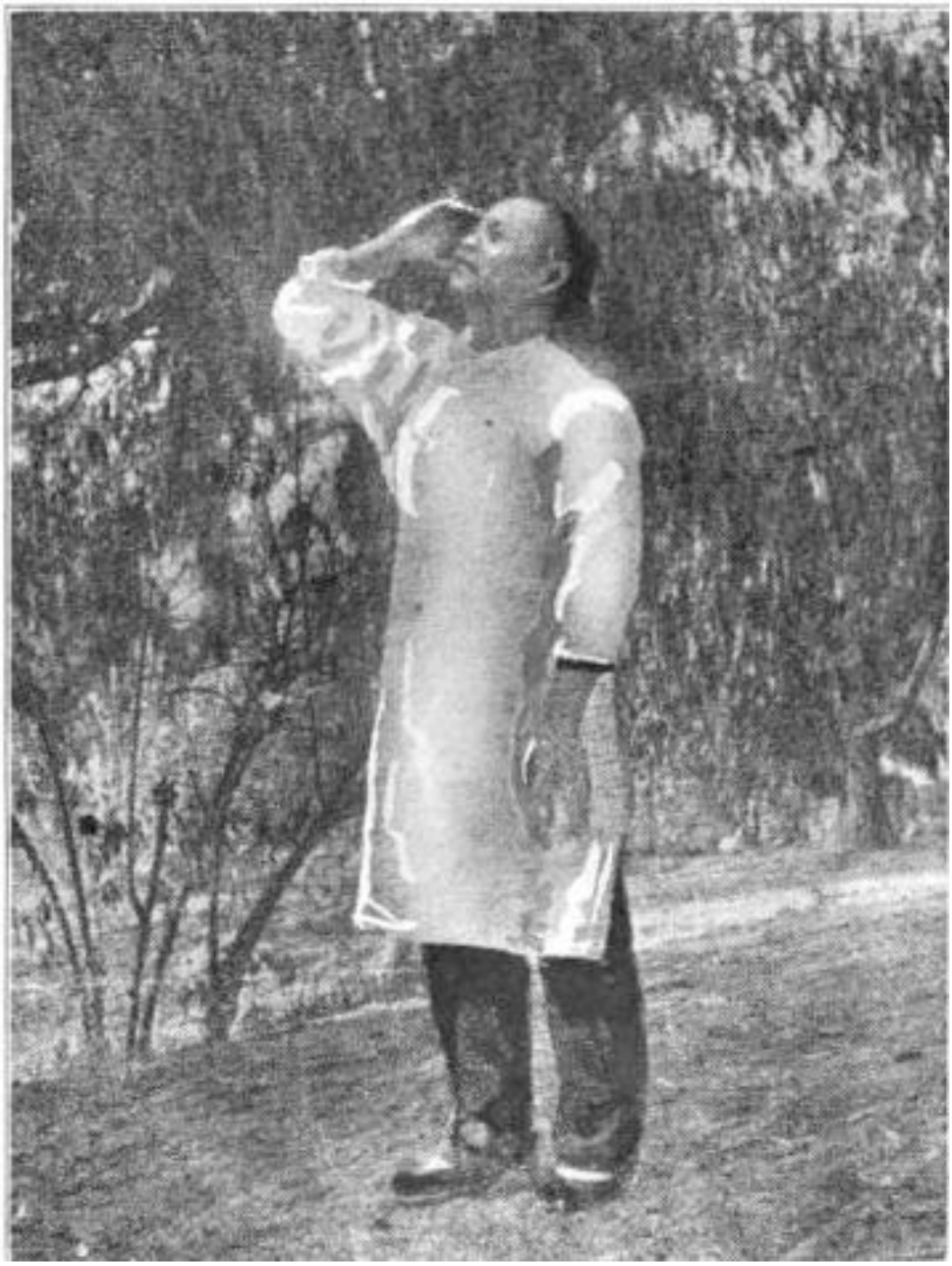
hopes and dreams were coming true." Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850-1943: A Trans-Pacific Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 162-85, here 171.

[425] Mary Ting Yi Lui, *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery: Murder, Miscegenation, and Other Dangerous Encounters in Turn-of-the-Century New York City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[426] "Yellow Angel," *Los Angeles Times.*



Sue Chang, depicted at the beginning of the novel, wears his hair in the traditional Chinese queue.

"HOW you think I look?"

Sue Chang photographed at the end of the book in a Western-style suit – physical evidence of his transformation.

China, an act that further delights his employers.[427] In *Yellow Angel*, while Daggett expressed sympathy for Sue Chang and the difficulties that restrictive immigration laws caused him when he tried to visit his wife and children still in China, it is nonetheless implied that his sentimental attachment to the family at Temple Hill provided a meaningful substitute.

Like Baldwin, Daggett's advocacy on behalf of Chinese immigrants was rooted primarily in her own interests as a mistress, and her social status as a member of the class that sought to exert its prerogative to govern over the nation's interests. Upset over the difficulties Sue Chang faced while leaving and re-entering the United States, the mistress of Temple Hill complains to her husband that, "it isn't fair that an incompetent class who are simply dogs in the manger should be allowed to ruin the future of a great, grand state like California." When her husband suggests somewhat sarcastically that she write to the President to voice her thoughts, she reprimands him for making light of the situation: "if women do not understand the values of those who serve in the household who does?"[428]

Like Baldwin, Daggett used her Chinese servant as a point of intervention into American domestic and foreign policy. In *Yellow Angel*, Sue Chang suffers discrimination despite the fact that Chinese servants have made California such a great place. Furthermore, the discrimination Sue Chang faced reveals the failure on the part of the United States government to defend its Christian obligations abroad. "Of what

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[427] Daggett, *Yellow Angel*, 29. As Kimberly Wallace-Sanders argues, representations of Mammy in the South typically depicted her as being greatly interested in the lives and welfare of the white children she cared for, and disinterested in her own family. Such portrayals functioned not only to show how black women were emotionally invested in their work caring for white children, but were used to demonstrate how their labor might serve the greater goal of white civilization. Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008).
[428] Daggett, *Yellow Angel*, 89-90.

particular benefit were foreign missions," the mistress of Temple Hill asks her husband at the beginning of the novel, "if the United States did not treat fairly the very heathen it sought to Christianize?"[429]

Chinese Cooks and the Enforcement of Immigration Laws

Baldwin's Chinese servants and Daggett's Sue Chang, despite being based on "real" individuals that the authors had employed, are better understood as literary characters that these authors engaged for their own political and social ends. Because the motives of white Americans seeking to redress immigration laws cannot be separated from their expectations surrounding servile Chinese labor, their accounts and narratives of Chinese servants in the Exclusion Era represent a discursive strategy more than an actual history. What is the "real" story of Chinese domestic workers in the Exclusion Era?[430] The lives of a sampling of Chinese domestic and service workers provide some evidence. Since immigration inspectors scrutinized the biographical details of Chinese immigrants and American-born Chinese seeking to either leave or re-enter the United States in order to determine whether they were legal, a fascinating – albeit incomplete – documentary record is available to historians. These sources indicate that the intimacy and familial bonds that authors like Reed, Baldwin, and Daggett posited as existing between white employers and their Chinese servants, did not conform to the experiences of many Chinese service workers who cooked and cleaned for white Americans.

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[429] Ibid., 39.
[430] This is not to suggest that accounts of the past can somehow exist outside of discourse, or that the state did not take part in the creation of discourse. Instead, the goal is to explore how government documents – in this case the records created and kept by immigration officials – framed how Chinese servants described their own personal experience.

For example, when Loui Wee, a cook, arrived in the San Francisco on June 5, 1905, he was detained on Angel Island while immigration inspectors questioned the validity of his claim of American citizenship. Because immigration officials had identified that claiming birth in the United States was a common tactic used by Chinese laborers in the United States who wished to depart to China and then return legally, Chinese claims to American citizenship were thoroughly scrutinized. In an interrogation conducted by Immigration Inspector John Dunn in the Detention Shed of the Pacific Mail Dock on July 6, 1905 (a month after his arrival), Loui stated through an interpreter that he was 32-years-old and that he had been born at 728 Dupont Street, in San Francisco's Chinatown. When Dunn asked what Loui's occupation was prior to departure, he stated that he "was engaged in cooking on Pacific Street, but stopped a couple of months before I went to China." Asked how long he had worked as a cook, Loui replied that he had been working as a cook ever since he was 16-years-old. When Dunn ascertained from questioning that Loui had always worked for white people, he asked Louie, "do you remember the names of all the white people you have worked for and the times you have worked for them?" Loui was unable to answer, and when pressed further to remember any details about his employment, the only thing he was able to recall was that his employer on Pacific Street lived near where the cable car line ended, and that at one point he had worked as a cook for a Mr. Phister, who lived on the corner of Washington Street and Van Ness.

It is clear from Dunn's line of questioning that he expected Loui to remember more details of his employment, and that he found Loui's recollections frustratingly vague. In his notes following the interrogation, Dunn also observed that the "applicant

understands a little English, but it appears only such as might easily have been acquired by working a few years as a cook."[431] Even though Dunn felt that it was likely that Loui had lived in the United States for a significant period of time, he questioned whether he could prove beyond a reasonable doubt that he was born in the United States.

Dunn's belief that Loui should be able to remember these details reveals that immigration officials assumed Chinese domestic workers made an effort to familiarize themselves with the lives of their employers. In contrast, as a cook Loui had shuffled through numerous jobs, and, in most cases, he did not reside in any of his employers' homes, but rather came in to prepare meals then left. Although it is impossible to discern whether Loui preferred this mode of employment to the older system, in which employers viewed their live-in servants as servile members of their family, it is clear that as a cook who came and went, he did not acquire intimate knowledge of his employers' situations.

Lee Won Gim, who also claimed to be an American citizen and who appeared before immigration officials on June 24, 1914 seeking departure papers, described the work he did as "washing dishes" for a white a family who lived on the 800 block of Post Street. Lee lived with his father, Lee Git On, at 712 Dupont Street. Both men provided domestic help to white families in nearby neighborhoods. The father, Lee Git

[431] My archival research focused on occupations that Chinese immigrants and American-born Chinese listed on their certificates of identity (certificates of identity replaced certificates of residence in 1909). If the occupation listed was "cook" or "servant," I attempted to locate the case files for those individuals, which included the arrival or departure interrogations conducted with immigration inspectors. It is important to note that the occupation of departing or arriving Chinese immigrants and American-born Chinese was only one element of the information that immigration inspectors hoped to obtain. File 13376/8-1, Chinese Arrival Files, San Francisco, Records of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, RG 85, National Archives, Pacific Region, San Bruno, CA. (To be cited henceforth as CAF, SF.)

On, worked as a cook for whites and his typical schedule found him leaving their apartment "very early in the morning" and returning home each night at 7 or 8 PM.[432]

Tom Loong Lum, another cook, returned to San Francisco on the S.S. Chiyo Maru on June 15, 1914 and presented himself as a native-born American citizen. Tom was born at 771 Clay Street and attended a Chinese school on Waverly Place for six years before quitting at the age of 16, at which point he went to work in the Palace Hotel as a cook for three years. He then quit and left for Los Angeles, but failed to find work there. Tom returned to San Francisco and worked as a cook for a year at the Fairmont Hotel, before departing for China. Tom noted that his brother Tom Loong Goey also worked in Palace Hotel.[433]

The immigration files suggest that Chinese boys tended to begin work as cooks at the age of 15 or 16. In an interrogation about her family, Chin Dung Quai stated to inspectors that her son, Yee Ngoon Wing, had attended a Chinese school in San Francisco from the age of 8 or 9 until he was 15, at which point he left to go and work as a cook for a white doctor's family.[434] Wong Mun Yuck and Wong Mun Dun, brothers, both attended the English School at the Congregational Mission from ages 12 to 15, while also attending the Wong Gar Mon Chinese School, until they both left to work as cooks. For the Wong brothers, their additional schooling in English was likely seen as an opportunity to expand their work options. At hotels Chinese workers could get by speaking only Chinese to their fellow cooks and waiters, but work for a private, white family required a basic grasp of English. At 15, Wong Mun Yuck ended up working for a woman by the name of Mrs. Dunn, whom he recalled living near the

[432] File 13490/5-13, CAF, SF.
[433] File 13490/ 5-3, CAF, SF.
[434] File 14122/9-5, CAF, SF.

intersection of Larkin and Pine streets, in the well-to-do neighborhood located immediately west of Chinatown.

The immigration files also suggest that mobility was the rule and not the exception for Chinese cooks and servants. As was the case with a number of Chinese cooks who were based in San Francisco, when the devastating earthquake struck in 1906 Wong Mun Yuck left the city and moved to Woodland, California, a town outside of Sacramento, where he worked for a Dr. Fairchild and then as a cook at the White House restaurant. His brother, Wong Mun Dun, was even more peripatetic in his employment. At 15, his first job was an apprenticeship with his uncle, who was the head cook at the American Boarding House at Post and Powell streets in San Francisco. After a year working there, Wong Mun Dun left the city for the town of Hollister, outside of San Jose, where he spent a year cooking for a white family before moving back to San Francisco. Wong Mun Dun was working in a liquor store in San Francisco when the 1906 earthquake occurred, at which point he went with his brother to Woodland, where he also worked in the White House restaurant for four years. At the time of the brothers' interrogation in 1913, when they were seeking departure papers for a trip to China, Wong Mun Dun had returned to San Francisco where he worked as a cook at the Union Club and then at the Immigration Station on Angel Island – the very place he was required to answer to his interrogators.[435]

Family networks often explained the migratory patterns of Chinese cooks, yet it is clear that an informal network of job advice existed as well. In white authors' accounts of Chinese servants, they typically described the appearance of a new Chinese servant as a mysterious occurrence (such as Reed did). Such accounts fail to grasp how

[435] File 14517/2-6, CAF, SF.

Chinese immigrants went about obtaining employment. Ng Gin Tow, for example, explained that he left San Francisco, where he had moved from Monterey at the age of 15, for Santa Barbara, after hearing from sources that "Santa Barbara was a better place to work." In Santa Barbara, Ng started work at the Mascaul Hotel, but only stayed for four months, opting instead to work as a private cook for a Mr. Eland, and then a Mr. Johnson in nearby Montecito. Ultimately, Ng ended up back in Monterey at the age of 27, to take care of his ill mother. Ng had attended the Chinese Missionary School at Washington and Stockton streets while living in San Francisco. His interrogation was expedited by immigration officials based on his ability to speak English relatively well, and because A.M. Osio, a white merchant in Monterey, was able to identify him as the child of Ng Doo Gin and Jew Shee, who were living in the United States at the time of his birth.[436] That Ng Gin Tow stayed at one place for a short period of time, while remaining in other positions for considerably longer periods, was apparently not uncommon. Ng Bing Chung (no relation), explained that even though he had worked as a cook for white families in San Jose for fifteen years, the time he spent with specific families varied widely based on their needs and presumably the economic conditions that would have allowed them to hire a cook. He noted that with each family it varied: "Sometimes stay long, sometimes only a few days."[437]

Kim Lem epitomizes the mobility of the Chinese cook, and the variety of jobs they might hold. In an interrogation conducted by J.H. McCall on August 15, 1911 at the recently opened Angel Island immigration station, Kim told McCall that he was 29-years-old and was born at 720 Stockton Street in San Francisco. Seeking departure

[436] File 13861/1-4, CAF, SF.
[437] File 13485/12-24, CAF, SF.

papers for a trip to China, Kim offered a diverse and varied employment history. Following the 1906 earthquake, Kim moved to Tucson, Arizona where he worked as a cook in a restaurant (he did not specify whether the restaurant was a Chinese restaurant that catered to the Chinese community or a restaurant for a white clientele). After a year in Tucson, where the file notes he was arrested and then freed "as a native," Kim moved to Los Angeles where he worked in a Chinese restaurant named Lum Ying for a stint. Then, Kim relocated to the Ojai Valley in Ventura County north of Los Angeles, where he did housework at Mr. Stewart's School for two months. From there Kim traveled to San Fernando and worked for Mrs. George Porter for a year, before going to Las Vegas, Nevada, to work as a cook in a concrete plant for a period of nine months. Kim's last job, at the time of his planned departure, had been working as a waiter in the Pekin Restaurant on Main Street in Los Angeles.[438]

In five years between 1906 and 1911, Kim worked as a cook in a Chinese restaurant, as a servant for a private school and then forna white woman in her home, and as a cook in what likely was a cafeteria for workers at a concrete plant in Las Vegas. Kim spent a relatively brief period of time at each job, and displayed a willingness to move hundreds of total miles and across multiple state borders looking for better positions. It is unlikely that Kim would lie about his employment history and offer such a convoluted list of positions, since the reason interrogators sought out this information in the first place was to gather any potential contacts who could fill them in about Kim's life, if the need arose. If McCall chose to, he could contact sources familiar with the Chinese community in the various places Kim listed living, and see if any of them recalled his presence. In addition, McCall would be able to ask his sources, and, if

[438] File 13376/5-2, CAF, SF.

possible, Kim's employers, whether their servant or cook had ever discussed where he was born, since Kim's ability to depart and return legally rested on his ability to prove that he was a native-born citizen of the United States.

Although San Francisco remained the main port of entry and departure for Chinese immigrants and American-born travelers, by the early part of the twentieth century the Chinese community, as revealed in these narratives, was more far flung. Routinely, Chinese cooks moved from city to city responding to employment opportunities passed along by kin and through clan connections. Again, from interrogations alone, it is difficult to determine whether Chinese kinship claims were indeed truthful, in that there were specific advantages to be gained by asserting that a merchant was one's father, or that one was the brother of an American-born Chinese resident who had already successfully established their nativity. Erika Lee has argued that in resisting Chinese immigration restrictions, Chinese immigrants and entrepreneurial middlemen established elaborate "paper" families as a means of gaining entry into the country.[439] Despite being "fictional" (in that paper families were not families by virtue of blood kinship), historian Estelle Lau has argued they were nonetheless an important part of the way that the Chinese community in the United States defined itself and worked collectively, and resisted what they considered to be the unjust nature of immigration policy.[440]

A community of Chinese chefs, who trained new members into the profession, shared information on jobs and working conditions, and undoubtedly socialized, resembled a family, albeit one not defined by shared blood. Immigration officials

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[439] Lee, *At America's Gates*, 200-7.
[440] Estelle Lau, *Paper Families: Identity, Immigration Administration, and Chinese Exclusion* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

commonly expressed suspicion over the veracity of such familial relations, and cooks did not escape scrutiny. Loui Yai, for example, was denied entry when he attempted to land aboard the SS Nippon Maru on July 12, 1903. (He appealed his case and it went to Circuit Court, where a judge overturned the decision and ruled in his favor). Loui claimed that prior to his trip to China he had been working for his uncle Yip Ngah Ming in Elko, Nevada, as a cook in the Depot Hotel. Loui also claimed to have been born at 820 Dupont Street in San Francisco, in 1882. The fact that Loui was unable to provide a detailed employment history, or explain how he ended up in Elko, likely contributed to the immigration officials' suspicions. They may have believed that Loui had entered the United States as a laborer, and as a result of the Scott Act could not leave and reenter. As a result, he had to create a false connection to San Francisco in order to convince officials he was born there, and then use fictitious kinship to explain how he ultimately ended up in Elko. Or, if Loui was attempting to enter the United States for the first time, he may have been instructed to describe Yip Ngah Ming as his uncle, a story Yip would have been coached in as well.[441]

In addition to having to master details about their real or paper family histories, Chinese cooks and servants had to recall for inspectors details about their employers' families. Jow Toy, who was interrogated on Angel Island in 1913 while applying for a certificate of identity to leave the country, stated that he had been working as a gardener and a cook for white rancher named Sherlin, in Belmont, down the peninsula from San Francisco. When Jow was unable to answer whether Sherlin had any children, Inspector A.W. Long expressed surprise that Jow did not know the answer to what he took to be

[441] File 13861/6-17, CAF, SF. In deciding against Loui's admission, Immigration Commissioner Hart Hyatt North noted that although Loui claimed that his parents could verify his birth in San Francisco, neither appeared to testify.

such a basic question about his employer's life. In Jow's case the suspicion was heightened because Jow's father, Jow Ng, had been able to provide these details when asked.[442] When Chinese cooks and servants displayed knowledge about their employers' backgrounds and personal histories the interrogation process was expedited. Mah Gee, a 28-year-old seeking to depart on a trip to China in 1914, moved with his family from San Francisco across the bay to Alameda after the earthquake, and then to Vacaville by himself. In Vacaville, Mah worked as a cook for a white woman named Mrs. Williams. In Mah's case, he was able to satisfy the Inspector J.H. McCall's questions about Mr. Williams' occupation (he worked as a fruit farmer) and whether the family had any children. Mah stated that the Williams had two boys – as a follow-up question, Mah was asked to give their names (Lee and Frank), and to state whether they were married.[443] Mah's ability to provide this information would have been seen as a positive indication that his employment history was truthful, while at the same time providing inspectors with the names of sources they could contact if it became necessary to pursue more information on Mah.

Ng Bing Chung, the cook in San Jose, was unable to name any of the white people who employed him, despite his inspector's urging (and despite having worked for white families in the city for fifteen years). Revealing the true intent of his questioning, the immigration inspector asked Ng whether he could provide the names of any white people who could verify his claim that he was born in the United States. Ng responded by stating that he had never shared that information with any white people.[444] Unlike the Chinese servants depicted by Reed, Baldwin, and Daggett, who were

[442] File 13341/4-10, CAF, SF.
[443] File 14390/22-2, CAF, SF.
[444] File 13485/12-24, CAF, SF.

portrayed as members of the families who employed them, Ng, if we assume his employment history was truthful, maintained his distance and privacy. Ironically, this was what many restrictionists and anti-Chinese advocates had sought to police all along – intimacy between male Chinese servants and white families – based on the belief that Chinese men posed a sexual threat to white women and children. Nonetheless, immigration officials became suspicious when Chinese cooks failed to provide personal information on their white employers.

Revealingly, when Chinese cooks and servants were able to obtain permission to depart or enter without intense scrutiny, it was because they conformed to white representations of Chinese servile behavior and the belief that deferent Chinese immigrants could not be a threat. Hom Yen Look was born in Marysville, CA, a mining town in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in 1893. In August 1911, Hom met with immigration officials on Angel Island in order to obtain the necessary papers (known by its government number as Form 430) that would allow him to exit the United States for a trip to China. Hom had to prove that he was a native-born American citizen. When asked to provide biographical details Hom stated that he had worked as a cook for white families and for a restaurant in Marysville, and that growing up he had attended a Mission school in the evenings, prior to gaining employment. Unlike other Chinese residents attempting to procure departure papers, Hom's interview was very brief. Noting that Hom and his siblings, who were also seeking departure papers, "all speak excellent English, [and] are fully Americanized," Inspector W.H. Webber concluded that "their native birth is apparent at a glance."[445] "Americanized" was a crucial cultural descriptor. Since Chinese exclusion was a strategy used by the

[445] File 13647/2-1, CAF, SF.

American government to defend the white race, "Americanized" signified that a Chinese individual was not a racial threat. In addition, since individual immigration officers possessed discretion in determining whether a Chinese immigrant would be allowed to leave or reenter the country legally, entirely circumstantial evidence, such as Hom's fluent English, played an important role in their decisions.[446]

In the case of Lum Jun, racial cues were also evident. Lum, who conducted an interview in Fresno in June 1913 for the purpose of obtaining departure papers, relied on testimony provided by his boss, S.W. Norton, who owned the Norton Café where Lum cooked. Norton explained to the immigration inspector that "everybody calls [Lum] by his American name, Charlie." When asked if he believed "Charlie" when he claimed to be born in the United States, Norton testified that "Charlie is a good boy [Lum was 29-years-old at the time] and I would believe his statements in all cases."[447] Lum's white employer, Norton, was willing to use his reputation and status to lend credibility to Lum's story – and to convince suspicious immigration officials who believed that most Chinese lied. Yet Norton's description of Lum as a "boy," a term often used in white descriptions of African Americans, also indicates that Norton regarded Lum as an inferior he controlled and someone who was therefore harmless.

Although it is impossible to form a comprehensive picture of the lives of Chinese cooks and servants during the era of exclusion, it is clear that for many Chinese immigrants and American-born Chinese, their occupation bore little resemblance to the romanticized one that popular sources presented. The typical Chinese servant rarely

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[446] McClain, *In Search of Equality*, 218-9. Although individual cases could be appealed within the immigration bureaucracy, immigration officials maintained final say over entrance.
[447] File 13893/9-4, CAF, SF. Lum was also able to produce as further evidence of his American birth, voter registration papers.

stayed in one job for a long period of time. Flexibility, not unassailable devotion, marked his career path.

Conclusion

In the immediate aftermath of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, there was no public consensus on the legislation's lasting impact, its day-to-day significance, or whether it was just. For Esther Baldwin, the exclusion of Chinese immigrants was a grave injustice precisely because it was her belief that – under her tutelage and supervision – her Chinese servants bore little resemblance to the threatening "laborer" the United States wished to keep out. Working as a missionary in China, Baldwin employed Christian converts as employees, and this was a practice she wished to continue in an unmolested manner upon her return home. When European thugs attacked her gentle, obedient Chinese servant, it was in Baldwin's mind a direct indictment of American immigration policy and its priorities as a whole, a point she made clear in her petition to Congress asking that an exemption be made allowing her to bring in domestic help.

For Reed, who claimed that Japanese servants lacked the colorful idiosyncracies that had made Lee Sing so interesting, the Chinese servant functioned as a symbol of the authentic yet fading place he referred to as the "old" American West. Glenn has argued that it was common for live-in Chinese servants to be replaced by newer Japanese immigrants. Glenn estimates that at the height of Japanese immigration to the United States, from 1904 to 1907, in the San Francisco area alone, approximately 4,000

Japanese men worked as servants or "houseboys." Many of the Japanese servants were students who did domestic work on a temporary, part-time basis.[448]

Daggett, in the dedication to *Yellow Angel*, struck a similar tone to Reed's, noting that the book had been compiled for her husband and for "friends of earlier California days who deplore with me the passing of the 'Yellow Angel.'"[449] In part, Daggett lamented the "passing of the 'Yellow Angel'" – meant here to refer not just to Sue Chang but to an entire class of Chinese servants – because she felt that Japanese servants made a poor replacement. In *The Yellow Angel*, the chapter "The Understudy" depicts the narrator's employment of a Japanese servant while Sue Chang is visiting China (in order to see his wife and children who are barred from immigrating to the United States), and the dire consequences that follow. Initially, the Japanese servant cooks wonderful meals and keeps a spotless kitchen in a manner comparable to Sue Chang. On the eve of a meal for some of Temple Hill's "prominent" neighbors, however, he quits suddenly, declaring that "I think I go learn be doctor." The selfish Japanese servant consumed with his own personal advancement appears as a stark contrast to Sue Chang, whose desire to perpetually please his employers meant that he would never leave on such short notice and risk their social status in the process.[450]

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[448] Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride*, 107-9.

[449] Daggett, *Yellow Angel*, (dedication). Although Daggett tried to position her family as representative of an older California lifestyle, her literary depictions need to be taken with a grain of salt. According to the 1910 Census, Daggett's husband worked not as a rancher but as a Los Angeles real estate developer. According to the census, the Daggetts did employ a Chinese servant by the name of Sue Chang, and the narrator in the novel is most certainly an autobiographical figure.

[450] Ibid., 44-55. Daggett's depiction of Japanese immigrant opportunism also reflects the more widely held belief of the period that whereas the Chinese community in the United States did not pose much of a threat to white Americans by the first decade of the twentieth century – more recent Japanese immigrants looked to get ahead given any chance. As Chester Rowell noted dryly in 1909, "we find the Chinese fitting much better than the Japanese into the status which the white American prefers them both to occupy – that of biped domestic animals in the white man's service." Chester Rowell, "Chinese and Japanese Immigrants – A Comparison," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 34, no. 2 (1909): 3.

In *Yellow Angel*, although Sue Chang does decide to take a job as a cook at a hotel in San Bernardino where his brother works in order to earn more money, his time away from Temple Hill is brief. Despite the extra pay, the kitchen at the hotel is dirty, the food is rotten, and the white waitresses he works with are unrelentingly cruel to him. Most importantly, as the narrator emphasizes, he misses the comfort of the familial and nurturing environment at Temple Hill.[451] While Daggett was willing to recognize that in practice, Chinese servants chose to opt out of live-in domestic service in favor of working at hotels and in other situations, in *Yellow Angel,* Sue Chang comes to see his decision as a mistake, and realizes that the chance for self-improvement that comes with residence in a white middle-class home is worth more than money. Sue Chang's sentimental attachment to Temple Hill trumped even the temptation of more money.[452] Yet observations such as these bear little resemblance to the changing structure of domestic work and do little to explain the implications of these changes. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, Chinese cooks comprised a highly mobile workforce. Chinese cooks, as interrogations revealed, were not likely to stay with one employer for a long period of time, and by the twentieth century, were far less likely to live in their employers' homes.

Even as a select group of white Americans clung to the image of a Chinese servant who was loyal to the family who employed him, reality had changed dramatically. Individuals like Baldwin, Reed, and Daggett expressed genuine sympathy

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[451] Daggett, *Yellow Angel*, 83-104.
[452] Again, the figure of Mammy is an obvious point of comparison. As Micky McElya argues, commentators on Mammy frequently claimed that while she received wages for her service to white families – her main motive was a natural urge to ensure the welfare of their children and homes. Micki McElya, *Clinging to Mammy: The Faithful Slave in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 2007.

for what they believed to be the figure of the loyal and obedient Chinese servant, yet they grasped onto a discursive figure that they had created in order to serve their own intentions and needs, and they failed to acknowledge the day-to-day obstacles and scrutiny confronted by Chinese service workers who were not intimates of white homes.

Written testimonies about the servility of the Chinese immigrant, and how this servility was valuable to domestic service, sustained a racial understanding of the Chinese that both preceded and persisted into the Exclusion Era. So prevalent was the idea that Chinese immigrants possessed unique racial attributes for service work, as a discursive concept, this idea came to inform federal policy during the First World War. As the next chapter examines, the United States military sought to simultaneously reward and exploit the servitude of the Chinese male immigrant, and was willing to make exceptions to Chinese Exclusion in order to do so.

Chapter 6

The Columbus Refugees: Servants to the Nation?

Introduction: "Pershing's Chinese?"

This chapter departs from servitude in the home in order to examine the historic plight and significance of a group of Chinese immigrants known as "Pershing's Chinese." Residing in northern Mexico in 1916, "Pershing's Chinese" were a group of laborers and merchants who provided goods and services to the United States Army's Punitive Expedition, which under the command of Brigadier General John J. Pershing had crossed the Rio Grande River and entered Mexico in an attempt to track down and capture the dissident Mexican leader, Francisco "Pancho" Villa. When the Punitive Expedition ended, 527 Chinese residents of Mexico accompanied Pershing's troops back into the United States, fearing reprisals against their lives as a consequence of having helped the United States Army. Because the majority of these migrants were banned from entering the United States by the Exclusion Act, their situation provoked a debate as to whether they deserved asylum, and, if so, what form that asylum would take.

The name assigned to this group of Chinese refugees, "Pershing's Chinese," reveals just how linked they were to the famous military commander. The Chinese immigrants who entered the United States with Pershing were permanently grateful to him for "rescuing" them from Mexico. More importantly, the public acceptance of "Pershing's Chinese" was indeed contingent on the willingness of General Pershing and

the officers who worked under him in the Army, to endorse and validate the Chinese refugees' presence in the United States. Ultimately, by working as servants, waiters, and cooks for the United States Army during the First World War, the refugees who had come to the United States with the Punitive Expedition were able to stay in the country. Initially let in under the specific provision that they would provide labor for and be the responsibility of the United States Army stationed in the American Southwest, the refugees became the subject of a renewed debate regarding their status when the First World War ended and their labor was no longer needed by the military. In November 1921 Congress passed Public Resolution 29, which granted them permanent residency in the United States, although under the conditions that they would not be allowed to become citizens and that they could not exit and then reenter the United States.[453]

Rather than referring to the Chinese who entered the United States in 1917 as "Pershing's Chinese," as many of their contemporaries did, I have chosen to describe them in this chapter as the Columbus refugees. This name is apt in that the Chinese who entered the United States were detained in a refugee camp outside of Columbus, New Mexico, while their fate was decided by government and military officials. During the initial days of their detainment in Columbus, it was common for newspapers to refer to the Chinese who entered with Pershing as the "refugees in Columbus." The name Columbus refugees is also fitting because Villa's raid on the town of Columbus, New Mexico, set into motion the sequence of events that led these 527 Chinese residents of northern Mexico to eventually flee across the border for their safety.

It is nonetheless important to explain how "Pershing's Chinese" gained popular currency at the time. The idea of ownership is implicit in the name "Pershing's

[453] For the text of Public Resolution 29, see *United States Statutes at Large, Vol. XLII* (1921), 325-6.

Chinese." Understood as belonging to Pershing and his troops, the Columbus refugees' public identities were defined through their status as servants: they were controllable, harmless, and useful to their "owners."[454] The cultural and social ownership that white employers had long claimed over their Chinese domestic employees, as the previous chapters have discussed, allowed them to contest the legal rationale that Chinese immigrants were harmful to the nation. Under their supervision, employers had argued since the 1860s that Chinese servants not only improved as individuals living and working among the moral environment provided by white families, but also saw their racial servility put to good use.

Military officials readily adopted similar explanations in attempting to justify why the Columbus refugees should be allowed to stay in the United States. Unlike employers and religious groups in previous decades, whose protests against the Exclusion Act remained only protests, Pershing and his associates achieved actual results. By performing the role of servants to the nation and its military interests, the Columbus refugees demonstrated how even during the height of the Exclusion Era, exceptions could be found to the harsh provisions of laws designed to restrict Chinese immigration. By 1917, the United States government had developed a complicated apparatus for policing and preventing the entry of Chinese laborers into the United States. In the case of the Columbus refugees, however, it bent and eventually modified its own rules in order to both reward and exploit their purported servility.

Because of the extraordinary circumstances surrounding them, it is possible to view the admission of the Columbus refugees into the United States, and the passage of

[454] There are obvious comparisons here to literal social and economic ownership implied in labels such as "Jefferson's slaves," and in the way that women have traditionally assumed their husbands' names and a surrogate status within marriage, such as "Mrs. Jefferson."

Public Resolution 29 in 1921, as anomalies in the federal government's policy toward the Chinese. Specifically, Pershing's popularity and clout as a military leader has been used to explain why the Columbus refugees received favorable treatment.[455] This chapter argues that their saga does not represent an anomaly: instead it exposes how the intertwined concepts of race and service continued to inform how Americans – in this case Americans acting as representatives of the state – assessed the worth of Chinese immigrants. When white, black, and Chicano men were drafted into military service during the First World War, military officials argued that the Chinese were not stealing "American" jobs, but rather contributing their particular racial talents in ways that freed American manpower for the war effort. Chinese servants performed the race-specific roles assigned to them by proving to be industrious workers, by willingly working in jobs that native-born Americans refused to take (such as cooking in the military's tuberculosis hospitals), and by demonstrating their loyalty and gratitude.

The Columbus refugees also illustrate the limitations placed on the Chinese as members of a race ineligible for citizenship, and as members of an immigrant group whose rights within the United States were severely restricted. As had been the case in the nineteenth century and the early-part of the twentieth century, racial ideology both defined how Chinese immigrants might win acceptance in the United States and limited the form that this acceptance would take.

The United States' First Refugees?

[455] See for example Edward Eugene Briscoe, "Pershing's Chinese Refugees in Texas," *Southwest Historical Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (1959): 457-88.

Scholars of the United States' refugee policies have argued that the federal government did not distinguish between refugees and immigrants prior to 1945. In 1945, President Truman issued an executive order that allowed displaced persons in Europe who were unable to return to their home countries, to use as refugees unclaimed immigration quota spaces and come to the United States. From 1945 until 1980, United States' refugee policy "consisted of a series of ad hoc and disparate presidential directives, special legislative acts, and grants of parole status by the U.S. attorney general," most notably the 1952 Walter-McCarren Act, which was used specifically to assist political dissidents fleeing from communism. It was not until 1980, in the aftermath of the refugee crisis resulting from the Vietnam War, that the federal government passed the first Refugee Act formalizing the United States' policies.[456]

Yet the fate of the Columbus refugees indicates that prior to 1945, in order to accommodate this group's unique circumstances, Congress was forced to create a special category of "refugee." In the official government documents that were produced during the debates surrounding whether the Chinese who had entered with the Punitive Expedition would be allowed to remain in the United States, they were referred to as either the "refugee Chinese" or the "Chinese refugees."[457] In 1917, when the Department of Labor worked out an agreement with the United States military that gave the Columbus refugees the opportunity to stay in the United States in exchange for their

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[456] Irene Bloemraad, *Becoming a Citizen: Incorporating Immigrants and Refugees in the United States and Canada* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), quote on 126-7. See also, Naomi Zucker and Norman Zucker, *Desperate Crossings: Seeking Refugee in America* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 24-43. On the United States' policy toward displaced persons in the aftermath of World War II, see Gil Loescher and John Scanlan, *Calculated Kindness: Refugees and America's Half-Open Door, 1945 to the Present* (New York: Free Press, 1986), 1-24.

[457] See, for example, House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Registration of Refugee Chinese, Hearings on S.J. Res. 33 Permitting Chinese to Register under Certain Provisions and Conditions*, 67th Cong., 1st Sess., November 8, 1921 (Serial No. 8).

labor, and, in 1921, when Congress passed Public Resolution 29 allowing the Columbus refugees to stay indefinitely as non-citizen residents, both acts were exceptional and had no historic precedent.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, efforts to restrict European immigration alongside Asian immigration had gained momentum, and, despite President Wilson's efforts to veto anti-immigration legislation, eventually resulted in the passage of the 1917 Immigration Act.[458] Yet increased restrictions also forced the government to debate the needs for the concurrent creation of exceptions. For example, in response to a 1912 bill introduced by John L. Burnett, a Democratic Congressman from Alabama and chairman of the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, which presented an early version of the legislation that would eventually become the 1917 Immigration Act, Charles Nagel, the Secretary of Commerce and Labor, suggested that the bill be amended so that individuals who could prove that they were attempting to enter the United States in order to flee "religious or political persecution" did not have to meet the proposed literacy requirement.[459] The 1917 Act, while not incorporating the provision for refugees escaping political persecution, did allow for

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[458] The 1917 Immigration Act required all immigrants to undergo a series of medical tests, to demonstrate their literacy in their native language, and to prove to immigration officials that they would not become a public charge. In addition, the 1917 Act also banned immigrants who were alcoholics and radical engaged in acts that were considered subversive. The 1917 Act also expanded restrictions on Asian immigration, creating an Asiatic Exclusion Zone that additionally encompassed India, Southeast Asia, and Korea. On the 1917 statute, see John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1955), 196-204.

[459] Joint Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Admission of aliens into the United States. Letter from the Secretary of Commerce and Labor, submitting department views on H.R. 22048, a bill to further restrict the admission of aliens into the United States, in response to inquiry of Mr. Burnett,* 62nd Cong., 2d sess., March 30, 1912, H. Doc. 659.

immigrants fleeing religious persecution to enter the country even if they were illiterate.[460]

In August 1918, with the war in Europe nearing an end, President Woodrow Wilson personally urged Congress to pass a resolution that would allow displaced refugees to come to the United States. Frank Polk, the acting Secretary of State, framed the issue in relation to the United States' international image. Referring specifically to 1,800 Serbian refugees trapped in the Soviet Union at the outbreak of the October Revolution, Polk argued that assisting these refugees would have a "good moral effect in the Balkans." Polk had informed Wilson of the need for a special resolution to accommodate European refugees based on the fact that the refugees "are destitute and, even if entirely free from mental or physical disability of the kind inhibited by the [1917] statute, would yet per se be likely to become public charges here."[461] Polk called attention to a fundamental problem in immigration law – since statutes like the 1917 Immigration Act sought to bar the entry of any immigrant who might become a public charge, special legislation was necessary to allow refugees, who in most cases had lost their personal possessions, to enter. Despite Wilson's personal plea, however, Congress did not amend the 1917 Immigration Act.[462]

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[460] As Higham notes, this was done mainly in the interest of assisting Russian Jews. Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 203.

[461] Joint Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Admission into the United States of alien refugees. Message from the President of the United States, transmitting report by the Acting Secretary of State submitting draft of a joint resolution authorizing the admission... of aliens who are refugees from conditions created by the war*, 65th Cong., 2d sess., August 22, 1918, H. Doc. 1262.

[462] James Hassell argues that the individual immigration officials, who determined whether any given immigrant might be able to enter, "relaxed the usual standards when granting entry visas to bona fide refugees" from Russia. James Hassell, *Russian Refugees in France and the United States Between the World Wars* (Philadelphia: Diane Publishing, 1991), 33. Martha Gardner demonstrates that the "likely to become a public charge" provision of the 1917 Immigration Act was rarely used to prohibit the entry of women who stated that they planned on working as domestics once in the United States. Unlike other forms of labor, domestic service was seen as suffering from a shortage of willing workers. This

Congress's deliberations on what to do with refugees created by the War continued into the 1920s. While Russians and other Eastern Europeans affected by the Revolution provided the initial focus, attention shifted to the plight of Armenians displaced and murdered as part of a genocidal campaign by the Turkish government. In January 1923, the Senate passed a bill that proposed to allow members of the Armenian race entry into the United States as refugees, in light of "cruel deportation, and unprovoked massacre at the hands of the Turkish military and civil authorities."[463] By 1923, the United States had introduced a provisional quota system that would provide the basis for the 1924 Immigration Act. Again, the law proved to be a problem, since Armenians could only enter the United States under the quota slots allocated to residents of Turkey, which had already been exhausted. On February 23, 1923, with only a week remaining in the Congressional session, the Democratic Senate minority leader, Joseph Robinson from Arkansas, made an impassioned speech on behalf of the Armenian refugees in which he cited various reports on the atrocities that they had endured, and claimed that it would be "criminal" for Congress not to act. Robinson's Republican counterpart, Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, agreed with him. Even though Lodge was adamant supporter of restricting immigration to the United States, in the case of the Armenians he felt that immigration restriction should not interfere with an "act of humanity."[464] Yet the problem was precisely that – the refugee bill designed

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perception would obviously benefit the Columbus Refugees as well. Martha Gardner, *The Qualities of Citizen: Women, Immigration, and Citizenship, 1870-1965* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[463] Senate Committee on Immigration, *Admission into the United States of certain refugees from near eastern countries*, 67th Cong., 4th sess., January 9 (calendar day, January 15), 1923, S. Rept. 1010, 3.

[464] "Admission of Armenian Refugees," 64th Cong., 4th sess., *Congressional Record – Senate* (February 23, 1923): 4351-53.

to allow Armenians to enter the country in excess to Turkey's quota slots was bundled with legislation seeking to reform immigration policy as a whole. It failed to pass.[465]

Although the government's actions in regard to the Columbus refugees cannot be seen as constituting a refugee policy – since they were quite literally the only ones to which relevant legislation applied – it does demonstrate their uniqueness in gaining this status. For the Columbus refugees, the category of "refugee" emerged as a classification that allowed officials to work around immigration laws and to improvise in terms of how they were interpreted. One likely reason that scholars have failed to account for the Columbus refugees – besides their relatively small number – is because the literature on the United States' refugee policy has focused on how the category of refugee emerged as distinct from the category of immigrant, even though post-World War I debates show that this distinction had confounded American legislators all along. In addition, unlike European refugees who were limited by quotas and the provisions of the 1917 Immigration Act, with the Columbus refugees, their refugee status was created due to the fact that they were classified as laborers who were members of a race that was barred from immigrating altogether.

Servants and Citizens

In this history of immigration to the United States, the acquisition of citizenship has typically followed settlement. The great exception to this American narrative was

[465] As Aristide Zolberg has argued, one of the main ramifications of the United States' failure to create distinctions between immigrants and refugees in the years that followed World War I was its subsequent policies toward Jews attempting to flee Nazism in the 1930s. Aristide Zolberg, *A Nation by Design: Immigration Policy in the Fashioning of America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 270-2.

the experience of Asian immigrants.[466] Prior to 1943, when Congress repealed the bar on their naturalization, Chinese immigrants entering the United States were not allowed to become citizens. The Columbus refugees reversed the relationship between settlement and citizenship entirely. By performing servile and gendered labor for the United States Army, the Columbus refugees could prove themselves to be good "citizens" (although not in a legal sense) and patriots, and as a result they might be allowed to settle permanently.

Gender, as well as race, defined the experience of the Columbus refugees. Like Chinese immigrants in the past, it was through their labor as domestic servants that the Columbus refugees allegedly revealed their true worth. Linda Kerber argues that "in the liberal tradition, rights are implicitly paired with obligation" to create a definition of citizenship. In order to enjoy rights protected by the state, individual citizens have legal obligations. For example, the right to a trial by jury is balanced by the legal obligation to serve on a jury if called. Throughout American history, Kerber argues, the idea of citizenship constructed through rights and obligations has been a gendered one. The right to own property and the right to vote, to name just two elements of legal citizenship, were the exclusive privileges of white men well into the twentieth century.

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[466] The 1870 Naturalization Act accorded the privilege of naturalization to whites and blacks only. During the late-nineteenth century and in first part of the twentieth century, Chinese, Japanese, and Indian immigrants all tested the interpretation of this Act, but were repeatedly denied the right to naturalize by the Supreme Court and lower appellate courts. In 1943, because China was an ally in the war against Japan, Congress repealed most of the exclusionary acts against Chinese immigrants and allowed for the admittance of a small number of Chinese immigrants and the naturalization of Chinese immigrants already in the United States. Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America (*Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 41-4. As Nancy Cott has pointed out, prior to the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, which standardized procedures for naturalizing both men and women, immigrant women did not acquire citizenship on their own – their citizenship was contingent on the naturalization of their husbands. In instances where native-born American women married immigrants who had not naturalized, these women lost their rights of citizenship. Nancy Cott, "Marriage and Women's Citizenship in the United States, 1830–1934," *American Historical Review* 103, no. 5 (Dec. 1998): 1440-1474.

Women still had obligations, but these obligations were defined socially rather than legally. For example, women demonstrated their citizenship through expressions of patriotism, maintaining spousal loyalty, and in creating a moral and functional domestic space.[467] Building on Kerber's argument, the circumstances of the Columbus refugees demonstrate how patriotic obligations could exist outside of legal citizenship, or even the promise of citizenship, for the Columbus refugees. The Columbus refugees' acceptance and right to remain in the United States was contingent on the services they could provide as workers. Yet like American women who were obligated to cater to the domestic needs of men as a national duty, the Columbus refugees' work took on meanings that transcended the simple fulfillment of an economic role.

The experience of the Columbus refugees also connects to how citizenship has been constructed in a martial context. Historically, military service has been an important avenue for groups seeking to demonstrate their worthiness for both legal and social citizenship. For example, the enlistment of blacks in the Union Army during the Civil War was originally intended to free whites from menial jobs, so that they could engage in combat. When the Civil War drew on, however, more and more blacks found themselves serving on the front lines. The military service of free African Americans and former slaves helped to galvanize public opinion about blacks and prepare the way for legal citizenship following the war."[468] Under segregation, when it had become evident that white Americans intended to continue to deny black Americans equal right,

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[467] Linda Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1998), xxi.
[468] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Business, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper's & Row, 1988), 8. John David Smith notes that: "the U.S. Colored Troops carried out various military duties and in the process surprised a doubting Northern public and their severest and most racist critics." John David Smith, ed., *Black Soldiers in Blue: African American Troops in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, Press), xv.

World War I functioned as a catalyst for the emergence of the "New Negro," who possessed a globalized outlook on the plight of African Americans in the United States. Black soldiers gained through fighting abroad a masculine sense of self that in turn led them to question and openly criticize the subservient role that blacks were expected to perform in relationship whites.[469]

Lucy Sayler has shown how the participation of Asian immigrants in the American military during the Great War also proved to be an important – albeit slow and uncertain – means of gaining legal citizenship. As Sayler documents, "Asian soldiers who underwent the 'baptism of fire,' proving they were not 'yellow,' fit into the war-era narrative of sacrifice and valor. Their claims to the reward of citizenship exposed fundamental tensions in American citizenship policy that judges and administrative officials struggled to reconcile, with conflicting results."[470] Whereas European immigrants who served in the American armed forces during the war became eligible for immediate naturalization, a similar policy for Asian immigrants would have contradicted the Supreme Court rulings that denied Asians the right to naturalize. Nonetheless, on a local level state judges, particularly in Hawaii, rewarded Asian immigrants' citizenship as a reward for their service. In 1925, however, the Supreme Court revoked the naturalization of Hidemitsu Toyota, a Japanese immigrant who had served in the Coast Guard and been granted citizenship by a federal circuit judge in Boston, thus upholding its previous decisions that Asians were racially ineligible to

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[469] Chad L. Williams, "Vanguards of the New Negro: African American Veterans and Post World War I Racial Militancy," *Journal of African American History* 92, no. 1 (Summer 2007): 347-370; See also, Barbara Foley, *Spectres of 1919: Class and Nation in the Making of the New Negro* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003).
[470] Lucy Salyer, "Baptism by Fire: Race, Military Service, and U.S. Citizenship Policy, 1918-1935," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 3 (Dec. 2004): 848.

become citizens. It was not until 1935, after a decade of lobbying by Asian American veteran groups and white representatives of the American Legion, that Congress passed legislation that made it possible for Asian veterans of the armed forces to receive citizenship.[471]

Unlike black and Asian soldiers who saw actual combat, the Columbus refugees – with the exception of one individual, discussed below – were relegated to domestic work as part of the nation's military mobilization during World War I. In assigning the Columbus refugees' gendered work – cooking and cleaning for troops garrisoned in the United States – military officials denied them an opportunity to partake in combat, and achieve the martial citizenship that military service provided. This was not a coincidence, but the result of the racial belief that the Chinese were suited for this type of labor. Commentators in the twentieth century refrained from explicitly describing the Columbus refugees as emasculated or effeminate, as had often been the case in earlier decades. Yet their assignment to labor that was considered an affront to the masculinity of white men implied this.

The experience of the Columbus refugees was not without an even more closely related precedent, albeit one that resulted in a different outcome. At the outset of the Spanish American War, on the morning of May 1, 1898, the Asiatic Squadron of the United States Navy, led by Commodore George Dewey, arrived in Manila Bay in the Philippines and attacked the Spanish fleet stationed there. Prior to the declaration of war between the United States and Spain, Dewey's fleet had been docked in the neutral, British-occupied port of Hong Kong, awaiting assignment. As was common at the time, Dewey had enlisted Chinese sailors to supplement his manpower. During the Battle of

[471] Ibid., 848-76.

Manila Bay, when it became clear that there were not enough white sailors to perform all of the combat procedures required, Chinese sailors were ordered to join in the naval combat.[472]

Joel Evans, a gunner on the USS Boston, noted in an eyewitness account published in August 1898 by *Century* magazine that the Chinese onboard were "ordinarily used for fetching and carrying," but a shortage of hands had led them to be impressed into more active roles during the battle. As Evans recalled,

> The Chinese showed as much nerve as the Americans. They toiled at the whips and in lifting and carrying the ammunition. Their faces were as impassive as when serving dinner in Hong-Kong harbor. They chattered to each other in their own language, and laughed in their celestial way, when a shot, striking the foremast, shook the ship, caused the paint to scale off the mast a foot from us, and the angle-lines which strengthen it inside to rattle loudly. "Velly good," said one, and mechanically resumed his task. They, too, were curious; and when some man would sing out from the ports that we had struck a Spanish ship they were as happy as we.[473]

Evans' surprise at the "nerve" displayed by the Chinese servants structures his account. Conditioned to associate their servile work with an emasculated status, Evans encountered firsthand a masculine display that challenged his preconceptions.

Evans emphasized that the Chinese servants took equal joy in defeating the Spanish enemy, and that their loyalty to their employers translated into loyalty to the American cause. It is clear from Evans' account that he thought the Chinese servants

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[472] Overall, five percent of all sailors in the American fleet engaged in the Battle of Manila Bay were of Chinese descent. In addition, during the subsequent Philippines War, American officers recruited Chinese residents of the Philippines to work as corps bearers, cooks, and in other support services. William Strobridge, "Chinese in the Spanish-Cuba/American War and the Philippines War," in Benjamin Beede, ed. *The War of 1898 and U.S. Interventions, 1898-1934: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1994), 102-3.

[473] Joel C. Evans, "The Battle of Manila Bay - The Destruction of the Spanish Fleet as Told by Eye-Witnesses, Part IV, Narrative of the Gunner of the BOSTON," *The Century* 56 (August 1898): 624-628.

who joined in battle deserved to be rewarded. Dewey, the commanding officer, shared this view and recommended that the Chinese sailors and servants who had served with him personally on the flagship of the fleet, the USS Olympia, be allowed to enter the country as a reward for their bravery. In August 1899, the *Brooklyn Eagle* reported that a Chinese Sunday school affiliated with the Central Congregational Church in Brooklyn sent Dewey a letter expressing its "satisfaction in finding that [Chinese sailors] have a friend in one who has deservedly gained so high a position of confidence and honor."[474] Immigration officials, however, informed Dewey that unless he drafted a list of the names of all the Chinese servants that he wished admitted, and sent that list to Congress so that they could create special legislation, they could not allow Chinese laborers to enter the United States.[475] Dewey never took this step, and the Chinese sailors' naval service went unrewarded.

Unlike the Columbus refugees, the Chinese servants under Dewey's command did not face immediate danger. In 1917, Pershing and his associates convinced the Department of Labor that there was no alternative to not letting in the Columbus refugees – if they were denied at the border and forced to return to Mexico their very lives were at risk. Still, this did not stop the Department of Labor from pursuing deportation to Mexico or China as possible options that would allow the United States to uphold the Chinese Exclusion Act.

Gender and race governed the Columbus refugees and their status, and operated both as legal constraints, and social frameworks through which their presence in the United States was explained. The Columbus refugees could not become citizens, could

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[474] "Religious Comment," *Brooklyn Eagle*, August 5, 1899.
[475] "Dewey's Chinese Seamen," *New York Times*, February 23, 1899.

not determine how they labored (until 1921), and were denied the chance to participate in combat – perhaps the most valuable asset by which male non-citizens could make a case for citizenship. The Columbus refugees could, however, provide service, and the Americans they encountered embraced the chance to exploit what they felt to be the natural role of the Chinese.

The Punitive Expedition

On March 9, 1916, Pancho Villa, commanding a force of 485 men, attacked Columbus, New Mexico a small city along the United States-Mexico border located about eighty miles west of El Paso. In the process of searching the town for weapons and valuables, Villa's men either intentionally or unintentionally – depending on the account – set fire to Columbus's buildings and homes. Although Villa's troops suffered the bulk of human loss as they were pursued by troops of the 13th Cavalry stationed in the area, Villa and his men killed 18 American soldiers and civilians during the raid on Columbus. Following the raid, President Woodrow Wilson ordered Brigadier General Pershing to lead a 10,000 men "Punitive Expedition" into Mexico to track Villa down and capture or kill him.[476] Wilson had assumed that because Villa was an enemy of the Mexican leader Venustiano Carranza (who would become President of Mexico in March 1917), Carranza would not object to the Punitive Expedition's incursion into

[476] Villa's motives for attacking the United States are highly contested among historians. As Friedrich Katz has argued, the most common motive attributed to Villa is that he blamed United States' military support for the defeat of his División del Norte troops at the hands of Venustiano Carranza in 1915, and that he knew that a raid on Columbus would provoke the United States into a military response. Villa hoped that such an action would in turn rally Mexicans to a popular cause and sow discontent against Carranza, who would be forced into the role of allowing American troops to enter Mexico. Other historians maintain that Villa was working with German spies, eager to distract the United States from events in Europe. For a full account of the different motives attributed to Villa's raid on Columbus, see Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 545-82.

Mexico. United States' officials failed to take into account that most Mexicans living in the northern states of Chihuahua and Sonora remained loyal to Villa.[477]

Less than a week after the March 15 raid on Columbus, the Punitive Expedition crossed into Mexico. Pershing's entrance into Mexico was not greeted as the act of ally, but rather as an invasion. Robert Thomas and Inez Allen, historians with the War Histories Division of the Army, note that "it became increasingly evident that the Mexican people, as well as the government, had no love for their northern neighbors and that, in many instances, they were assisting Villa to evade American troops."[478] Not only did the United States Army fail to receive any support from the local population, it also ended up battling with the official government of Mexico. Angered that President Wilson had failed to seek permission to enter Mexico with the United States Army, Carranza's troops directly engaged units of the Punitive Expedition in northern Mexico and defeated a unit of Pershing's troops at a skirmish in Carrizal on June 21.[479] Pershing failed repeatedly in his attempts to track down Villa.

The American invasion exacerbated hostility already directed against the Chinese community in Mexico. In the fall of 1916, with American troops establishing bases and camps to support the Punitive Expedition, Villa issued a declaration calling for the expulsion of all foreign property owners – specifically singling out Americans and the Chinese. Previously, in the summer of 1916, when Villa's troops occupied Ciudad Chihuahua, he pledged his protection to all foreign merchants "excepting from

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[477] Charles Harris and Louis Sadler, *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution: The Bloodiest Decade, 1910-1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 300-6.
[478] Inez V. Allen and Robert S. Thomas, *The Mexican Punitive Expedition under Brigadier General John J. Pershing, United States Army, 1916 – 1917* (Washington, D.C.: The Chief of Military History, 1954), III-26.
[479] Harris and Sadler, *The Texas Rangers and the Mexican Revolution*, 300-6. After the clash at Carrizal, American and Mexican diplomats were able to put an end to fighting between Pershing and Carranza's troops, as both nations were fearful that a formal war would break out.

the same the Chinamen and the white Chinamen, that is the Americans." According to Friedrich Katz, "while the few Americans in Ciudad Chihuahua managed to hide, the Chinese the Villistas found were mercilessly massacred."[480]

Unlike in the United States, where antipathy against the Chinese reflected the belief that it was impossible for white labors to compete with the "slave" labor that Chinese laborers provided, in Mexico, anti-Chinese sentiments, while racial as well, focused on the role of Chinese immigrants played as merchants, and the widely held opinion that Chinese merchants played an exploitative role in the economy. Villa's pronouncements against the Chinese built upon anti-Chinese sentiments that both preceded his rise to leadership in the north of Mexico in 1916, and would persist after his demise, culminating in the expulsion of Chinese from the state of Sonora in 1931.[481]

On January 18, 1917, with American involvement in the First World War imminent, President Wilson ordered General Pershing to withdraw his troops from Mexico. When the Punitive Expedition made its way back to the United States border, eleven months after the troops had entered Mexico, although Pershing had failed to capture Villa he had acquired a caravan of 2,700 refugees. Among these refugees were

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[480] Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 626.

[481] On the history of anti-Chinese sentiments in Mexico, see Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "Racism and Anti-Chinese Persecution in Sonora, Mexico, 1876–1932,"*Amerasia* 9, no. 2 (1982): 1–27; Leo M.D. Jacques, " The Anti-Chinese Campaign in Sonora, Mexico, 1900–1931" (PhD diss., The University of Arizona, 1974); and, Philip Denis, "The Anti-Chinese Campaigns in Sonora, Mexico," *Ethnohistory* 26, no. 1 (1979): 65-80. For an analysis of how anti-Asian immigrant ideology and government policy travelled between the United States, Mexico, and Canada, see Erika Lee, "Orientalisms in the Americas: A Hemispheric Approach to Asian American History," *Journal of Asian American Studies* 8, no. 3 (2005): 235-56.

Mexicans opposed to Villa who feared for their safety, expatriated Americans (including a significant number of Mormon colonists), and 527 Chinese men.[482]

An Ethical Dilemma and an Economic Opportunity

Confronted with 527 Chinese refugees, the United States government faced an ethical and practical dilemma. Excepting the merchants among the group, the Chinese refugees were barred from entering the United States by the Exclusion Act. After their arrival in Columbus, Pershing appointed his friend William Tracy Page civilian advisor to the Chinese with the hope that Page would be able to devise some sort of solution, since Pershing knew that their return Mexico would put them in grave risk. Pershing knew Page from their mutual service in the Philippines, where Page had worked as an immigration commissioner. The military held the Chinese in a guarded camp just outside of Columbus, so that they would not try to flee into the interior of the United States while awaiting their fate.[483]

Initially, officials with the Department of Labor wanted to send the Chinese refugees to Juarez, Mexico. The Santa Fe *New Mexican* reported on February 12, 1917 that immigration officials had hoped to transport the Columbus refugees under bond to El Paso, where they could then cross the border. However, army intelligence officers predicted that Villa, operating in the northern part of Chihuahua, planned to attack Juarez and that any Chinese in the city would likely be executed, as had been the case in

[482] In 1917, Mexicans were still allowed to immigrate freely into the United States and did not face any restrictions based on their nationality. It seems that the Immigration Act of 1917, which was passed on February 4, only days after Pershing and his caravan arrived, was not applied to the refugees.
[483] Briscoe, "Pershing's Chinese," 467.

Chihuahua.[484] Following the refugees' arrival in Columbus, Chinese Consul-General T.K. Fong came to El Paso from San Francisco along with representatives of the Six Companies. Fung Ching, a delegate from the Six Companies, carried with him relief money raised in San Francisco that was used to provide daily rations for the refugees. While members of the Chinese community went about ensuring that the refugees had adequate provisions, the United States Army entertained a proposal from Governor Esteban Cantu of Mexicali, who was allegedly willing to accept the Chinese migrants in the municipality of Mexicali and employ them as laborers. The plan fell through, however, when Cantu demanded that each Chinese migrant pay a charge of $150 upon entering his district. Looking for an alternative solution, American officials were prepared to send the Chinese laborers to Sonora, until the Governor of Sonora explicitly barred their entry.[485]

Indecision about the Chinese refugees reflected skepticism on the part of government officials about Pershing's claims that the refugees were loyal and helpful servants to the Army. In both the coverage of the Punitive Expedition, and the subsequent return of Pershing to Columbus, the press expressed suspicion about the motives of the Chinese merchants and workers conducting trade with the troops. An article in the *New York Times* depicted the Chinese refugees as opportunistic – a characterization that would have been familiar to an American audience of the period – and intent on simply making money. As the article pointed out, "these Chinese flocked to the American lines to make money, while the Mexicans, through pride, refused to sell

[484] "Steady Villista Drive to Border; To Attack Juarez and Kill Chinese," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, February 12, 1917.
[485] F.B. Worley, "Five Hundred Chinese Refugees," *The Overland Monthly* 71 (April 1918): 293.

hungry soldiers anything to eat."[486] The paper was hardly sympathetic to the Mexican loyalists who aided Villa, yet it described them as possessing a national and patriotic spirit, unlike the sojourner Chinese. F.B. Worley reported in the *Overland Monthly* that the United States had allowed in the 527 refugees directly attached to the army, but an additional 500 Chinese refugees remained camped in Juarez, Mexico, just over the border. They too faced immediate danger, but their entry was barred, unless they travelled directly to a Pacific port where they could then depart for China.

The Columbus refugees found themselves in a type of borderland limbo, unable to return to Mexico, and legally not allowed to stay in the United States. The Six Companies were able to finance the return of a select number of the refugees to China, but could not afford to send the whole group, even though this was solution that was actively promoted by the Department of Labor. Finally, approximately 40 Chinese refugees were able to establish their credentials as merchants, allowing them to enter legally. They had to provide a bond stipulating that once in the United States they would remain merchants. An additional number of refugees either decided to take their chances by returning to Mexico, or were able to finance a return trip to China with their own money. This left 450 Chinese refugees in the Columbus camp, at a cost to the military of $100 per day.[487]

With the Six Companies unable to continue covering the costs of provisioning the Columbus refugees, and the government unable to broker any type of agreement with Mexican authorities providing for their safe return to Mexico, it was perhaps inevitable that the United States military would seek some sort of pragmatic solution.

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[486] "Chinese on Army's Hands," *New York Times*, July 18, 1916.
[487] Worley, "Five Hundred Chinese Refugees," 293.

Working with the Civilian Advisor Page and the Department of Labor, Army officials determined that the Chinese refugees could stay in the United States as workers for the military as long as they also remained under the direct supervision of military officials. The Columbus refugees were given strict orders to stay at their assigned camp or base, and were expressly prohibited from travelling without military permission, which would be a violation of their parole. To enforce these restrictions, each refugee was issued a special certificate of identity that indicated his unique status.[488] On June 6, 1917, not long after the arrangement was finalized, a private Southern Pacific Railroad train left Columbus for Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas with the Columbus refugees on board. In order to ensure their safe arrival and fair treatment, the refugees were accompanied on the trip by the Chinese Consul Fong and representatives from the Six Companies. Fong stayed in San Antonio for a week to monitor the conditions.[489]

The arrival of the refugees in San Antonio was heralded as a remedy for the labor shortage caused by the start of the First World War. The *San Antonio Light* noted that the Chinese refugees were to stay in the city "and work exclusively for the government until conditions make it possible for them to return either to Mexico or to China." It is apparent that the reputation of the Chinese for domestic service work preceded them. In the same article, the author communicated that Commanding Brigadier General James Parker wanted to make it clear to area civilians that the Chinese were to be employed only by the military. "Many letters and telephone messages and a number of personal visitors" had been received by military officers, "asking that some of the Chinese be allowed to work in private homes," although the

[488] House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Registration of Refugee Chinese,* 944.
[489] *San Antonio Light*, June 8, 1917. Cited in Amy Elizabeth Nims, "Chinese Life in San Antonio," (M.A. Thesis, Southwest Texas State Teachers College, 1941), 7.

newspaper reported that General Parker was adamant that "not one of the Chinese will be permitted to take private service."[490] Clearly military officials did not want to engage in the business of placing Chinese servants into private situations, especially since this would have violated federal law.

During the early days of the Columbus refugees' residence in San Antonio, local newspapers also emphasized that they would only be staying in the United States for a brief period of time, as temporary laborers. In February 1918, an article in the *San Antonio Light* noted the Chinese worked eight to ten hours a day as cooks and launderers and had proved to be diligent workers, even though army officials had refused them time off in order to celebrate the Chinese New Year. Referring to the refugees' detention on military bases and their status as detainees, the article made it evident that while the Chinese were contributing to the war effort, they remained in the United States only at the good graces of the government, and were in no position to dictate the terms of their employment.[491]

The first task assigned to the Chinese refugees was to clear an area of scrub so that Camp Wilson (later renamed Camp Travis) could be constructed as barracks and training facilities for newly conscripted recruits. In April 1917, the United States had entered World War I and was rapidly attempting to mobilize and prepare troops for battle in Europe. The conscription of American men influenced the Army's design for the Chinese – with the normal labor force occupied with military training, the Chinese were seen as freeing up human resources for battle. Military officials had predicted that the task of clearing the ground for Camp Wilson would take three to four months of

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[490] Ibid.
[491] "Chinese Detained Here Celebrate New Year's Day Today with a Feast," *San Antonio Light*, February 10, 1918.

labor; Chinese workers accomplished the feat in a month and a half. Despite receiving no overtime pay, the Chinese refugees assigned the arduous task apparently continued to work long after their official day had ended, which was attributed to the fact that "they were glad to be with the army again, and inside the United States."[492] Speaking to the *San Antonio Light* in 1921, Page praised the Chinese refugees' "willingness to work twelve to eighteen hours a day without extra pay, never complaining if the urgency of the work required it." In his testimony presented before Congress, Page claimed the refugees worked from 7 AM to 11 PM at the job, receiving twenty cents an hour for their labors.[493] While Page attributed the Chinese refugees' industry to their innate work ethic and sense of gratitude, and a desire to prove their utility, the face of an uncertain future must have also weighed heavily on their minds. In addition, even though the Columbus refugees were not formally enlisted members of the armed forces, they were obligated to follow the commands of their military supervisors. Had they been told to work all night, for example, they would have had little recourse in resisting such an order.

With the ground clear and construction on Camp Wilson ready to begin, the question of how to use the labor of Columbus refugees again entered the military's considerations. The construction of Camp Wilson employed 6,000 Texan men; following their arrival, the Columbus refugees became the camp's cooks and launderers. At Camp Wilson, and – as the war effort progressed – at military bases and camps throughout Texas, New Mexico, Louisiana, and even Kansas, the Chinese refugees became a permanent, floating staff of mess cooks, officer servants, and

[492] Briscoe, "Pershing's Chinese," 473.
[493] "Chinese May Be Permitted to Stay Here," *San Antonio Light*, July 31, 1921.

waiters. At Camp Wilson, where the bulk of the Chinese men remained stationed, Page helped to create an English language night school. In his 1959 article, Briscoe cited Page's initiative as performing an assimilative function and as "a necessary cultural step in the direction of integrating the individual in his place in the American community." On a practical level, the school made for more effective cooks and waiters, who could then use English to communicate with their employers.[494]

Legislating Amnesty

In 1919, with the war's end, Page was able to secure some work assignments for Chinese refugees at bases and camps around the Southwest and in the lower plains states. In July 1919, Page resigned his position as Civilian Advisor to focus exclusively on his private business interests, a move that left the Chinese refugees without an advocate. Not surprisingly, in August 1919, the War Department, at the behest of State Department and Department of Labor, prepared a request to the 66th Congress asking for $86,000 to fund the repatriation of the Columbus refugees to China. Newton Baker, the Secretary of War, noted in his letter to the House of Representatives that it was "doubtful" that the military could continue to find sufficient employment for the 409 Chinese refugees still under their supervision.[495]

Although Congress agreed to allocate this money, the plan to repatriate the Chinese refugees was never put into effect. Page no longer held the post as civilian advisor, but nevertheless seemed to remain genuinely interested in what happened to the Columbus refugees. Page intervened on their behalf by rallying Pershing, as well as a

[494] Briscoe, "Pershing's Chinese," 474.
[495] *Appropriation for transportation to China of certain Chinese refugees from Mexico*, House Document 181, 66th Cong., 1st Sess., *U.S. Congressional Serial Set*, session no. 7645, vol. no. 34.

number of high-ranking military officials, to write letters of support for the Columbus refugees to stay in the United States. Initially, Page met little resistance in his efforts. At the end of 1920, the 66th Congress was on the verge of passing a bill that would allow the refugees to claim resident alien status. As Briscoe notes, the bill was tabled when a Chicago lawyer, Charles F. Hille, alleged that Page and his cohorts stood to gain financially from brokering this agreement. According to Hille, the Columbus refugees were going to pay Page a fee in exchange for his lobbying efforts. This allegation was never substantiated, and Page in turn accused Hille of delaying the legislation because he was maneuvering to serve as the lawyer for the refugees in exchange for payment. Nonetheless, in the midst of these exchanges, the bill languished and had not been passed when the 66th Congress came to an end with the elections of November 1920.[496]

In April 1921, when the 67th Congress met for its first session, Senator James W. Wadsworth Jr., a Republican from New York, introduced a new bill seeking to secure legal status for the Columbus refugees. Wadsworth's bill passed through the Senate, but came to a halt in the House of Representatives. In October 1921, Page travelled to Washington to help further its cause. Throughout this entire process, the Columbus refugees remained confined on military bases. Pending a legal decision on their status, they were unable to travel freely and look for work, leaving many unemployed.

To assist the Columbus refugees, in 1919 Page had called upon the Washington, D.C. law firm of Bouve and Parker to prepare a report on their contributions. Having served in the Philippines with Major Bouve, Page was able to get the law firm and A. Warner Parker, an immigration law expert, to take up the case *pro bono*. In January

[496] Briscoe, "Pershing's Chinese," 482.

1919, Parker submitted a report and testimony on the Columbus refugees before the United States Senate.[497]

Parker's report would feature prominently during the November 1921 hearing on the Chinese refugees, which took place before the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization. At the hearing, Parker not only presented his firm's findings on the Columbus refugees, but served as an expert witness answering the various questions that committee members posed. For example, Parker explained to John C. Box, a Democratic Congressman from Texas, and John E. Raker, a Democratic Congressman from California, that it was his understanding (based on what he had learned from Pershing), that the Chinese in Mexico did not originally attach themselves to the Punitive Expedition with the intent of entering the United States, but that this had occurred only after it became evident that those who had assisted the United States Army would be at risk if they stayed in Mexico.[498] Box in particular was skeptical about the motives of the refugee Chinese and whether they had joined Pershing's forces primarily as a means of fleeing Mexico for the United States.

Box's and Raker's line of questioning undoubtedly reflected general suspicions against all Chinese, who were widely believed to use any ruse to sneak into the United States. For example, E.J. Henning, the Assistant Secretary of Labor who took part in the November 1921 hearing, discussed – as an aside during the hearing – his belief that "American citizens of the Chinese race" should be barred from receiving American passports, although as he noted, unfortunately the American judicial system did not share his view. Henning also digressed to fill in Committee members on the latest

[497] House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Registration of Refugee Chinese,* 945.
[498] Ibid., 945.

attempts of the Department of Labor and immigration officials to more closely police Chinese immigrants attempting to enter the United States from Canada.[499] In a similar vein, a 1918 article from the *San Antonio Evening News* profiled immigration officers' attempts to patrol the United States-Mexico border against illegal Chinese immigration, and made no mention of "positive" cases such as the Columbus refugees. F.W. Berkshire, who was based in El Paso and responsible for overseeing the border from the California coast to Brownsville on the Gulf of Mexico, was primarily concerned with stopping smuggling operations and the drug trade. E.W. Smith, the main immigration official in San Antonio, dedicated most of his time to making sure that the Chinese in San Antonio had proper registration and were not illegally residing in the city.[500]

Given that the government dedicated most of its attention to policing the attempts of Chinese immigrants to enter the United States unlawfully, Congress seemed uncertain about what to do with the unique case of the Columbus refugees. Responding to Box, Parker stated to the Committee his belief that "they attached themselves to Gen. Pershing undoubtedly, to start with, as a business proposition; there was a chance for them to make money, and I suppose that was their principal object in attaching themselves originally to the expeditionary forces." To emphasize this point, Parker cited a letter from Pershing where the general stated that their need to flee Mexico came from the services they provided to the troops and the associated risks. Pershing argued that while the Chinese in Mexico had begun offering services to the Punitive Expedition based on their self-interest as businessmen, their decision to leave Mexico was not an

[499] Ibid., 968. During the hearing, E.J. Henning, the Assistant Secretary of Labor, mentioned this to Johnson as an aside.
[500] "Opium, Smugglers, Criminals Help to Interest U.S. Men," *San Antonio Evening News*, November 13, 1918.

opportunistic one, but reflected instead the real risks they faced by staying. By presenting the Chinese as brave assistants to the Army, Pershing and Parker justified their stay in the United States.[501]

An "Aptitude" for Sanitation

The willingness of the Columbus refugees to perform labor that posed high health risks, and that had been shunned by American workers, was cited as one of the foremost reasons why they should be allowed to stay in the United States. According to Parker, the Army was forced "to assign [the Chinese refugees] to duty in the tuberculosis hospitals in Fort Stanton and Bayard, New Mexico, where it had been found impossible to obtain satisfactory help for the conduct of the messes." Although the Columbus refugees did not have a choice as to whether they wanted to accept their assignment, military officials expressed satisfaction with the fact that they did the work without complaint.

More generally, American officers recounted being pleasantly surprised with the overall sanitation of the Chinese workers assigned to them. That they felt inclined to make this point speaks to the legacy of the nineteenth-century racial discourse that associated the Chinese with leprosy, unhygienic cooking practices, and filth. Colonel E.M. Wells, the commander of the United States Army General Hospital in Fort Bayard, commented: "They are hard workers, conscientious always, and have exhibited

[501] Pershing to Johnson, November 7, 1919, *House Reports*, 67th Cong., 1st Sess. (Serial No. 7921), Document 471, p. 2. The various reports and official correspondence on the Columbus refugees were included as appendices to the bill that was debated by the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization and which eventually became Public Resolution 29.

a surprising aptitude for observing the principles of cleanliness and sanitation."[502] With the refugees detained in Columbus awaiting a decision on whether they would be able to stay, Page anticipated that the Chinese refugees would eventually be put to work as cooks, servants, and waiters. He initiated a training program for them in the "principles of camp sanitation and hygiene."[503]

Page felt that if the Chinese were forced to return to China, the new sanitary practices they had acquired during their four years in the United States would mark them not only as aliens in their former home land, but also pose a risk to their health. Page clearly felt that their associations with American institutions had transformed the Chinese, and that their assimilation into civilized behavior could not easily be reversed. Writing to Albert Johnson, the chair of the House Committee, in a letter that was subsequently presented during the hearing, Page argued, that,

> The strongest reason why these men should not be returned to China, eliminating entirely what this Government owes them for their invaluable services, is, to my mind, the conditions they would be forced to live under in the Canton Province, where they originally came from. To return them to that life after they have been accustomed to living in the sanitary conditions which have surrounded them during the past three years and a half would undoubtedly cause great mortality among their number. The food they would be forced to consume and the filth they would be compelled to live in would take a toll that would shock humanity. Having spent 16 years in the Orient I speak advisedly. Their systems could not stand reverting to the life they would be forced to live, and as there would be no field of employment for the occupations they are fitted to follow – most of them being domestics – they would be forced to work as laborers at meager wages which would not permit them to live under hygienic conditions or to procure proper food.[504]

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[502] House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Registration of Refugee Chinese*, 949.
[503] Ibid., 948.
[504] Ibid., 954.

Page felt that deporting the Columbus refugees to China would put them in grave danger since their hygiene had improved and they could no longer tolerate the "filth" of their native country. He also believed that the job skills the refugees had gained as domestics had no place in a predominantly rural, uncivilized society. Page's beliefs mirror those of the white public health officials who operated in Chinese immigrant communities in the United States. Health concerns were a major element in organizing relations between Chinese immigrants and white Americans. As Nayan Shah has documented in San Francisco, the city's Chinatown was frequently alleged to be a spawning ground for diseases such as the bubonic plague. In the minds of reformers, any effort to incorporate the Chinese population into the social and economic life of the city had to be accompanied by sanitization.[505]

Patriots and Servants

References to the "racial efficiency' of Chinese workers also figured prominently in the Congressional debates preceding the passage of Public Resolution 29. Ironically, in public debates regarding the exclusion of Chinese laborers, their efficiency as workers was usually portrayed as a threat to the white worker. In "Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion," the widely circulated pamphlet published by the American Federation of Labor in 1902 and better known by its subtitle, "Meat vs. Rice," Samuel Gompers urged the United States government to renew the Exclusion Act based on the argument that less-than-human Chinese immigrants could survive in

[505] Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 3-14. Anti-Chinese politicians such as San Francisco's Mayor Kalloch felt that the best solution to Chinatown was to hermetically seal it off from the rest of the city, and to enforce a draconian health code against the neighborhood's residents.

conditions that white workers could not tolerate. Of the Chinese, Gompers felt that "their ability to subsist and thrive under conditions which would mean starvation and suicide to the cheapest laborer of Europe secures to them an advantage which baffles the statesman and economist to overcome." Furthermore, the AFL argued that the legacy of Chinese employment in domestic service and agricultural work was not something that could be quickly eradicated: "absolute servility was expected from those who took the place of the Chinaman, and it will take years to obliterate these traces of inferiority and reestablish the proper relations of employer and employee."[506]

In the context of aiding the cause of the military, however, "absolute servility" was not viewed as a problem. As was the case with Chinese immigrants employed as servants in private homes for much of the nineteenth century, servility was seen as a positive attribute of the Chinese race, and one that could be put to ready use. Colonel W.D. Chitty, who supervised Chinese refugees working at Kelly Field between August 1917 and 1918, noted that "in all cases the wages paid were small, but at no time was any question raised by them on that score." Major Frank Monroe of Fort Leavenworth in Kansas made a similar point, claiming that the labor provided by the Columbus refugees assigned to him allowed him to operate his mess at a cost of $40 per month, whereas hiring white men would cost $5 to $10 per month more. Colonel F.E. Fetchet of the Air Force estimated that the Chinese refugees employed at various airfields throughout Texas and Louisiana "released a great many men for war duty, probably not less than 1,000."[507] Page explained to Johnson, the chair of the Committee, that "These

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[506] Samuel Gompers and Hermann Gutstadt, *Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion; Meat vs. Rice; American manhood against Asiatic coolieism, which shall survive?* (San Francisco: American Federation of Labor, 1902), 14-15.
[507] House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Registration of Refugee Chinese*, 950.

Chinese have tried in every way possible to show their appreciation of the asylum which has been granted them and have worked, with few exceptions, longer hours than civilian labor would have been willing to work."[508] As noted earlier, Page's representation of the Columbus refugee's sacrifice carefully evaded the issue of whether they were involuntary laborers – unlike civilians they could not refuse a contract or quit a job.

D.H. Currie, commander of the Field Artillery Board at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, was one of the few officers who tried to reconcile what he considered to be the highly beneficial characteristics of the Chinese workers he encountered with their legal status as a dangerous race that had to be prevented from entering the country. Currie argued that "when the law against the admission of Chinese to this country was enacted it was to prevent the competition of coolie labor with our own native laborers, and there was undoubtedly danger to our own laborers in the Pacific States from unrestricted immigration of Chinese." However, in the specific context in which the Army was operating,

> There could be no danger in permitting these refugees to remain here. There is no wage competition between these men and any class of laborers in this country. Many of them have already gone into service as family servants at a time when the available supply of native servants is far below the demand. Moreover, these Chinese work at wages materially above those usually paid our own native servants, but their work is of such a high class that all who employ them consider their services well worth the extra wage.

Currie spoke from personal experience – he wished to retain a Chinese servant that was employed by his family.[509]

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[508] Ibid., 954.
[509] Ibid., 956-7.

Currie also found himself reproducing the arguments surrounding Chinese immigration that had persisted from the 1860s, which the exclusion laws had muted, but never eradicated altogether. Unlike Chinese laborers entering the United States as "paper sons" and undocumented laborers, the Columbus refugees benefited from the willingness of military officials to calculate their contributions to the country in concrete terms, and its ability to create exceptions to the Exclusion Act. Citing the various types of labor that the Chinese had performed during the war, Page argued to San Antonio residents in 1921 that the Chinese living in the vicinity of the city "have never cost the United States anything and have been instrumental in saving considerable money."[510] While white employers of Chinese servants had been attempting to make this very same argument ever since the Exclusion Act first went into effect in 1882, they lacked the authority that representatives of the state possessed.

Page presented the Columbus refugees as "good, loyal, honest servants of the Government," who not only raised funds for the local chapter of the Red Cross and participated in patriotic parades during the war, but had also endowed a hospital bed for wounded American soldiers in France by hosting a chop suey dinner at San Antonio's Menger Hotel.[511] Of course, such actions by the Chinese living in Texas and other states in the American Southwest were performed not as an obligation of citizenship, but rather as a voluntary gesture. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent the Columbus refugees were genuinely grateful to the United States for helping them to escape

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[510] "Chinese May Be Permitted to Stay Here," *San Antonio Light*, July 31, 1921.
[511] House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Registration of Refugee Chinese*, 955. Nims interviewed refugee Dong Chong for her thesis, who recalled the chop suey dinner at the Menger Hotel. Unfortunately, Nims's interviews with living Columbus refugees tended to focus on them verifying aspects of the research she had done independently, and not the refugees' perspectives on their own history. Nims, "Chinese Life in San Antonio," 9.

Mexico, and to what extent they were performing a role that they knew was required of them in order for them to be allowed to stay. In describing before the House Committee the veritable absence of any parole violations or other criminal behavior on the part of the Chinese, Page noted that the only Chinese refugee to violate parole, Jung Hoy, did so because the Seventh Field Artillery, which he was attached to, had shipped out to France. Upon his return to the United States, Page commented with evident satisfaction, "it is needless to state that he was not punished, but rather admired for his patriotic desire to follow his employers to the fields of battle, where he received wounds in action." As a result, Jung was the only refugee who was allowed to naturalize while still living in the camps.[512]

Not surprisingly, since the Chinese refugees were stationed at camps and bases located in the region that connected the American South to the West, their services were frequently compared to the labor that the large African American population of the region would have otherwise provided. This history predated the arrival of the Columbus refugees, although their presence again brought it to the forefront. In 1869, Texas newspapers participated in the debate on Cornelius Koopmanschap's proposal at a convention of Southern planters and financiers in Memphis, to set up a labor exchange where he would provide Chinese coolies to work on sugar and cotton plantations. While some Texan newspapers editorialized that Chinese contract labor would lead to a new

[512] House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Registration of Refugee Chinese*, 972. As Sayler has shown, if it had been challenged in court prior to 1935, it is unlikely that Jung's American citizenship would have been upheld. Sayler, "Baptism by Fire," 865.

race war, many papers welcomed Chinese labor as a more manageable alternative to emboldened, former slaves.[513]

In 1921, officers stationed in Texas, Louisiana, and New Mexico, revisited the theme of whether Chinese workers performed better than native Southern blacks. White and Chicano workers were also sometimes compared by officers to the Chinese refugees, although African Americans provided the focal point for comparisons. One officer wrote to Page that the Chinese were better workers than the white and colored workers that had preceded them, while another commented that the Chinese were "much superior to the Negro and Mexican in this section."[514] The culinary skills of the Columbus refugees were almost universally praised in the testimony that Page and Parker gathered to present before Congress. In the officers' mess, where it was not uncommon for officers to dine with their wives and children, officers complimented Chinese cooks and waiters for contributing to a serene domestic environment in the otherwise rough-and-tumble world of camp life.

J.S. Cecil, a Colonel of Infantry with the US Army, enthusiastically praised Fong Kee, a refugee who had been in his personal employment as a "cook and general housework man," and noted that "no matter what I want done, or when, I can always depend upon its being done on or before the time set, and it is always well done." Cecil wrote to Page that he had sent Fong to school, and hoped to continue to employ him if the resolution was passed by Congress and the Columbus refugees were allowed to stay. Cecil concluded his letter by saying that, "I have nothing against the negro – I was born and raised amongst them, and my people owned them as slaves – but I would actually

[513] Edward J.M. Rhoads, "The Chinese in Texas," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (July 1977): 2.
[514] House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Registration of Refugee Chinese*, 965.

rather have this one Chinese man than three negroes. He will do more work, better work, and, at the same time, not steal anything."[515]

After the passage of Public Resolution 29, Fong accompanied Cecil to his new post at Fort Benning in Georgia. With Fong, it is possible to trace briefly the extent to which Chinese refugees continued to perform service for Army officers and the military, even after they were allowed to move freely within the United States. Fong's file contains correspondence from Cecil to immigration officials in Texas. When Public Resolution 29 was finally passed and the refugees were required to register, pay the immigration head tax, take a medical examination, and submit photos for their certificates of residences, Fong was with Cecil in Richmond, having accompanied him on a trip from Georgia. Cecil wanted to know how to go about registering Fong, and whether this could be accomplished in Jacksonville or Norfolk, the two closest regional offices.

According to his file, Fong Kee contemplated a return trip to China in October 1923, for the purpose of remarrying and bringing back his son from a previous marriage. According to the manifest he filled out in 1922 as part of the registration process required by Public Resolution 29, his wife Leong Shee had died in China. In response to a letter of inquiry from the Commissioner of Immigration in Boston to W.W. Sibray, the Acting Commissioner General in Washington, Sibray informed the Boston office that Fong's ability to travel to China and return with a wife and his children, depended on his occupation, and asked whether his occupation put him in the exempt classes that were allowed to bring in women and children from China. Apparently Fong had moved to the Boston area – it is unclear whether he was still

[515] Ibid., 960.

employed by the Cecil family, since no reference is made to them. No further correspondence appears in Fong's file, nor was he issued the certificate that would have allowed him to exit and re-enter the United States legally.[516]

Life under Public Resolution 29

When Sidney Wharton, the commander of Camp Travis, prepared at the request of Henning a full list documenting where the Chinese were working on September 31, 1921, he found that 29 refugees were working at Kelly Field, an air base located on the south side of San Antonio, and that 98 refugees remained employed at Camp Travis (previously Camp Wilson). Twenty-six refugees were employed at Fort Sill in Oklahoma, and 27 at Fort Stanton in New Mexico. The rest of the Chinese refugees were scattered around different camps and bases, mainly in Texas and New Mexico. Of the 365 refugees still living in the United States as aliens, Wharton counted 65 without work – a number that he attributed to the fact that they had been unable to move about freely. Of the initial 527 refugees who had arrived in Columbus in 1917, the government had deported seven, 38 refugees had returned to China by choice, and four had returned to Mexico. Twelve refugees had died since their arrival, although Parker during the hearing made sure to point out – in yet another attempt to highlight the good sanitary practices of the refugees – that this was an extremely low number given the cramped confines of the camps, and the quickness with which disease could spread. The influenza epidemic that devastated the United States in 1918 and 1919, Parker noted, had done little harm among the Chinese refugee community.[517]

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[516] File 55027/1, INS, DC.
[517] House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Registration of Refugee Chinese*, 971-2.

On November 16, 1921, Congress passed Public Resolution 29, which authorized the Commissioner General of Immigration to issue certificates of identity to 365 Chinese refugees. During the Committee meeting that finalized the language of the resolution, none of the parties taking part tried to block outright provisions for allowing the refugees to stay, but they did take measures to make sure that Columbus refugees received the "privilege" to stay only if they adhered to certain rules and regulations. A major point of contention was whether the Columbus refugees would have the right to travel to China and then return to the United States. Parker explained to committee members that under the existing laws, Chinese laborers living in the United States had a right to return to China if they proved to immigration officials that they owned $1,000 worth of property. Parker also explained that if the Columbus refugees became merchants, this would allow them free movement between China and the United States. This point led Johnson to complain that many Chinese immigrants entered the United States as students and remained by becoming merchants, and to ask whether restaurant owners constituted merchants – a complicated distinction Henning tried to explain.[518]

Toward the conclusion of the hearing, Henning took the lead role in redrafting the language of the resolution. The bill that had passed through Senate made no mention of how the Columbus refugees were to be registered. Filling in the blanks, Henning advocated that not only should the refugees be registered in accordance with Geary Act and McCreary Amendment of 1892 and 1893, but that they should also be subject to the medical examinations and provisions required by the 1917 Immigration Act. Noting that the refugees were receiving a "privilege" in being allowed to remain in the United

[518] Ibid., 967.

States, Henning argued that "if they once leave this country that privilege should cease. I do not think we are called upon to give the privilege of coming and going."[519]

Henning was clearly reluctant to establish any precedent whereby the rights of Chinese laborers to leave and reenter the United States were expanded – even if the rights in question only applied to the Columbus refugees. Public Resolution 29 effectively marooned the Columbus refugees in the United States. If the refugees departed the United States as laborers, under the 1888 Scott Act, like all foreign-born Chinese living in the United States they would be barred from re-entering. The only refugees with the ability to visit family in China or Mexico were those who were able to claim the exempt status of merchant or student. Since Public Resolution 29 required adherence to the Immigration Act of 1917, which was directed against both Asian and European immigrants, the Columbus refugees also had to pay an eight dollar tax as immigrants "entering" the country, submit to a series of medical tests, and risk deportation if they were found to be living off public benefits, professing to anarchist or communist beliefs, or engaging in prostitution or drug use. Public Resolution 29 did exempt the Columbus Refugees from the literacy requirement of the 1917 Act, which otherwise would have required them to pass a reading and writing test in their native language. Finally, Public Resolution 29 included a stipulation, in response to the Hille controversy, which stated that no one was to earn money off the registration of the Columbus Refugees.[520] By January 29, 1922, immigration official E.W. Smith reported to the *San Antonio Express* that the 269 Columbus refugees who remained in San

[519] Ibid., 973.
[520] *United States Statutes at Large, Vol. XLII* (1921), 325-6.

Antonio had all received their certificates, and that 24 refugees had managed to save a total approximately $1100 in wages that they had earned during the previous years.[521]

News of the special status of the Columbus refugees circulated nationally, and in one instance, encouraged an attempt by a group of Chinese immigrants smuggled into the United States to claim a legal status. Immigration officials arrested Louie Ying in April 1932 at the Wing Fong potato ranch near Downey, California, just south of Los Angeles. During his interrogation before immigration inspectors, Louie claimed that he arrived in the United States as part of Pershing's caravan on June 4 or 5 in 1917, and that he had worked in the barracks in San Antonio for five years as a dishwasher. When asked if he was given any papers upon his arrival, Louie claimed that General Pershing had given him a pink piece of paper with his photo on it (the certificates of identity were printed on a pink-colored paper), and that Pershing himself had paid the head tax required to receive the paper. After being issued papers in 1922 (this would have been a reference to the certificate of residence authorized by Public Resolution 29), Louie claimed he moved to the Los Angeles area, and that four years prior, while living in Compton, he had lost his identification.

In a follow-up interrogation, inspectors pressed Louie for more details, asking him whether he had crossed any rivers when entering the United States from Mexico. Louie claimed not to have remembered "because we were so excited and there were so many people." Despite the inspectors' attempts to make Louie recall specific details, he claimed not to remember the name of Columbus, New Mexico or of the army camp where he was stationed in San Antonio. According to Louie, all he remembered was

[521] "Pershing's Chinese Save Money in the US," *San Antonio Express*, January 29, 1922. Although this sum represented a lot of money in 1922, for an individual Chinese laborer to be allowed to leave and then reenter the United States, he had to own $1,000 worth of property personally.

that "I was working for General Pershing." When asked if he remembered the name of the Mexican village he had lived in before entering the United States, Louie said he knew it only as "Wong Seung," which according to the translator meant "War King." The final straw came when immigration inspectors showed Louie a picture of the real Louie Ying who had registered in 1922 (which officials in Los Angeles had obtained from the El Paso office), and the Downey, California Louie Ying could not identify him. On January 22, 1933, Ying was deported from the port of San Pedro.[522]

Lin Ock Wong was arrested during the same raid at the potato ranch, and also claimed to be a Columbus refugee. Lin stated that he had initially entered the United States at Lima, New Mexico (the inspectors annotated this with a question mark, as there is no Lima, New Mexico). Lin stated that after having spent only two months in Mexico, "the Mexican people commenced to drive the Chinese out, killing them, so I followed a General or Colonel and washed dishes for him." Inspector Charles Dixon directed a number of questions at Lin designed to get him to describe the layout of Columbus, the relation of the army base to the town, and so on, which Lin claimed to be unable to answer because he was looking for work and he "was not particularly concerned with the scenery." Such a statement would have also raised red flags among the inspectors, since the refugees, confined to an army base outside of Columbus, would not have been able to look for work on their own volition. Like Louie, Lin was also shown a picture of a certificate of identity for the real Wong Lin Ock, to whom a certificate of residence had been issued, and whom the Lin Ock Wong of California claimed not to recognize. Immigration officials deported Lin as well.[523]

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[522] File 55777/309, INS, DC.
[523] File 55777/309, INS, DC.

It is unclear how the men in California came into possession of the information surrounding the real Louie Ying and the real Wong Lin Ock. Given the relatively small number of Columbus refugees, it was easy to verify whether the men were who they claimed to be. Regardless, the undocumented Chinese immigrants who were ultimately deported at San Pedro knew that being "Pershing's Chinese" afforded them the special status of being able to enter the United States as laborers, which was an exceedingly valuable exemption at the time. The men at the Downey potato ranch also demonstrated a basic familiarity with the narrative of the Columbus refugees, why they had left Mexico, and under whose supervision they had left. Since Mexican animosity toward the Chinese had not abated, it is possible these men had resided in Mexico before entering the United States, and were combining their own stories of persecution with that of "Pershing's Chinese," to give legitimacy to their escape. These cases reveal that the exceptional status of "Pershing's Chinese" offered a valuable opportunity for Chinese immigrants who had entered illegally from Mexico to represent their presence in the country as legal.[524]

When Columbus refugees ran afoul of the law on their own, they were not afforded any special status and were treated like any other immigrant found to be violating the conditions that allowed them to maintain their legal status. During the 1921 hearing before the Immigration and Naturalization Committee, Henning had argued for making the Columbus refugees subject to the 1917 Immigration Act specifically for this reason. "If within five years one of them gets in jail, becomes a bum

[524] Unfortunately, at least from the perspective of trying to understand the past, immigration officials did not ask either of the men at the potato ranch how they had learned about the Columbus refugees. Even if they had, it is perhaps doubtful that the arrested Chinese immigrants would have shared this information.

or loafer, or public charge, engages in prostitution or profits from prostitution," he noted, "all of these things we would have the power to deport them for."[525]

Louie Git, a 45-year old Columbus refugee, was deported by the United States government in August 1933 after he was convicted for possession and intent to sell opium, an offense that violated the 1931 Immigration Act and was punishable by deportation. Louie spent time in prison at the Bexar County Jail in San Antonio, the federal prison in Leavenworth, Kansas, and immediately before his deportation, at the Federal Detention Farm in La Tuna, Texas.[526] Fung On (known by his Americanized name, Tom Fong), was arrested in Chicago on the charge of selling 15 grams of smoking opium in April 1935. Fung contested the deportation ruling in his case by arguing that since he was ordered to pay a $50 fine during his sentencing and was not actually imprisoned, he could not be deported, since this would represent a form of double jeopardy. Ultimately, the Immigration and Naturalization Service ruled that this was not the intent of the law, and the Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago dismissed the case when an attorney representing Fung attempted to get it heard on appeal. Fung was deported in 1936.[527]

In last ditch attempts to remain in the United States, both Louie and Fung claimed American citizenship, stating that they had been born in San Francisco. This was likely an attempt by the men to avoid deportation since American citizens could not be deported, with the last tactic available to them.[528] When asked what state San

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[525] House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Registration of Refugee Chinese*, 971-2.
[526] File 55827/831, INS, DC.
[527] File 55908/508, INS, DC.
[528] As Lee notes, this was a common tactic, especially after the 1906 earthquake and fire destroyed most of San Francisco's paper records. As an immigration official from Seattle complained in 1924, "There is not much way on checking on the Chinese when they get in here. A number will have papers, a number

Francisco was located in, however, Fung could not answer. Upon further examination, Fung claimed to have travelled to Mexico from San Francisco at the age of three with his father (hence explaining his shakiness on the details of his earlier residence), who was later murdered by a mob of Mexicans. When asked by his attorney how long he had served as a cook for General Pershing, Fung responded by stating that he was not a cook for Pershing but a "spy." (This statement, oddly, was ignored by both Fung's attorney and the immigration inspectors present.) Fung spent five years with the army in the quartermaster department at Camp Stanley in Texas, working as a waiter in the dining room, earning one dollar a day, until he received his registration papers in January 1922. The tenure of his service did not win him any concessions – immigration officials denied his claims of nativity and he was deported.[529]

Louie's and Fung's cases reveal how the special status of the Columbus refugees made it difficult for them to claim citizenship, which was an important strategy for Chinese immigrants fighting deportation. In the case of Dear Tan, his status as a Columbus refugee registered under Public Resolution 29 actually led to his citizenship being revoked. Dear, who was legally a United States citizen by virtue of having been born in San Francisco in 1888, was nonetheless registered as a legal alien under Public Resolution 29. In 1923, Dear had moved to Washington D.C. where he was working at the Army Air Service Field in the mess hall. There he met with an immigration inspector from the regional office in Baltimore who obtained from him the necessary photos and the eight dollar head tax that the refugees were required to pay. Until 1919, Dear worked as a mess boy with the 5th Calvary. When the 5th Calvary moved to

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will not have papers, and when asked why, they say that they were born in San Francisco. Cannot show birth, for fire destroyed all." Cited in Lee, *At America's Gates*, 202.

[529] File 55908/508, INS, DC.

Marga, Texas, Tan found work with the 12th Division of the Air Service working as a servant for Major Walton in El Paso. When Walton was transferred to Bolling Field in Washington D.C., Dear accompanied him. In 1923, Walton had informed Dear of his ability to acquire the certificate of residence and had assisted him in initiating the process. Because immigration officers feared that various parties might try to profit from the process of issuing the certificates, the immigration inspector asked Dear why Major Walton was "taking such an interest in you" and whether he stood to receive any money or other types of gifts. Accordingly, Dear stated that Walton liked him simply because he was "a good boy and favorable to the service."[530]

During the interrogation, Dear testified that he was born in San Francisco at the corner of Dupont and Jackson streets, in a five-story building, although he could not remember the specific address. He offered the name of Der Way Shing, a partner in the firm of Now Wah on Dupont Street, as someone who could verify this. When pressed for details about San Francisco – a common interrogation tactic – Dear recalled to the satisfaction of his inspector that San Francisco's main post office was a marble building, that there were no street cars on Jackson Street when he lived there, that cable cars ran up rather than down Clay Street, that he had attended a Congregational school located on Washington Street, and that one took the ferry from San Francisco to travel to Oakland.

In his interrogation, Dear noted that he had moved to Terron, Mexico in 1915 to find work, and ended up working in an American grocery store there, before coming over as a refugee in 1917. During the Punitive Expedition, Dear was attached to the Fifth Cavalry. The inspector who had conducted Dear's 1923 interrogation noted that

[530] File 54214/20, INS, DC.

when officers of the regiment inquired as to whether he would be permitted to leave Columbus, New Mexico, and accompany the troops to El Paso in June of that year (presumably before the arrangement to send all of the refugees to San Antonio had been agreed upon), the local immigration supervisor wrote to Washington to see whether this was possible. The El Paso supervisor reported that Dear "has established himself so thoroughly in the good graces of the officers of this regiment by his industry, skill, good habits and dependability that they are loath to part with him." The same letter made reference to Dear's immigration files with the San Francisco and Portland offices of the Immigration Service, which the officer in El Paso had requested. As to Dear's assertion that he was an American citizen, the immigration supervisor in El Paso could not "satisfactorily corroborate" this fully but he was inclined to believe this was true. The interrogations conducted by the immigration officer in El Paso and by the immigration officer in Washington, DC, show that Dear gave the same answers to the same questions in both instances. Ironically, Dear had to settle for resident alien status, which meant that he was prohibited from leaving and re-entering the United States, even though he was an American-born citizen.[531]

Conclusion

Even though they were few in number, the Columbus refugees entered Texas at a time when the state's Chinese population was minimal. In 1940, the Chinese in San Antonio, almost all of whom came initially as refugees with the army from New

[531] Ibid.

Mexico, accounted for roughly 45% of the state's Chinese population.[532] Amy Nims, a graduate student in the MA program of Southwest Texas State Teachers College, wrote her 1941 thesis on "Chinese Life in San Antonio." Nims' scholarship was influenced by her personal connection to the Chinese community in the city. She notes in the preface to her thesis that she got to know her interviewees and their culture working as a teacher at the Chinese Baptist Church in San Antonio.[533] She argued on the first page of her thesis that the Chinese community in San Antonio had successfully adopted an American mode of living while also contributing to the city the "virtues of Ancient China" (which she took to be the innate business sense of the Chinese).

Nims' work can be seen as part of a larger assimilation project initiated in response to the arrival of the Columbus refugees. The Baptist Church Nims volunteered for was founded immediately after the First World War in the form of a mission, with the explicit purpose of teaching English and Christianity to the Columbus refugees living in the city. Ironically, in trying to establish the stellar reputation of San Antonio's Chinese community, Nims argued that the Chinese are "very law-abiding people…this may be due to the fact that only higher-class Chinese are allowed to enter the country." Although her thesis repeatedly mentions how the Columbus refugees as the core of San Antonio's Chinese community, she appeared to have difficulty reconciling the refugees' humble backgrounds with their alleged transformation.[534]

Like Nims, Briscoe also concluded his article with his personal assessment that the United States made the right decision in allowing the Columbus refugees to stay.

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[532] Rhoads, "The Chinese in Texas," 19. San Antonio had a population of approximately 50 Chinese residents prior to the arrival of the Columbus refugees.
[533] Nims, "The Chinese in San Antonio," iii.
[534] Ibid., 65.

Citing examples from his own research on the Chinese community of San Antonio, where many of the refugees stayed after the passage of Public Resolution 29, he found that none of "Pershing's Chinese" or their direct descendents had ever engaged in racial strife or conflict with the surrounding non-Chinese majority, none of them ever appeared on the relief rolls during the Great Depression, and that some even became Baptists. Briscoe had personally attended public school with some of the descendents of the refugees, so he was able to observe that "almost invariably, through attitude and behavior, the children revealed the excellence of their family life, and they usually made superior students."[535] Writing in 1959, during a period in which a premium was placed on the assimilation of immigrants into American life, Briscoe felt obliged to defend the Chinese refugees not only by raising their productive legacy as workers aiding the United States army, but as loyal Americans raised in good families, who had made the most of the government's beneficence in allowing them to stay. Briscoe did not extrapolate, however, from the example of the Columbus refugees to make any broader assessments of the exclusion policy as a whole.

It is difficult to assess exactly how many of the Columbus refugees went into professions that would have allowed them to claim merchant status. Despite Nims' assertion that the refugees relied on their "higher class" background in order to establish successful businesses in San Antonio, the available sources on the Chinese community in San Antonio show that a considerable segment of the refugee population remained employed at the city's military bases as cooks and waiters, and that others travelled all over the United States doing similar work. A 1925 article in the *San Antonio Express* reported that police officers had arrested eight of "Pershing's Chinese" who had been

[535] Briscoe, "Pershing's Chinese," 488.

working as cooks at Camp Travis and Kelly Field for gambling on the games of mah-jongg and fan-tan. This development, the article joked, had threatened to leave the army "breakfastless."[536] The Columbus refugees did not always follow the law – as this incident and drug convictions demonstrate – even if popular portrayals of the group tended to downplay or ignore any actions that might raise doubts about whether they should be allowed to remain in the United States.

What is clear is that white Texans never fully grasped the unique status of the Columbus refugees and the full complexities of how immigration laws affected the Chinese. An article published in the *San Antonio Express* in 1921, while Public Resolution 29 was pending before Congress, described how the Chinese community in San Antonio displayed little of the trickery and deception that the author Bret Harte had made famous in his 1870 story, *Truthful Language from Plain James*. Instead, the article's author praised the sanitary practices of the Chinese community, its low incidents of criminal activity, and the business philosophy of Chinese race that had helped them to prosper economically. The article touched on most of the prominent stereotypes surrounding the Chinese – for example, the author felt inclined to dispel the "fable" that Chinese dined on rats and other rodents. The article never addressed the special status of the Columbus refugees and the rules by which they had been allowed to stay in the United States. This is perhaps best captured by the irony of the article's headline, which read, "San Antonio Colony of Chinese an Example of Good Citizenship." Attempting to describe the specific circumstances of "Pershing's Chinese," the author stated that Public Resolution 29 "would give them the right to remain in the United States indefinitely with virtually the same privileges as citizens,

[536] "2 Army Camps May Go Breakfastless, Cooks Land in Jail," *San Antonio Express*, May 12, 1925.

except the right of voting."[537] The article did not bother to answer how one could be a good citizen without citizenship. Nor did it address the various restrictions on travel in-and-out of the United States, the constant scrutiny that Chinese residents of the United States faced domestically, and the absence of other "privileges" that went far beyond suffrage.

The Texas press was not alone in failing to recognize the significance of the Columbus refugees' naturalization being blocked by federal law. J.C. Stedman, a lieutenant in the Air Force who submitted testimony supporting the refugees in their attempt to stay in the United States, commented that if the Chinese were granted citizenship he "would not hesitate to give some of them employment."[538] These sources reveal that for white observers and employers of the Columbus refugees, their "citizenship" or social belonging was defined by the work they performed on the behalf of whites, and not by their actual legal status.

On a certain level, the story of "Pershing's Chinese" offers a comforting narrative, especially when read in the context of the many privations and travails that Chinese immigrants suffered while trying to enter the United States. The Columbus refugees directly aided Pershing's Punitive Expedition in Mexico, and in doing so, put their lives at risk at a time when assisting the United States Army carried direct and dire consequences. That they were eventually able to settle in Texas and other states suggests to historians (as Briscoe's account illustrates) that there was at least a modicum of justice to be found in immigration laws that otherwise viewed Chinese laborers as racial and economic threats. Yet immigration officials and the politicians

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[537] "San Antonio Colony of Chinese an Example of Good Citizenship," *San Antonio Light,* September 18, 1921.
[538] House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Registration of Refugee Chinese*, 962.

who were ultimately left to decide the Columbus refugees' fate, did not let the Chinese in unconditionally. Not only did the Columbus refugees have to continually prove their worth as cooks and servants, they had to do so in the face of racial expectations that had already to a large measure defined what white Americans felt to be their worth in the first place.

Conclusion

Domestic Concerns, Global Issues: Domestic Workers and Immigration Policy in the Present

Conclusions: The Cultural and Legal Meanings of Service

Since the 1850s, Chinese immigrants working as domestic servants typically found employment in private homes and hotels. In the estimation of many middle class Americans, the work of Chinese servants benefited the families whose well-being was paramount to the health of the nation. Middle class whites viewed domesticity as an inherent feature of the civilized races, and a cultural and physical outcome that could only be produced through the labor of others. The reliance of middle class Americans on servants meant that the ostensibly private concerns of the home were in reality a matter of constant public discussion. Following the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, the employers of Chinese servants sought to rectify what they felt to be unfair restrictions on Chinese immigration based on their own class and self-interests. These interests were predicated on the belief that members of the Chinese race were uniquely suited to provide domestic labor, since they willingly accepted their subservient status. Additionally, Chinese servants were key pieces in the efforts of Protestant missionaries to convert and reform the Chinese, both in the United States and in China. Protestants saw Chinese servants as an obedient and captive audience.

With the Columbus refugees, the alleged servility of the Chinese became a matter of the state. In determining whether the migrants who arrived with Pershing would be allowed to enter and stay in the United States, the military, immigration officials, and, eventually Congress, had to determine how to reward the Columbus

refugees for the services that they had performed for the nation and its armed forces. The laws and restrictions pertaining to Chinese immigration contained no language that distinguished domestic labor from other forms of labor. Chinese laborers had been barred from entering the United States on the grounds that they represented an economic, social, and racial threat. Yet with the passage of Public Resolution 29 in 1921, the state recognized that servile labor belonged to a different category – a point further supported by arguments that the Chinese were more competent than Americans in performing such labor. In doing so, the state implicitly recognized what supporters of Chinese servants had been arguing for years.

Acclaim for the virtues of Chinese domestic labor could never have existed without the representational foil of "Biddy." The tensions that marked the relationship between the predominantly Protestant and Anglo employers of servants, especially in the Northeast, and the Irish Catholic labor they were forced to hire, came to a head in the figure of Biddy. Biddy's ever present flaws, such as her inability to cook a sophisticated meal and her ignorance of how to properly care for delicate china, meant on a practical level that she was ill-equipped to carry out her responsibilities. Yet it was Biddy's impudence that truly infuriated her employers. Rather than meekly accepting her subservient status and what she could learn from her Anglo superiors, like the rebellious Irish in general, she insisted on her independence. In the minds of her employers, Biddy was not fit to govern herself, and certainly not fit to govern a middle class household – yet this never stopped her from asserting her tyranny and reign over her employers and their families. Only occasionally did middle class employers acknowledge that domestic labor conferred a degraded status on those employed in such

positions, which is why the Irish had come to monopolize the occupation in the first place, since it had been virtually abandoned by native-born women.

Irish immigrants, on the other hand, were clearly conscious of domestic service's status. After 1869, when rarely a week went by in which one of the major magazines or newspapers did not contain an article extolling the "coming of John Chinaman," the presumed connection between race and domestic service was made even more apparent. The idealized Chinese servant represented the antithesis of white manhood. Not only was he emasculated and asexual, and willing to do women's work, he lacked the free-will and independent spirit that was perceived to be the hallmark of white, male individuality. Irish women recognized that in order to be considered "good" servants, they had to submit themselves to the type of racialization that had been used to depict passive and content slaves in the antebellum period, and docile Chinese "coolies" in the era of Reconstruction.

Striving to be included among the white races, it did not benefit the Irish to be seen as innately servile. Irish immigrants responded by claiming membership in a more broadly conceived white working class, and, as was the case in San Francisco during the late-1870s, framed their actions against the Chinese in the context of the right of the white race to defend itself against an Asian onslaught. In this reading of whiteness, which was advanced by the Workingmen's Party of California, the Catholic Church, and politicians seeking the votes of white laborers, the Irish were not the servants of white civilization but active members in their own right. Middle class Anglo Americans contested Chinese exclusion as a federal policy that threatened what they believed should be their privileged status when it came to defining the nation's interests.

Read together, hopefully these chapters demonstrate how the relationship between immigration and domestic service moved from a cultural, economic, and social context, to one that was legal as well. The creation of federal immigration law in the 1880s and 1890s made this inevitable. As the final portion of my dissertation addresses, while domestic service remains a form of labor that is deeply imbricated in the way that middle class Americans define their cultural and social identities, it also continues to play a fundamental role in how Americans think about immigration policy and who should be allowed to enter the country.

The Past Repeats Itself?

"Some of the features in the late campaign in California are both humorous and instructive," began an editorial that appeared in the *Christian Advocate* in November 1882. The campaign in question was the gubernatorial race that pitted the Republican candidate Morris Estee against George Stoneman, a Democrat. What the *Christian Advocate* found to be "humorous and instructive" was that the vehemently anti-Chinese Stoneman, as well as his running mate for lieutenant governor, both employed Chinese domestic servants in their private residences. The *Christian Advocate* caustically editorialized that Stoneman's willingness to engage Chinese immigrants as servants, "illustrates how much sincerity there is in the outcry against the Chinese." His employment record further revealed "the precise degree of sympathy which dwells in the bosoms of these politicians for the 'poor, down-trodden white laborer, who is ruined by Chinese cheap labor.'" As the newspaper argued, the public would be better informed about immigration if politicians were forthright about the fact that Chinese

servants "were neater, more civil, and more reliable than any other class." This was not the approach that Stoneman took in explaining his behavior. Instead, he defended the inconsistencies between his anti-Chinese political rhetoric and his family's employment of Chinese servants, by claiming that his wife managed the family's household affairs and that he had no control over the hiring of servants.[539]

The hypocrisy that prominent opponents of Chinese immigration allegedly displayed in employing Chinese domestic workers appeared regularly as a topic of discussion during the 1870s and 1880s. In October 1877, for example, the *Wasp* directed a barbed attack at William Hinton, the publisher and editor of the San Francisco *Post*, which juxtaposed the "editor at work" with the "editor at home." In the *Post*, Hinton had regularly attacked business owners and manufacturers who hired Chinese immigrants instead of white laborers, a position that the *Wasp* found comical since Hinton apparently had no qualms about employing Chinese servants in his own home. In a cartoon the *Wasp* published on its front cover (pictured on the following page), Hinton was depicted as blithely ignoring the contradictions between his private affairs and how he managed them, and the public stances he made in his newspaper.[540] Other publications were less concerned with exposing hypocrisy, and more intent on policing the employment of Chinese servants through the method of public shaming. Beginning in May 1878, for example, *Thisleton's Magazine* published a weekly list that featured the names of businesses employing Chinese servants and cooks, as well as the names and addresses of families who hired Chinese servants to work in their homes.

[539] *Christian Advocate*, November 23, 1882.
[540] Frederick Keller, "A Hint-On the Chinese Question," *The Wasp*, October 6, 1877.

The Wasp, "A Hint-On the Chinese Question," October 6, 1877

Since daily protests occurred in San Francisco over Chinese immigration, *Thisleton's* provided specific targets if its readers chose to take direct action.[541]

Encountering these sources today, it is difficult to avoid the feeling of historical déjà vu. Stoneman's employment of Chinese servants, for example, and the political liability this posed, surely would have resonated with Zoë Baird. Baird – President Bill Clinton's 1993 nominee for Attorney General – was forced to withdraw her candidacy after the media uncovered that she had employed illegal immigrants in the care for her children – a scandal the media subsequently labeled "Nannygate."[542] Even more recently, Mitt Romney, a candidate for the 2008 Republican presidential nomination, might have reached back in time and borrowed from Stoneman the explanation that he had "unknowingly" employed undocumented immigrants as gardeners at his personal estate in Massachusetts. What Romney ended up claiming – that the landscaping company he employed had sent the workers to his home, and that he had not inquired about their status – did not differ greatly from Stoneman's excuse that he was not responsible for screening domestic laborers.[543] Nor was the tone of the *Boston Globe's* editorial critique of Romney, who had campaigned as a staunch advocate of strengthening laws designed to prevent the employment of illegal immigrants, that

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[541] See, for example, "Some of the Citizens Who Employ John Chinaman," *Thistleton's Magazine*, May 4, 1878.

[542] For an analysis of the media coverage of "Nannygate" in the *New York Times*, see Veena Cabreros-Sud and Farah Kathweri, "New York Times on Immigrants: Give Us Your Healthy, Wealthy and 24-Hour Nannies," Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) website, April/May 1993, http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=1213 (accessed October 12, 2008). The debate about whether to use the term "undocumented" or "illegal" to describe immigrants who have entered the United States without official permission is an important one. Where I have used illegal here, it should not imply that I condemn immigrants' behavior on the grounds that they have broken the law. My goal instead is to show how the binary of legality/illegality is inadequate when it comes to thinking about migration and globalization.

[543] Of course, the category of "illegal" itself demonstrates how immigration has changed from a policy and cultural standpoint, since this category did not exist before the anti-Chinese legislation of the 1870s and 1880s.

different from the *Christian Advocate's*. "The Guatemalans who worked at Romney's house remember with affection the governor's cheery 'buenos dias,'" commented the *Globe,* "a little of that attitude – plus some recognition that the problem is complex – should replace the round-'em-up, lock-'em-out posture he's adopted for the campaign."[544]

The goal of this chapter is to explore this sense of déjà vu, and to connect present-day discussions and debates surrounding domestic work and immigration, to the questions, problems, and solutions of nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century Americans. At the center of this dissertation has been the idea that historically, Americans understood the "servant question," the "Irish question," and the "Chinese question," to be inseparable issues that coexisted in a complex dialogue of problems and solutions. Domestic service structured how native-born Americans viewed the political economy of immigration, how they measured the value of different immigrant groups in comparison to each other, and how they thought about what they stood to gain or lose by allowing certain immigrant groups to enter the country.

In the past five years, immigration – which has always held a prominent place in American political and social debates – has reemerged in public discourse as one of the more pressing issues facing contemporary Americans.[545] A critical approach to today's immigration "question" also needs to take into account the role that immigrants perform as domestic laborers, focusing on how their reception is shaped by the fact that immigrants are disproportionately represented as maids, housecleaners, nannies, and

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[544] Editorial, "Who's Cutting Romney's Lawn," *Boston Globe*, December 6, 2006.
[545] In the last year of this dissertation's completion, the United States has entered a severe economic decline, which many commentators believe might come close to paralleling the Great Depression. How this will affect immigration debates remains to be seen. If the past is any indicator, attitudes about the threats posed by excessive immigration may become even more hard-line.

care providers working for Americans. Immigrant labor in American homes cannot be disconnected from the politics and implications of globalization. Still, immigrant domestic workers remain for the most part the subject of myopic national debates about immigration policy, assimilation, and legality that fail to situate migration to the United States in a global perspective. While the politics of assimilation and the legal status of immigrants are undeniably important as frameworks for thinking about domestic workers, they nonetheless fail to account for the larger forces that structure contemporary migration.

Domestic Service: Change and Continuity

Since 1920, domestic service has been the subject of significant demographic, technological, and organizational transformations. In the nineteenth century, it was common practice for authors writing about the domestic service question to lament that mistresses contributed to the occupation's degradation by constantly lashing out at the incompetency of Biddy. These authors argued that by presenting domestic service as a refuge for the incompetent, mistresses drove away competent women who might otherwise enter the field. By the 1890s, the stigma that for whites, domestic service was appropriate only for lowly Irish immigrants, had yielded to a different type of stigma that portrayed domestic service as the least attractive of professions open to white women wage earners. Domestic service was no longer directly associated with degraded Irish labor, yet its reputation as work for whites had hardly improved.

This new stigma depicted domestic service as work that provided a haven for women of low morals and little aspiration. For example, Marguerite B. Lake argued in

1913 that "domestic service seems to be the occupation open to the lowest grade of workers."[546] In her muckraking text, *What Eight Million Women Want*, the reformer Rheta Childe Doore argued that it was logical that there was a link between prostitution and domestic service, because "the domestic, belonging, as a rule, to a weak and inefficient class, is literally driven into the paths where only strength and efficiency could possible protect her from evil."[547] As Jane Addams put it in her essay titled, "A Belated Industry," "There are many noble exceptions, but it follows that on the whole the enterprising girls of the community go into factories, and the less enterprising go into households."[548] Working-class women themselves echoed these sentiments and promoted the benefits of factory work – albeit in a manner that emphasized the social opportunities it afforded them to work among their friends, and the greater freedom that came with not being directly supervised by middle-class employers.[549]

Addams argued at the turn of the century, domestic service remained an occupation governed by "feudal" rules. It bore little resemblance to industrial work, which promoted routines, clear roles for employers and employees, as well as rule by the clock (where work came to a definitive end and one was free to do what one wished in their leisure). In advocating for domestic servants who "lived out," that is, away from the homes where they worked, Addams highlighted the isolation of the domestic servant in the home and the fact that judgments on her work and character were the sole provenance of the mistress who employed her. Living outside of their employers'

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[546] Marguerite B. Lake, "Relation Between Occupation and Criminality of Women: A Summary," *Journal of Home Economics* 5, no. 4 (1913): 228-9.
[547] Rheta Childe Doore, *What Eight Million Women Want* (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1910); reprinted in Harvey Swados ed., *Years of Conscience: The Muckrakers; an Anthology of Reform Journalism* (Cleveland: World Pub. Co., 1962), 143.
[548] Jane Addams, "A Belated Industry," *The American Journal of Sociology* 1, no. 5 (March 1896): 539.
[549] Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in turn-of-the-century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 37-40.

homes meant that for servants their work hours would become regular, allowing domestics to exercise "their natural social ties." Living out would also entail a contract, which could formalize what constituted good or bad work.[550] Although such arguments gained momentum during the Progressive Era, the importance of contracts had been emphasized since the 1880s. An article published in *The Nation* in 1884, for example, argued that if contracts were implemented in domestic service, servants could "sell their labor as they would sell potatoes, and owe nothing more to the purchaser."[551]

While certain reformers may have welcomed the application of "political economy" to domestic service, others feared the intrusion of such language into their homes, much in the same manner they had lamented yielding autonomy to independent-minded Irish servants. Alongside contracts, it was feared that servants would also demand the right to unionize. As Flora McDonald Thompson put it, speaking on behalf of what she called the "mistress class" in *Cosmopolitan*, the science of training domestic servants as workers and the unionization of the profession posed to create "a rebellion that brings the bitterness of labor vs. capital into our kitchens to sour our children's bread and bully us into a state of submission."[552]

Well into the twentieth century, it was still common for Irish immigrants and even first generation Irish Americans to work as domestic servants, yet the Biddy stereotype waned. As early as 1884, *The Nation* alluded to a "silver age of the kitchen" when Irish domestics dominated. This silver age, while not matching the "golden age" when domestics were drawn from the ranks of the Anglo, native-born population and

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[550] Addams, "A Belated Industry," 545.
[551] "Domestic Service," *Nation*, January 3, 1884, 7.
[552] Flora McDonald Thompson, "The Servant Question," *Cosmopolitan* 28 (March 1900): 521.

were considered equals to be the equals of their employers, was nonetheless preferable to the current situation of domestic service when few if any women were willing to enter a profession where "a woman is most frequently reminded of her social inferiority."[553] Of course, the Biddy stereotype did not completely disappear. Biddy still signified the threat that working class Irish women could pose when they interacted with more civilized segments of society. For example, Mary Mallon, the Irish servant who became a social pariah in 1915 after she continued to work as a cook despite being a known carrier of typhoid, was frequently depicted as a crude, ugly, masculine, and menacing woman – traits that were based on earlier impressions of the risks associated with bringing female Irish immigrants into the refined homes of Anglo Americans.[554] Nonetheless, the derision directed at Mallon as an Irish immigrant was exceptional, and not the norm.

An article by Mary Smith published in *Forum* magazine in 1899 perhaps best reveals how American concerns with domestic service moved from highlighting the unique difficulties of Irish employees, toward an understanding that acknowledged European immigrants would never be appropriate for the profession because they were white.[555] Addressing what she considered to be the uniqueness of the domestic service problem in Northeast, Smith noted that domestic service needed to take into account the opportunistic spirit of the white American woman, which in Smith's article included Irish immigrants. Smith wrote that

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[553] "Domestic Service," *The Nation*, 7.
[554] Judith Walzer Leavitt, *Typhoid Mary: Captive to the Public's Health* (New York: Beacon Press, 1997), 96-125.
[555] Even in the nineteenth century, as I note in chapter one, Americans seemed to be uncertain as to whether Irish immigrants failed as servants because of Irish racial traits – or, because as whites, like native-born American girls they too could not abide the "slavery" and servitude that the profession required. On this very point, different parties contested the whiteness of Irish women.

> A new ideal is inevitable, - a standard which shall harmonize with the tendencies in other industries, which shall share the democratic spirit developed in this country and which shall take into account the race constituency of the American people. The social standard of domestic service in the Far West, where Chinese and Japanese domestics are employed, or in the Southern States, where the Negro is the only help available, must differ widely from that which should prevail in the Eastern and Central Northern States.[556]

By dividing domestic workers into Asian, Negro, and white populations, Smith departed from early divisions that were based on an understanding of racial traits being a product of nationality. In Smith's account she does not differentiate Irish servants from native-born whites or other European groups. Like Addams, Smith also believed that unless dramatic reforms were undertaken in domestic service, and dignity restored to the profession – in areas of the United States where white women were the primary source of labor, the occupation was doomed.

Whereas in 1870, 8.4 per cent of Americans were employed as servants, by 1920 that number had dropped to 4.5 per cent.[557] While the increased availability of other work for women explains some of this decrease, technological and social changes also affected American homes: smaller apartments required less cleaning; the increased availability of appliances like gas stoves made domestic work easier; and a greater selection of food products reduced preparation from scratch.[558] By 1920, more than half of all non-rural Americans homes had electricity, which allowed for the use of appliances like refrigerators and cleaning equipment such as electric vacuums, which

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[556] Mary R. Smith, "Domestic Service: The Responsibility of Employers," *Forum* 27 (August 1899): 682.
[557] Daniel E. Sutherland, *Americans and Their Servants: Domestic Service in the United States from 1800 to 1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 183.
[558] Ibid., 184.

made the work more efficient.[559] All of these factors decreased the need for live-in servants and made it more common for middle class Americans to employ a servant who reported to work on an occasional basis.

The greater availability of industrial work allowed more white women to escape domestic service, and caused more black women to become entrenched in the profession.[560] By 1920, the black population of Northern cities had risen precipitously as a result of migration from the South. For some black migrants, domestic service quite literally shaped the pattern of their migration, with permanent black communities forming in summer resort communities in New York and Rhode Island, for example.[561] Nationally, by 1920, black women accounted for 44.4 per cent of women working as servants in the United States labor force. In 1900, foreign-born white women accounted for 42.5 percent of women working as servants; by 1920, that number had decline to 23.8 per cent. In urban areas, better technology and the convenience it brought did not eliminate the need for servants among the middle-class. It did, however, create a two-tiered system of service, where the wealthiest families were able to continue to employ live-in African American servants, while less wealthy middle class families relied on live-out servants who came on an occasional basis.[562]

In the American West, the status of servants remained closely tied to perceptions that domestic workers were racialized immigrants, who unlike white women and black

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[559] For a more detailed discussion of the technological changes that took place in the home, see, Ruth Schwartz Cowan, "The 'Industrial Revolution' in the Home: Household Technology and Social Change in the Twentieth Century," *Technology and Culture* 27, no. 1 (1976).
[560] David M. Katzman, *Seven Days a Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 266-79.
[561] Myra B. Young Armstead, *"Lord Please Don't Take Me in August": African Americans in Newport and Saratoga Springs, 1870-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).
[562] George J. Stigler, *Domestic Servants in the United States: 1900-1940*, Occasional Paper No. 24 (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1946), 7.

women in the East, were permanently marked as foreign labor. The Japanese servants who increasingly worked in jobs that Chinese immigrants could no longer fill were subjected to representations that depicted them to be aliens whose service could not be disconnected from their national and racial interests as foreigners. Unlike Irish women, who were eventually accepted as members of the white race, Asian servants remained "aliens" in both a cultural sense, and by law. Mike Davis has documented that Japanese servants – in the same way that nineteenth-century authors imagined Chinese servants to be intimately placed enemies in white homes – occupied a similar place in Americans' literary imagination, especially as tensions between Japan and the United States increased after 1906.[563]

In the West, the racial tensions that marked domestic service resulted not only from immigration from Asia, but also from the not-too-distant legacy of Anglo conquest in the region. Evelyn Nakano Glenn has documented how Anglo settlers in the Southwest portion of the United States and Southern California, were conscious of the racial claims upon which expansion was premised during the late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth century. For them, domestic service offered a site where the logic of expansion could be reproduced clearly. Anglo employers demanded deference from their Chicana employees in order to fix the uncertain racial hierarchies of the region.[564] White women living in the area that the United States conquered from Mexico, created schools and training programs designed to transform Chicana women into acceptable household laborers and Protestants. Mary Romero notes that rarely did white settler

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[563] Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Vintage, 1999), 273-356.
[564] Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 170.

recognize the irony of trying to Americanize Chicana women as if they were foreigners, when they were actually native to the area.[565] As Mae Ngai has argued, "Casting Mexicans as foreign *distanced* them both from Euro-Americans culturally and from the Southwest as a spatial referent."[566] Similarly today, the transnational networks and circularity that continue to inform the lives of Mexican and other Latina immigrants in the Southwest and California are still largely ignored in favor of representations that highlight their status as immigrants.

Nationally, domestic service remained a profession closely tied to regional racial hierarchies. Even with the greater organization of women workers during the era of the Great Depression and World War II unionization did not affect domestic servants in large numbers. In most cases, domestic servants did not become eligible for social security, unemployment and accident compensation, as well as higher wages and regular hours. Phyllis Palmer notes that "housewives would not attack the problem of the organization of household work but would seek, instead, a labor force with no choice but to acquiesce."[567] By the 1940s and 1950s, black women, who still had extremely limited employment options, most often fell into this category.

Connecting the Past and the Present

When historians make connections between the past and present, they must be willing to think outside their discipline. By training, historians are taught to look at events in the past as highly contingent and situational. For example, to a historian, the

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[565] Mary Romero, *Maid in the U.S.A.* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 79-82.
[566] Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America (*Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 133.
[567] Phyllis Palmer, *Domesticity and Dirt: Housewives and Domestic Servants in the United States, 1920-1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 134.

claim that "Americans have always been suspicious of immigrants," is accurate only as a generalized statement. The historian would point out that while Americans have always encountered immigrants – the racial, legal, cultural, and economic issues that inform particular suspicions and give them their contextual meaning, have changed over time.

On the other hand, for the sake of connecting the past to the present, it is necessary to acknowledge that certain relationships follow patterns and bear characteristics that endow them with significance and meaning outside of their specific historic manifestations. That history has trends. For example, as the sociologist Mary Romero has argued of recent generations of Americans, "Whites are frequently socialized with role expectations that women of color will clean up after them, prepare their meals, wash and iron their clothes, and care for their children."[568] Even though the specific discursive work done by the figures of Biddy and John Chinaman has been relegated to the past, stereotypes connecting race and labor have survived and even flourished. Today, for example, the figure of "Maria" supports contemporary Americans' belief that Latina women are predisposed to work as servants and nannies, and, perhaps more importantly, demonstrates the continued role that stereotypes regarding labor play in constructing racial and gendered identities.[569]

Explaining why domestic service has inevitably produced exploitation and racialization, the sociologist Bridget Anderson points to the conflict between the body

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[568] Romero, *Maid in the U.S.A.*, 72.

[569] On the "Maria" stereotype and the idea that Latina women are predisposed to caring for children, see Judith Ortiz Cofer, "The Myth of the Latin Women: I Just Met a Girl Named Maria," in *The Latin Deli: Prose and Poetry* (New Work: W.W. Norton and Company, 1995), 149-54; and, Kristen Hill Maher, "'Natural mothers' for sale: The construction of Latina immigrant identity in domestic service labor markets," in Donna Gabaccia and Colin Wayne Leach, eds., *Immigrant Life in the U.S.: Multi-disciplinary perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2003), 173-90.

as personhood and body as property. In the political philosophy that has dominated the West since the Enlightenment, personhood and possession of one's body has been considered sacred and foundational to the idea of the "individual." In conflict with this creed, and at the source of the perceived degradation that has marked servitude in general, is the idea that "the domestic worker is selling, not her 'labour power' (the property in the person), but her personhood."[570] In agreeing to clean, cook, nurture, and perform forms of labor designed to sustain their employers, servants are expected (or forced) to relinquish their personhood in favor of maintaining another's. As Anderson's points out, in the United States, the belief that servants must relinquish their personhood explains not only why domestic service and slavery have often been conflated in the past in labor ideology, but also why servitude has also continued to take a form that can make it closely resemble slavery.[571] In recent years – although they remain extreme examples of exploitation – there has been no shortage of incidents in which servants have been found to be imprisoned in the employers' homes without pay, beaten to the point of near death, and raped or subjected to other forms of sexual assault.[572]

Again, while historians are deeply apprehensive about labeling anything universal, domestic service, at least as it has functioned in the United States since the mid-nineteenth century (when the home was first socially constructed as a sanctuary for the bourgeois family), has been marked by certain enduring qualities. Anderson insists that it is essential to any analysis of domestic service to recognize that from the

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[570] Bridget Anderson, *Doing the Dirty Work: The Global Politics of Domestic Labour* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2000), 3.
[571] Ibid., 126-58.
[572] Joy M. Zarembka, "America's Dirty Work: Migrant Maids and Modern-Day Slavery," in Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild, eds., *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002), 142-153.

perspective of the employer, the labor exchange that occurs in domestic service is primarily cultural and not economic. While servants certainly perform labor that can be defined with a wage value and are (usually) paid accordingly, the ultimate value of their labor is defined by what it enables socially. The employers of servants gain by avoiding work that if they were to perform it would not earn them wages.[573] This has been a fundamental paradox for women governed by the rules of a patriarchal society and bourgeois respectability and represents another source of continuity in domestic service. A woman will be judged by both the appearance of her "orderly, pleasant house," yet she cannot win any social recognition or pay for doing the work necessary to ensure that her home and family achieve this standard. Social recognition is won through intellectually and economically remunerative work performed outside the home, or, as was the case in the nineteenth century, by governing over the domestic labor of others.[574]

Today, the loss of personhood that servitude compels is made even more salient by the absence of legal citizenship for the female immigrants who are overwhelmingly responsible for domestic work across the world. Here as well, nationally, the argument advanced by white Americans in the nineteenth century – that Chinese immigrants would best serve the needs of the American nation if they were kept outside of the social body and denied naturalization – again echoes. Although proponents of increased border security and crackdowns on illegal immigrants often highlight what they claim is the criminality of immigrants who have entered the United States without government

[573] Anderson also argues that servants enable employers to adopt lifestyles such as large suburban homes with elaborate amenities that if they were responsible for cleaning and caring after, they would likely eschew in favor of more simple domestic arrangements. Anderson, *Doing the Dirty Work*, 16.
[574] Palmer, *Domesticity and Dirt*, xi. There are of course exceptions to this, such as the conservative or religious adulation of the housewife who does not work.

approval, employers of servants have reaped many benefits from the undocumented status of immigrants they employ. Employers of undocumented immigrants can and do avoid paying social security and employment taxes. Undocumented servants in many cases lack the ability to seek legal redress in disputes over wages or abuse, and are fearful that if they pursue help from the law it will result in deportation. In addition, while Americans who favor further restricting immigration to the United States have stated that immigrants are a drain on the country's social services, undocumented immigrants are not eligible for social security, healthcare, and other services that are tied to citizenship or a legal status – despite in many cases contributing to these services' maintenance through taxes.[575]

Another constant that has defined domestic service as an occupation has been a focus on how its political economy shapes groups categorized by race and national origin. Because Americans have believed that domestic work has existed as a profession befitting non-citizens and racially inferior persons, it has also been discussed in the context of what it has enabled among those who were able to benefit from such labor. "They perform the menial labors of our households, and in general do so much of our commonest toil that they pave the way for the higher labors of the better races," testified William Hollister before the Congressional investigation on Chinese immigration in 1876. Hollister, a wealthy Californian rancher, like other affluent Americans who believed in the idea of the free market, felt that group status and the status of labor aligned naturally. "In all fairness, considering the place filled by the Chinese in

[575] Grace Chang, *Disposable Domestics: Immigrant Women Workers in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000), 55-92.

California, how are they to be considered damaging or degrading to white labor?" asked Hollister. "They do not fill the positions sought after by others."[576]

Today, similar debates occupy economists who seek to calculate whether immigrants on the whole benefit the United States economy, or whether immigrants negatively affect working class Americans by driving down wages in "menial" occupations. Such arguments do not debate whether the nation provides the best unit to make these calculations. The pro-immigration argument was summarized by the *New York Times* during debates surrounding the proposed Kennedy-McCain Immigration Bill in 2006 (ultimately defeated in Congress): "Immigrants provide scarce labor, which lowers prices in much the same way global trade does." Conversely, the *Times* noted that economists who were skeptical of whether immigration benefited the economy would point out that such benefits were not equally distributed. In other words, "people with means pay less for taxi rides and household help while the less-affluent command lower wages and probably pay more for rent."[577] When white labor leaders rallied against Chinese immigration on the grounds that it drove down wages for white (and as was often implied, American) workers, it was difficult to divorce cultural arguments from economic ones. A similar relationship exists today. Whereas Hollister claimed that Chinese immigrants "do not fill the positions sought after by others," contemporary pro-immigration advocates argue that no amount of anti-immigrant rhetoric changes the fact that jobs as maids, gardeners, and low-wage factory workers are available to native-born Americans if they chose to pursue them. These debates hinge less on verifiable social scientific data then they do on cultural attitudes. Yet they hold in common an

[576] Hollister's testimony was reprinted by the Six Companies, in *Memorial of the Six Chinese Companies* (San Francisco: Alta Print, 1877), 30.
[577] Roger Lowenstein, "The Immigration Equation," *New York Times Magazine*, July 9, 2006.

assumption that nations order individuals into categories – of Americans and of immigrants – and need to measure the implications accordingly. Studies have highlighted for example, that black Americans, when polled, are more likely than white Americans to state that undocumented immigrants should be deported, a position attributed to the fact that black Americans are more likely to compete for the same jobs that undocumented immigrants end up taking.[578] As was the case in the past, when racial ideology prevented white workers and, Irish immigrants in particular, from forming alliances with the other minority groups such as Chinese immigrants, national ideology and identifications present similar barriers today.

The fact that the categories of legal and illegal are given the most attention in immigration policy debates should not mask that race still plays a prominent role in informing how cultural understandings of immigration are framed.[579] In addition to the way that race shapes Americans' expectations of the roles that immigrants of color are to play in society, race also shapes cultural attitudes surrounding intimacy and care. For example, the J-1 Visa issued by the United States government for cultural and educational exchanges for foreign nationals between the ages of 18 and 26, is widely used by European women who come to the United States and work as *au pairs*. "Au pairs" and nannies do similar work. However, the J-1 visa requires participants to be

[578] Pew Hispanic Center, "Attitudes Toward Immigration: In Black and White," April 2006, cited in Jorge Castañeda, *Ex Mex: From Migrants to Immigrants* (New York: The New Press, 2008), 12. The statistics as to whether economically, this is actually the case, are – not surprisingly – disputed. As Roger Waldinger suggests, today, black Americans, who are native-born and numerous generations removed from their migration to northern cities, often refuse to enter the economic "queue" at the bottom and take jobs that require servility and carry a menial status. Roger Waldinger, "The New Urban Reality" in Norman Yetman, ed., *Majority and Minority: The Dynamics of Race and Ethnicity in American Life* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999).

[579] Anti-immigrant advocates such as Samuel Huntington claim that what is at stake is American culture, and that arguments against immigration do not need to rely on racial assumptions. Authors like Huntington, however, refer to culture as something that is fixed and immutable – qualities usually associated with the idea of race. Samuel Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005).

fluent in English prior to migration so it tends to be issued to better educated European immigrants. In addition, J-1 visa holders and their employers are subjected to strict government supervision, which includes an official orientation session for migrants and periodic check-ins to make sure that there are no disputes or problems between employers and employees. Obviously, undocumented nannies are not privileged to either the legitimacy afforded by the J-1 visa, or the government regulation it provides.

White *au pairs* are typically represented as belonging to an elite class of servants (as Joy Zarembka point out, translated from French *au pair* means "an equal), and the employment agencies that place *au pairs* in American homes reflect this status in their pricing. Employment agencies enthusiastically tout the cultural benefits that come with exposing young American children to European culture; rarely do they promote what children might gain from being raised by Mexican or Guatemalan women.[580] If in the second half of the nineteenth century, American experts on the "servant question" portrayed the English servant as the consummate professional in contrast to incompetent Biddy, than it is hard to see how things have truly changed. The recent reality television shows *Nanny 911* and *Supernanny*, for example, both follow a format where English nannies are brought into American homes in order to demonstrate to the parents how to properly discipline their children, organize household chores, and restore tranquility to their homes. Ironically, Latina women are far more likely than English women to be the ones responsible for domestic reform of this nature, but it is

[580] Zarembka, "America's Dirty Work," 148-9; Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Doméstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 92-4.

highly unlikely that white Americans would embrace "reality" in this form.[581] Julia Wrigley's research has shown that white Americans often hire Latina women based on a belief that they are submissive and will not take a dominant role in the household, and not usurp their role as mothers.[582]

Domestic Labor in a Global Context

In her highly influential book, *The Second Shift*, the sociologist Arlie Hochschild reinterprets the idea of the "second shift" – typically used in the language of factory workers to describe the second of the three eight hour shifts that divide up a 24-hour work schedule – as a phenomena that working women experience in the home. The "second shift" in this context refers to the cultural and social expectations that women, including women who work in jobs outside of the home, are primarily responsible for the completion of domestic tasks. As Hochschild argued pointedly in 1990 when the book was first published, the greater independence and equality that many women assumed would come with professional careers eluded them. Gender roles, and the belief that it was the responsibility of women to ensure that the home was clean, that dinner was ready, and that the children's lives were in order, determine that most women who work perform a "second shift" upon coming home.[583]

Hochschild's argument illustrates that even as middle class women have become more likely to work outside of the home, they remain accountable for the appearance of

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[581] As a point of contrast, the 2004 documentary film *Maid in America*, which was directed by Anayansi Prado and aired on PBS's "Independent Lens" series, looks at the lives of three Latina domestics and traces their experiences as immigrants and workers. Of course, *Maid in America* was seen by far smaller audiences than either *Nanny 911*or *Supernanny.*
[582] Julia Wrigley, *Other People's Children* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).
[583] Arlie Hochschild, *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home* (New York: Avon Books, 1990).

the home, and, in this regard, maintaining domestic standards. If the role of the nineteenth-century middle class white mistress was to govern over the home and domestic, in order to provide a sanctuary for men returning from the public world of work and to ensure that children were raised with the amenities and values that would allow them to become virtuous citizens, then today the middle class women is expected to do many of the same things – while potentially holding down a full-time career. Kathy Sherman, the author of *A Housekeeper is Cheaper Than Divorce* (one guidebook among many in the growing field of self-help literature on how to find and hire domestic help), refutes the claim that finding the right help is impossible: "Getting husbands to equally share housework is the impossible fantasy."[584] In the nineteenth century, middle class women embraced the opportunity to govern over their servants as a social obligation that made them valuable contributors to the nation's health, and experts on issues such as the qualities of immigrant labor. The difference today is perhaps best captured in the argument that many middle class women now simply want to escape one form of labor in favor of labor that possesses more value in society.

The "second shift" is an important concept for critiquing gender roles within American society. Nonetheless, it has also directed attention away from the fact that the allocation of domestic labor is a global issue. While the second shift is a justifiably important concern to middle class American women, it does not describe a universal dilemma. In the aftermath of 1993's "Nannygate," the organization Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) pointed out that the *New York Times* devoted over 142 articles of news coverage to the scandal, but only two dealt with the lives of immigrant

[584] Kathy Fitzgerald Sherman, *A Housekeeper Is Cheaper Than a Divorce: Why You Can Afford to Hire Help and How to Get It* (Mountain View, CA: Life Tools Press, 2000), 15.

domestic workers employed by Baird and others. In its opinion articles on the topic, the *Times* published a piece by the novelist Erica Jong in which she claimed that as women, "We should be marching down Fifth Avenue waving banners that say "I hired an illegal alien.'" Articles of this nature, as FAIR argued, gave the impression that being "wealthy enough to hire cheap, exploitable labor is a mark of oppression" for women, while making the women of color who did the work invisible.[585] That many immigrant domestics are forced to leave their own families, in order to earn money performing the role of care providers in another country, is rarely considered by employers.[586] Domestic needs in the Global North undermine the domestic stability of countries in the Global South, in both the economic and humanistic senses of the word. Rhacel Parreñas has documented that Filipina women work as domestics in more than 130 countries across the globe. She writes of an "imagined global community" of Filipina domestic workers, who are joined by the shared experience of having to seek out this work abroad, and who rely on extended family to support children who remain behind in the Philippines.[587]

As Grace Chang has argued, "immigration from the Third World into the United States doesn't just happen in response to a set of factors but is carefully orchestrated – that is, desired, planned, compelled, managed, accelerated, slowed, and periodically stopped – by the direct actions of US interests, including the government as state and as employer, private employers, and corporations."[588] Historians of migration have suggested that the idea of "voluntary" migration has always been a problematic concept

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[585] Cabreros-Sud and Kathweri, "New York Times on Immigrants."
[586] Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Doméstica*, 24-5.
[587] Rhacel Salzar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 80-115.
[588] Chang, *Disposable Domestics*, 3-4.

because it suggests that migrants act as independent agents in deciding to leave their home countries and move abroad.[589]

Accordingly, the significance of the United States border means different things to different people. As Jorge Castañeda, Mexico's former Secretary of Foreign Affairs, has observed in describing the general sentiment of Mexicans about the border and immigration:

> The two countries have constructed, over the years, a segmented but partly unified labor market. Whatever their laws say, Americans from all walks of life tolerate, encourage, and enjoy the benefits of low-wage, low-skill, and high-comfort-zone labor from Mexico. The latter contributes enormously to the U.S. economy without receiving any acknowledgement from Americans for this contribution. Mexicans hope that one day, the United States will, instead of hypocritically accepting this situation by looking the other way and crying crocodile tears about breaking the laws, face up to it and formalize it: adapt legality to reality, instead of the other way around.[590]

Nonetheless, as Castañeda's background in the government makes him the first to acknowledge, getting American politicians to approach immigration as a bilateral issue and not solely an issue of American "security," has been nearly impossible.

Despite the global and transnational forces that drive migrants from the "global South" to seek opportunities elsewhere, immigration policy is still constructed through national concerns. In 1993, the Baird controversy led politicians to propose a "Nanny Visa," which they claimed would help to ameliorate the problem of Americans being "forced" to hire illegal immigrants as domestic workers.[591] The failed Kennedy-McCain legislation, which sought to implement a guest worker program that would

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[589] Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, "Introduction," in Lucassen and Lucassen, eds., *Migration, Migration History, History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997).
[590] Castañeda, *Ex-Mex*, 40.
[591] The "nanny visa" proposals were short lived, as the Baird scandal faded from the public's attention. Chang, *Disposable Domestics*, 107-110.

have allowed immigrants to live and work in the United States for a temporary period, followed a similar logic: jobs that did not appeal to Americans could be filled by immigrants who were nonetheless to remain foreigners, even while they labored in the United States. The history of guest worker programs in the United States is checkered. *Braceros*, Mexican guest workers who were contracted to work in the Southwestern United States during the labor shortage caused by World War II and its immediate aftermath became a stateless, free-floating proletariat, protected by neither Mexico nor the United States. Although the initial *bracero* program was in theory regulated by a series of treaties between the United States and Mexico, the enforcement of minimum wage standards, adequate room and board, and non-violent working conditions was lax at best. Large agricultural companies consistently paid less than the government-regulated wage and ignored the stipulation that the *braceros* were not to replace native-born American workers. This second point inured *braceros* to American farm workers and members of organized labor, who, in framing their own needs in strictly national terms, did not attempt to organize the guest workers but sought to abolish the program altogether.[592]

From a more radical and theoretical position, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue in *Empire* that the displacements produced by globalization have created what they label "the multitude." The multitude represents the arrival of the third world into the first world, an "invasion" that exposes globalization's ramifications:

> Empire can only isolate, divide, and segregate. Imperial capital does indeed attack the movements of the multitude with a tireless determination: it patrols the seas and the borders; within each country it divides and segregates; and in the world of labor it reinforces the cleavages and borderline of race, gender, language, culture, and so forth. Even then,

[592] Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 127-66.

> however, it must be careful not to restrict the productivity of the multitude too much because Empire too depends on this power. The movements of the multitude have to be allowed to extend always wider across the world scene, and the attempts at repressing the multitude are really paradoxical, inverted manifestations of its strength.[593]

Hardt and Negri point out that attempts to contain and confine the multitude can never be absolute, because it is their "productivity" and labor on which global capital relies. In this sense borders represent not only the contradictions within globalization, but are also the locations where the brutal hierarchies and inequalities of globalization are most visible.

No Servants, No Masters…No Nations?

When historians connect the past to the present, they are forced to think about the larger picture that their work can potentially reveal. To a different end, connecting the past and present to the personal requires scholars to consider how their subject matters in their day-to-day lives. Female scholars of domestic service, for example, have been highly self-reflexive in approaching domestic labor, and how their subject of research intersects with their positions as professional women.

Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, for example, was drawn to the history of black servants in Washington, D.C. during the interwar period because of the familial connections she possessed to this work. As Clark-Lewis explains in her introduction, the collective experience of her grandmothers, great aunts, and their friends, revealed to her the central role that domestic work played in structuring the migration of blacks from the South to points further north, in that it typically accounted for the work they were

[593] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 399.

expected to perform upon their arrival.[594] Mary Romero ascribes her original interest in the subject of domestic service to an experience she had as a recently hired faculty member living in El Paso, Texas. Romero was renting a room from a colleague who employed immigrant women from Mexico as servants, which he depicted as an act of charity. When his servants failed to show the proper degree of gratitude, or quit suddenly, they became "ungrateful Mexicans" in his eyes. Romero learned that many of her academic colleagues displayed visible discomfort when she discussed her work in seminars and workshops, since they themselves employed servants. Fellow faculty members were much more comfortable "discussing race, class, and gender from a macrolevel."[595]

Clark-Lewis and Romero provide examples of how most academics who write about domestic service are incredibly conscious of the socioeconomic and cultural position they occupy, and what it means for them to employ paid domestic labor. Palmer, even though she focuses primarily on domestic workers prior to 1945, is perhaps the most forthcoming in terms of addressing the personal ideological dilemma that domestic service posed in her life. In *Domesticity and Dirt*, she tries to take on the "hypocrisy" of her position as a scholar and an employer in a direct manner. Tracing the development of her feminist ideology, Palmer describes how she became aware that domestic service forced women to take advantage of other women, and in the process supported a sexist standard – that women would either have to do housework themselves, or employ the labor of other women, since men almost never did an equal share of the necessary work. As she writes in the preface to her book,

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[594] Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, *Living In, Living Out: African American Domestics in Washington, D.C., 1910-1940* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994).
[595] Romero, *Maid in the U.S.A.*, 3; 164.

> I vowed, of course, that I would never put the burden of my housework on another woman, even as I assumed that this work was 'mine.' Participation in the women's movement augmented this commitment. I would not exploit the labor of black or any other women. And so I labored through graduate school and my first teaching job, working full time at school and study and then grocery shopping, cleaning house, going to the Laundromat, ironing, cooking meals, sewing, and giving dinner parties.[596]

Palmer was unable to sustain her self-sufficiency as her professional demands and responsibilities grew. She eventually hired a Guatemalan woman to work for her one day a week, cleaning her home. Pierrette Hondanegu-Sotelo, the author of *Doméstica*, notes in the preface to her study that like Palmer, despite her knowledge of how prestige and status is attached to certain types of work, and the implications of this social structuring, she still could not "claim" housework and homemaking in the same way she embraced her academic labor.[597] Hondanegu-Sotelo acknowledges that the solution to this, in lieu of the housework simply not getting done at all, was to hire an El Salvadorian woman to come and clean every other week.

Palmer laments that ultimately, why she considered herself a "good" employer (the quotes are Palmer's), she knew that her employee was not enrolled in social security and did not have access to affordable health insurance – benefits that Palmer could not provide as her employer. Both Palmer and Hondagneu-Sotelo conclude that while it is perhaps inevitable that working women will be forced to hire servants in order to maintain their careers and family life, the profession itself can be reformed. Both authors argue that reform will have to be economic as well as social. Economically, they argue that servants, regardless of their immigration status, should

[596] Palmer, *Dirt and Domesticity*, x.
[597] Hondagu-Sotelo, *Doméstica*, xiv.

receive retirement benefits, healthcare, unemployment insurance, and be granted the right to organize in unions in order to demand these improvements collectively. Socially, Palmer calls for an increased awareness of not only what domestic workers enable with their labor, but also for "a future in which no work is hidden and no labor invisible," so that one mother's middle class bliss is not predicated on the exploitation of another woman.[598] Like Palmer, Hondagneu-Sotelo promotes "social recognition" for "the work of caring for homes and children," and for the treatment of the occupation as a form of employment where contracts inform employer/employee relationships, not emotion.[599]

My goal here is not to criticize the self-reflexive approach that scholars have brought to their employment of domestic servants, and the consciousness they have demonstrated in making salient how race and gender affects their own intimate relations. I was raised in a home where an El Salvadorian immigrant came once a week to clean. Domestic service is part of my life story as well. I had an eerie sense reading Palmer in particular, and following her personal narrative as she went from an idealistic graduate student who refused to employ a servant and probably could not afford to anyway, to a busy (and practical?) professor who took advantage of the money she was earning to make life easier. I have spent nights in bars discussing how this hypothetical scenario might play out in my own life, and querying friends to see where they stand.

Still, although I wholeheartedly agree with arguments for a system where domestic workers are entitled to the same social benefits that other workers receive (and the right of domestics to unionize in order to achieve this), and concur with the position

[598] Palmer, *Dirt and Domesticity*, 161.
[599] Hondagu-Sotelo, *Doméstica*, xiv.

that there should be protections for domestic workers regardless of their citizenship status, I also wonder if these social objectives, while important – like so many that are framed in the context of civil rights – will ultimately serve to reify the importance of the nation.

"Some say it's elitist to hire household help," comments Sherman, the aforementioned author of *A Housekeeper is Cheaper Than Divorce*, "I say it's snobbery to turn household labor into a moral issue." Sherman suggests that being a housekeeper can serve as the starting point for the pursuit of the "American dream" for immigrant women and their families. Despite having to clean, cook, and care for Americans, their children and grandchildren, in Sherman's estimation, benefit from the chance to prosper and succeed.[600] Of course, Sherman is correct to note that many children and grandchildren of immigrant domestic workers achieve financial and other forms of success in the United States. Absent, however, is the recognition that there might be a corresponding nightmare to the deferred promise of the "American dream," which forced the immigrant domestic worker to leave her home in the first place. That immigrant domestic workers' succeed at surviving in the United States in spite of the myriad obstacles they face, should not distract from the continued globalization of domestic work, and the ability of Americans to exploit immigrant domestics and pay them low wages.

It is a difficult hypothetical exercise, and one that seems almost quixotic, to try to think about concepts such as migration and labor outside of the hegemonic context that is provided by the nation. I hope to suggest that ultimately, as long as Americans

[600] Sherman, *A Housekeeper is Cheaper than a Divorce*, 57-61; quote on 57. I do not mean to single Sherman out, but offer her opinions instead as emblematic of the larger discourse surrounding immigrant domestic workers.

fail to recognize that the immigrant servants in their homes bear with them the economic, political, and cultural ramifications of globalization, the difficulties that these workers face will not be effectively addressed.

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A Note on Sources:

In the course of researching my dissertation, I have used a number of online databases that allow users to conduct full-text searches in the hundreds of newspapers and periodicals that have now been digitized and archived online. In my bibliography, I have indicated both the individual newspapers and magazines that I cite, as well as the different databases that I have used.

In order to direct readers to published books and manuscripts that I have used as evidence, versus the published works that have comprised the secondary literature for my dissertation, I have created separate categories in my bibliography to reflect this. Certain works, like Bancroft's and Salmon's histories, for example, could accurately be placed in both categories.

Finally, I have included full citations for the authored articles and editorials that appear in my dissertation. For editorials and anonymous articles that play a more minor role in my dissertation, the names of the newspapers and magazines that I have drawn from are included below, and full citations can be found in the footnotes that appear with each chapter.

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