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Beneath the Long White Cloud: settler Chinese women's storytelling in Aotearoa New Zealand

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**BENEATH THE LONG WHITE CLOUD:
SETTLER CHINESE WOMEN'S STORYTELLING
IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses settler Chinese women's storytelling in Aotearoa New Zealand in order to articulate a conception of autonomous subjectivity within the context of hegemonic Colonialist Orientalist narratives. Utilising a bricolage methodology that combines the researcher's creative writing with critical analyses of spoken and written stories, including interviews with authors, it focuses on Chinese women's lived experiences and the narrative strategies they deploy.

The prolonged absence of the feminine voice is barely acknowledged in extant studies of the settler Chinese community in New Zealand. Chinese women's stories did not emerge in the public domain until the 1990s. While increased recognition of this writing appears to point to the country's progress, Colonialist Orientalist narratives have continued to characterise Chinese women as either exotic and Oriental or assimilated and invisible, subordinating them in accord with an enduring prototype: 'Chinese woman'. I contend that the insidiousness of this prototype is reflected in its integration into settler Chinese women's subjectivities, and in the stories they tell: both 'inside' the Chinese community, and 'outside' in the Pākehā mainstream. As such, it appears that there exists no space within which these women can express an autonomous subjectivity and thereby assert a 'separate' identity.

This thesis is concerned with identifying such a space. Framed by key premises drawn from Judith Butler's critical analysis of subjection, and with reference to Rey Chow's analysis of Chinese woman's subjectivity, Linda Alcoff's positional feminism, Erving Goffman's dramaturgical schema and Mary Ann Doane's theory of femininity as 'masquerade', this research analyses the stories that settler Chinese women have told in diverse contexts including personal interviews and in their published writing. In these analyses, in which I conceive of storytelling as performance, I identify a range of narrative strategies through which autonomous subjectivities may be articulated and validated, and which have the potential to ground claims for previously unrecognised subject positions.

The more explicitly imaginative creative writing in this thesis is also interrogative, and as such, has more than adjunctive value to the (more overtly) critical discussion. Chapter Five demonstrates a range of counterhegemonic narrative strategies in its juxtaposition of multiple genres including fictionalised autobiography, poetry, images and excerpts from mainstream New Zealand newspapers. Creative writing is also utilised to articulate an intimate conversation among Chinese women in Chapter Two, and in the autoethnographic narrative threads integrated into the critical discussion in most of the other chapters. The incorporation of this creative writing into the body of the thesis is intended to demonstrate that the language of traditional academic discourse alone is inadequate for the task of illuminating settler Chinese women's subjectivity. It also reveals how the autonomy and agency of this Chinese woman writer – in the capacity of researcher – may be grounded in the transformation of the very language that has produced her as 'Chinese woman'.

DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD except where indicated in the Preface,

due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

the thesis is fewer than 100 000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed:



Date: 28 February 2016

PREFACE

Publications:

The thesis includes the following published works with minor adaptations:

“Sunday Gardening: The Adventures of John Chinaman on the New Gold Mountain.”

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“Staples.” *Culture Is. . . Australian Stories Across Cultures: An Anthology*. Ed. Anne

Marie Smith. Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2008. 19. Print.

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TERMINOLOGY

Aotearoa is the Māori name for New Zealand. Literally translated, it means ‘long white cloud’. According to popular Māori folklore, New Zealand was discovered by voyagers who sighted a long bright white cloud hovering above the land (J.O. Wilson). ‘Aotearoa New Zealand’ signifies the country’s bicultural underpinnings (Mutu).

Pākehā is a Māori term that in colonial times was used to refer to white British settlers. It has evolved to include references to mainstream culture in New Zealand, which remains predominantly white Anglo-European. ‘Pākehā’ is still commonly used to refer to white New Zealanders, but in recent years, the term has developed a much broader connotation. It has been proposed by some commentators that ethnic minority groups such as the established Chinese community, who have assimilated into the mainstream, may be recognised as ‘Pākehā’.² In this thesis, ‘Pākehā’ is used interchangeably with the term ‘mainstream’. Except where indicated, it pertains to culture rather than ethnicity.

Chinese community refers to the long-established diaspora descended from the earliest immigrants who arrived in New Zealand before World War Two. In recent years, many in this community have identified themselves as ‘Poll Tax Descendants’ in reference to the Poll Tax legislation under which their forebears entered the country between 1881 and 1944.³ The social network of this community remains strong throughout New Zealand, with members able to trace their origins to a specific area around the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong Province, South China: the counties known as Chung Shan 中山, Poon Yue 番禺,

² James Belich, for example, argues that as the Chinese presence is substantial and longstanding, ‘... a case can be made for including them in the concept ‘Pākehā’’ (536); and Michael King asserts that Pākehā culture is ‘made up of many strands’, including the Chinese (515). See also H. Chung, “Autoethnographic” 80.

³ The Poll Tax was officially repealed in 1944, although it was waived from 1934 onwards (Murphy, *Poll-tax* v). Tony Thackery, Chair of Trustees for the Chinese Poll Tax Heritage Trust Fund 2011-2014, has pointed out that not all settler Chinese are descended from Poll Tax payers.

Jung Seng 增城, and the district known as Seyip 四邑, which includes the counties of Hoi Ping 開平, Yun Ping 恩平, Sun Wui 新會 and Toi Shan 台山 (Appendix 1).⁴ Where I need to distinguish between this community and later Chinese arrivals, I refer to the earlier diaspora as the **settler Chinese community**.

Chinese women or **settler Chinese women** refers to the women of this community, who have either grown up in New Zealand, or spent most of their lives there, and who consider the country to be ‘home’. The main focus of this thesis is on settler Chinese women’s experiences in the years from 1939 to 1987; 1939 marks the arrival of the first significant numbers of Chinese women into New Zealand, and 1987, radical changes to legislation that facilitated the entry of unprecedented numbers of Chinese immigrants. I consider the years between to be formative, for the hegemonic discourses that regulated Chinese women’s presence at this time have continued to inform their subjectivity into the twenty-first century. In light of significant historical resonances in the years before 1939 and after 1987, this period is bracketed loosely.

Except where indicated, ‘**Chinese woman**’ – that is, singular, and in quotation marks – refers to a prototypical identity for Chinese women co-constructed by hegemonic narratives; it also refers, metonymically, to this collective of narratives. Similarly, the terms ‘**Chinese**’ and ‘**Chineseness**’ (also in quotation marks) refer to hegemonic constructions that prevail – or are implicitly understood to prevail – in the Pākehā mainstream.⁵

During the gold rush era that began in the mid-nineteenth century and petered out in the early twentieth century, the white settler Pacific Rim sites of Australia, the U.S.A., Canada and New Zealand were known by the thousands of Chinese who travelled there, as **Gold Mountain** 金山. (Australia and New Zealand were sometimes referred to as the New Gold Mountain 新金山). I use this term to refer to these sites collectively, and in the creative works in Chapters Two and Five

⁴ I have borrowed the romanisations of these county/district names from Lee and Lam. As there exist numerous systems of Cantonese romanisation (see, e.g., Matthews and Yip; Bauer and Benedict), spellings vary considerably across different publications.

⁵ Discussed in detail in Chapter One: ‘Chinese Woman’: A Colonialist Orientalist (Re)Construction.

to refer specifically to New Zealand.

Since the late twentieth century, the term **Asian** has been widespread in New Zealand. In everyday parlance it grossly denotes both Chinese people and/or Asians who 'look' 'Chinese' and who are therefore perceived to be Chinese (for example, those who are Japanese or Korean). Because the Chinese community constitutes a significant proportion of all Asian New Zealanders,⁶ and because (other) New Zealanders are most familiar with Chinese culture (above other Asian cultures), the term 'Asian' in the mainstream implicitly denotes 'Chineseness' (Cormack 39; Ip and Murphy 13-14). In many contemporary Pākehā narratives, the category 'Chinese' is subsumed beneath the category 'Asian'. The citation of 'Asian' in this thesis is twofold. It reflects this gross mainstream denotation, recognising that while the Chinese community may not be specifically named in some mainstream narratives, it is nonetheless included. And where I have used the term with quotation marks, this constitutes a reflexive reference to its popular usage and denotation, and recognition of the shortcomings this entails.

Colonialist discourse refers to entrenched narratives stemming from ideologies traceable to New Zealand's white Anglo-Saxon British colonial roots. Within these narratives Pākehā hegemony and authority are implicit. In this thesis, Colonialist discourse is identified in mainstream narratives as a **Colonialist Orientalist Episteme**, the manifestations and strategies of which are discussed in detail.

The term **narrative** pertains to and is interchangeable with 'discourse' in this thesis, but my preference is for the former, for it is implicitly predicated on the presence of a *narrator*, which imparts a sense of agential negotiability or room for manoeuvre. In contrast, the term 'discourse' connotes a more rigid regulatory regime. 'Narrative' encompasses not only prevailing hegemonic ideologies, but also the minor stories stemming from and/or positioned within these ideologies.

⁶ In 2006, the Chinese population constituted 41% of the total Asian population in New Zealand (Bedford and Ho 2); in 2013, 36.3% (Statistics NZ, "2013 Census").

Storytelling refers to the diverse, unique and particular ways in which Chinese women articulate their own stories, which in this thesis includes oral histories and testimonies as quoted and cited from interviews conducted for histories, documentaries and academic research; public talks and lectures; and writing: in personal correspondence, personal essays, fiction, poetry, drama, monologues, dialogues, and in autobiographical and autoethnographic narratives.⁷

Autonomous subjectivity, non-‘Chinese woman’ subjectivity, and extra-hegemonic subjectivity are synonymous. The expression of this subjectivity is understood to be evidence of the Chinese woman subject’s agency.

Note: In this thesis, certain words and phrases have been capitalised to highlight their conceptual significance, and to emphasise the ‘hegemonic force’ of dominant discourses.⁸ These are all discussed in detail within the text.

⁷ Autoethnographic narratives being a critical analytical variant of autobiographical narratives; discussed in detail in Introduction: Methodology, Methods and Chapter Outlines.

⁸ The phrase ‘hegemonic force’ is borrowed from Judith Butler, “Endangered” 211.

GLOSSARY

Unlike Mandarin Chinese, where there is one standardised system of romanisation (Pinyin), Cantonese Chinese has spawned numerous recognised systems, and there appears to be no consensus amongst scholars and writers.⁹ In this thesis I have opted to phoneticise Cantonese words in accord with a range I have seen used by other Chinese New Zealand writers. These words do not adhere to one particular Cantonese dialect, but rather, reflect a combination of the ones most commonly spoken in the settler Chinese community in New Zealand.¹⁰ In a bid to portray the settler Chinese community authentically in Chapters Two and Five, I have opted not to make clear distinctions between these dialects. Descendants from these regions socialised and frequently intermarried, and if their offspring did chance to grow up speaking Cantonese, it was not at all unusual for them to confuse – and mongrelise – two or more dialects. The following romanised Cantonese words and Chinese characters appear in Chapters Two and Five unaccompanied by English translations. (All other characters in the thesis are accompanied by English translations.)

<i>A-Mah</i>	阿嫲	grandmother: father's mother
<i>A-Paw</i>	阿婆	grandmother: mother's mother
<i>A-Yeh</i>	阿爺	grandfather: father's father
<i>Ai-ya</i>	哎咗	expression of surprise or pain ¹¹
<i>Baba / Ba</i>	爸爸 / 爸	father
<i>Ba Ma</i>	爸媽	father, mother; parents
<i>Bak-bak</i>	伯伯	uncle: father's older brother
<i>cha siu baos</i>	叉燒包	steamed barbeque pork buns

⁹ See, for example, Matthews and Yip (10); Bauer and Benedict (471).

¹⁰ The origins of which are the Seyip, Poon Yue, Chung Shan, and Jung Seng regions; see Terminology above.

¹¹ Equivalent to e.g., 'oh my god!'

<i>cheun</i>	春	spring (the season)
<i>doong gu</i>	冬菇	shitake mushrooms
<i>gai siu</i>	介紹	introduce
<i>Gor</i>	哥	older brother
<i>Goong-goong</i>	公公	grandfather: mother's father
<i>gow gees</i>	餃子	dumplings
<i>gum sarn</i>	金山	Gold Mountain ¹²
<i>gwei-jai</i>	鬼仔	Pākehā boy ¹³
<i>gwei-lo</i>	鬼佬	Pākehā man
<i>gwei-mui</i>	鬼妹	Pākehā girl
<i>gwei-paw</i>	鬼婆	Pākehā woman
<i>harm yue</i>	鹹魚	salty fish (preserved)
<i>hei</i>	囍	double happy ¹⁴
<i>hei lok</i>	喜樂	joy
<i>Heung Gong</i>	香港	Hong Kong ¹⁵
<i>hoong-bao</i>	紅包	red envelope: gift of money
<i>Jeh-jeh</i>	姐姐	older sister
<i>jook</i>	粥	rice porridge
<i>jum cha</i>	斟茶	pour tea ¹⁶
<i>kow tow</i>	叩頭	kowtow
<i>loong</i>	龍	dragon

¹² See Terminology above.

¹³ Literally, 'ghost boy'; *gwei* 鬼 is a pejorative term used to refer to Caucasians or westerners.

¹⁴ Character commonly used for Chinese weddings, e.g., in invitations and banners.

¹⁵ Literally, 'fragrant harbour'.

¹⁶ Reference to post-nuptial tea ceremony.

<i>lup cheong</i>	臘腸	dried sausages
<i>m sik gong</i>	唔識講	cannot speak
<i>Ma</i>	媽	mother
<i>Ni hao ma?</i>	你好吗	how are you?
<i>Paw-paw</i>	婆婆	grandmother: mother's mother
<i>sai-yan</i>	西人	western/Pākehā people
<i>see</i>	死	dead ¹⁷
<i>dui dung le</i>	最恨了	most hated
<i>sik farn</i>	吃飯	eat dinner ¹⁸
<i>Sook-sook</i>	叔叔	uncle: father's younger brother
<i>tong</i>	湯	soup
<i>wong</i>	黃	yellow
<i>Yeh-yeh</i>	爺爺	grandfather: father's father ¹⁹

¹⁷ Often used pejoratively; equivalent to 'damn'.

¹⁸ Literally: eat cooked rice.

¹⁹ Alternative to A-Yeh above.

INTRODUCTION:

HOW CAN SETTLER CHINESE WOMEN SPEAK?

I have often wondered what might have happened had my father decided to remain in Hong Kong after he married my mother, instead of returning to New Zealand in the footsteps of his brothers, father and grandfather. What kind of life might my siblings and I have led? What experiences might have defined our formative years? As a young woman, what liberties could I have been privy to? Instead of growing up in a minority cast of a few thousand, I would have grown up amongst millions of people 'just like me'. This demographic difference alone may have – doubtless, would have – had a profound impact on how I learned to perceive myself. When I returned to Hong Kong at the age of twenty, I was immediately struck by how self-assured, independent and outspoken the colony's Chinese women were. To me, these women appeared remarkably self-aware and confident of their place in the world. Next to them, my Chinese New Zealand sisters and I felt faceless and inarticulate, and not only on account of our very limited Cantonese. It occurred to me that perhaps we were unwilling – or unable – to express and assert ourselves because we had grown up in a place where we did not – could not – speak for or of ourselves. We were silent because we were not sure *who* we were. At the same time, this *uncertainty* was what seemed to distinguish us as Chinese New Zealand women.

Manying Ip, a Chinese scholar who immigrated to New Zealand from Hong Kong in 1974, has observed this very phenomenon. During her research for *Home Away from Home: Life Stories of Chinese Women in New Zealand* (published in 1990),²⁰ she noted that 'many' 'New Zealand Chinese women' 'remain quite *unaware of their own separate identity*' (*Home* 9).²¹ Ip found the women she interviewed to be extremely humble and self-effacing: they seldom referred to themselves in the first person; identified very closely with their families (Ip, "Home"

²⁰ Hereafter, *Home Away from Home*.

²¹ My emphasis.

Email; G. Wong, “Harsh”); and within the Chinese community, were known only as ‘Mrs So-and-so’ – apparently, even their ‘very close friends’ did not know their maiden or given names (*Home* 9). Indeed, the humility of these women was such that the author experienced great difficulty convincing them that their life stories were, in fact, worth telling (Ip, “Unheard” 7).

Ip’s observation that these women knew each other only by their married or family names certainly rings true. Having observed my mother and aunts socialise with each other and their friends over the years, I am familiar with the generic terms of address they use, and their lack of knowledge of each other’s given names is unsurprising. But I was struck by Ip’s inference that such naming indicates a lack of self-awareness: an *attenuated personhood* that entails an inability to speak for oneself.

Could my own inability to articulate myself be traced to the names I have been given by virtue of the *Chinese New Zealand woman* identity ascribed to me?

It is certainly the case that within Chinese families in New Zealand, women have long been aware of the expectation to comply with time-honoured patriarchal obligations, which require us to defer to fathers, husbands, sons, mothers-in-law and older siblings (Choong 24-52; Ip, *Home*; K. Chang). And there is, without doubt, a sense in which the names that we are addressed by, for example, ‘Mrs So-and-so’, ‘Second Aunt’, ‘Little Sister’, and the stories told – and, importantly, not told – about us, both create and affirm our subordinate status within the family. When I reflect on my own situation, I can see that the names that I was given, the attributes associated with those names, and the stories about Chineseness and about Chinese women that I heard when I was growing up have had a significant influence on the way I see myself, and on how I perceive my relationship with and in the world. It is, for example, customary in many traditional Chinese families for all the children in one generation of the extended family to be given the same name. Usually what is shared is one part of a two-character name. In my family, all the girls were bestowed with *siu* 小, which means ‘small’ or ‘little’. We were all named ‘little’ women. While we have always been treated with respect, at the same time it was made clear to us that our position in the family was subordinate. We grew up with

the understanding that our lives – our stories – were not as important as those of our men.

In my family there is a book. It is six inches thick and within its pages, written by hand, are the stories of my father's family through all the generations from the early Ching dynasty 清初. This genealogical narrative is, of course, patrilineal, and the book is only inherited by sons. When my father and my uncles recount family stories, these are about brothers, uncles, grandfathers and great-grandfathers. Great-great-grandfather left his Cantonese village in the 1850s to build the Pacific Railroad in North America. Great-Great Uncle sailed to Wellington, New Zealand a couple of decades later and opened a laundry business. Great-Grandfather followed in his footsteps. Grandfather founded a bank, an import-export business, and a whisky distillery. They know all the stories about the men in the family – about the women, they know very little. The only stories I have been told about my grandmother are limited to what she did not do (she did not go to school; she did not leave Hong Kong when she was supposed to), tales of her brother (who was murdered for stealing an apple), and the epitaph on her gravestone, a story written by her sons. She lived, but we know not how.

Outside, in the Pākehā world, I learned from an early age that it was best to keep a low profile. To be recognised as 'Chinese' was to be subject to experiences that ranged from probing questions about my home life ('Do you *always* eat with chopsticks?') and corporeal features ('why are your eyes a funny shape?'), to pointed displacements ('where are you from... *originally*?') and thinly disguised imperatives ('why don't you *go home*?'). To be recognised as 'Chinese' in the public domain was always an unsettling experience, for even the most well-meant interrogations disturbed the perception I had of myself as a New Zealander. Not only did they remind me that I was, in the eyes of the mainstream, strange and Other, but there was a sense in which the repetition of these questions perpetuated me as a diminished identity.

Early on in my PhD candidature, I perceived how insidiously these stories and interrogations had influenced my sense of self when I realised that my research

narrative had veered off-course. It had become very theoretical and philosophical, and the topic of Chinese women had somehow migrated from its central place in the critical discussion and become confined – marginalised – in the ‘creative component’ at the end of the thesis. It was, at first, incomprehensible to me how this had occurred. I had been developing the project for many years before its formal beginning, and was highly motivated to pursue it; that it now bore only the remotest resemblance to its incipient self caused a profound sense of disorientation.

In an attempt to get back on track, I ventured to the Aotearoa Centre at the Christchurch City Library in search of Chinese New Zealand stories. I was disturbed to find very few stories written about or by women descendants of the earliest Chinese immigrants. Was this a matter of numbers? Just before radical changes in immigration legislation in 1987 that permitted a significant increase in the Asian population, the entire Chinese community in New Zealand numbered less than 20,000; and it was not until 1986 that the number of Chinese females came close to the number of Chinese males (Appendix 2).²² Was the lack of Chinese women’s stories due to host culture hostility? Childhood memories of Pākehā New Zealanders brought to mind smiles and loud, slow voices: department store clerks and fellow bus passengers who shouted at my mother: ‘What BEAUTIFUL children – they look like DOLLS’ – and the trauma of stinging stones and *ching chong chinaman*. We never dared to chant the comeback so popular with Kiwi kids: *Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me*. Names did hurt, and to openly deny that they did would only have served as an invitation to be pelted by said sticks and stones. Although racism was never talked about at home, we instinctively knew how to deal with it. While we had the freedom to roam the neighbourhood as we pleased, we knew which shops and houses we could not enter, which thresholds we could not cross. We knew that on the outside we had to keep our heads down and our mouths shut. And at the same time, as a Chinese

²² It was not until 1991 that the Chinese community reached a gender ratio of 99 males to 100 females (Ip and Liu 33). In 1986 the population in New Zealand was 3,263,283, (Mair 29 Nov 2011).

girl/woman, I knew that on the inside, I was expected to defer to fathers, brothers, uncles and 'uncles'. *You must respect the man*, my mother would say, *he is stronger than you*.

I grew up believing that Chinese women should not speak. The abstract turns in my earlier research were grounded in this belief. I had written under the misguided assumption that theorising and universalising – like a white man – was the only legitimate way to articulate my concerns, and I had believed that my story, the story of my experiences as a Chinese woman, should not be told. I was not alone in my convictions. Similar beliefs have been expressed by other Chinese New Zealand women who have stated with no false modesty that their stories are not worth telling.²³ I contend that this self-subjugation can be traced to the hegemonic narratives that diminish us. The marginalization of my own story to the final chapter of my thesis occurred under the cumulative subordinating influence of both Pākehā and Chinese narratives that inculcated the belief that my story – the story of a settler Chinese New Zealand woman – did not have sufficient value to be the focus of critical research. Upon reflection, I am able to see clearly the significance of what occurred, which was that the drift I experienced – away from the original proposal – was part of the very phenomena I needed to research.

While it is certainly the case that both the inside world of the family and the outside world of the Pākehā mainstream diminish Chinese women in New Zealand, it is the hegemonic force of mainstream narratives that ultimately sustains this diminution.²⁴ In the early twenty-first century, women descended from the earliest Chinese immigrants can trace their forebears back two, three, four or five generations. It is important to note that while we are highly culturally assimilated, our assimilation has been strongly coerced. In order to be tolerated in the

²³ For example, as confirmed by the following researchers: Ip, "Unheard" 7; Choong 25-26; E.W. Ng, Interviews 4 Mar 2012, 13 Apr 2012.

²⁴ Accordingly, the phrase 'hegemonic narrative/s' throughout this thesis is assumed to incorporate both 'Pākehā' and 'Chinese' threads.

mainstream, we have had little choice but to become Model Minority citizens.²⁵ Our behaviour has not only been coerced by hegemonic cultural narratives but also regulated by a raft of legislated exclusions and marginalisations (Appendix 3). In response to these, we have been raised in families where patriarchal Chinese narratives that emphasise *filial* obligations prevail. While it is certainly the case that such obligations – for example, for humility and obedience – stem from traditional Confucian ideals, the emphasis on such ideals has been crucial for the cultivation of a mainstream-approved presence through the production of compliant ‘Chinese’ subjects.²⁶ In order to survive in the public domain, we were raised to be law-abiding, self-sufficient, hardworking and respectful of authority. We were raised to *know our place*.²⁷ Our subordinate status as women not only contributed to the family’s welfare, it also prepared us for our position in the margins of the mainstream.²⁸

Certainly, when I was growing up in New Zealand in the 1970s and 1980s, we were well aware of prevailing Pākehā cultural norms. Their coerciveness was such that if we did not eat Weetbix for breakfast and lamb chops for ‘tea’, if we did not

²⁵ James Ng notes that in the postwar years, Chinese families generally kept a low profile because ‘the critical factor’ was that ‘there existed a majority of European strangers who did not completely accept them, and could revile them’ (J. Ng, *Windows* 2:264-65). The Chinese have been tolerated – and valorised – in accord with the degree to which they have demonstrated Pākehā attributes and habits (such as speaking English, and taking holidays), deferred to Pākehā, helped Pākehā, or at the very least, refrained from imposing themselves on Pākehā; and to the extent that they have demonstrated qualities such as gratitude, cleanliness, helpfulness, compliance, self-reliance and respect for the law. See, for example, Ip, *Dragons on the Long* 8, 33, 59-60, 73, 123-24; Choong 44-47; J. Ng, *Windows* 1: 325-26; *Windows* 2:117-118, 120, 250.

²⁶ According to R. Chung and Walkey, the Chinese in New Zealand are perceived as a Model Minority because their publicly discernible Confucian attributes clearly align with the Pākehā mainstream’s Protestant work ethic. Chinese New Zealanders tend to be law-abiding, hardworking, well-educated and gainfully employed, with a significant proportion in professional occupations. They are also perceived to be ‘ethical’ and conformist (311, 312), maintaining a very low profile in the public domain. And not only is the community highly assimilated culturally, they are also, in general, ‘non-political’ (311).

²⁷ The imperative to *know our/your place* is discussed in B. Yee 90, and in Ip, *Dragons on the Long* 110, 111-12. See also Erving Goffman’s discussion of a ‘proper place’ for the stigmatized (*Stigma* 119).

²⁸ To paraphrase an old Chinese proverb: in order for there to be order in the nation, and peace in the world, there must first be harmony in the home.

call our grandmothers ‘Nana’, or follow the rugby or eat at barbeques at the weekend, we did not dare let on. To do so would have invited undue attention to our Otherness. We were good at telling stories that made us appear *as if we were just like them*.²⁹ Instinctively aware that there was little space in the Pākehā mainstream to manifest our Chinese lives, we diminished our public presence by dressing, eating and talking like Pākehā. We did our best to confine our Chineseness to our fruit shops, market gardens, and double-happy 囍 weddings.³⁰

From the 1970s onward, increased – and certainly overdue – recognition for Māori sovereignty kept the Chinese community sidelined. The Māori-Pākehā relationship was prioritised through the implementation of bicultural policies.³¹ Māori became an official language used by government departments and local municipalities, and taught in schools and kindergartens.³² Knowing how to speak Māori was cool: we all learned to ‘kia ora,’ complain about our ‘whānaus’ and poke fun at our fathers’ ‘pukus’.³³ At the same time, the Cantonese language, spoken by the vast majority of settler Chinese New Zealanders at this time (J. Ng, Windows 1:11), was a source of humiliation. We cringed if our elders spoke it loudly in public, and we secretly laughed at their badly accented English; the sounds of Cantonese were so ridiculed by our Māori and Pākehā peers that many young Chinese people refused to speak it outside the home.³⁴ As we listened to te reo Māori (the Māori language) being spoken on radio and television, we heard our parents and grandparents mutter about the lack of state-funded Chinese television or radio, and the absence of Cantonese language education in schools and kindergartens. At that

²⁹ See for example: Ip, *Dragons on the Long* 59-60.

³⁰ 囍 (*hei*) means ‘double happiness’ or ‘double joy’ and is used symbolically – often in gold, on a red background – for Chinese weddings.

³¹ By 1990, New Zealand had officially become ‘bicultural’ (Smith 244-45).

³² Māori Language Week was instituted in 1975; the first officially bilingual school opened in 1978; the kōhanga reo movement, established for the purpose of immersing pre-schoolers in the Māori language, began in 1982; the first Māori-owned Māori language radio station went on air in 1983; The Māori Language Act declared Māori an official language in New Zealand in 1987 (Ministry, “Māori”).

³³ ‘Kia ora’: greeting or salutation used increasingly from the 1980s by both Māori and non-Māori broadcasters on radio and television (Ministry, “Māori”); ‘whānaus’: families; ‘pukus’: beer bellies.

³⁴ Affirmed by: B. F. Ng 115; Ip, *Dragons on the Long* 33; and Helene Wong, Interview 7 Nov 2012.

time, we considered their complaints to be petty; we didn't think to question our marginal status. To our assimilated young minds, it was obvious: the government didn't want to promote Chinese culture or the Cantonese language because they were clearly inferior to the languages and cultures of Pākehā and Māori. We grew up believing that being Chinese was a matter of shame.

In order to fully comprehend the origins of that shame, an understanding of how historical narratives have represented Chinese subjects is necessary. To facilitate this, I offer, in the following section, a brief account of enduring mainstream discourses of 'Chineseness' in New Zealand. This will set the scene for the research statement, in which I articulate the thesis' key questions and concerns. In the critical literature review that follows, I situate this research in the context of scholarship most pertinent to these questions and identify the key areas this work contributes to, within which my specific concerns can be addressed. I then develop a conceptual framework, and explain the methods with which I propose to respond to the key questions within the context of the chapter outlines. The chapter concludes with a brief defence of the conceptual frameworks, methodology, and methods chosen for this project.

Economic Scapegoats, Alien Invaders and 'Ching Chong Chinamen': A 'Chinese' History

The Pākehā-narrated history of the Chinese in New Zealand is overwhelmingly the history of Chinese men, within which the presence of Chinese women has barely been acknowledged. In my re-presentation of this history, I focus not on the usual narrative sequences and highlights, which are now comparatively well-known, but rather on prevailing masculine discourses of 'Chineseness'.³⁵ In keeping with other

³⁵ David Fung notes that as recently as the mid-1990s, 'the majority of New Zealanders, including many politicians, crown law officers as well as our own Chinese people were ignorant of the past anti-Chinese history', that in 'the major publications and the school curriculum on New Zealand history, the story of the Chinese was either completely ignored or dismissed in a few sentences', and that the exhibition on Chinese New Zealanders at Te Papa Tongarewa, the national museum in Wellington, which ran from February 1998 to July 2000, was 'an eye opener to all'. See Appendix 3

Pacific Rim Gold Mountain sites (Australia, the U.S.A. and Canada), the Chinese in New Zealand have typically been characterised as economic scapegoats, alien invaders and ‘ching chong chinamen’ (or objects of ridicule), and such characterisations have served to justify their marginalisation and exclusion.³⁶ I discuss each of these, drawing particular attention to how they have endured into the twenty-first century.

The first significant numbers of Chinese to arrive in New Zealand in 1865 were gold miners from Victoria, Australia, invited by the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce in the hopes that their presence would restimulate the flagging economy.³⁷ During the goldmining era in New Zealand (which peaked in the 1860s and continued through to the turn of the century), the vast majority of Chinese immigrants were sojourners; driven by conflict, poverty and political instability in China, their main objective was to find sufficient gold to enable return to a comfortable life in their homeland. Most did not intend to settle in New Zealand; and as wives and children typically remained in China and money was remitted home to them, the perception of ‘chinamen’ ‘sucking the country dry’ was widespread.³⁸ When gold eventually became scarce, many Chinese stayed on and established small businesses in urban centres, typically in market gardens and laundries (B.F. Ng 84-86). Their propensity for hard work and industry was praised by some observers, but at the same time gave rise to strong objections about unfair competition; there prevailed a belief that ‘chinamen’ took what Pākehā believed was rightfully ‘theirs’ (Fig. 1).³⁹

for details of legislation and policies that have regulated the Chinese presence in New Zealand from the nineteenth century through to the twenty-first century. Much of this did not become well-known until quite recently.

³⁶ For example, see Yu; Price; S. K. H. Chu; Huang; Tam; Cassel, “Introduction” ; Elder 225, 229, 232; Ommundsen 93-94; and K. J. Anderson 90.

³⁷ Julia Bradshaw notes that the first arrivals came to New Zealand in December 1865 (12); other scholars state that it was 1866 (F. Fyfe 15,20; Greif, *Overseas* 15; Ip and Murphy 20; Taher 61).

³⁸ See e.g., Ip and Murphy 31-35; Cormack 169; A. Wong, ATETS 149; Appendices 4, 7.

³⁹ See, e.g., J. Ng, *Windows* 1:207; Fairburn, “What Best” 71; Appendix 7. This led to the mobilisation of legislation specifically targeted at restricting Chinese businesses; e.g., the 1904 Shops and Offices Act – amended in 1927 – regulated the operating hours of businesses and the number of unpaid workers, and denied the Chinese the right to participate in decisions about business opening hours;

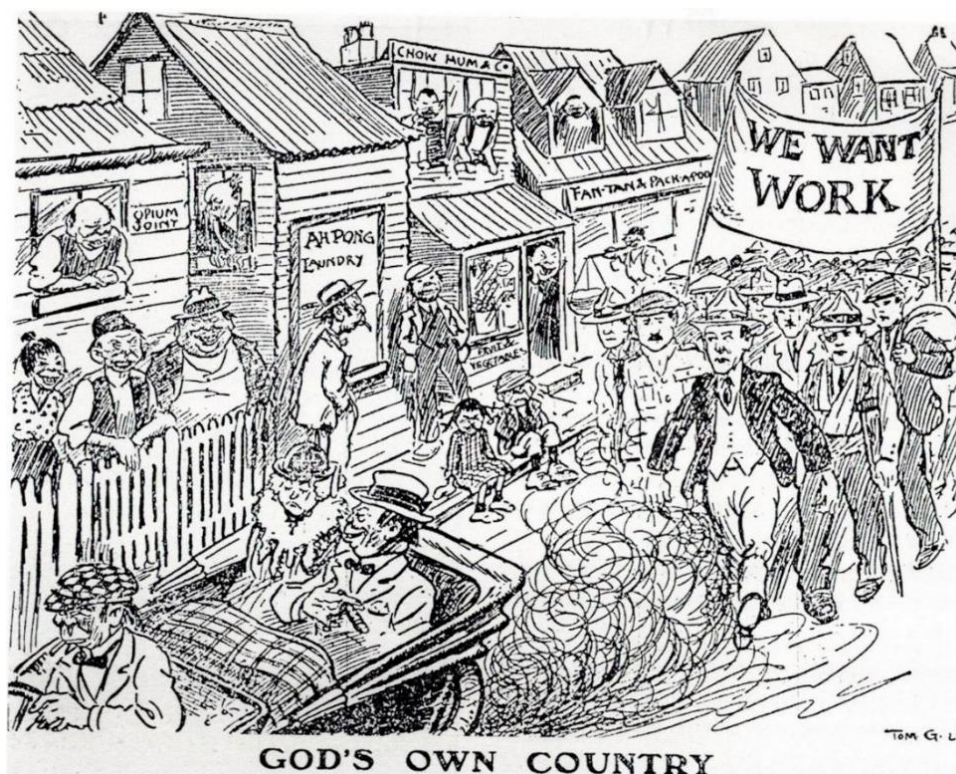


Fig. 1. Tom Glover. *New Zealand Truth* 18 Mar 1922: 1. *Papers Past*. National Library of New Zealand. Web. 31 Jan 2016.

The situation in the late twentieth century was in some ways reminiscent of this earlier period. In 1987, with the realisation that stronger economic ties with Asia were necessary, the government radically liberalised immigration policy in the hope of attracting asset-rich immigrants with business networks and acumen to (once again) stimulate the country's flagging economy. Most of the new Chinese immigrants hailed from Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia and China (Ip, "Chinese New Zealanders" 187; P.H. Li 232-34).⁴⁰ After arrival in New Zealand, many immigrants with professional qualifications were unable to secure employment in their fields of experience. Others, wanting to set up business ventures and networks, were hindered by difficulties navigating infrastructure and a lack of practical support (Ip and Murphy 31-33; Ip, "Chinese New Zealanders" 193).

and the 1910 Factories Amendment Act restricted the operating hours of Chinese laundries (Murphy, *Guide* 164, 186).

⁴⁰ China became the main source of Chinese immigrants after 1996 (Ip and Liu 41).

Consequently, many of these new Chinese immigrants became occupationally marginalised, just as their predecessors had been a hundred years before them (Hill; Henderson; Tan). Some took up menial jobs, while others returned to their home countries, commuting for work and leaving spouse and families in New Zealand. In light of the significant number of these ‘astronaut’ spouses – who had little choice but to shuttle between Asia and New Zealand – it appears that accusations of ‘sucking the country dry’ were, in the eyes of many mainstream New Zealanders, as well-grounded in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as they were a hundred years earlier.⁴¹

The Chinese have long been economic scapegoats. The tension between economic need and resistance to acceptance of the Chinese as integral to the nation is as evident in the twenty-first century as it was in the nineteenth century. In the 2002 Poll Tax Apology, which was perceived by some members of the Chinese community to be rushed, ill-considered and strategically timed before a national election (P. Wong; Ip, “Poll Tax”), Labour Prime Minister Helen Clark acknowledged and emphasised the importance of the Chinese community’s ‘economic and social contribution’ and the ‘many new Chinese migrants’ who contribute ‘new ideas’, ‘a strong work ethic’, and ‘valuable contacts with their countries of origin’ (Appendix 23). In light of the socio-economic marginalisation of many of the ‘new Chinese migrants’, Clark’s very public appreciation for the community appears highly strategic. The Apology, which coincided with Chinese New Year celebrations, implicitly endorsed an expectation of exchange: the Chinese were welcomed for the sake of the economy (Appendices 12, 23; H. Wong, “Ching Chong Chinamen”).⁴²

⁴¹ See, for example: Ip and Liu 51- 52; Ip and Murphy 30-34; Cormack, 169; Appendices 5, 8. This belief never really went away; it persisted even during the peaceful, prosperous postwar decades leading up to 1987. For example, in 1970, M. Taher wrote that ‘Chinese. . . *have begun* putting their profit back into business and market gardens instead of remitting much of it to relatives in their homelands’ (62) (my emphasis), implying that commitment to New Zealand was at that time, very recent. This appears to overlook the Chinese community’s earlier contributions to the nation’s economy, for example, during World War Two when they were the country’s major suppliers of fruit and vegetable produce (Lee and Lam 16).

⁴² See also New Zealand Parliament, “Immigration Chronology”, regarding the NZ-China Free Trade Agreement of 2008, which allowed for the entry of up to 1800 skilled Chinese nationals ‘at any one time’ under the proviso that they met certain requirements, including a job offer.



Fig.2. John Collis Blomfield, *New Zealand Free Lance*, 24 June 1905. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand

Where the Chinaman gets a footing, vice, squalor and misery are inevitable. They are most of them cruel, lustful, lecherous, satyrs. . . It is the same everywhere.

(“Chinese Curse”)

During the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, the Chinese were perceived as a menace: an unclean, diseased, subhuman race. The prevailing perception of them as ‘inscrutable Johns’ who lived in ‘squalid’ ‘dark and odorous’ homes permeated by the ‘sour smell of Asia’ (“Chinatown”) was informed by sinophobic narratives that circulated freely between Gold Mountain sites, some of which were published in New Zealand newspapers.⁴³ For example: “Via San Francisco, My Journal of a Sunday in San Francisco” describes the Chinese as ‘sallow-looking heathens’ with ‘scintillating slits which do duty for eyelids’, who inhabit premises that smell ‘like the palace of a rat king’. Following his travels in Canada and the U.S.A., Lionel Terry (whose premeditated murder of Joe Kum Yung in Wellington caused a sensation in 1905)⁴⁴

wrote “The Shadow”, a poem describing the Chinese as ‘plague-fraught, sin-spawned fiends’ (23). The Australian journal *The Bulletin*, popular in New Zealand,

⁴³ See, for example: Murphy, *Poll-tax* 7; Ip, “Chinese New Zealanders” 163; Ooi, “Reorientations” 20; Ferrall, Millar and Smith 9-10; Ooi, “Uncanny”. Note that many stories about Wellington’s ‘Chinatown’ were highly sensationalised or even fictionalised (Shum, “Remembering” 79).

⁴⁴ Discussed further below.

was a leader in sinophobic literature between 1880 and 1901, publishing numerous articles, poems, short stories and cartoons that portrayed demeaning stereotypes such as ‘the money-grabbing Chinaman’, ‘the vindictive Chinaman’ and ‘the comic Chinaman’ (Yu 61-68, 73-74), and which variously referred to Chinese people as ‘lepers’, ‘heathens’ and ‘human scum’ (qtd in Ferrall, Millar and Smith 12).⁴⁵ In this early period, the prevailing perception of the predominantly male Chinese population in New Zealand was that of a community of compulsive gamblers, opium addicts, and sexual predators, whose behaviour needed to be curbed by highly discriminatory legislation.⁴⁶

The hegemonic force of these sinophobic narratives was such that Chinese (‘Asian’) immigrants who arrived decades later (after 1987) were also seen as undesirable, morally suspect predators. Not only did they feature often in sensational news stories involving criminal activities, they were, in everyday conversations, perceived as intruders who populated suburban streets with their oversized ‘mansions’, navigated the roads in erratic, discourteous *un-Kiwi* fashion and took jobs, school and university places meant for ‘real’ New Zealanders.⁴⁷ That

⁴⁵ Quoted from *The Bulletin*, 10 March, 1888. See also Ooi, “Reorientations” 90-91, 112; Price 187-88. *The Bulletin* was considered to be an Australasian journal, with approximately 10% of its content contributed by New Zealanders (Belich 329).

⁴⁶ The 1881 *Gaming and Lotteries Act* outlawed Chinese games of chance such as ‘Pak-a-poo’ and ‘Fan-tan’ between 1881 and 1977, while non-Chinese forms of gaming remained legal (Shum, “Remembering” 82). Under the 1901 *Opium Prohibition Act*, opium smoking – the preferred method of consumption amongst the Chinese – was prohibited, and the police could, until 1965, enter and search any Chinese business or residential premise without warrant. And while there were no laws that prohibited marriage between Chinese and Pākehā, Pākehā women who married Chinese men were required to forfeit their (at that time) British citizenship (Appendix 3; Murphy, *Guide* 160-61, 48). The concern was not only for Pākehā women. Due to labour shortages in the early twentieth century – and the fact that most Pākehā refused to work for Chinese employers – many Māori women were employed in Chinese market gardens. This led to a number of Chinese-Māori liaisons and such strong objections from both Pākehā and Māori that in 1929, an official inquiry was launched to investigate the matter (Brookes). See also “The Chinese Curse”; Ooi, “Reorientations” 61-79, 85-86; and J. Ng, *Windows* 2:274-275.

⁴⁷ Butcher and Spoonley’s 2011 analysis of media constructions of Asians and Asian immigration identifies familiar discourses of alien invasion, economic competition, and ‘moral panic’ in the period from the 1990s through to the twenty-first century; it concludes that Asian immigrants have been ‘demonized and scapegoated as a cultural and problematic “other” . . .’ See also: Booth and Martin,

the fear of Chinese/'Asian' invasion is deeply embedded in the New Zealand psyche is clearly evident in a couple of cartoons, their publication separated by a 92-year interval: "Still they come", published in 1905 in the *New Zealand Free Lance*, shows Premier Richard Seddon and his deputy Joseph Ward looking on in horror as a stream of Chinese men vault nimbly over a wall into the country (Fig. 3); and Tom Scott's 1997 cartoon (Fig. 4) portrays politician Winston Peters – famous for his anti-Asian immigration stance in the election campaigns of the previous year – waving a newspaper with the headline 'Chinese reclaim Hong Kong' and shouting 'I warned everyone that Asians were taking over, but nobody would listen!'⁴⁸



**Fig. 3. John Collis Blomfield, *New Zealand Free Lance*, 7 January 1905
 A-315-3-042, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.
<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23065453>**

There are numerous narratives that portray the Chinese as objects of ridicule, as comic or pathetic 'ching chong chinamen', whose ill-treatment is somehow justified. Up to World War Two, the harassment of Chinese miners,

16 Apr 1993; Booth and Martin, 23 Apr 1993; Coddington; Cormack 27, 110-11, 119, 125, 169, 209; Appendices 5, 6, 13.

⁴⁸ Satirises the New Zealand Party and Winston Peters' well-known anti-Asian stance in the 1996 general election. See also Shaw; and Spoonley, "Ethnic".

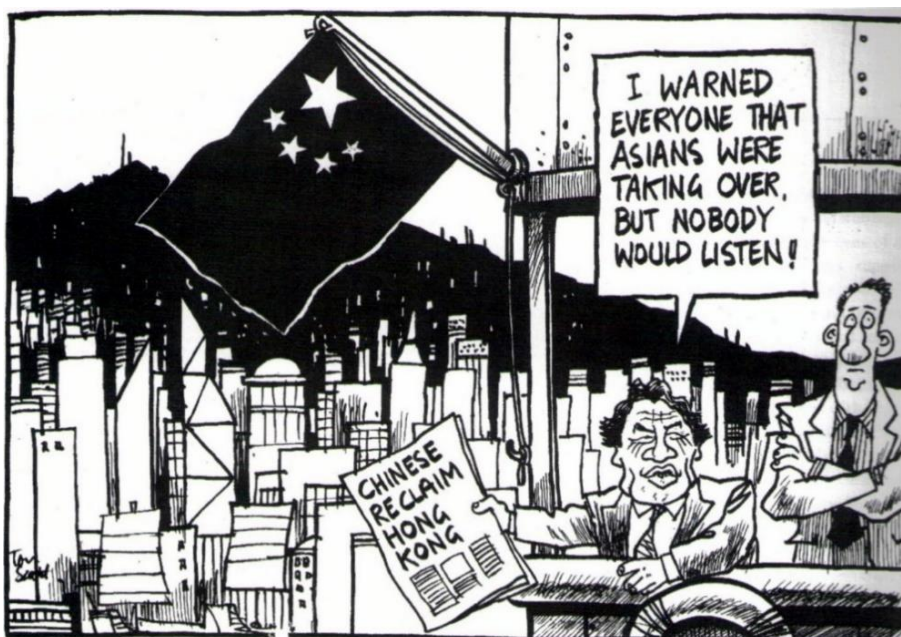


Fig. 4. Tom Scott, *Evening Post*, 30 June 1997
 H-418-021, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.
<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22738410>

market gardeners, pedlars, and fruit and vegetable retailers – which at times extended beyond verbal abuse to vandalism, arson and/or physical assault – was commonplace.⁴⁹ Such treatment was perceived by many Pākehā to be ‘high-spirited pranks’ or sport rather than genuinely deviant or criminal behaviour (P. S. Butler 23-24). While the Chinese were ostensibly protected by the same laws that protected all other New Zealanders, it was not uncommon for crimes and misdemeanours against them to be regarded by Pākehā as justifiable given widespread opposition to their presence. Although the Chinese were protected under British law, prevailing opinions of them as morally degenerate aliens undermined the justice to which they were entitled.⁵⁰ The tension between the law as ‘universal protector’ of all human lives and the pervasive belief that ‘Chinamen’ were not fully human

⁴⁹ See, for example, “Fracas”; “Assaulting”; “Assault on”; “Murderous”; “Outrage on a Chinaman”; “Outrage on a Chinese”; “Brutal”; “Assault and Robbery”; “In a Fruit Shop”; “Ill-Treatment”; Helen Wong, 10-28.

J. Ng, *Windows* 1:289.

⁵⁰ See, for example: “Outrage on a Chinese”; “Treatment”. The raft of legislation designed to exclude and deny the Chinese full participation in New Zealand undermined any protective legislation (Appendix 3; Murphy, *Guide*). See also Alison Wong’s poem “One Hundred Pounds” about the murder of her great-grandfather in Wellington in 1914 (Appendix 25).

became a matter of intense public interest with the premeditated murder of Joe Kum Yung, an elderly retired miner, in 1905. According to historian Peter Butler, the murder ‘epitomized the irrational and racial nature’ of all crimes against the Chinese at this time (26). Following a trial in which the defendant British ex-patriot Lionel Terry represented himself, the jury declared Terry guilty with a recommendation for mercy in light of the insanity he suffered due to his inordinate fear of ‘aliens’, and his sentence to death by hanging was eventually commuted to life imprisonment. Contemporaneous reports of the murder typically portray Terry as a good British specimen and Joe Kum Yung as a pathetic victim; in several accounts Yung is not even acknowledged by name, but referred to simply as ‘the Chinaman’.⁵¹ Although most condemned the act of murder, the level of support for Terry indicates a widespread consensus that the views motivating the murder were in some sense ‘right’.⁵²

The belief that the Chinese are ‘fair game’ persisted into the late twentieth century and remains significant today. Growing up, we were occasionally victims of gratuitous racist violence: pushed, spat at, stoned and ‘roughed up’ – and of course, verbally abused. Everyday insults were typically less violent (at least in a physical sense), though no less offensive: the stretched-out slant eyes, bad imitations of Chinese accents, jokes about food (‘you eat flied lice?’) and how Chinese people are like ducks because we all look alike – these were part of the fabric of everyday ‘Kiwi’ conversation. Such incidents are not the preserve of some deviant ignorant yesteryear. News reports, and testimonies from ordinary New Zealanders – both

⁵¹ See, for example: “1905”; “Past Year”; “Lionel Terry”; “Murder of a Chinaman”; “Case”; “Criminal”; “Haining”.

⁵² See, for example, “Plea”. After one escape from Seacliff Mental Asylum, police remarked that the difficulties they experienced in apprehending Terry were due to widespread sympathy and support for him in the community (Inspector McGill, letter to the Commissioner of Police, 19 December 1907, cited by Shum, “Remembering” 77). Terry was, according to C.A.L. Treadwell, described as a ‘patriot’ and ‘hero’ ‘ad nauseum’ in the decades following the murder. His ‘heroism’ continues to be acknowledged in more recent scholarship in the context of the sinophobic social climate of decades past; see for example: Belich 229; Ballantyne, *Webs* 81.

Pākehā and Chinese – confirm that ‘Chinaman Games’ are as much sport now as they were then.⁵³

Historically, the limits of Pākehā tolerance have been expressed and defined through the dissemination of narratives that characterise the Chinese pejoratively as economic scapegoats, alien invaders, and ‘ching chong chinamen’. In the middle decades of the twentieth century, these narratives were so insidiously coercive that the Chinese internalised their subordinate status, actively assimilating and accepting the inevitability of the cultural and linguistic losses this entailed.⁵⁴ Having grown up with the knowledge that they and their forebears had been ‘allowed into New Zealand under sufferance’, the settler Chinese remained a community of politically passive Model Minority citizens, who vigilantly maintained that it was ‘best policy’ ‘not to rock the boat’ (Ip and Pang 181). Acutely aware of the fragility of mainstream tolerance, some even voiced support for continued restrictions to immigration policy, expressing concerns that a marked increase in the Chinese population would re-activate prejudice and discrimination (Greif, *Overseas* 116-18). With the resurgence of sinophobia from the 1990s, the settler Chinese community was left in no doubt about the hegemonic force of the narratives that have historically assigned them to the margins of the nation.

Research Statement

It is not difficult to see how the narratives cited above could undermine a settler Chinese New Zealand woman’s awareness of her own separate identity. By virtue of being raised small 小, silent, and subordinately female, I cannot but infer that I am yet less than the Chinese men who are portrayed as such abject objects of

⁵³ Contemporary racist sentiments can be more accurately described as ‘Asia-phobic’ rather than sinophobic. There are numerous examples of violence directed at members of New Zealand’s various Asian communities in recent years; see e.g., “Arrests”; “Judge”; “Face”; Clarkson; Kidson; Feek; Lynch; Greenland.

⁵⁴ Assimilation of the Chinese community in New Zealand is discussed in detail by Stuart Greif in his PhD study published in 1974: *The Overseas Chinese in New Zealand*. The author expresses ‘shock’ at what he describes as the ‘rapid pace of the blind assimilation of the Chinese into New Zealand British life’ (*Overseas* xiii).

contempt in these narratives. And the absence of Chinese women from these stories affirms that we are, as Nigel Murphy describes, 'the invisible of the invisible': subsumed beneath both 'Pākehā' and 'Chinese' narratives ("Researching" 230).

In this thesis, my focus is on the relationship between Chinese women's subjectivity and their public identity. My concern here is not whether the stories told about us are 'true'. My concern is for how dominant mainstream discourses subordinate Chinese women. While I recognise that patriarchal Confucian narratives certainly contribute to the diminution of women within Chinese families, in the New Zealand context, it is hegemonic mainstream Pākehā narratives that ultimately determine *which* Chinese narratives are most appropriate for the purpose of co-constructing the prototype 'Chinese woman' on the outside. It is mainstream imperatives for Model Minority behaviour that *summon* the patriarchal Chinese narratives that inculcate filial behaviour on the inside, which contribute to and reinforce Pākehā narratives about 'Chineseness' and 'Chinese woman' on the outside. Due to the hegemonic force of Model Minority imperatives, the Chineseness that prevails on the inside in the Chinese New Zealand family is strongly influenced by the 'Chineseness' the family is required to manifest on the outside. In light of this, my primary concern is for how this (Pākehā-reinforced) 'Chineseness' subordinates Chinese women.

Accordingly, I contend that mainstream narratives that prescribe Chinese women's public identity impact significantly on their subjectivity across both outside and inside domains, allowing little space for the articulation or recognition of an extra-hegemonic or separate identity. The primary objective in this thesis is not to make a public claim for a 'settler Chinese New Zealand woman' identity, but rather, to account for the Chinese woman subject's self-awareness of a separate identity *beyond* the hegemonic narratives that subordinate her as a Chinese woman in New Zealand. While there is certainly political value in asserting a complex intersectional identity (such as 'settler Chinese New Zealand woman') (K. Davis), self-recognition must ground public recognition. If I cannot articulate *who* I am, then how is it possible to assert and distinguish myself within and from the context of the hegemonic narratives that subordinate me?

Although this thesis is a self-inquiry, and the key questions below derive from personal experience, my concerns with what it means to be subordinated as a settler Chinese New Zealand woman are pertinent to those of other subjects similarly subjugated by hegemonic discourses. In what ways does the subject position assigned to me both contain and constrain me? How can I articulate an identity beyond the stories told about me? Could my awareness of such an identity be cultivated in the process or experience of telling my own stories? Could the stories of other settler Chinese New Zealand women be instructive? What kinds of narrative strategies are needed? I contend that the answers to these questions, all of which are focused on the woman subject's *awareness of the limits of her subordinated self*, determine whether in fact it is possible to make a substantive claim for a publicly recognisable, extra-hegemonic, autonomous, non-‘Chinese woman’ identity.

This research has been motivated by the discomfort and disidentification I have experienced in my encounters with the hegemonically-constructed prototype ‘Chinese woman’, by my observation that many stories about Chinese women in New Zealand have not been told by Chinese women, and by the recognition that I am *not* ‘Chinese woman’.⁵⁵ The review of literature that follows offers a critical survey of *absence*, which reveals how settler Chinese women’s voices in New Zealand have been variously elided, marginalised, assimilated and excluded.

Critical Literature Review

In order to address the key concerns of this thesis as outlined in the research statement above, an interrogation of the nexus between the Chinese woman subject and the particular narratives that co-construct the prototype ‘Chinese woman’ is required. The review of literature pertinent to the identification and articulation of this space is divided into five sections. With reference to histories and contemporary media, *Narrating the Nation* critically analyses hegemonic

⁵⁵ Lykke defines disidentification as ‘resistance to hegemonic and normativizing discourses’ (“Passionate” 32).

narrative strategies that subsume and marginalise settler Chinese stories and voices in New Zealand, highlighting the historical and political discourses that undergird these. Next, *Postcoloniality and Gold Mountain Phenomena* situates my research in the context of studies of Chinese women and their stories across the white settler Pacific Rim sites of Australia, U.S.A. and Canada. *The Search for Chinese Women in New Zealand* draws attention to the absence of studies about Chinese women in New Zealand. *Settler Chinese New Zealand Women's Storytelling* offers a survey and preliminary analysis of Chinese New Zealand women's writing and existing research on this subject. Finally, *'Chinese Woman' and Subjectivity* offers a brief survey of how the prototype 'Chinese woman' has been constructed in different contexts and draws attention to what is required for a conception of subjectivity adequate to the task of identifying settler Chinese New Zealand women's separate identity.

Narrating the Nation

The real enemy of the Chinese was the ideal society.
(Moloughney and Stenhouse 64)

There has been a tendency for scholars in the Pākehā mainstream to explain the marginalisation, elision and exclusion of the settler Chinese community in New Zealand with reference to a historically recognised imperative to define the country's national identity.⁵⁶ The roots of this imperative are, without exception, cited as colonial, harking back to the days when the colony aspired to be a 'fairer Britain of the South Seas'.⁵⁷ In this historical context, the identification of white Anglo-Europeans as New Zealanders 'above' all other peoples in the colony, including tangata whenua/Māori, prevails.⁵⁸ Despite the government's growing

⁵⁶ See, for example: Ballantyne, *Webs* 52-66; also Price 202; Moloughney and Stenhouse 63-64; Ferrall, Millar and Smith 7; Ballantyne and Moloughney, "Asia" 69-70; Smith 122-23; Bradshaw 196.

⁵⁷ See, for example: Brooking and Rabel 36-37; Murphy, *Poll-tax* 7; Ip and Murphy 18; Ip, "Chinese - The First" 2.

⁵⁸ Paul Spoonley notes that compared to the 'mix of arrivals' in Australia, Canada and the U.S.A. during colonisation, the "'civilising" of New Zealand was the almost exclusive focus of British . . . settlement', and this resulted in a remarkably homogeneous population ("I Made" 42). 'Tangata whenua' refers to the Māori people in New Zealand; its literal translation is 'people of the land'.

commitment to Māori from the 1970s, and increased ethnic diversity from the late 1980s, the basis for New Zealand's national identity has changed little. Demographically, the 'European ethnic group' constitutes the majority of the population, and Pākehā – or Anglo-European – cultural norms continue to predominate.⁵⁹ Relatedly, there has endured a prevailing assumption that it is a Pākehā responsibility to manage the country's other ethnic communities (Brookes; Brawley, "No White"; Ip, "Māori-Chinese" 234). In recent decades, the government's ongoing need to attend to and arbitrate between the competing demands of Treaty of Waitangi obligations to Māori, and its engagements with the regional Asian economy (which require more than lip service to the nation's diverse resident Asian communities) foregrounds this management, for it points to an enduring Pākehā authority.⁶⁰

Under the auspices of Pākehā authority, the settler Chinese community's place in the nation remains uncertain. While the question of what place the

⁵⁹ According to Statistics New Zealand, in 2013, 74% of the population identified with one or more European ethnicities; and of overseas-born residents, the largest number were born in England (Statistics, "2013"). In 2012, historian Michael King confirmed that 'the dominant realities of New Zealand life . . . are still those of a mainstream Pākehā culture. . .' (515). A 2015 report from the Federation of Multicultural Councils (which represents New Zealand's diverse ethnic and migrant communities) confirms this (de Bries 12, 26, 48, 56). See also Ip and Murphy 18; Ghosh 7; and Johnson and Moloughney, who in 2006 noted that while 'the study of diasporic communities has gained momentum' it was 'struggling to find an institutional presence in New Zealand universities' (1). The nation's 'lack of appetite for diversity' (de Bries 12, 25) is reflected politically: multiculturalism in New Zealand is not (yet) affirmed through 'any constitutional, legislative or parliamentary instruments' (Tolley 75; see also de Bries 7, 17-19). In 2015 I tried to contact the Office of Ethnic Affairs with regard to whether there had been new developments, but received no response.

⁶⁰ In his 2009 essay "'Māoriland' and 'Yellow Peril'", Nigel Murphy asserts that 'White New Zealanders' have long 'controlled the nation's destiny and identity', that 'Othering the Chinese and subordinating Māori' were 'essential' to the formation of a national identity, and that 'New Zealand continues to live with the legacy of that process today' (82). Manying Ip notes that 'in a socio-political system where the power of whiteness remains largely invisible and unquestioned', Māori and Asian concerns have been pitted against each other ("Māori-Chinese" 250). Many minority immigrant ethnic communities do, in fact, recognise the importance of a 'Treaty-based multiculturalism' and would welcome opportunities to engage with Māori; however, they remain uncertain about where they stand in relation to Māori and the Treaty of Waitangi (LewGor; de Bries 7, 9, 10, 15). I draw on Ghassan Hage's discussion of the management of ethnic Others in his account of Australia's 'white nation fantasy'. See also Day; and Bailey's discussion of Marilyn Frye's 'whitely script' (97).

community has in the nation's *bicultural* framework (within which the rights of tangata whenua/Māori are deemed equal to those of Pākehā) has been acknowledged by some scholars, the impact on the settler Chinese community of more recent *multicultural* discourses – within which they are subsumed beneath the category 'Asian' – has barely been addressed.⁶¹ The review of literature below suggests that multicultural narratives in New Zealand are not as progressive as they appear to be because the place they afford the settler Chinese community is undermined by enduring colonialist discourses.

While less discriminatory immigration policies from 1987 ostensibly afforded equal value to all peoples within the nation state, support for ethnic minorities remains incumbent upon the Pākehā majority, who determine the conditions under which they are tolerated.⁶² A recent report from the Federation of Multicultural

⁶¹ For example: Mark Williams has argued that New Zealand's postcolonial bicultural identity 'drags with it colonial assumptions about racial identity' (302) and allows 'only ancillary space for those not included within its binarism', in particular, 'Chinese people [who] have been in this country almost as long as colonialism itself. . .' (301). Tony Ballantyne notes that despite their significant populations in New Zealand since the 1860s, the history of Asian settlers in New Zealand, does not 'disrupt the dominant bicultural narratives of the nation' ("Writing Out Asia" 93). Hilary Chung observes that in New Zealand's bicultural context, the inclusion of the New Zealand Chinese identity as 'Pākehā' – in accord with Michael King's reframing of the term to include 'non-Māori New Zealanders – 'reflects their historical invisibility' ("Autoethnographic" 80). While there have appeared a few collections of scholarly papers concerned with Asia/Asians, multiculturalism and New Zealand in recent years, and these are certainly pertinent to the settler Chinese community, their stories and identities are subsumed beneath the category 'Asian'. See, for example, Ghosh and Leckie; Johnson and Moloughney; Voci and Leckie.

⁶² I say 'ostensibly' because although immigration policy no longer explicitly discriminates on the basis of race or ethnicity, it has been implicitly discriminatory. This has been evident in the stringent conditions for the entry of new immigrants to New Zealand, many of whom are Asian. For example, in 1995, in response to widespread public opposition to increasing Asian immigration, a compulsory English test was implemented for potential applicants, which alone caused a 96% drop in applications (Appendices 3, 11; Ip and Murphy 63). In 2012, those applying to enter under the 'Migrant Investment' category were required to invest in the country a minimum of 1.5 million dollars, supported by one million dollars in 'settlement funds', in addition to either proving English language competence or pre-purchasing ESOL tuition at a cost of up to \$6795 depending on the applicant's IELTS score. Alternative modes of entry included investment of \$10 million, which brought with it exemption from the English language requirement, or the 'Skilled Migrant Category', which required a high standard of English language proficiency. (In 2012 the quota for humanitarian refugee applications was limited to 300.) Although these requirements apply equally to all potential migrants, given that the two other significant sources of immigrants were the UK and South Africa,

Councils (published in 2015), collated from workshops conducted in ethnic minority communities nationwide, reveals mainstream tolerance to be significantly limited.⁶³ Relatedly, the report confirms that New Zealand remains ‘predominantly monolingual and monocultural’ (de Bries 12, 26, 48, 56). I contend that this enduring monoculturalism has clear colonial roots, from which stem two prevailing narratives: the Superiority Myth, and the Progress Narrative;⁶⁴ and that ultimately, it is the hegemony of these narratives that sustains the marginalisation of the country’s ethnic minority communities.

The Superiority Myth is an enduring narrative in which New Zealanders see themselves as members of a ‘special’ society, free of the social injustices that plague other countries. In particular, it has been claimed by Pākehā scholars from the nineteenth century through to the twenty-first, that with regard to matters of race relations, New Zealand is superior to other white settler nations in the Pacific Rim:

... race relations in New Zealand. . . have been as good as in any former European settlement colony and much happier than in Australia, South Africa or North America. . . (Keith Sinclair 1971: 121)

... most New Zealanders . . . are good-hearted, practical, commonsensical and tolerant. Those qualities are part of the national cultural capital that has in the past saved the country from the worst excesses of chauvinism and racism seen in other parts of the world. (Michael King, 2012: 520)

the English language requirement does appear to discriminate against Asian applicants (*Immigration*).

⁶³ Summaries from these workshops reveal factors such as ‘deep-seated’, ‘overt’, ‘casual’ and ‘institutionalised’ racism, and ‘cultural insensitivity’ to be significant impediments to the development of successful multicultural communities in New Zealand (de Bries 26, 40, 53, 19, 53). The pages cited from de Bries here are individual examples only; such descriptions are repeated several times throughout the report.

⁶⁴ New Zealand is certainly not alone in its deployment of a Superiority Myth; according to Shohat and Stam, such narratives are expressions of ‘colonialist exceptionalism’ that many Western colonial nations have displayed (386-87).

According to this narrative, the Chinese may have been discriminated against in New Zealand, but they have been treated far better than their counterparts in Australia, Canada, and the U.S.A.⁶⁵ Implicit in the nation's Progress Narrative is a process of edification, within which New Zealand is perceived to have evolved from ignorant (Victorian/Edwardian era) to charitable (World War Two) to welcoming and appreciative (late twentieth century): a country of worldly citizens who not only tolerate but *include* the Chinese – and all other ethnic minority communities.⁶⁶ It is important to note, however, that such communities are included as Others, and that these narratives of Superiority and Progress are rather insidious. Their co-construction of a harmonious, purportedly democratic and inclusive multi-culture in New Zealand dissembles the limits they impose on the stories of Others under their auspices.⁶⁷ In a contemporary context, these limits are not immediately apparent, for the showcasing of diverse ethnic communities – which allows mainstream (and other) New Zealanders to demonstrate their appreciation for 'food, festivals and funny customs' (H. Wong, "Image") – is a carefully managed affair. Such displays of diversity are not emancipatory, for they require endorsement from and are regulated by the Pākehā mainstream; inclusion therefore offers no break from colonialist discourse, but is rather a strategic continuation of it.⁶⁸

The 'happy hybridity' celebrated and advertised in diverse media in New Zealand from the 1990s effectively dissembles enduring inequalities.⁶⁹ In light of

⁶⁵ See, for example: Greif, *Overseas* 85; Price 96; M. Williams 306, 313; Ooi, "Reorientations" 14-17; Fairburn, "Is There" 144-45, 151. Brawley points out that in the years 1946-1978, New Zealanders' perception of harmonious domestic race relations between Europeans and Māori played 'an important role' in dissembling a 'racially discriminatory immigration policy' ("No White" 28-29).

⁶⁶ See, for example: Ooi, "Reorientations" 14; Bradshaw 139; Ballantyne and Moloughney, "Asia" 65; Meyer and McLellan 56; Greif, *Overseas* 63, 96; R. Chung and Walkey; Beatson and Beatson; McNeur 35-37, 54.

⁶⁷ As Homi Bhabha contends, while 'Western connoisseurship' entertains and encourages cultural diversity, there is always also a corresponding *containment* of it' (208) (my emphasis). See also Ooi, "Reorientations" 48-50, 170-71.

⁶⁸ As Homi Bhabha asserts, the 'universalism' that underscores the containment of diversity 'masks ethnocentric norms, values and interests' (208). Such norms are, however, openly reasserted when they are perceived to be challenged; see, for example, Phillips, "Politics".

⁶⁹ Resulting from, for example, 'colonial imposition' and 'obligatory assimilation' (Shohat and Stam 43). The term 'happy hybridity' is borrowed from Jacqueline Lo.



Fig. 5. Chinese dragon being carried across a pedestrian crossing, Wellington. Photograph taken by Craig Simcox. 18 Sept 1999. Further negatives of the *Evening Post* newspaper. Ref: EP/1999/2748/17. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23094815>

these, the rhetoric with which stories of ‘unity in diversity’ have been articulated in a range of media has drawn objections from critics who point out that such ‘unity’ is prematurely claimed. In recent years, Chinese and other Asian New Zealanders have become increasingly visible in a range of everyday media including mainstream newspapers, magazines, websites, radio and, most conspicuously, on television, where they appear not only in niche ‘Asian’ programs in which they showcase their cultural differences to the nation, but also in prime time soap operas, comedy sketches and commercials.⁷⁰ In her study of screen representations of Asians in New Zealand, Paola Voci notes that while such appearances contribute to the impression of an inclusive, harmonious multicultural nation, close scrutiny reveals such harmony to be coercively constructed by ‘homogenizing strategies’ that ultimately subjugate Asian/Chinese voices (74). In her analysis of the television documentary *Here to Stay*, which tells the story of the settler Chinese community, Voci observes that although there are explicit references to the history of racial discrimination, these are minimised in ‘high-tech digitized’ images presented in a sped-up ‘video-

⁷⁰ See, for example: Fig. 8; *Asia Downunder*; *Thousand Apologies*; “Footprints”. H. Wong, “Helene Wong”. Voci, “Isn’t it Great?”; Abel.

game' format that emphasises their remoteness from – and de-emphasises their relevance to – contemporary New Zealand (91). Voci argues that strategies like these 'soften' 'problematic histories and stories to fit into a unifying narrative' (92), and that there is therefore a need to maintain a sense of caution, for such 'unity' dissembles a 'still unequal power relationship' (94).⁷¹

This 'still unequal power relationship' also lies at the centre of a controversy, discussed by Sue Abel, surrounding a television commercial for *Drive* washing powder screened in New Zealand in 1996-7, featuring a Chinese woman stereotyped as a speaker of broken English, and devious to boot.⁷² In her analysis, Abel reveals that despite having received numerous complaints, the Advertising Standards Complaints Board saw fit to deem the advertisement inoffensive, concluding that the Chinese woman character – and presumably, by extrapolation, the Chinese community – was 'party to the humour rather than the subject of it' (119). Abel found that the majority of participant viewers in her study (who ranged across diverse ethnic communities, including Pākehā) perceived the advertisement to be offensive; that is, they saw it as a negative representation of a Chinese woman. In light of this, the Complaints Board's verdict is disturbing, for by virtue of being *the* official arbitrating voice on the matter, it appears to constitute a *coercion* of 'happy hybridity'.

Such coerciveness is evident also in Pākehā-narrated historical research about the Chinese community. Despite their self-proclaimed 'unsettling' of the assumed 'fundamental Britishness of settler culture', Ballantyne and Moloughney characterise the Chinese and Chinese culture as exotic and commoditised curiosities

⁷¹ Similarly, in their analysis of television and multiculturalism in New Zealand, Kothari, Pearson and Zuberi reveal that reporters for the (now defunct) magazine show *Asia Downunder* felt pressured to 'prettify' potentially disturbing stories in order to avoid adding to the stock of extant negative representations of Asians in the media, and because not to do so would be at odds with the gratitude that 'Asian migrants' are supposed to feel for mainstream hospitality (147-48). (Kothari et al assert that New Zealand 'struggles with the notion that Asian immigrants might be more than permanent guests' (149)). In a similar vein, in Jane Roscoe's study of the 1994 television series *An Immigrant Nation*, the author states that the objective was to 'make documentaries . . . that would be *palatable* to the mainstream audience' (Roscoe, *Documentary* 11-12) (my emphasis).

⁷² The advertisement was created by J Walter Thompson (JWT) in Sydney and also screened in Australia (Abel 117).

that embellish the mainstream, in ways that effectively reiterate the Chinese community's Otherness and reaffirm the hegemony of British settler culture ("Asia" 66-67). In "Asia in Murihiku: Towards a Transnational History of a Colonial Culture" (published in 2006), much is made, for example, of the visit to Otago of the international exhibit 'Chang the Chinese Giant', his wife 'Kin Foo', and son 'Fireworks' in 1871, and it is implied that the popularity of 'Chang', and Chinoiserie – that is, of a 'consumable Asia'—is somehow at odds with the racial discrimination that Chinese miners were subject to at this time (89-91). What appears to be missed is that the Pākehā appreciation for 'Chang' and Chinoiserie, and their simultaneous discrimination against the Chinese living amongst them, are two sides of the same Colonialist coin: they both exclude the Chinese on account of their Otherness. By virtue of this blind spot, what occurs is not so much an unsettling of 'the fundamental Britishness of settler culture' as much as a reaffirmation of the colonialist narratives that ground it.

Such reaffirmation is also discernible in "'Drug-besotten, sin-begotten fiends of filth": New Zealanders and the Oriental Other, 1850-1920' (published in 1999), a paper in which Moloughney and Stenhouse attempt to revise the usual portrayals of Chinese settlers as abject victims of racial discrimination. In their re-creation of the past in accord with contemporary liberal sensibilities, the authors' re-characterisation – and valorisation – of the Chinese as autonomous agents who can more than hold their own appears to amount to a coerced equality:

Respect for other cultures has undoubtedly burgeoned in recent years, but more humaneness and tolerance may be found in our past, and less shining altruism in our present, than we may be prepared to acknowledge. (50)

To many New Zealand observers . . . the Chinese appeared capable of outdoing the Europeans at their own game. Even the harshest critics appeared ambivalent, troubled by the fact that their supposed racial inferiors exhibited superior characteristics . . . virtues such as honesty, hard work, temperance and thrift. . . (62-63)

The guise of going in to bat for the Chinese cannot conceal the subordinating force of the hegemonic narratives that undergird this revised history, as the emphatic tone in the following excerpt reveals:

New Zealanders did not ‘other’ the Chinese as radically and systematically as we might think. . . It is worth remembering that for murdering Joe Kum Yung, Lionel Terry received a life-sentence, not a knighthood. (63)

In their attempt to recreate a more egalitarian history of Pākehā-Chinese relations, the authors re-subordinate the Chinese; the above assertion effectively flattens the moral landscape, removing the ground upon which they could potentially situate and speak of their injuries. The authoritative tone with which the above assertion is made suggests that the desire to re-present the Chinese as equals is driven not by concerns about attributing agency to them, but rather, by the need to reassert Pākehā hegemony through the recreation of a more palatable Pākehā history.⁷³

It is significant that both these papers (Ballantyne and Moloughney, “Asia”; Moloughney and Stenhouse) were published at the turn of the millennium, a period in which Asian immigration was highly controversial and perceived by many to be potentially injurious to the nation. In the face of resurgent fears of a growing Asian population, they portray an already-‘Asian-ised’ New Zealand: a nation that has a strong history of having survived, integrated and dealt fairly with (its) Oriental Others. In their assertions that the New Zealand story has ‘always’ included Chinese

⁷³ This has also been observed in the process of re-creating historical narratives in another cultural context: the museum. In response to proposals for the Chinese exhibit at the National Museum Te Papa Tongarewa in the 1990s, Jock Phillips observes that there were objections that as the Chinese ‘had suffered the most in New Zealand society’, ‘British inheritance was being ignored for the sake of making pakeha [sic] New Zealanders look bad’ (“Politics” 150). Phillips notes that there were similar objections to what was perceived to be an over-representation of Māori culture: Pākehā apparently ‘did not want to be reminded of their culture’s misdeeds’ (147). In the same vein, in their analysis of media constructions of Asian immigrants and immigration, Butcher and Spoonley are of the view that the demonization and scapegoating of Asian immigrants as problematic others in New Zealand in the early 1990s has ‘*no historical precedent*’ (112) (my emphasis).

stories,⁷⁴ and that Chinese subjects within the nation have long been autonomous agents, these histories appear to endorse a contemporary liberal ethos that valorises both diversity and equality. But their recreation of a more inclusive past within which inequalities are retrospectively minimised ultimately amounts to a reassertion of Pākehā hegemony that sustains the marginalisation of Chinese-told stories, for their rather ardent valorisation of New Zealand as a democratic place where all are included and treated fairly affords little space for Others to argue otherwise.⁷⁵

Postcoloniality and Gold Mountain Phenomena

Chinese cannot ride the juggernaut of indigenous law as Māori can, even though many Chinese in the 19th century were as much victims of British imperialism. . . (Pansy Wong)⁷⁶

Settler Chinese stories have not been included as founding colonial stories in New Zealand largely because the Chinese community has, since first arrival, and despite its significant contributions to the nation, been persistently characterised as outside, ‘impermanent’ and Other (Ip and Murphy; Cormack). Moreover, its problematic histories have been subdued in the context of the nation’s Progress Narrative, most recently manifest as a story of ‘happy’ multicultural unity (Voci, “Isn’t it Great?”; Kothari et al 147-48). Relatedly, the community’s prevailing identity as a low profile, socio-economically successful Model Minority lends neither credence nor voice to the kinds of injury that typically define postcolonial

⁷⁴ In the same vein, Brian Moloughney’s 2003 paper “Translating Cultures: Rethinking New Zealand’s Chineseness”, discusses the numerous ways that Chineseness has and continues to manifest in New Zealand (398-400).

⁷⁵ I have drawn from Kim Wilson’s discussion of ideological re-framings in historical narratives (103-26); also Millar (156-57), and Ooi (“Reorientations” 8), who both argue that representations of Chinese in New Zealand fiction reflect contemporaneous attitudes and discourses.

⁷⁶ Stated in the context of Pansy Wong’s objections to what was perceived to be an ‘ill-considered’ and rushed process leading up to the Labour government’s Poll Tax Apology in 2002 (as noted above in *Economic Scapegoats, Alien Invaders and Ching Chong Chinamen: A ‘Chinese’ History*). Pansy Wong was New Zealand’s first Asian MP; she served with the National Party from 1996 to 2011.

narratives. In New Zealand, settler Chinese stories have not been perceived as postcolonial stories because the lives of settler Chinese are perceived to lie beyond the nation's founding *colonial* story.⁷⁷

In this framework, the impact that European colonialism had on Chinese lives both in China and in New Zealand is overlooked. It is important to note that the arrival of the earliest Chinese immigrants to New Zealand in the nineteenth century was part of an exodus in response to economic and social instabilities in China caused in significant part by European imperialist incursions; and that their subjection to discriminatory social, economic and legislative discourses in New Zealand can be explained with reference to a larger phenomenon in which European settlers around the Pacific Rim sought to keep their countries 'white' (Price; Murphy, *Poll-tax* 7; Ooi, "Reorientations" 20; Brawley "No White"; Brawley, *White Peril*; Poy 5).⁷⁸ In recognition of these phenomena, I situate this thesis in the context of research about other Chinese women in the Gold Mountain sites of the U.S.A., Canada, and Australia.⁷⁹

In this thesis, I perceive Chinese women's stories across these sites as 'postcolonial' because they demonstrate evidence of the subordinating influence of hegemonic mainstream narratives that stem from what I term a *Colonialist Orientalist Episteme*. This Episteme valorises white/western/mainstream discourses, minimises narratives that discredit the mainstream (for example, concerning racial discrimination), essentialises and denigrates Chinese people, culture and tradition, and *speaks for* Chinese women. Following Edward Said,

⁷⁷ Ballantyne and Moloughney, for example, point out that the reason Ng Bickleen Fong's 1959 study of Chinese New Zealanders has been largely ignored by New Zealand historians is because 'Asians enter our "national" story only as the people we want to keep out, and they are constructed as part of that other world against which we seek to define ourselves' ("Asia" 69).

⁷⁸ Nigel Murphy asserts that all policies and legislation relating to the Chinese enacted in New Zealand 'were designed to minimise the perceived negative impact of Chinese on New Zealand life', that marginalisation 'was intended', and that in light of the size of the Chinese population, 'the sheer number of laws, policies and regulations relating' to them 'is enormous' ("Legal" 199).

⁷⁹ Some studies, e.g.: Yung, *Unbound Feet*; Yung, *Unbound Voices*; Pepper; X. Zhao; S. K. H. Chu; Poy 11-47; Bagnall; specifically concern settler Chinese women (descended from pre-World War Two immigrants). However, I do acknowledge that later Chinese women immigrants have been similarly subordinated by enduring colonialist discourses; see below.

Orientalist beliefs are here understood to be derived from colonialist beliefs because the ways that China – and Chinese people – are represented in the mainstream reflect a ‘colonial mindset’ that ‘approaches a heterogeneous, dynamic, and complex human reality from an uncritically essentialist standpoint’ (Prasad 266; Said 333). This is evident in narrative (re)productions of ‘China’ and ‘Chinese woman’ as exotic, ahistorical and tradition-bound, and as inferior to the West and its people. Orientalist discourses *are* Colonialist discourses (Prasad 266; Said 345, 347). The experiences – and stories – of Chinese women across the Gold Mountain sites have been directly impacted by hegemonic narrative practices that have rendered their lives a colonial legacy.

The impact of these narrative practices is evident in the lives and subjectivities of both settler and later immigrant Chinese women in the Gold Mountain sites of the Pacific Rim. The extant research shows that the operation of a Colonialist Orientalist Episteme can be clearly discerned in the stories of Chinese women at these sites who were or have been: subject to exclusion laws, some targeted specifically at them (Peffer; S. K. H. Chu; Murphy, *Guide* 84-89; Bagnall); heavily stereotyped, marginalised, and ‘invisibilised’ (that is, assimilated) (Kingston, “Cultural”; S. K. H. Chu 35, 37; Lo, Khoo and Gilbert 7-8; H. Wong, “Image”); and silenced by ‘progressive’ multicultural discourses which showcase (for example, as ‘Chinese’ or as ‘Asian’), exoticise and sanitise – therefore subordinating – Chinese women’s stories.⁸⁰ There also exists within all of these communities an acute awareness of the impact of hegemonic discourses on Chinese women’s stories (Lim, “Tradition”; S. C. Wong, “Chinese” 46-47; T. Khoo; Chin; Bow; Kim 59-72), and of the imposition and internalisation of identities created by these (D. L. Li, “Production” 322-23; Kim 177; T. Khoo 152; Lo, Khoo and Gilbert 7; Bow 45).⁸¹

⁸⁰ For example: Lo, Khoo and Gilbert contend that ‘hegemonic multiculturalism and the “new racism”’ are characterised by ‘exclusionary identity politics’ (2). See also Kingston, “Cultural”; Voci, “Isn’t it great?”

⁸¹ For example: in her analysis of Chinese American women’s autobiographical writing, Shirley Geok-Lin Lim points out the ways in which these stories are subsumed by narratives of white men, American cultural ‘superiority’, or Confucian patriarchy; Tseen Khoo, an Australian scholar, notes the ‘complicitous ways’ that Western narratives about Asian women ‘continue to interpellate them’

Commentators across these Gold Mountain sites have certainly recognised the tension between what is described as ‘the democratic rhetoric of inclusion’ and ‘the realities of exclusion’ (P. Chu 4). They express frustration about the mutual exclusiveness of the categories ‘Chinese’/‘Asian’ and ‘mainstream’ (American/Australian/Canadian/New Zealand), and of the difficulties of asserting hyphenated or hybrid identities. They share the challenge of resisting essentialised, ahistorical accounts of Chineseness and of Chinese women, and recognise the need to articulate unique subjectivities grounded in highly specific and localised histories in order to actualise such resistance (P. Chu 4, 6; Lo, Khoo and Gilbert 1; S. K. H. Chu; Kingston, “Cultural”; H. Chung, “Autoethnographic”). But the dissemination of these histories as a strategy to claim a locally grounded identity is significantly fraught for Chinese women.

In 1982, Maxine Hong Kingston vociferously objected to mainstream reviews of *The Woman Warrior: Memoir of a Girlhood Amongst Ghosts*,⁸² complaining that readers could not read the story that she had told from her *Chinese American* perspective, because they could perceive it only as ‘exotic’, ‘inscrutable’, ‘mysterious’ and ‘oriental’:

The critics who said how the book was good because it was, or was not, like the oriental fantasy in their heads might as well have said how weak it was, since it in fact did not break through that fantasy. (Kingston, “Cultural” 55).⁸³

Despite Kingston’s insistence that *The Woman Warrior* was an *American* book (58), the story she told could not be heard (grasped) in mainstream America due to the

(152); and Leslie Bow contends that Asian American women’s authority to speak is undermined by ‘the “model minority” discursive framework in which Asian Americans must operate’ (45), and that their socially impotent identities (41) must be negotiated within a ‘contentious framework’ (31). Relatedly, Sandra Ka Hon Chu argues that settler Chinese women’s silence in Canada is attributable to the ‘paucity of narrative tropes available’ to describe their experiences of discrimination (34).

⁸² Hereafter, *The Woman Warrior*

⁸³ Since its first publication in 1976 (New York: Knopf), *The Woman Warrior* has been widely read and acknowledged in the U.S.A. (S. C. Wong, “Autobiography” 248).

hegemony of mainstream narratives that perpetuate the representation of Chinese as Oriental Others.⁸⁴

The literature reviewed here suggests that the elision and marginalisation of Chinese women's stories across the U.S.A., Canada, Australia and New Zealand remains current. I situate this thesis in the broad terrain of studies of Chinese women's stories across these Pacific Rim Gold Mountain sites because the commonalities noted above point to the pervasiveness of a Colonialist Orientalist Episteme founded on white mainstream hegemony. In New Zealand, a postcolonial perspective is most pertinent, for as an 'essentially Anglophile' nation, 'white settler ways of being and thinking' have been – and remain – integral to the country's engagements with Asia and with Asian peoples (Ip, "Chinese Immigration" 157; Cormack 12). The predominance of monocultural discourses in New Zealand supports an enduring 'colonial mindset' that is a crucial factor in the absence of women from narratives about or concerning the settler Chinese community.

The Search for Chinese Women in New Zealand

General histories of New Zealand barely acknowledge the Chinese community, much less its women. The prevailing tendency of these histories up to and including the twenty-first century has been to marginalise, assimilate, elide, or completely exclude the stories of settler Chinese.⁸⁵ While some of the more recent histories appear more inclusive, they either (re)situate the Chinese in familiar landscapes that reiterate their marginalised status, or assimilate them into mainstream narratives, effectively rendering them invisible. For example, in Philippa Mein Smith's *A Concise History of New Zealand* (published in 2012), the Chinese are re-characterised as goldminers and as objects of exclusionist legislation, and subsumed beneath the 'Asian' presence, the (re)cited benefits of which are economic engagement with the Asia region and cultural 'embellishment' (85-86, 146, 266).

⁸⁴ Kingston's predicament resonates with that of Indian woman Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, as told by Gayatri Spivak, in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (307-308).

⁸⁵ See, for example: W. P. Reeves; Parsons; Morrell; Beaglehole; McLintock; Oliver; Sinclair, *History* 1969; Sinclair, *History* 2000; Murphy, "Appendix" 282-83.

James Belich and Michael King both argue that the evolution of the term 'Pākehā' is such that it *could* include the Chinese (and other ethnic minority groups), a proposed subsumption that would effectively amount to a coercively assimilated inclusion (536; 515). The focus of most research on the settler Chinese community is on immigration and legislation, and on host culture responses (Murphy, "Appendix");⁸⁶ other areas of interest are regional histories (Ballantyne and Moloughney "Asia"; Ritchie; Bradshaw), and assimilation and adaptation (Greif, *Overseas*; Sedgwick, "Politics"). As such, there is a tendency to retrace familiar mainstream, public 'masculine' discourses, with Chinese women typically either marginal or absent from these studies. Where Chinese women are acknowledged in these general histories, their presence is limited to narratives concerning statistics and legislated exclusion (F. Fyfe 114-15; Belich 228-32). My research reveals that no settler Chinese woman has been identified by name in any general history of New Zealand.⁸⁷

There exists no known History of Settler Chinese Women in New Zealand. This lack of recognition is undoubtedly due, at least partly, to their low numbers. While the Chinese population certainly increased during the twentieth century, it was curbed by restrictive immigration legislation that was particularly discriminatory with regard to the community's women right up until the 1980s (Appendix 3; Murphy, *Guide* 84-89). Before World War Two, due in significant part to this legislated exclusion, the majority of Chinese women married to Chinese men in New Zealand remained in China (Murphy, *Guide* 84). The few who did reside in New Zealand with their husbands were seldom publicly recognised as individuals; in fact, those who arrived prior to 1930 were usually identified by immigration officials

⁸⁶ Murphy's comprehensive survey includes resources and research on the Chinese community in New Zealand up to and including 2003.

⁸⁷ Manying Ip made a similar observation in 1990 (*Home* 9). The first three volumes of *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (published in 1990, 1993 and 1996) which cover the period 1769 to 1920, include entries for seven Chinese men within which some of their womenfolk are identified by name (Dept. of Internal 1990; Dept of Internal 1993; Dept. of Internal 1996). *The Dictionary* also includes individual entries for three Chinese women – these are written by Chinese New Zealand writers (J. Ng, "Lo Keong"; Ip, "Van"; Ip, "Doo").

by their husband's names or simply as 'Ah Nui', which means 'woman' (Murphy, *Poll-tax* 89). Typically, these early Chinese women immigrants were subsumed beneath the marginalised 'whitened' identities of their husbands and fathers.⁸⁸ Unlike their sisters in the United States or Canada, many of whom worked as domestic servants, waitresses, or prostitutes, and who tended to remain within urban Chinatowns or Chinese settlements (P. Chu 15, 41-42; Huang 80; Pepper 10; Yung, *Unbound Voices* 9-175), the vast majority of Chinese women in New Zealand in this early period worked in the family home and for the family business, and did not reside in Chinatowns. As they tended to live predominantly inside lives, socialising mainly within their families and communities, they were, from the perspective of the Pākehā mainstream, comparatively inconspicuous.⁸⁹

Not only have Chinese women barely been acknowledged in Pākehā-narrated histories about the Chinese in New Zealand, but their presence as *women* in New Zealand has also been largely overlooked. While a number of New Zealand women's histories emerged in the 1980s, Chinese women as a group are not mentioned in any of these.⁹⁰ From the mid-1980s, coincident with the government's radical liberalisation of immigration policy, there seems to have been an increasing national awareness of the importance of cultural diversity, but this does not appear

⁸⁸ Who not infrequently had had their family names confused and anglicised upon arrival, and/or who were known in the Pākehā mainstream only by their business names, or the more pejorative 'John' or 'Chinaman'. The anglicisation of Chinese names occurred due to ignorance regarding the priority of Chinese family names on the part of immigration officials (Murphy, "Researching" 228-30; Ip, *Home* 104; A. Chang and R. Chang n. pag.)

⁸⁹ See, for example: Ip, *Home*; Ip, *Dragons on the Long*. Although there were streets in Wellington and Auckland where a number of Chinese families and businesses were housed, and these have been popularly remembered as 'Chinatowns', these were nothing like the segregated self-sustaining North American enclaves where residents were overwhelmingly Chinese. The Chinese in urban New Zealand locales lived alongside Pākehā, Māori and people of other ethnic communities (Shum, "Remembering" 73; B. F. Ng 61).

⁹⁰ See, for example: Brookes, MacDonald and Tennant; Coney, *Every*; and Edmond. A few individual Chinese women have been named: Sandra Coney's *Standing in the Sunshine: A History of New Zealand Women Since They Won the Vote*, published in 1993, identifies Mabel Song as the first Chinese woman to gain citizenship following the repeal of the prohibition on Chinese naturalisation in 1952 (180); and Manying Ip authored four settler Chinese women's biographies included in MacDonald, Penfold and Williams' *The Book of New Zealand Women*, published in 1991.

to have been extended to Chinese women.⁹¹ For example, Lauris Edmond's collection *Women in Wartime: New Zealand Women Tell Their Story* includes stories told by Māori, Fijian and Polish women, but there are no stories from Chinese women.⁹² Such omissions are not unusual: the absence of Chinese women's stories is conspicuous across a range of first-person accounts of New Zealand women's lives in this period,⁹³ and is in keeping with a range of other historically significant narratives about New Zealand women. There are, for example, no stories about Chinese women in *The New Zealand Women's Weekly* monograph commemorating the magazine's first sixty years with a sampling of 'the best of' from the period 1932 to 1992 (Blackwell).⁹⁴ There is no record of their involvement in the 1993 Suffrage Centennial celebrations in *Celebrating Women: A Suffrage Year Handbook*; according to this publication, Chinese women were not – as a community – granted (or perhaps, did not apply for) funding for books, scholarships, memorials, exhibitions or celebrations.⁹⁵ In the 1993 Statistics New Zealand publication *All About New Zealand Women*, Chinese women are identified only under the aggregate term 'Asian', and due to standardised government definitions of ethnicity, all Chinese-Māori and Chinese-Pacific Islander women are subsumed respectively, under the Māori and Pacific Islander categories (243).⁹⁶

⁹¹ Increased awareness of cultural diversity at this time was a consequence of several factors including: a Māori renaissance from the 1970s, increased immigration from the Pacific Islands, and radical liberalisation in immigration policy in 1987 which allowed for immigrant selection on the basis of personal merit rather than nationality or ethnicity (Phillips, "History"; Taonui).

⁹² The book comprises a series of first-person narratives that do not acknowledge authorship, but the content of the stories and photographs indicate the ethnicity of the authors, the vast majority of whom appear to be Anglo-European. In her social history of the Auckland Y.W.C.A. published in 1986, Sandra Coney notes the organisation's discomfort with its 'monocultural image' with reference only to the absence of Māori and Pacific Islander women (*Every* 285).

⁹³ See, for example: M. Clark; Else and Roberts; J. Fyfe; Myers; Jennings.

⁹⁴ There is a story about Helene Knox (also known as Helene Wong) in the October 8, 1979 edition of *The New Zealand Women's Weekly*; however, this did not make the commemorative edition despite it being a groundbreaking story. Helene Knox was the first woman to be appointed to the Prime Minister's 'think tank' (Hamilton).

⁹⁵ Manying Ip received a Suffrage Centennial Celebration Award in 1993; however, awards are not listed in this publication.

⁹⁶ Incidentally, this statistical elision is echoed in Edmond's *Women in Wartime*: while the arrival of refugees from both the United Kingdom (in 1940) and Poland (in 1944) is specifically noted in the

On the whole, Chinese researchers in New Zealand have also paid little attention to women in the settler Chinese community.⁹⁷ James Ng's *Windows on a Chinese Past*, a comprehensive four volume chronicle of the history of the first Chinese settlers in New Zealand, includes only a few pages about Chinese wives (2:260-64), a table listing the numbers of 'Chinese Full-blood Females in New Zealand' (1:209-11) and two biographies of Chinese women (3:345-55, 425-32).⁹⁸ While Ng Bickleen Fong's (1959) study of the community's assimilation, and Beven Yee's (2001) study of adaptive responses are valuable for their inside perspectives, neither draws significant distinctions between the experiences of men and women. Most research focused on Chinese New Zealand women or hegemonic mainstream narratives about the Chinese links those descended from the settler community to the post-1987 diaspora (Ip, "Gender"; Ip, "From Gold"; Ip and Liu; Ip and Pang; Ip and Leckie; Ip and Murphy; Ooi, "Reorientations"). This research is certainly valuable for its foregrounding of historical resonances in legislative, socio-economic, political and media discourses, and for signalling the impact these have on women's lives, but the emphasis on shared experiences across very different communities obscures settler Chinese women's unique experiences.

Settler Chinese New Zealand Women's Storytelling

The impetus for the emergence of Chinese women's storytelling in New Zealand can be traced to the post-1987 influx of Asian immigration.⁹⁹ The significantly increased

book's 'Chronology of Events', there is no mention of the Chinese women and children who arrived in New Zealand as refugees in 1939 (257-275).

⁹⁷ That is, researchers who are New Zealanders and ethnically Chinese.

⁹⁸ These are about Matilda Lo Keong, the first Chinese woman to immigrate to New Zealand (from Victoria, Australia) c.1854, and Chin Toi Harr, who arrived as a refugee in 1939. Apart from these accounts, Chinese women are only mentioned briefly in these volumes, for example, in discussions about immigration legislation (1:100, 207, 260), their villages of origin (2:257, 263), or from the exoticising perspective of Pākehā narrators (1:207); and a few are identified in photographs: e.g., 3: 205, 207, 217, 222, 227, 229, 234.

⁹⁹ According to Bedford and Ho, between March 1986 and March 2006, New Zealand residents born in Asia increased almost sevenfold, and the population identifying with Asian ethnicities increased by

Asian presence caused a resurgence of racist sentiment in the mainstream, where those who felt threatened by the changing demographic perceived all Asians – including the long-established settler Chinese – to be part of the ‘Asian Inv-Asian’ (Ip and Murphy 14; Appendices 5, 6).¹⁰⁰ The settler Chinese community’s transformation from well-assimilated, low profile Model Minority to highly visible object of mainstream hostility was rapid. At the same time, the community’s Chineseness – anachronistically characterised by its pre-World War Two rural Cantonese origins and dedicated efforts to assimilate into the New Zealand mainstream over several generations (Ip, *Dragons on the Long*; Ip, *Home*; Choong 24-52) – was thrown into stark relief by the new arrivals’ very public, sophisticated, ‘culturally and linguistically confident’ Chineseness (H. Chung, “Autoethnographic” 82).¹⁰¹ In response, the settler community had cause to reflect upon and articulate a distinct identity, and it was this that led to the emergence of Chinese New Zealand women’s writing in the late twentieth century (81-82).¹⁰²

Before 1990, Chinese women rarely published, performed or broadcast their stories for mainstream audiences in New Zealand.¹⁰³ Manying Ip’s *Home Away from*

550 per cent (11). The China-born population increased by 1479.9 per cent and the Hong Kong SAR population increased by 341.7 per cent (12).

¹⁰⁰ Because from the perspective of many in the mainstream, ‘all Asians look the same’ (Ip and Murphy 30). The phrase ‘Asian Inv-Asian’ is used in Booth and Martin, 16 Apr 1993; and Booth and Martin, 23 Apr 1993.

¹⁰¹ See also: Ip, *Dragons on the Long* 127, 141.

¹⁰² The emergence of settler Chinese writing could be perceived as a response to contemporary constructions of Chineseness produced from what Olivia Khoo has described as ‘emergent diasporic Chinese modernities in the Asia-Pacific’ (2). I discuss this further in Conclusions. While settler Chinese men e.g., historian James Ng, journalist Gilbert Wong, poet Chris Tse, have also contributed stories about the settler Chinese community in the mainstream, storytelling in the public domain does appear to have been dominated by the community’s women.

¹⁰³ Ng Bickleen Fong’s 1959 study included several interviews with Chinese women, but for the purpose of assessing the extent of the Chinese community’s assimilation, most of the data gleaned from these was collated and analysed in aggregate terms. Only two of these are written up as case studies (one involves a 14-year-old high school student) (98-101; 103-104). And because the personal interviews with participants were ‘of an informal nature’, that is, conducted through everyday contact, and participants ‘were often unaware that they were being interviewed’, they were, according to the author, not aware that their stories were being made public (2). “The Chinese Community”, a television documentary broadcast in 1972, included brief interviews with three settler Chinese women (discussed in detail in Chapter One: ‘Chinese Woman’: A Colonialist

Home: Life Stories of Chinese Women in New Zealand (published in 1990) was the first substantial mainstream-disseminated publication dedicated to stories told by Chinese New Zealand women. More personal narratives and testimonies followed: Eva Ng and Jane Thomson's *Amongst Ghosts: Memories and Thoughts of a New Zealand-Chinese Family* appeared in 1992. Two years later in 1994, Lynda Earle's collection of poems, *Honeypants*, was published to critical acclaim,¹⁰⁴ and Helene Wong directed and presented "Footprints of the Dragon", a television documentary about the lives of both newly arrived and settler Chinese families.¹⁰⁵ In 1996, Lynda Chanwai-Earle's play *Ka Shue (Letters Home)*, the first theatrical work about Chinese New Zealanders, premiered in Wellington. In the context of heated debates about Asian immigration in New Zealand throughout the 1990s, a few Chinese women found the courage to speak about their experiences in public forums (Ngan; L. S. Wong, "Moulding"; H. Wong, "Image"; H. Wong, "Chinamen"). And after the Labour government's Poll Tax Apology in 2002, more settler Chinese women chose to tell their stories through poetry (A. Wong, *Cup*); documentaries (*Ho Sue Shee*; "Stories"); stage plays (Aronson; H. Chung, "Autoethnographic"); fiction (E.W. Ng, *Chinatown*; A. Wong, *ATETS*); histories (K. Chang; Helen Wong; Lee and Lam), and in academic research (Shum, "Representing"; K. A. Lee; L. S. Wong, "As the Bamboo"; Choong 24-52).¹⁰⁶ Unlike stories about the Chinese community told by mainstream Pākehā researchers (discussed above), many of which engage with familiar public 'masculine' discourses, these stories are more personal and intimate.

Scholarship about settler Chinese New Zealand women's stories is scarce. To date, attention to these stories has been limited to and embedded in studies dedicated to New Zealand theatre (Peterson; Warrington), representation in ethnic

Orientalist (Re)Construction). In 1982, Vanessa Sue et al, a group of settler Chinese women students, published a sociological study titled *Chinese of Christchurch*.

¹⁰⁴ Selected for the New Zealand Book Awards, and shortlisted for the Penn Book Awards in 1995 (C. O'Brien). Lynda Earle later became known as Lynda Chanwai-Earle.

¹⁰⁵ Part of the *Immigrant Nation* series: the topic of Jane Roscoe's studies (*Documentary*; "Documenting"). Each episode was dedicated to a different ethnic community in New Zealand.

¹⁰⁶ It was felt that the Poll Tax Apology constituted recognition for the Chinese community's 'rightful place' in New Zealand and as such, gave the settler Chinese the confidence to speak up and tell their own stories (E. W. Ng, Interview 4 Mar 2012); see Chapter Four: Eva Wong Ng.

minority fiction (Ooi, “Insider”), representation of ethnic minorities in documentary television (Roscoe, *Documentary*; Roscoe, “Documenting”), ideological issues in historical fiction for young readers (Wilson 103-26), and Chineseness in New Zealand literature (Ooi, “Reorientations”). I found only three scholarly papers that have as their specific focus the work of two settler Chinese women writers; all of these engage with fairly recent narratives about multiculturalism, Chineseness, and the politics of identity (H. Chung, “Autoethnographic”; H. Chung, “Chineseness”; Calleja, “Monodramas”).

To date, it appears that only two women from the settler Chinese community have completed research projects that have utilised elements of artistic and creative practice in their attempts to articulate – and publicly claim – settler Chinese New Zealand identities. Liu Shueng Wong’s 2010 MA Creative Writing thesis “As the Bamboo Sings”, which incorporates a novel about the earliest Chinese settlers in New Zealand, is ‘motivated by a strong desire to have Chinese New Zealand history interpreted through the eyes of an insider’ (3). Kerry Ann Lee’s MA Design thesis “Homemade: Picturing Chinese Settlement in New Zealand” (completed in 2008), is presented as a collage of images and text: a ‘graphic translation of Chinese New Zealand history’ (5) that illustrates the complexities of articulating a Chinese New Zealand identity by making ‘visible a spectrum of ... experiences in the space between Pākehā and Chinese culture that has often been overshadowed by colonial settler history’ (17). While both Wong and Lee’s research projects are clearly motivated by the need to counter hegemonic accounts of Chinese history – and Chineseness – through very specific and localised narratives, the concerns they address are not gender-specific.

Chinese women’s stories have had a more significant mainstream presence in the last couple of decades; but despite public recognition of the quality of some of this writing, it remains insignificant in the field of New Zealand Literature.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Lynda Chanwai-Earle, Alison Wong, and Eva Wong Ng have all been nominated for or won prestigious awards, and their work has been publicly acclaimed; see Chapter Four. Editors of anthologies have only noted the marginality and absence of Chinese women in very general terms.

Where the writing of Chinese women has been included in such collections, it has either been assimilated by mainstream narratives or Orientalised, and a distinct Chinese New Zealand identity denied. For example, Alison Wong's "Māoriland", a chapter from her acclaimed novel *As the Earth Turns Silver* in which the Chinese protagonist encounters a Māori gentleman, is incorporated in Stafford and Williams' 2012 anthology in a section dedicated to writing about Māori New Zealanders (1030-32). And Wong's poem "A Chinese Ghost Story" is included in Green and Ricketts' *99 Ways Into New Zealand Poetry* in a chapter titled "Asian Connections", which frames 'Asian-ness' in New Zealand Literature as writing *about* Asia, the implication being that 'Asian-ness' is other than and therefore not integral to New Zealand (486-88).¹⁰⁸ There is little discussion of the poet's Chinese New Zealand identity and how this is articulated in her writing.

The lack of space for such an identity in these anthologies correlates with mainstream reviews of settler Chinese women's writing that exoticise Chinese women and their lives, and elide their unique lived experiences and subjectivities.¹⁰⁹ My review of the literature reveals that little attention has been paid to the factors that impede both the recognition and women's articulation of stories about their lived experiences.¹¹⁰ In order to identify these, it is necessary to look beyond storytelling that has been publicly endorsed and approved. Hence, while published writing by settler Chinese women is significant in this thesis, it is just one storytelling mode amongst others through which their subjectivity is analysed.

For example, Damien Wilkins reveals that he is perplexed by the 'under-representation' of Asian writers (17); and Jane Stafford and Mark Williams observe that the 'full arrival of multicultural literature, as found in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia or Canada, has yet to occur' in New Zealand (14).

¹⁰⁸ Similarly, Erin Mercer situates Alison Wong's writing in the context of 'immigration . . . making multicultural frameworks increasingly relevant' (102), suggesting that the Chinese presence in New Zealand is a recent phenomenon.

¹⁰⁹ See, for example: Battye, *Drama Cuts: Teacher's* 13-15, 26; Coleman; Sheahan-Bright. Discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

¹¹⁰ More broadly, there has been mention of the insidious impact of hegemonic narratives on Chinese subjectivity in the New Zealand context (Ip and Pang; L. S. Wong, "Moulding"; A. Wong, "Field"; H. Wong, "Chinamen"), but the plight of Chinese *women* has been largely overlooked.

‘Chinese Woman’ and Subjectivity

On a poststructuralist reading, the subject ‘Chinese woman’ does not exist outside the sites where the different discourses that co-construct ‘her’ converge in distinct and particular locales. In North America in the post-bellum period, ‘Chinese woman’ was a ‘prostitute’ (Peffer; Poy 10). In post-revolutionary China, ‘ideals of wifehood’ were prescribed by the state (Evans), which at the same time inscribed ‘Chinese woman’ in line with modern state categories such as ‘worker’, ‘youth’, and ‘proletariat’ (Barlow). Julia Kristeva’s ‘Chinese woman’ is an idealized emancipated – yet Orientalised – subject who functions to highlight the predicament of oppressed western women. In postwar New Zealand, ‘Chinese woman’ was a nominally exotic, largely invisible subject. The subject position ‘Chinese woman’ has, across diverse geographical and historical sites, been tailored to serve the hegemony of specific regulatory narratives, with both the value and identity of ‘Chinese woman’ derived from the particular constellation of discourses from which ‘she’ is produced. ‘Chinese woman’ is not therefore ‘a transcendent category’ (Barlow 256); and a transnational, transhistorical conception of ‘Chinese woman’ is not – to borrow from Ien Ang’s critique of the category ‘woman’ – a “‘natural” political designation’ (Ang, “I’m a Feminist” 191).

But it is a political designation nonetheless. While it is certainly the case that very different and specific discursive constellations co-construct diverse and particular ‘Chinese woman’ subject positions, many of these discourses overlap or are intertwined. This thesis shows that, in the case of the Chinese New Zealand woman, it is difficult to clearly identify, much less extricate, the narrative threads that are (culturally and experientially) ‘Chinese’ from those that are superordinately ‘Pākehā’ (or western). This is an entanglement that holds true across the various Gold Mountain sites that Chinese women inhabit. It is this inextricability that informs the *powerlessness* that characterises Chinese women’s subjectivity; as such, the hegemonically constructed identity ‘Chinese woman’ may be instructive as a model for discursive constellations that obscure possibilities for the woman subject’s autonomy, and therefore agency. In light of that, ‘Chinese woman’ is a site of political significance from which may be extrapolated a conception of Chinese

women's subjectivity that has the potential for broader applications. At the same time, a conception of Chinese women's subjectivity is certainly necessary for the project of identifying what could be autonomously claimed by the Chinese woman subject *beyond* the specific hegemonic narratives that co-construct her as 'Chinese woman'.

In New Zealand, the prototype 'Chinese woman', like 'her' Gold Mountain sisters, accommodates diverse forms; but the more dangerous variant, the devious Dragon Lady, pertains largely to more imaginative realms of discourse (Ooi, "Reorientations" 94-98; Voci, "Isn't it Great?" 83; Abel). Narratives about – or purporting to be about – actual Chinese women in New Zealand have tended to characterise them as more benignly exotic, and family- and tradition-bound.¹¹¹ Like Tani E. Barlow's Chinese 'woman', the New Zealand 'Chinese woman' is produced from 'differential family relations' (256).¹¹² I contend that what has prevailed in mainstream New Zealand are narratives that *summon* the traditional family 'Chinese woman', which are assumed to inform – and are conflated with – the 'historically specific material reality' of actual Chinese women (Mohanty 400-01, 411). Such narratives, which stem from pervasive Colonialist Orientalist and western feminist beliefs about the oppressiveness of Chinese culture,¹¹³ assume that Chinese women *are* 'Chinese woman'. Hence, in order to arrive at an extra-hegemonic account of settler Chinese New Zealand women's subjectivity, and therefore identity, the limits of the discourses that co-construct this 'traditional' 'family' 'Chinese woman' need to be determined.

¹¹¹ The prevalence of this characterisation may be due to the absence of Chinese women prostitutes in New Zealand in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries compared with other Gold Mountain sites, especially the U.S.A. and Canada (J. Ng, *Windows* 1:100, 119; Simmons 69).

¹¹² Barlow calls this a 'differential *jia* relation' (*jia* 家 = family), from whence 'woman' is produced from the discursive effects of 'kinship nomenclature' (256). I refer to 'woman' rather than 'Chinese woman' here in reference to Barlow's analysis of Chinese 'woman' in China.

¹¹³ For example, in her comprehensive critical review of how 'the traditional Chinese woman' was constructed in Western scholarship up to the late twentieth century, Jinhua Emma Teng notes that the focus on the close association between Chinese women and the family has been due to an abiding feminist concern with subordination and the 'particular oppression caused by the extreme nature of Chinese patriarchy' (124-25).



Fig. 6. Chan Yuk-sum (left) with daughter-in-law Betty Choy, grandson Robert, and granddaughters Eileen and Colleen, Auckland, 1959. Source: Ip, *Dragons on the Long* (49). Photograph by Ken Choy. Reproduced with permission of Robert Choy, Colleen Chung & Eileen Asbury.

It is important to note that this thesis does not include a separate analysis of the hegemonic patriarchal Chinese narratives that co-construct the prototype ‘Chinese woman’. Accordingly, in this review of literature, I provide no survey of scholarship about Chinese women’s inside lives. First, the review above indicates that such an endeavour would be highly impracticable given the extent of cultural assimilation in New Zealand and therefore the extent to which Chinese narratives are subsumed by and inextricable from mainstream Pākehā narratives. Second, given this inextricability, an inside analysis could not feasibly contribute to the project of identifying what could be subjectively and autonomously claimed by the Chinese woman subject beyond the hegemonic *Pākehā*-authorised narratives that are my main concern. Finally, in this thesis such studies bear the brunt of my critical analyses, for in the New Zealand context, the positing of a substantial inside ‘Chinese’ world (implicitly, against an outside ‘Pākehā’ world) rests on an essentialist dichotomy that affirms the very hegemonic narratives I endeavour to challenge.

Conceptual Frameworks

This thesis diverges from the works cited in the literature review above in its much closer focus on Chinese women's subjectivity and lived experiences, and in its theorisation of the relationship between these and the hegemonic narratives Chinese women are subjected to. The conceptual framework of this thesis is divided into two parts. I begin by drawing on Rey Chow's study of mainland Chinese woman writer Ling Shuhua's short stories of the late 1920s in order to develop a model of subjectivity through which settler Chinese New Zealand women's lived experiences may be apprehended ("Virtuous"). Then, with reference to Judith Butler's critical analysis of subjection (*Psychic*), I outline the thesis' three key objectives and discuss the theoretical positions I adopt to meet these: a feminist poststructuralist perspective, Linda Alcoff's 'positional' feminism ("Cultural"), Erving Goffman's dramaturgical schema (*Presentation*), and Mary Ann Doane's theorisation of femininity as masquerade.

In her analysis of three short stories by mainland Chinese woman writer Ling Shuhua (published in 1928), Rey Chow offers a perception of Chinese women's subjectivity drawn from 'traditional Chinese society'. Chow asserts that as the patriarchal organization of this society consigned women to domesticity, domesticity should be seen as the 'predominant' 'paradigm under which many Chinese women's thinking operates' ("Virtuous" 91). In what follows, I reveal how Chow's analysis of Chinese women's subjectivity resonates strongly with my own analyses of settler Chinese New Zealand women's lived experiences.¹¹⁴

First, Chow's analysis demonstrates that in the pre-revolutionary period, Chinese women's subjective experiences are constrained as 'virtuous transactions': the Chinese woman is aware of the patriarchal discourses that define – and confine – her as 'Chinese woman', and that it is incumbent upon her to meet the conditions

¹¹⁴ Perhaps this resonance is due to the fact that settler Chinese women in New Zealand are also descendants of 'traditional' Chinese society; for unless they – or their forebears – returned to China to live for extended periods, they would not have experienced the emancipatory reforms that occurred there from the mid-twentieth century. In 1959, B.F. Ng observed: 'As in pre-Communist China, the Chinese family in New Zealand still upholds the traditional characteristics of being patronymic, patrilineal, patriarchal and patrilocal' (68).

prescribed for this identity. Chow describes these transactions in terms of self-sacrifice: 'Chinese women' she writes, 'learn to give up their own desires in exchange for their social "place"', but no matter how dedicated they are to this self-sacrifice, their 'fate' remains beyond their control ("Virtuous" 94-96). The tragedy – and irony – of the woman's predicament is that the full extent of her subjection is only realised when she strives most wholeheartedly in her endeavours to meet the obligations prescribed for her (94-96). There are clear structural resonances with the situation of settler Chinese New Zealand women, whose position in the mainstream is determined by an 'unspoken contract'. In return for tolerance of their presence, Chinese women in New Zealand must: act 'normatively', assimilate, refrain from becoming 'social derelicts', and most importantly, *know their place* (B. Yee 89-90). As with Chow's virtuous transactions, even the utmost diligence on the part of the Chinese woman cannot guarantee that she will be tolerated, and her very dedication to the task of upholding the contract reveals her vulnerability and the extent of her subjection.

Second, like Chow's 'traditional' Chinese woman subject, the settler Chinese New Zealand woman is self-limiting. She has internalised both hegemonic mainstream and patriarchal Chinese expectations and restrains herself in accord with these, and she sees herself as her narrators see her: as a subordinate subject.

Third, Chow argues that Ling's writing itself constitutes a virtuous transaction, for the writer uses the language available to her in a way that elicits public appreciation, and because her writing is recognised only for its 'trivial' feminine subject matter, such appreciation requires the writer to accept a subordinate public presence. Similarly, while Chinese New Zealand women writers' stories have been appreciated in the public domain, they have at the same time been diminished by mainstream Orientalist readings, which writers have 'accepted' in 'exchange' for public recognition. In this transaction, the unspoken contract is fulfilled insofar as the Chinese woman writer demonstrates her assimilation to hegemonic Pākehā narratives that regulate the reception of her stories and

reinforce her subordinate place in the mainstream.¹¹⁵

Fourth, Chow shows how Ling's stories draw attention to Chinese women's patriarchal oppression through the portrayal of the 'trivial' events in women's everyday lives, thereby illustrating the oppressiveness of the patriarchal discourses that constrain those lives. She writes: '... triviality itself should ... be seen as an ironic means of exploring patriarchal ideology, whose limits are made palpable precisely through women's so-called private and insignificant sufferings' (104). Through this implicit irony, Ling's stories demonstrate the Chinese woman writer's reflexive awareness of the extent to which hegemonic discourses subjugate her; and that within the virtuous transactions of Chinese women's lives and writing there is, in fact, space for autonomy. All that is required is a shift in the Chinese woman subject's perspective to gain from this. Chow's analysis suggests that this room for manoeuvre – the woman's autonomy, and agency – lies in the writer's portrayals of Chinese women's subjugation: that is, in her appropriation and performance of the very narratives that subordinate her.

In accord with Chow's analysis, I draw the main premises of my conceptual framework from Judith Butler's critical analysis of subjection in *The Psychic Life of Power*. The key premises of Butler's analysis, stipulated in the introduction to her work, are highly pertinent to my thesis, for they specifically interrogate the issue of subjection as both subject creation and subordination – that is, as *subjectivation*. I borrow directly from these premises in order to structure the primary objectives in this thesis. First, the thesis aims to account 'for the way regulatory power maintains subjects in subordination by producing and exploiting the demand for continuity, visibility, and place' (29); that is, I expose the insidious operation and reach of hegemonic discourses that co-construct the prototype 'Chinese woman'. Second, the thesis attempts to recognise 'that the subject produced as continuous, visible, and located is nevertheless haunted by an inassimilable remainder, a melancholia that marks the limits of her subjectivation' (29); that is, I aim to demonstrate that despite the Chinese woman's subjectivation by hegemonic narratives, a part of

¹¹⁵ Discussed in Chapter Four: Can Chinese Women Speak?

herself remains unassimilated and this marks the limits of her subjectivation by these narratives. Third, the thesis aims to offer ‘an account of the iterability of the subject that shows how agency may well consist in opposing and transforming the social terms by which it is spawned’ (29); that is, I endeavour to demonstrate the capacity in which the Chinese woman subject can re-cite or perform ‘Chinese woman’ in different contexts, and thereby reveal how her agency can be grounded in her subversion of the very narratives that produce her as ‘Chinese woman’. I elaborate on each of these in turn below.

In accord with the first objective of this thesis, which is to expose the insidious operation and reach of hegemonic discourses which co-construct and perpetuate ‘Chinese woman’, this thesis analyses settler Chinese New Zealand women’s subjectivities from a feminist poststructuralist perspective that demands attention to social, historical and cultural specificity (Weedon 136). In accord with this, the thesis exhibits an explicit awareness of discursive effects by practising a Foucauldian ‘archaeology’ of knowledge: I juxtapose elements from the past and the present by documenting the historically and culturally specific conditions that produce ‘Chinese woman’, and describe how these manifest in the world. This enables an understanding of how the ‘rules’ that govern the expression and prevalence of conceptions of Chineseness and of ‘Chinese woman’ operate, and why these have endured, and facilitates the interrogation – and undermining – of the authority of hegemonic discourses that perpetuate ‘Chinese woman’ (Prasad 244-47, 250-51; Mills 24-26, 64-65; Foucault, *Archaeology* 130).

With reference to the second objective, which is to demonstrate that despite the Chinese woman’s subjectivation by hegemonic narratives, a part of herself remains unassimilated and that this marks the limits of her subjectivation, it needs to be noted that a poststructuralist conception of subjectivity cannot yield an adequate account of autonomy. On a poststructuralist reading, the Chinese woman’s subjectivity is a ‘site of conflicting competing subject positions’ (Weedon 15), the very instability and *discomfort* of which points to her disidentification from the discourses that co-construct her as ‘Chinese woman’; such a reading, however,

cannot account for the Chinese woman subject's reflection of or challenge to the narratives that co-construct her as 'Chinese woman' (Alcoff, "Cultural" 380). In order to apprehend the woman subject's *articulation* of her discomfort and therefore her separate identity, her subjectivity must be theoretically reconfigured. Linda Alcoff's 'positional' feminism offers a conception of 'woman' that is neither essentialist nor nominal, but which theorises 'her' through an exploration of the experience of subjectivity (382), and constructs and situates 'her' through a 'matrix of habits, practices and discourses' (384). Alcoff's conception of 'woman' constitutes a 'particular discursive constellation', which takes into account both the (shifting) discourses that position the woman as a subject *and* her responses to these, manifest in her interpretations, reflections and everyday practices (384-86). It offers a nexus where the woman may ground herself; from where her identity can be 'the product of her own interpretation' (385). Alcoff's 'positionality' therefore accommodates both subjectivation and agency. It endorses a flexible site from where a woman can *see herself*, and therefore mark the limits of her subjectivation.

Storytelling affords opportunities for such reflexive seeing, for it enables the Chinese woman to both position and identify herself, and to make sense of herself, her experiences, and her relationship with the world. In telling stories about her experiences, she enhances her subjective range, and hence her subjectivity and sense of self (Gubrium and Holstein 8; de Lauretis 182; Weedon 21). The matrix of her stories, and their intersubjective connections with the stories of other Chinese women accords to her an identifiable *position*. This is not an essentialist station, for her position changes in correlation with her stories and the ways these stories connect to each other and to the world the woman lives in. In the process of storytelling, the woman locates and relocates herself in the world, thereby exercising her authority.¹¹⁶ In contrast to the precarious passivity of a 'purely' poststructuralist subjectivity – which is 'constantly being reconstituted in discourse' (Weedon 33), storytelling is a subject-driven and therefore agent-centred process

¹¹⁶ Alcoff describes this position as a discursively constructed identity, from where women can 'actively utilize[d]' 'their positional perspective' ("Cultural" 385-86).

which, even amidst the hegemonic discourses that construct the Chinese woman as 'Chinese woman', allows her to validate her own perspective. In storytelling, a critical distance manifests between the Chinese woman subject and the hegemonic narratives that co-construct her as 'Chinese woman'. This distance marks the limits of the woman's subjectivation, for it enables a reflexive critical gaze: she is able to see herself *and* the narratives that perpetuate her subordinate position. However, due to the hegemonic force of these narratives and the lack of alternative subject positions available to her, the woman's *seeing* must be obscured. She cannot be seen to undermine the very narratives that produce her. In order to protect (and therefore sustain) her critical gaze, the Chinese woman subject must continue to be seen as 'Chinese woman'.

In light of this and in accord with the third objective of this thesis – which is to demonstrate the capacity in which the Chinese woman subject can re-cite the hegemonically constructed 'Chinese woman' in different contexts, and thereby reveal how her agency can be grounded in her subversion of the very narratives that produce her as 'Chinese woman' – I draw on Erving Goffman's dramaturgical schema and Mary Ann Doane's theorisation of femininity as masquerade in order to conceptualise Chinese women's narrative strategies as *performances*.

Goffman's dramaturgical schema is grounded in the metaphor of theatre, and is concerned with the production of social appearances, which are conceived as performances (*Presentation*; Prasad 45-46). The schema is useful for my interrogation, for it enables the exposition of the hidden dynamics behind social interactions and reveals how identity concerns are managed through public performances. It therefore informs my comparative analyses of Chinese women's storytelling in (nominally) inside/'Chinese' and outside/'Pākehā' contexts. In my analyses, Goffman's conceptualisations of 'frontstage' and 'backstage' facilitate the identification of a 'cynical' subjectivity: a *seeing* subject, whose autonomy is

attributable to her awareness that her performance of 'Chinese woman' is, in fact, a performance (*Presentation* 28-29).¹¹⁷

For an explicitly feminist analysis of Chinese women's subjectivity and to provide an account of Chinese women's autonomy, I draw on Mary Ann Doane's theorisation of femininity as masquerade to frame my analyses of Chinese women's storytelling performances. Doane's masquerade draws attention to hegemonic discourses that obscure and obstruct women's *seeing*, and to the exploitable space between the woman subject and her publicly recognised femininity. In 'Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator', a paper about gendered representations in classical Hollywood cinema, Doane contends that women on screen have repeatedly been denied the right to *see*, and to *be seen* as *seeing* subjects. Because there is no place for the woman as subject in the context of patriarchal narratives (the woman as subject rather than object of the gaze is 'impossible') women who have dared to 'appropriate the gaze' are 'dissociated from mastery': for example, terminated or deemed 'monstrous' (Doane 84, 83, 67).¹¹⁸ Amidst these constraints, Doane argues that the flaunting of femininity, which involves the production of it as 'excess' or 'masquerade', is empowering because the woman who holds her femininity – her mask of 'womanliness' – at a distance is able to resist patriarchal positioning, and this allows her to be a *seeing* subject. If, as Donna Haraway would argue, fully identifying with 'woman' – or in this case, 'womanliness' – forecloses a woman's critical gaze, then the *distance* from 'woman' enabled by her masquerade enables her to see.¹¹⁹

Doane's masquerade can be usefully applied to Chinese women in New Zealand whose subjectivation as 'Chinese woman' denies them the privilege of *seeing*. In conjunction with Goffman's conception of 'cynical' performance (*Presentation* 28-29), the deployment of a 'Chinese woman' mask affords the

¹¹⁷ Goffman contrasts the 'cynical' performer with the performer who is 'fully taken in' by her own performance (*Presentation* 28-29). I discuss this further in Chapter Three.

¹¹⁸ See also, L. Williams 97.

¹¹⁹ Haraway states that 'one cannot "be" . . . a woman, colonized person. . . so on – if one intends to see and see from these positions critically' (585); (my emphases).

Chinese woman a critical gaze that offers room for manoeuvre, to not only resist the constraints of the hegemonic narratives that subordinate her, but potentially, to subvert them.

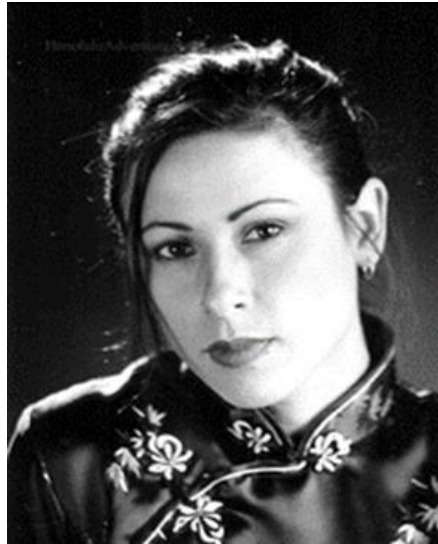


Fig. 7. Lynda Chanwai-Earle: playwright and actor. Source: Tsai.
Reproduced with permission of Lynda Chanwai-Earle.

How could a Chinese woman's agency be grounded in her subversion of the very narratives that produce her as 'Chinese woman'? If we can deduce from the foregoing discussion that (Chinese women's) performances of 'Chinese woman' have both regulatory and subversive potential – for they can expose and undermine the operation of hegemonic discursive regimes – then a conceptualisation of 'Chinese woman' as *performatively* constructed, akin to Judith Butler's theorisation of gender, may well be instructive (Chinn 120; J. Butler, *Undoing* 52). If 'Chinese woman' is performed through processes of citation, through the 'stylized repetition of acts' (J. Butler, *Gender* 140; Chinn 112), then 'she' may be conceived – and crucially, *re-conceived* within the context of a regulatory regime that becomes naturalized over time (J. Butler, *Gender* 33; Bailey 96-97). The 'stylized repetition of acts' – manifest in this thesis in different forms of storytelling – can amount to a subversive deployment of hegemonic narratives (de Lauretis 182; Alcoff, "Cultural" 383), for with each storytelling performance, re-citals of 'Chinese woman' *authorised by Chinese women subjects* take on new meanings that have the

potential to disrupt the prototype 'Chinese woman'. While telling stories about 'Chinese woman' requires the Chinese woman subject to inhabit an 'ambivalent scene of agency' (J. Butler, *Psychic* 15) – for her engagement with the prototype requires a degree of 'submission' to 'her' – it is a scene of agency nonetheless. Over time, the cumulative impact of stylized reiterations of 'Chinese woman' authorised in the stories Chinese women tell may be sufficient to transform the hegemonic narratives that first produced 'her'. Both Goffman's schema and Doane's masquerade allow for autonomy and agency through the 'iterability' of the subject – that is, the capacity for 'Chinese woman' to be re-cited in different contexts, here conceived as different performances, which I analyse through a range of Methods.

Methodology, Methods and Chapter Outlines

The elision of Chinese women's stories from mainstream Pākehā (and feminist Pākehā) narratives, as revealed in the critical literature review above, exposes the limits of hegemonic discourses, necessitating a 'politics of partiality' that takes exclusion - and therefore difference – seriously (Ang, "I'm a Feminist" 204). In this thesis, the potential for such a politics is explored through self-inquiry, the key aim of which is to discern what being a settler Chinese New Zealand woman means. Accordingly, most of the methods I have chosen focus on personal narratives and highlight subjective lived experiences, both my own and those of other settler Chinese New Zealand women. Through cultural historical analysis of hegemonic mainstream narratives; autoethnographic narratives; personal interviews; close critical readings of settler Chinese women's published writing; and my own creative writing practice; I attempt to interpret settler Chinese New Zealand women's lived experiences both in a broader social context – as they pertain to the question of their enduring subordinate status – and a more intimate context, one that has personal significance for myself. Below, I begin by discussing the inclusion of autoethnographic narratives throughout the thesis. This is followed by an account of the background to the personal interviews I conducted, which inform Chapters Two, Three and Four. I then offer an outline of each chapter, which explains how

the methods chosen for this research were utilised, and end with a brief defence for the conceptual framework and methodology.

Autoethnographic narratives appear throughout this thesis as personal stories, and more implicitly, in the critical observations I make from a first-person perspective. I include these for three main reasons. First, as the review of literature above demonstrates, existing narratives about settler Chinese New Zealand women do not adequately articulate or represent settler Chinese New Zealand women's experiences. Not only are there few public narratives about us, the disparity between these and my own life experience is such that an autoethnographic contribution is necessary to this research. Second, the absence in the public domain of a legitimate, recognised settler Chinese New Zealand woman identity requires me to demonstrate the very difficulties involved in identifying and articulating what could ground such a position.¹²⁰ Third, by explicitly drawing attention to these difficulties through a first person perspective both in the context of personal stories, and in the thesis' scholarly arguments, I am able to enhance my understanding and analysis of other Chinese women's stories in this research. As such, my own stories have intersubjective value: they validate – and are validated by – other Chinese women's stories, thereby contributing to a nexus that has the potential to ground a more substantive critical gaze. Hence, the inclusion of autoethnographic narratives in this thesis does not entail a claim for their epistemological value on the basis of personally lived experience alone. These narratives have *analytical* value for they facilitate a critical self-reflexivity that enables and enhances theoretical understandings of the broader phenomena of Chinese women's subjectivity and subjectivation (L. Anderson 373, 375; Ellis and Bochner 739).¹²¹

¹²⁰ Ien Ang argues that her autobiographical 'tales of Chineseness are meant to illuminate the very *difficulty* of constructing a position from which I can speak *as ... [a] Chinese...*' (Ang, *On Not Speaking* 24).

¹²¹ As bell hooks has argued, '... combining the analytical and the experiential is a richer way of knowing' (181). I define analytic autoethnography as work in which the researcher is a full member of the research group; her membership is visible in her published texts; and the research is focused on enhancing 'theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena' (L. Anderson 373).

The *interviews* I conducted involved conversations with five Chinese New Zealand women writers, which were sustained over a period of more than three years. I was privileged to have the opportunity to speak with: Alison Wong, Eva Wong Ng, Helene Wong, Lynda Chanwai-Earle and Wendy Yee. All of these women are descended from the earliest Chinese immigrants (that is, their pioneer forebears arrived before World War Two), have lived most of their lives in New Zealand, and were able to vouch for the cumulative impact that hegemonic mainstream narratives have had on their lives.¹²² Apart from their writing, these women have worked in a diverse range of occupations (including pharmacist, IT specialist, political adviser, archivist, actor, and documentary filmmaker) and their homes have spanned the length of New Zealand. The oldest interviewee was born in the 1930s, and the youngest in the 1960s. Their stories, therefore, offer a broad range of perspectives. I deliberately sought writers because I needed participants who, by virtue of their vocation as storytellers, would be able to offer clearly articulated reflections about their experiences as Chinese women. With the exception of Wendy Yee, all of the interviewees are accomplished writers who have published or performed their writing about the Chinese community – and about being Chinese – and their work has been recognised and discussed in the public domain.¹²³ I located my first participant, Alison Wong, through Steven Young, a Chinese New Zealander who has several pages on his (consulting engineer) website dedicated to matters concerning the settler Chinese community in New Zealand (Young). Alison Wong introduced me to all the other participants, except for Wendy Yee, with whom I was already personally acquainted. With the exception of the initial interview with Alison Wong, which took place in Melbourne, all interviews were conducted via email. The other participants live in different locations throughout New Zealand, and it was not feasible to speak to them all in person. Due to participants' other

¹²² All except Lynda Chanwai-Earle, who was born in England, were born and raised in New Zealand and have spent most of their lives there. Alison Wong has lived in Australia for the past five years. Wendy Yee has lived in the U.S.A. since 2013.

¹²³ Wendy Yee's work, although publicly performed, does not focus on her particular experiences as a settler Chinese New Zealand woman; however, the stories she shared with me in interviews are valuable to this research.

commitments and difficulties in co-ordinating mutually agreeable times, their preference was for email interviews. Each woman also expressed a personal preference for writing their responses, as this allowed time for reflection and clarification. The interviews were semi-structured and organic. I had two sets of questions; the answers to the first set of questions led to the modification and generation of the second set. Subsequent to this, follow-up questions were forwarded as I required further explanation or clarification. I was particularly interested in how participants responded to hegemonic discourses of 'Chinese woman' and Chineseness both in their everyday lives and in their writing.

Below I present the chapter outlines, which incorporate discussion of the additional methods utilised in this thesis:

Chapter One involves a *cultural historical analysis*. With reference to the first objective of this thesis, which is to expose the insidious operation and reach of hegemonic narratives that co-construct and perpetuate the (ahistorical) prototype: 'Chinese woman', I analyse a diverse range of mainstream Pākehā narratives, including newspaper reports, histories, photographs, and television documentaries, ranging from the nineteenth century through to the twenty-first century. My attention to the textual, rhetorical and diversionary strategies that perpetuate some narratives and subjugate or exclude others, reveals that in New Zealand, Chinese women's public identity has been historically characterised by a Colonialist Orientalist Episteme that constructs them as both Oriental and invisible subjects who cannot speak for themselves.

Chapter Two constitutes a work of *creative writing* that responds to the second objective of this thesis, which is to demonstrate that despite the Chinese woman subject's subordination by hegemonic narratives (revealed in Chapter One), a part of herself remains unassimilated, and this marks the limits of her subjectivation. The chapter presents a group of settler Chinese women sharing stories in an intimate inside conversation, revealing their responses to the hegemonic narratives that subordinate them. These stories are inspired by *interviews* (both my own, and other researchers') and my own personal experiences and observations. Their critical perspectives reference Chinese women's everyday

practices, strategies, and reflections, and evidence their autonomous subjectivities. In this chapter, Chinese women *speak for themselves*.

Chapter Three offers a critical response to the second objective of this thesis. In this chapter I attempt to discern the limits of Chinese women's subjectivation by hegemonic narratives through a comparative analysis of their responses in personal *interviews* in both inside ('Chinese') and outside ('Pākehā') contexts. The chapter reveals that as Chinese women are bound to perform in accord with the hegemonically constructed prototype 'Chinese woman' in both inside and outside contexts, there appears to be no space where they can express their autonomous subjectivities. However, the reflexivity gained from the sharing of what I term 'retreat' stories, told in the absence of both mainstream Pākehā and patriarchal Chinese audiences,¹²⁴ configures a space within which autonomous subjectivities can be expressed. I argue further that such reflexivity can be strategically deployed in performances of 'Chinese woman' on the outside, enabling Chinese women to assert their autonomy – and agency – in the public domain.

In Chapter Four, I address the final objective of this thesis, which is to attempt to show how the Chinese woman's autonomy and agency, manifest in her performances of 'Chinese woman' can be grounded in the subversion of the very narratives that subordinate her. The chapter involves *close critical readings* of selected works by four of the settler Chinese women writers I interviewed, and an analysis of mainstream responses to these. As these works belong to different creative writing genres, and demonstrate a diverse range of strategies, they enable significant insight into Chinese women's subjectivity and capacity for agency. My analysis reveals that no matter what strategies the writer uses to assert her non-'Chinese woman' subjectivity, the hegemonic force of Colonialist Orientalist narratives precludes the public recognition of this subjectivity. However, the intersubjective nexuses enabled by the sharing of retreat stories in these works

¹²⁴ I define a 'patriarchal Chinese audience' as one before which Chinese women are aware that demands for compliance with patriarchal Chinese imperatives leave little or no room for negotiation. A 'patriarchal Chinese audience' is therefore not necessarily male, for some Chinese women, e.g., traditional matriarchs, may also be staunchly and coercively patriarchal.

offer hope; as constellations of autonomous subjectivities, they constitute robust positions from where settler Chinese New Zealand women can collectively assert a separate identity.

It is to this end that the researcher's own retreat stories are imaginatively deployed in the work of *creative writing* in Chapter Five. The main objective of this chapter is to demonstrate the complexities involved in my personal responses and resistance to the hegemonic narratives that subjectivate me as 'Chinese woman', and in so doing assert my own autonomous subjectivity. "Sunday Gardening: The Adventures of John Chinaman on the New Gold Mountain" is a narrative collage that includes prose, poetry, news stories, and images: a work drawn from my own life, and from the experiences of settler Chinese New Zealand women known to me. Following on from the stories told by other Chinese women (in Chapters Two, Three and Four), it contributes to a critical storytelling nexus. Utilising a range of narrative strategies to explore, articulate and assert my own separate identity, I appropriate, perform and attempt to subvert the hegemonic narratives that co-construct the prototype 'Chinese woman'. As "Sunday Gardening" illustrates and attempts to consolidate the key premises explored and analysed in this thesis, I anticipate that it will be illuminated by all that precedes it. The creative work in this chapter will not, therefore, be preceded by any further exegesis.

As the discussion above shows, the conceptual framework and methods in this thesis constitute a bricolage methodology: a combination of a range of strategies gleaned from diverse fields of inquiry. Within this conceptual framework, which draws on Rey Chow's conceptualisation of 'traditional' Chinese women's subjectivity ("Virtuous"), Judith Butler's critical analysis of subjection (*Psychic*), Linda Alcoff's positional feminism ("Cultural"), Erving Goffman's dramaturgical schema (*Presentation*) and Mary Ann Doane's theorisation of femininity as masquerade, the methods I deploy are all necessary for the task of interrogating the complexity of settler Chinese New Zealand women's lives and to illuminate and identify the intricate ways in which Chinese women's subjectivity is both

constrained and enabled (Kincheloe 334). The multidisciplinary, multi-method approach in this thesis facilitates a broader understanding of how hegemonic discourses operate. The different platforms on which storytelling is interrogated – through interviews, autoethnography, and various genres of creative writing – demonstrate that Chinese women’s lived experiences do not simply reflect hegemonic perceptions about them, and that their stories cannot be adequately articulated in ‘straightforward’ prose or in the context of hegemonic or hegemonically endorsed narratives (Stone-Mediatore 66). By drawing attention to different narrative strategies and a range of subjective experiences, the bricolage methodology I deploy enables a thorough and intimate exploration of Chinese women’s subjectivity, exposing the diverse ways that Chinese women relate to – that is, resist, perform, and conform to – hegemonic narratives.¹²⁵ Crucially, the methodology facilitates the production of an intersubjective solidarity: a nexus of critical gazes that has the potential to legitimise Chinese women as *subjects who see*, thereby validating their storytelling as knowledge production.¹²⁶

Together, the conceptual framework and methods I utilise in this thesis enable me to theorise *the autonomy and agency of the Chinese woman subject within the constraints of her subjectivation by hegemonic narratives that conspire toward her dissolution*. There is no contradiction here, because what is sought foremost is not a discrete identity – the recognition of which cannot, in the context of continually shifting discourses ever be secure/d – but rather and more pragmatically, a means of locating and subsequently negotiating an ongoing awareness-of-self, the epistemological value of which rests on its distance from the discourses that nonetheless ground it.

¹²⁵ Because, as Audre Lorde argues, the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house’ (26-27).

¹²⁶ For in order to be perceived as a knower, the Chinese woman must, as Donna Haraway contends, be ‘pictured as an actor and agent, not as a ... ground or resource’ (592).

CHAPTER ONE:

AN ‘UTTERLY CHARMING PICTURE OF ORIENTAL WOMANHOOD’

. . . although she has taken to Westernisation eagerly . . . she still remains the same enigmatic, strange but utterly charming picture of Oriental womanhood. (“Going Western”)

The literature review above indicates that Chinese women have been barely acknowledged in research about the settler Chinese community and largely excluded from histories and other studies about New Zealand women. This chapter reveals that where Chinese women have been recognised in the public domain, their identity has been persistently characterised by a Colonialist Orientalist Episteme, which re-presents them as exotic, tradition-bound and Oriental, and/or assimilated, progressive and therefore invisible. In accord with the first premise of Judith Butler’s critical analysis of subjection, which is to account for ‘the way regulatory power maintains subjects in subordination by producing and exploiting the demand for continuity, visibility, and place’ (*Psychic* 29), this chapter presents a cultural historical analysis of mainstream Pākehā representations of Chinese women in New Zealand in order to expose the operation and reach of hegemonic mainstream narratives that perpetuate the prototype ‘Chinese woman’. In identifying the textual, rhetorical and diversionary strategies deployed under the auspices of a Colonialist Orientalist Episteme, my analysis of a diverse range of narratives reveals the hegemonic force that effectively diminishes the Chinese woman subject, disabling her capacity to speak for herself. The chapter begins with a critical survey of how Chinese women have been portrayed as increasingly included in New Zealand in the context of the nation’s Progress Narrative. This is followed by an analysis of how hegemonic mainstream narratives have re-presented Chinese women in accord with a Colonialist Orientalist Episteme. The final part of the chapter examines how this Episteme silences Chinese women subjects by *speaking for* them.

Progress

The Chinese have numbers of their women here, and the women are fecund. . . It is a gross and bitter evil and the malignity of it increases with every child of Chinese blood born into the country. (“Empire”)

In the context of the nation’s Progress Narrative, which portrays New Zealand’s social and political development in linear fashion, Chinese women have been characterised in accord with specific changing cultural and historical conditions within which their lives are portrayed as having improved over time. According to the Progress Narrative, Chinese women were excluded during the Victorian and Edwardian eras with reference to the colony’s aspiration to be a ‘fairer Britain of the South Seas’ (Ip and Murphy 18; Murphy, *Poll-tax* 7); tolerated in the years between 1939 and 1948 in the context of mainstream humanitarian concerns (Beatson and Beatson 38-39; Ip, *Dragons on the Long* 18-19); and from 1987, openly appreciated in a climate of increasing multicultural diversity (Smith 86; Voci, “Isn’t it Great?”; R. Chung and Walkey).¹²⁷ Implicit throughout this Narrative is the belief that it is the Pākehā mainstream’s moral evolution that facilitates (increasing) tolerance for Chinese women, and that New Zealand’s progress enables Chinese women’s progress. In what follows, I raise questions about the integrity of the Progress Narrative by drawing attention to the conditions under which mainstream tolerance prevails, and the lack of historical evidence for lasting tolerance.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chinese women were perceived by some Pākehā observers to be potential saviours. In light of the overwhelmingly male Chinese population, there were concerns – about homosexuality, the sexual predation of both Pākehā and Māori women, and miscegenation – that advocates for the Chinese community believed could be best alleviated by relaxing the legislation restricting the entry of Chinese wives (Appendix 3; Brookes; “Chinese Curse”; “Living”). However, opposition to the admission of Chinese women appears to have been grounded in greater fears about their

¹²⁷ See also Introduction: Critical Literature Review: Narrating the Nation above.

potential to corrupt the nation's 'morals' and 'race'.¹²⁸ In 1904, 'A Perilous Proposal: An Open Door for Chinese Women' (published in the *Free Lance* newspaper) warned that 'the admission of women of . . . the lowest Asiatic type – isn't going to mend any morals' and that increasing 'the supply of Chinese by raising a yellow colony in our midst . . . won't commend itself to a community that means to keep clear of the colour taint'. At the beginning of the twentieth century, increasing numbers of Chinese women entering the country and a growing population of New Zealand-born Chinese children caused significant disquiet, for a local-born Chinese community would potentially be entitled to the same rights and privileges as Pākehā and Māori New Zealanders – an altogether unpalatable situation, particularly in light of the falling European birth rate at this time (Smith 125; Murphy, "Joe" 52; Ip and Liu 35). Fear of Chinese women's reproductive potential was so great it was proposed that 'it would be a good thing. . . to deport the Chinese women, even if ten Chinese males were admitted for every Chinese woman sent out of the country' ("Empire"). In 1907, the arrival of just thirteen Chinese women was proclaimed 'the largest number of Chinese women arriving . . . in the country's history' and sparked a debate concerning the increasing numbers of 'New Zealand-born Chinese children who are, unfortunately brought up to live according to the habits of the Chinese. . .'.¹²⁹ In the same year, the presence of around fifty Chinese women in the Dominion 'made it imperative for Parliament to do something about the matter', and there was subsequently much support for raising

¹²⁸ Given the circulation of sinophobic narratives between Gold Mountain sites (as discussed in Introduction: Economic Scapegoats, Alien Invaders and 'Ching Chong Chinamen: A 'Chinese' History), it is likely that stories about Chinese women prostitutes in North America contributed to this apprehension. See, e.g.: Pfeffer; Wegars, "Besides" 231-33. The situation in New Zealand however, was very different; there were no known Chinese women prostitutes there at this time (J. Ng, *Windows* 1:100, 119; Simmons 69; Shum, "Remembering" 78).

¹²⁹ New Zealand Parliamentary Debate (NZPD), 1907, 839-40, quoted by Ip, "Gender" 46. The entry of Chinese women into New Zealand in even small numbers made newspaper headlines; in 1920, for example, "Chinese Women Coming to the Dominion" described the arrival of nine Chinese women as a 'fairly large number'.

the Poll Tax to £500.¹³⁰ Between 1881 and 1920, the New Zealand parliament deliberated over no fewer than twenty-one Acts, all of which were proposed to inhibit the growth of the Chinese population (Ip, “Gender” 44). Up until 1921, Chinese women were excluded from New Zealand under the same legislation as Chinese men, and between 1921 and World War Two, there were very strict quotas for Chinese women immigrants, with entry largely restricted to the wives of Chinese men who were either naturalised or born in New Zealand (Murphy, *Guide* 84, 195-96; Appendix 3).

In accord with the Progress Narrative, attitudes toward the Chinese community softened during World War Two.¹³¹ In 1939, Chinese women were permitted to enter the country in limited numbers on humanitarian visas. In response to difficulties in China ensuing from the Sino-Japanese War, the government allowed Chinese men who were permanently resident in New Zealand to apply for temporary permits for the entry of 249 wives and 244 minor children. After the war, these families were granted permanent residency (Murphy, *Guide* 88-89). In accord with the Progress Narrative, tolerance for the Chinese community increased in the postwar years, and the quota for Chinese women entering the country was increased accordingly.¹³² From 1954, Chinese women were permitted to enter the country as newly wedded spouses from China (Murphy, *Guide* 271-72). In this period, appreciation for Chinese women’s ‘cultural’ contributions in the mainstream appeared to grow. For example, women and girls were seen in parade floats and other public events dressed in cheongsams and other ‘Chinese’ attire (Ip, *Dragons on the Long* 18-19; Appendices 16-20; Fig. 12). In accord with the Progress

¹³⁰ Parliamentary Debates, vol 142, p838, qtd by B.F. Ng 26. New Zealand officially became the Dominion of New Zealand on 26 September 1907; in 1953 this was officially changed to the Realm of New Zealand, although the term Dominion has never been officially revoked (Ministry, “Dominion”).

¹³¹ See, for example: Greif, *Overseas* 43-45; Beatson and Beatson 38; Lawlor 81-82; Ooi, “Reorientations” 98; Leckie 57; E.W. Ng, Interview 4 Mar 2012.

¹³² In accord with the Progress Narrative, James Belich notes, for example, that in 1950, ‘government officials were congratulating themselves on their clemency in letting a Chinese resident of 50 years bring in a wife he had married in 1898’ (Cabinet Paper 9, February 1951, CP (51) 137, National Archives, Wellington; cited by Belich (229)).

Narrative, in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s Chinese women became increasingly assimilated (Greif, *Overseas*; “Chinese Community”). They appeared in acting roles in mainstream productions on stage, film and television (“Greatest”; “Geeling”; H. Wong, “Reel”; H. Wong, “Helene Wong”; Appendix 21), and they actively participated in local and national governments (Hamilton; Beal; Appendix 22). And from the 1990s onward, the contributions of Chinese women were promoted and celebrated in the context of a ‘happy’, harmonious multi-culture.¹³³ According to the Progress Narrative, it certainly appears that Chinese women progressed from being feared, to tolerated, to included, to being appreciated and having a say in the running of the country.

But the situation was not as progressive as this Narrative suggests. During World War Two, only the wives and families of permanently resident Chinese men were permitted entry, and they were subject to strict conditions, including payment of a £200 security deposit and a £500 bond serving as guarantee that after a period of two years the wife and all her children – including those born in New Zealand – would return to China (Murphy, *Guide* 89-90; Appendix 3). While these families were eventually granted permanent residency in 1947, this occurred only after much petitioning from the Presbyterian Church – and was perceived retrospectively by the Customs Department as ‘a rather drastic step taken to solve a problem to which there appeared no easy solution’.¹³⁴ In the years immediately after the war, priority for entry was given to the wives of Chinese men resident in New Zealand who had been married the longest; the reason for this was that it was assumed –

¹³³ See, for example: Roscoe, *Documentary* 11-13, 177; Voci, “Isn’t it Great?” 94; Warrington 101-105; Peterson 115-16; Mercer 102; J. Ng, “Overview”; J. Ng, “Recent”; Amery; Andrews; Farrell; Tay.

¹³⁴ Customs Department memo, 29 September, 1950, quoted by Murphy, “Joe” 54; see also Ip and Murphy 27-28. James Belich, in 2001, claimed that the New Zealand government permitted entry to ‘about 1500’ Chinese wives and children on temporary permits, ‘which World War Two made permanent’ (232); Belich cites AH McLintock, ed, *An Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, n.p. 1966. However, in 2008, Nigel Murphy stated that the government admitted 249 women and 244 children. Murphy also states that these permits for permanent residency were the result of petitions from the Presbyterian Church *following* the war; residency was not granted to these refugee families until 1947 (*Guide* 84, 88). See also Ip and Liu 46-47; Greif, *Overseas* 45; and Beatson and Beatson 38, who concur with Murphy.

indeed, hoped – that their wives would be beyond childbearing age (Ip, “Gender” 47; Murphy, *Guide* 85). The quota system that allowed for these entries was discontinued in 1952 in response to the observation that the Chinese community was growing, but not assimilating as rapidly as anticipated (Murphy, *Guide* 86, 92). Subsequent to this, the immigration process for Chinese women was, according to Nigel Murphy, ‘designed to be as difficult as possible’ (“Joe” 63-64). In 1954, Chinese men who wished to bring their wives out from China were required to be naturalised first, and the marriage solemnized in Hong Kong; it was hoped that the expense of this would be a disincentive and that Chinese men would find marriage partners in New Zealand instead. There was no provision for Chinese women permanently resident in New Zealand to bring fiancés into the country (Appendix 3; Murphy, *Guide* 271-73).

The postwar decades have generally been perceived as a comparatively benign period during which the Chinese in New Zealand were well-tolerated.¹³⁵ Such tolerance, however, was contingent upon both the Chinese community’s well-assimilated, low profile Model Minority presence, and their continued systematic exclusion. Between 1946 and 1978, the government covertly upheld a ‘White New Zealand’ policy through a number of means, including: deliberate obfuscation of immigration laws and policy, refusal to inform non-European applicants of the reasons for their unsuccessful immigration applications, and taking advantage of Australian immigration legislation (Brawley, “No White”).¹³⁶ These measures, correlated with vigilant regulation of Chinese women entering New Zealand, effectively stemmed the growth of the Chinese community. For example, during this period, requests for Chinese men to enter the country to relieve an acute labour shortage in the country’s market gardens (many of which were Chinese family

¹³⁵ See, for example: Greif, *Overseas* 51, 93-94; B. F. Ng 74; Ip, “Gender” 49; and Ip, “From Gold” 294.

¹³⁶ In 1964, a new immigration act declared that any citizen in the Commonwealth or the Republic of Ireland could enter New Zealand on the proviso that they were qualified to be permanent residents in Australia. As Australian legislation at this time excluded virtually all non-European Commonwealth citizens, the New Zealand government’s use of Australian immigration laws to exclude non-European applicants effectively allowed the government to be discriminatory while at the same time maintaining the appearance of being non-discriminatory. Brawley argues that manoeuvres such as this were tantamount to a ‘White New Zealand Policy’ (“No White” 17).

businesses) were either denied or approved with stringent conditions. In 1949, a request by the Chinese community for 250 Chinese labourers was refused (Murphy, *Guide* 258); and in 1974, fifty Chinese men were permitted entry but in order to prevent any gratuitous increase in the Chinese population, married men were explicitly excluded from this scheme (Murphy, "Joe" 55). As in the nineteenth century and the earlier decades of the twentieth century, the legislation that kept the numbers of Chinese women low discouraged itinerant Chinese male workers from remaining in New Zealand (Ip and Liu 34; Appendix 3). The labour shortage also contributed to Chinese women's absence from the public domain, for it confined them to very long hours in the family business (Murphy, *Guide* 258). In the postwar decades up until the 1980s, Chinese women were well-tolerated because they were highly assimilated and kept low in number; largely unseen, they were, according to Manying Ip, 'not even a thorn in the flesh for even the most intolerant New Zealander' ("From Gold" 296).

The rapid resurgence of anti-Chinese sentiment in the 1990s in response to the influx of Chinese and other Asian immigrants confirmed that sinophobia was only latent during the middle decades of the twentieth century. Mainstream tolerance plummeted, with little distinction made between the long-established settler community, who were generally very well-assimilated, and the more recent arrivals who hailed (mostly) from Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Taiwan and China.¹³⁷ Due to the significant number of Chinese men unable to find work in New Zealand, who had little choice but to commute to work in their home countries, women were left to bear the brunt of mainstream hostilities.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ As noted above, between 1986 and 2006, New Zealand residents who were born in Asia increased seven-fold, and the population identified with Asian ethnicities increased by 550% (Bedford and Ho 11). Public outcry in response to this increase necessitated political intervention and the implementation of further conditions for entry to New Zealand (Ip and Murphy 63; see also Introduction: Critical Literature Review: Narrating the Nation above). The perceived problem of 'too many Asians' was a controversial issue in the 1996 election campaigns and has remained central to the New Zealand First party's political platform (Ip and Murphy 36; Bedford, "New Zealand"; Spoonley, "Rising"; Fig. 4.)

¹³⁸ With reference to "Disoriented Drivers a Hazard to Kiwi Roads", a 'sub-feature' of Booth and Martin's 'notorious "Inv-Asian" article' of 16 Apr 1993, Manying Ip observes that Chinese women are



Fig. 8. 'Sally Chan' in "A Thousand Apologies: A Public Service Announcement."
A Thousand Apologies. Dirs. Roseanne Liang et al. TV3. 21 Sept 2008. YouTube.
 Web. 7 Nov 2015.

The perception of Chinese women as threatening was compellingly depicted in 2008 in the television comedy show *A Thousand Apologies*. Presented as an advertisement for a political campaign, a sketch titled "A Public Service Announcement" portrayed an obnoxious Chinese woman, 'Sally Chan', who aggressively and unscrupulously changes the rules in a game of Monopoly with two 'New Zealand' women ("A Thousand Apologies: Public"). As 'Sally Chan' is clearly identifiable – through her name, Kiwi accent, and Māori jade necklace – as a well-assimilated Chinese New Zealand woman (Fig. 8), the sketch, which ends with the slogan 'New Zealand Worst: We all lose when Asians win', conflates *all* Chinese women as Others, and characterises them (albeit satirically) as one homogeneous threat to the nation.¹³⁹

'the butt of racist jokes and stereotypes' ("From Gold" 298). Certainly, there were also women who commuted to Asia to work (see, e.g., "Footprints") but in most cases, it was men (Ip and Liu 42).

¹³⁹ That is, the aim of the sketch is to pillory rather than perpetuate sinophobic narratives. The sketch parodies the political party New Zealand First's philosophy of protecting "our country" from a menacing "them" (Edwards). Paola Voci observes that in many sketches in *A Thousand Apologies* 'the widespread but often disguised anti-Asian sentiment is exposed'. Another Chinese woman character who appears in the same series is 'Super A-ma': an elderly superheroine who inserts herself in films such as *Star Wars* and *Lord of the Rings* ("Isn't it Great?" 83), thereby disrupting revered familiar western narratives.

While there is certainly evidence of mainstream appreciation for Chinese women's cultural contributions in the public domain from the mid-twentieth century onward, it is important to note that such appreciation has been founded on an enduring perception of Chinese women as exotic Others. After World War Two, Chinese women and girls in 'ethnic' dress were photographed in parades, concerts and other mainstream events (Appendices 16-20; Fig. 12). In 1956, a report in the *Upper Hutt Leader* on a Chinese wedding in Hastings, which offers a detailed account of the female guests' sartorial choices and the postnuptial tea ceremony, describes the occasion as an 'exotic and colourful spectacle' of 'New Zealand-wide interest' ("Chinese Wedding"; "European").¹⁴⁰ In the 1960s and 1970s, acting roles for Chinese women on mainstream New Zealand screens were limited to 'prostitute', 'plum blossom' and 'pleading peasant'; and in the 1980s and 1990s, to the likes of 'sexy siren', 'drug courier' and 'opium den hostess' (H. Wong, "Reel"). This trend continued into the twenty-first century, with Chinese or Asian women appreciated largely for their perceived exoticism and sexual availability (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9. Tom Scott, cartoon, *Dominion Post*, 10 July 2004
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand

Despite appearances to the contrary, prevailing perceptions of Chinese women in New Zealand have not changed substantially since the beginning of the twentieth century. Their exclusion and marginalisation in the context of political,

¹⁴⁰ See also "All-Chinese Wedding"

legislative and cultural narratives is reflected in their *diminution* within the country's Progress Narrative. In this Narrative, Chinese women are 'included' under the auspices of a Colonialist Orientalist Episteme, which continues to characterise them in accord with a prototype 'Chinese woman':

The daughter-in-law in a Chinese house is treated by her mother-in-law like a slave. Until the next brother gets married and she gets a new slave. The thing you never do is marry a youngest son. You'll hear people saying: 'Oh, so-and-so is really neat, but I'd never marry him – he's the youngest son!'

Being a female was a really bad news thing. . . the complete favouritism they showed him. . . he was given the best food, but Chinese families always used to do that, they offer males food before they offer it to females. . .

. . . if you are 'second daughter' you're like every other second daughter that has been for the last twenty-one generations. So it doesn't matter what you think or what you want for yourself. You're just 'second daughter' and it's been worked out for you since the day you were born. (Beatson and Beatson 68)

These stories, which appear in a secondary school social studies textbook published in 1990, illustrate clearly the 'Chinese woman' that persists in mainstream New Zealand narratives. Purportedly from actual Chinese women,¹⁴¹ the testimonies above characterise Chinese women with reference to oppressive patriarchal traditions. Presented in a chapter titled 'Family' alongside an explanation – complete with accompanying pictographs – of how the contemporary characters for Mother 母 Father 父 and Child 兒 developed from their most rudimentary forms (Appendix 15), these stories reinforce conceptions of Chinese women as family- and tradition-bound, perpetually subordinate, *ahistorical* subjects. In this textbook written for the 'progressive' purpose of enlightening young New Zealanders in the

¹⁴¹ The sources of the excerpts included in this text are listed at the beginning of the book, and are not clearly identified (Beatson and Beatson n. pag.).

late twentieth century, they highlight Chinese women's enduring marginal status in the context of the Progress Narrative.¹⁴²

'Chinese Woman': A Colonialist Orientalist (Re)Construction

In the discussion below I reveal a range of mainstream Pākehā narratives, which portray Chinese women as either exotic, Oriental and tradition-bound, or assimilated, progressive and therefore invisible as *Chinese*. I contend that what structures these narratives is a Colonialist Orientalist Episteme discernible in four key narrative strategies, which involve: i) the valorisation of Pākehā/western attributes, values and narratives; ii) the essentialisation and/or denigration of China and Chinese culture; iii) the elision or minimisation of narratives that discredit the Pākehā mainstream; and iv) *speaking for* Chinese women. The analyses that follow show that these strategies are intertwined. Together they subjectivate Chinese women in accord with a prototype 'Chinese woman', which characterises them as tradition-bound, oppressed, 'backward', needing to be rescued and spoken for, and worthy of valorisation only in so far as they demonstrate Pākehā attributes and commitment to hegemonic Pākehā values and narratives.

Before 1945, most narratives about Chinese women in New Zealand newspapers referenced women living in mainland China. These are pertinent to this thesis because they demonstrate how the flow of Orientalist narratives about women in China contributes to the prototype 'Chinese woman' upon which mainstream perceptions of Chinese women in New Zealand are based. An extensive literature and image search for this period revealed Chinese women in China to be characterised either as exotic, tradition-bound and needing to be rescued, or as emancipated-because-westernised. Examples of the former trope include "Chinese Women and their Feet", a story published in the *Manawatu Herald* in 1898, which describes an encounter with a 'small-footed Chinese woman' dressed in 'silk

¹⁴² I contacted the publisher Heinemann Education, the New Zealand Ministry of Education, and one of the authors, Peter Beatson, but I was not able to find out to what extent this text was in fact used in secondary schools in New Zealand.

embroidered in gold and colors'; "Chinese customs" (published in the *Evening Post* in 1937), which reports in detail some of the beauty traditions practised by Chinese women; and "Chinese Women: Many Disabilities" (*Evening Post* 1935) a rather sensational account of the 'typical' lives of Chinese girls who, if not destroyed at birth, are 'reared in seclusion and ignorance', 'spend their last days of maidenhood' weeping, and after marriage live lives 'worse than slavery'.¹⁴³ From the 1930s, news stories tend to conflate Chinese women's emancipation with westernisation.

"Chinese Allies" (*Evening Post* 1945) cites the presence of Christian missionaries as an influence that facilitated the education of girls;¹⁴⁴ and "China's Modern Women: A Severe Criticism" (*Evening Post* 1930) holds the west responsible for the rise of the 'modern' Chinese woman who does not go 'into the kitchen' or make her own clothes 'as her older sisters did', but instead 'bobs her hair', wears 'foreign-style dresses and shoes', and accompanies men to 'dancing halls' and 'cinema houses'. It is widely assumed throughout these emancipation narratives that Chinese women possess a 'natural' desire to become more like their western sisters.¹⁴⁵

Characterisations of Chinese women as either exotic, tradition-bound and oppressed, or westernised and therefore emancipated, also prevail in New Zealand-based narratives. Before 1945, Chinese women living in New Zealand rarely made the news, but when they did, they featured as unnamed objects of exclusion ("Perilous"; "Empire"; Murphy, "Joe" 52-53), or pity ("From War"; "Chinese refugees"), or as silent appendages to Chinese men ("Appeal"; "Chinese Appeal"). Where individual Chinese women were named, they were identified either as criminal ("Chinese Woman"; "Murder Charge"), or tragically deceased ("Fell"; "Death of Chinese"; "Death Under"). On a more positive note but rather more

¹⁴³ See also "Chinese Girl's Foot", "Chinese Woman's Foot" and Appendix 14.

¹⁴⁴ See also "Chinese Women: Their Advancement"; "Going Western"; "Topics".

¹⁴⁵ "Beauty Comes Out of the West" (*Evening Post*, 1938), for example, goes so far as to assume that they want also to *look* like western women; to have, it is claimed, the same 'rosy cheeks, bright eyes and fair curly hair'. See also "Emancipation"; "Topics"; and "Westernisation".

rarely, when they were celebrated, it was for their demonstrated commitment to Pākehā values and attributes.¹⁴⁶

Such characterisations are also evident in research narratives, two of which I discuss here. Stuart Greif's study *The Overseas Chinese in New Zealand*, based on the author's political science PhD thesis, was published in 1974 and involved interviews with forty Chinese women, four of which are published in the book as detailed case studies. Julia Bradshaw's 'The Bride Could Speak No English' is a chapter dedicated to Chinese women in *Golden Prospects: Chinese on the West Coast of New Zealand*, a regional history published in 2009. Although these two narratives represent different genres, and are separated by a period of thirty-five years, close reading reveals strong discursive similarities. In what follows, I draw particular attention to how they *valorise Pākehā values, attributes and narratives, and essentialise and denigrate China and Chinese culture*.

That Chinese women are perceived as 'inferior' is immediately apparent in the title of Bradshaw's chapter, 'The Bride Could Speak No English' and in its opening sentence: 'It is often said that women in Colonial New Zealand had invisible lives and this is especially true of Chinese women. . .' (123). Throughout the chapter, the 'backwardness' of traditional Chinese culture is consistently juxtaposed with the 'progressiveness' of Pākehā culture. New Zealand is portrayed as a welcoming place that enables Chinese women's lives to advance in ways that would not have been possible had they remained in China; it is claimed that those women who were willing to adapt and assimilate allowed New Zealand to improve their lives. Several pages are, for example, devoted to Annie Long, whose forthrightness, fierce independence and extensive involvement with the Anglican Church are valorised and contrasted with stories of her 'backward' 'Chinese' life; Annie, it is claimed, was 'probably a servant from a poor family' whose immigration to New

¹⁴⁶ For example, Mary Ann Wong worked for the Anglican Chinese mission in Wellington ("Obituary") and Annie Wah Lee was a nurse who worked for the American Red Cross in China (P. Matthews).

Zealand '*transformed her life*' (136).¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, portraits of unassimilated, tradition- and family-bound Chinese women emphasise the assumed oppressiveness of their everyday lives and invariably depict them as victims.

Greif's *valorisation of Pākehā culture* is implicit in his *essentialisation and denigration of China and Chinese culture*. The author's assumptions about Chinese culture as exotic and tradition-bound are revealed in the contrast between his perception of Chinese homes (he observes that 'there are certainly no great differences' between them and European homes in New Zealand) and the Oriental Hollywood set of his imagination, complete with 'hatchet-man', 'ancestral tablets' and 'bead curtains' (50-51). Relatedly, in conversation with Chinese women, the author appears, at times, to assume that Chineseness is both essential and quantifiable:

- Greif: How Chinese are you?
- Helen: If you mean 'Do I speak Chinese?' Well I do, and my father taught me to read and write some, but I never pursued it. . .
- Greif: Are you Chinese in other ways?
- Helen: I don't know. Could you define Chinese? (135)

Bradshaw characterises Chinese women as exotic and Other at many points in her chapter. For example, she proclaims that Annie Long was 'the first Chinese woman [Governor-General] Plunket had ever shaken hands with' (134); and her references to bound feet appear to be gratuitously repetitive. Over sixteen pages, which include fifteen substantial images, there appear no fewer than sixteen explicit mentions of 'bound feet', with reference both to women who had them, and those who did not. The presence of bound feet is assumed to indicate 'backwardness' or tradition-boundness, and their absence, progress and liberation; implicit throughout the chapter is the belief that women who had them were fated

¹⁴⁷ My emphasis. Bradshaw also invariably portrays Pākehā women as well-meaning and benevolent, a characterisation that disassembles the coercion behind Chinese women's assimilation (see, e.g., 128).

to lead secluded, oppressed inside lives, and those who did not were destined to lead progressive lives on the outside.

The characterisation of Chinese women as either invisible (that is, assimilated, 'Pākehā'/western and therefore progressive) or Oriental (that is, exotic, 'Chinese' and tradition-bound) is also apparent in "The Chinese Community", a television documentary about the New Zealand Chinese community, which aired (in New Zealand) in 1972.¹⁴⁸ The documentary features two distinct groups of Chinese women: three interviewees who wear western clothes and who articulate their responses in New Zealand-accented English (Fig. 10); and three dancers who wear 'traditional' ethnic Chinese costumes and perform 'traditional' Chinese dance to 'traditional' Chinese music – the latter fill the spaces between the interviews and do not have the opportunity to speak (Fig. 11). The Oriental/invisible (assimilated) dichotomy is also apparent in the questions posed to the women interviewees, where they are asked either about the ways they are (essentially) 'Chinese', or the ways they are, or aspire to be 'Pākehā'. In a conversation with Jenny,¹⁴⁹ her desire to assimilate is highlighted: prompted by the interviewer, she states that she would certainly consider marriage to a Pākehā man if she were 'in love with him'. At the



Fig. 10. Chinese women interviewees in the "The Chinese Community". Narr. Geoff Walker. *Gallery*. NZBC. 25 May 1972. DVD. From left: Nancy Kwok Goddard, Jenny (last name unknown), Helene Knox (Helene Wong).

same time, the questions posed to Nancy Kwok Goddard about dating and matchmaking practices ('How precisely is it done?') elicit responses that confirm her

¹⁴⁸ Part of the *Gallery* documentary series.

¹⁴⁹ No last name identified

‘Chineseness’. And in the voice-over introduction below, the narrator highlights Helene Knox’s mainstream-approved attributes (name, educational achievements, marriage to a Pākehā man), valorising her as a progressive (‘new’, assimilated) Chinese woman:

Helene Knox is very much one of a new generation of young Chinese. She’s a graduate from Victoria University and she’s completing a sociology honours degree this year. She’s been married for only a few months to a European.

In this documentary, it is clear that Chinese women are perceived not as *either* exotic *or* assimilated, but rather as assimilated only to the extent that their ‘Pākehā’ attributes and values are in fact recognised and *always* exotic on account of their ‘Chineseness’. It is hegemonic Pākehā narratives that authorise their ‘Chineseness’, as the interview below with Helene Knox demonstrates:

Interviewer: You did actually react against being Chinese when you were younger.

Helene: Yes I did... I resented, I suppose, being Chinese. I resented being asked stereotype questions about what I ate at home, and did I eat with chopsticks all the time, and I resented too being called names at school.

Interviewer: What sort of names?

Helene: Oh, the usual things, ching chong chinaman, pug nose, that sort of thing... my parents told me to ignore it, which I did, and I found this was a very sensible way of dealing with it. At the same time, I resented it... I did things which... I felt were far more westernised. I really tried to divorce myself from Chinese ways. I went to school and did things which may be considered unusual. I went skiing, I did acting...

Interviewer: Very un-Chinese.

On a first viewing, the interview appears benign in its valorisation of Helene as a well-assimilated progressive Chinese woman. But in light of the emphasis on her 'Pākehā' attributes in the narrator's introduction (above), the interviewer's concluding response here to Helene's account of the ways she has sought to assimilate herself appears to confirm his approval of her as a progressive (that is, *better*) Chinese woman. Close scrutiny reveals that the valorisation of Helene as progressive entails not only the assumption that her Chineseness is inferior, but also, the *minimisation of narratives that discredit the Pākehā mainstream*. The interviewer refers to Helene's experience of racism as *her* reaction 'against being Chinese', the implication being that it is not mainstream discrimination that is at issue but her Chineseness. Helene also describes her feelings about her Chineseness as *resentment* about 'being Chinese', and her strategies for dealing with 'being Chinese' are described in terms of needing to distance herself from it, as though Chineseness were a stigma she feels compelled to rid herself of. It is significant that the interviewer does not ask Helene why she resents 'being Chinese'; rather, his opening statement about her response to it implies that the grounds for this resentment (that is, the Chinese community's inferior status) are understood.¹⁵⁰

In this interview, the Colonialist Orientalist Episteme is discernible in the narrative strategies deployed by the interviewer/narrator, which simultaneously *valorise Helene's Pākehā attributes and values, essentialise and denigrate her Chineseness, and minimise narratives that discredit the Pākehā mainstream*. Subjectivated as 'Chinese woman', the Chinese woman Helene Knox can only speak as 'Chinese woman': a subject who valorises Pākehā attributes and values, essentialises and denigrates her own Chineseness, and minimises narratives that discredit the Pākehā mainstream.

In the conclusion to this chapter below, I consider in detail how Chinese women subjects are *spoken for* and silenced by these strategies.

¹⁵⁰ Similarly, Stuart Greif asks Jenny of her childhood, 'Did your being Chinese get in the way?' (Greif, *Overseas* 122)

Speaking for – and Silencing – Chinese Women

... the impetus to *always* be the speaker and to speak in all situations must be seen for what it is: a desire for mastery and domination. (Alcoff, "Problem" 246)

Speaking for manifests in all Colonialist Orientalist narrative strategies. The particular manoeuvres involved in valorising Pākehā values, attributes and narratives; essentialising and denigrating Chineseness; minimising narratives that discredit the mainstream; and practically speaking on behalf of Chinese women, are strategies that conspire to subordinate and therefore *speak for* Chinese women. The entire project of subjectivating Chinese women in accord with the prototype 'Chinese woman' is inextricable from the desire to *speak for* them. In my final analyses below, I draw attention to the different ways that Chinese women have been spoken for – and silenced – in mainstream narratives.

I discuss first how the *elision and minimisation of narratives that discredit the Pākehā mainstream* denies and elides Chinese women's experiences of racism and discrimination.

In Bradshaw's study, the legislative and social discrimination that Chinese women would have been subject to is certainly acknowledged, but there is evident a 'disconnect' between these and their accounts of actual Chinese women. The topic of social and legislated exclusion is the focus of a separate chapter (193-211),¹⁵¹ and the chapter dedicated to Chinese women only obliquely references the impact of such exclusion on their lives. The author claims, for example, that the very low number of Chinese women who immigrated to New Zealand was due more to Chinese tradition – that is, 'the way that Chinese society was organised and the fact that most Chinese men didn't intend to stay' – than the government's restrictive immigration policies (123-4).¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ With the focus being on mainstream responses to the Chinese presence.

¹⁵² In the same vein, the exclusion of Chinese women was justified by the belief that for a long time Chinese men *preferred* to live in New Zealand without their wives; see excerpt from 1951 Customs Dept review of immigration policy quoted in Murphy, *Guide* 92. What is overlooked is that this 'preference' was due in significant part to obstacles to Chinese women's immigration, i.e.,

In Greif's study, the interview schedule suggests that opportunities for interviewees to articulate negative experiences were somewhat limited. The schedule includes only eight questions (out of a total of 136) on the topic of 'prejudice' and discrimination, and every one of them requires only a basic affirmative or negative answer.¹⁵³ The author interpreted the large percentage of participants who responded negatively to the question 'Has the subject ever met up with prejudice?' (49%) as a positive indicator of assimilation; but nothing is said about the remaining 51% who may be assumed to have either responded affirmatively, or not at all, to this question, who may in fact have experienced 'prejudice' (93-94). Similarly, responses that indicate a desire for continued immigration restrictions are interpreted and emphasised as a sign of assimilation, despite the fact that most interviewees expressed dissatisfaction with these restrictions (162-4). Greif's minimisation of racism is, in other parts of the study, fairly explicit. In the following example, he describes discrimination against the Chinese as pervasive and therefore inevitable, and at times, 'imagined':

The story of the Chinese in New Zealand has been in the past as much a sad tale of the white man's prejudices and exclusionist tactics as anywhere else. . . Every Chinese New Zealander knows something of this from tales of parents and grandparents. This naturally puts the Chinese on guard and possibly makes them over-sensitive to imagined or real slights. . . (93)

Greif's narrative also seems somewhat dismissive in places. He acknowledges, for example, that 'few Chinese have escaped teasing or abuse as children in school', but

prohibitive legislation, as well as the known difficulties involved in resettling due to host culture hostilities and lack of social support; see e.g., J. Ng, *Windows* 1:208. The irony is that the view that Chinese women's absence is largely explained by traditional Chinese preferences renders immigration restrictions somewhat gratuitous; for from this perspective, Chinese women are legislatively excluded at the same time as they are characterised through Orientalist narratives to be 'fixed' 'outside/rs'. Such 'over'-exclusion is also evident in other Gold Mountain sites; for example, Sandra Ka Hon Chu points out that in Canada, it has been common amongst scholars to explain Chinese women's absence with reference to the demands of the patriarchal Chinese family, rather than 'anti-Chinese sentiment', but that 'Confucianism and the sojourner mentality alone fall short of explaining years of profound gender imbalance. . .' (38-39).

¹⁵³ See questions 85 to 92 in Greif's interview schedule (*Overseas* 178-79).

insists that ‘this soon wears off, and there is no lasting effect’ (51). And his explanation that ‘taunts of “chinky Chinaman”’ come from schoolchildren unable to ‘restrain their acclamation of differences in racial appearance’, or who are products of ignorant parents (51), effectively sanitises racism by emphasising the innocence and ignorance of perpetrators.

While both Greif and Bradshaw certainly acknowledge Chinese women’s hard work, initiative and forbearance, there is no explicit recognition of how New Zealand’s legislative restrictions and socio-cultural conditions contributed to the difficulties in women’s lives which made this hard work necessary for their survival in the first place.¹⁵⁴ Within these narratives, the Chinese woman’s experiences and stories of ‘prejudice’ or discrimination cannot be accounted for. It is an elision that implicitly exculpates the Pākehā mainstream from whatever hardships she had to endure. At the same time, the woman’s life is characterised as inherently unfortunate, for her predicament can only be due to the fact of her ‘Chineseness’. Against this, her forbearance and success in New Zealand are deemed ‘heroic’, and whatever progress she makes is portrayed as having occurred because *New Zealand* rescued her from the shackles of patriarchal Chinese tradition. Here the *minimisation of narratives that discredit the Pākehā mainstream* works in tandem with the *essentialisation and denigration of Chineseness* and the *valorisation of Pākehā narratives, attributes and values* to *speak for* Chinese women.

On the assumption that Chinese culture is ‘backward’, *speaking for* Chinese women is perceived as a means of *rescue*. Greif, for example, appears to be driven by a self-appointed gallantry that correlates with a perception of Chinese women as helplessly oppressed:

Grief: Does this bother you, not being able to mix with
Europeans?

¹⁵⁴ Chinese New Zealanders were, for example, excluded from state welfare assistance through the Old Age Pensions Act in 1898, the Widows’ Pension Act in 1911, and the Family Allowances Act in 1926. It was not until 1938 that they become entitled to the social security benefits available to other New Zealanders. Restricted immigration until 1987 also meant prolonged separations from families in China (Appendix 3; Murphy, *Guide* 153, 207, 234; B. F. Ng 31).

Shirley: Sometimes, but I am happy just to be with my family and relatives. . . (138)

Greif: Have you ever thought of going back to school?

Shirley: No, I am too busy helping on the farm. I am happy the way I am. (139)

In this interview, Shirley insists – more than once – that she is happy with her life, and content just to be with her family, but the author overlooks this in his summary observations about her:

Shirley has been victimized . . . by her father and husband who have an interest in her isolation. Her father was guaranteed a hardworking . . . faithful daughter who would be obliged to do his bidding, having no other alternative. Thus an arranged . . . marriage was in the cards. Her husband also receives her unstinting labour and slavish devotion . . . her world is narrow. . . (140)

The underlying assumption here is that Shirley is so oppressed by patriarchal Chinese tradition that she cannot speak for herself. The author takes on the responsibility of *speaking for* her, but his doing so effectively (re)inscribes her as a non-speaking subject. Little consideration is given to Shirley's perspective, or the possibility that there might be something positive about her predicament. That her filial obligations may not be as onerous as they appear is not even considered; the author does not, for example, reflect on the possibility of reciprocity. Implicit in the author's questions and observations is an assumption that Shirley is incapable of fully comprehending (what he perceives to be) the wretchedness of her situation.¹⁵⁵ *Speaking for* Shirley reaffirms her subordinate position, from which it is (at the same time) assumed she needs – and naturally, must desire – to be rescued. The irony of *rescue* is that it is contingent upon the Chinese woman's subordinate status, which is (first) authorised by the narrator's essentialisation and denigration

¹⁵⁵ Similarly, Greif characterises Yew-ling, a refugee wife who left China during World War Two, as a helpless, abject victim. He describes her, for example, as an 'anachronism', who belongs to a 'rapidly dying breed', and assumes that she has little awareness of the fact that she 'has no future' (156).

of her 'Chinese' life. Hence, the author's *speaking for* Shirley not only reaffirms her enduring status as a non-speaking subject, but his own authority.

Such reaffirmation is central to the re-subordination of Chinese women who have attempted to speak critically. The hegemonic narrative project of *speaking for* such outspoken women involves their re-characterisation. When the Chinese woman attempts to speak critically, she is put in her place: subdued and re-presented as an interesting or entertaining 'Chinese woman': an object of amusement. In Bradshaw's chapter, the derogatory remark that Choo Marn, as a court witness, made to a prosecuting counsel in court is described as an 'incident [which] caused a smile to pass over the countenance of both interpreters' (128);¹⁵⁶ and Annie Long's outspokenness on discrimination and opium consumption (134) is interpreted only as evidence of her 'very interesting and remarkable' character (131). Neither woman is portrayed as a subject whose opinion is worthy of serious attention in the public domain. Speaking about marginalisation reinforces the Chinese woman's marginalisation, for the attention she invites and the subsequent dismissal of her critical voice diminish her further.¹⁵⁷

It appears that the hegemonic force of 'Chinese woman' in the mainstream is such that 'she' can be employed to *speak for* Chinese women on rather insubstantial premises. Indeed, the robustness of the prototype belies the artifice with which 'she' is reproduced; it appears that 'Chinese woman' is often sketchy, requiring little in the way of verification by actual Chinese women.¹⁵⁸ Bradshaw's Chinese women have, for example, been recreated largely from stories told by Chinese men, and from Pākehā documents and testimonies, with stories from actual Chinese women constituting comparatively few sources.¹⁵⁹ And the author's speculations about the lives of secluded inside (that is, 'traditional', family) Chinese

¹⁵⁶ Grey River Argus, 17 September 1910, as quoted by Bradshaw.

¹⁵⁷ There is an analogy here with Judith Butler's discussion of sexualised discourse (*Excitable* 82-83).

¹⁵⁸ 'Her' reproduction involves, as Toni Morrison describes, an 'economy of stereotype', which 'allows the writer a quick and easy image. . .' (67).

¹⁵⁹ Approximately two thirds of the references cited are Pākehā sources (including newspapers, archives, histories and interviews), approximately 20% Chinese men, and the remainder are Chinese women, mostly in the form of interviews.

women are significant: descriptions of these women's familial relationships, social life, and even psychological outlook appear remarkably tentative and unsubstantiated in parts. Bradshaw writes, for example, that Annie Long '*may have been* a "bondsgirl", a young woman from a poor family who was "sold" to a wealthier family on the condition that they treated her well and arranged a marriage for her when the time came' (131).¹⁶⁰ The author is similarly speculative about the life of Chu Shee, who she claims '*would have been* very busy looking after her sons and *may have* lacked the confidence and language skills to expand her world much beyond her family and the shop' (131).¹⁶¹ Upon a cursory reading of Bradshaw's chapter, such speculations seem unremarkable, for they appear to simply reaffirm widely held perceptions about Chinese culture and Chinese women. Upon closer scrutiny, however, what can be discerned is not only the author's complicity with an enduring Colonialist Orientalist Episteme, but her anticipation of complicity on the part of the reader whose understanding of Chinese culture and Chinese women is assumed to derive from the same Episteme. In the Pākehā mainstream, familiarity with the 'Chinese woman' prototype is such that Chinese women are apprehended in easily recognisable terms. 'Chinese woman' therefore, appears to be a closed epistemic domain: the 'truth' about 'her' – and therefore about Chinese women who are subjectivated by 'her' – lies in the hegemonic force of narratives disseminated by narrators whose position affords them the authority to reproduce 'her'.¹⁶² It is a hegemonic force that silences Chinese women because the closed epistemic domain within which they are subjectivated limits their public presence, and therefore their speech, to that which must cohere with 'Chinese woman'.

The portrayal of Chinese women as non-speaking subjects *speaks for* Chinese women (and men) by excluding them from public conversations. In the documentary "The Chinese Community", the characterisation of Oriental Chinese

¹⁶⁰ My emphasis

¹⁶¹ My emphasis

¹⁶² That is, the writer's identity as a hegemonic narrator is epistemically significant; what is claimed to be 'true' is contingent upon his/her location (Alcoff, "Problem" 231, 235-6).



**Fig. 11. Unidentified Chinese women dancers. "The Chinese Community."
Narr. Geoff Walker. *Gallery*. NZBC. 25 May 1972. DVD.**

women as non-speaking subjects is integral to the exclusion of the Chinese New Zealand community. The closing commentary voices over footage of non-speaking 'traditionally' dressed Chinese women dancing to 'traditional' Chinese music (Fig. 11). On first viewing, this appears to be an aesthetically pleasing, albeit 'exotic' conclusion; however, close scrutiny reveals a dissonance between this footage and the narrator's comments about New Zealand's policy on Chinese immigration that belies a subordinating, excluding Colonialist Orientalist Episteme:

... Chinese leaders here say that the situation still isn't much to sing and dance about. In the 1970s, they claim that New Zealand presents a closed door to most overseas Chinese who would like to settle here. The government's stated reasons for this are intriguing. Immigration restrictions, government spokesmen have claimed, are based on the ease with which new arrivals can be assimilated, the ease with which they can fit in. More Chinese, it is apparently implied, would not fit in.

The transposition of these comments over footage of 'traditionally' dressed Chinese women engaged in 'traditional' Chinese dance seems facetious, for the message it conveys is: 'Look at these strange people – it's "intriguing" that the government claims that they wouldn't fit in'. Throughout the documentary there appears to be

an openness and willingness on the part of the narrator and the interviewer to engage with, listen to, and understand the community; there appears to be a genuine empathy for the community's predicament that engenders a sense of expectation for a more inclusive future. The conclusion effectively ambushes these expectations, for the foregrounding of Otherness through the staging of explicitly Oriental Chinese women in the context of questions raised about the Chinese community's inclusion effectively configures an abrupt exclusion. The footage deployed at this crucial juncture forecloses the Chinese community's objections through the (re)presentation of their women as non-speaking subjects.¹⁶³

Finally, and perhaps most insidiously, the Progress Narrative that includes, and ostensibly emancipates Chinese women, *speaks for* them by cultivating gratitude for the place they are afforded in the mainstream. What is beguiling about the Progress Narrative is that it appears to be so generous. It accommodates understanding for the plight of its victims (Greif, *Overseas* 43-45; Beatson and Beatson 38); appreciates their contributions (Voci, "Isn't it great?"), and takes responsibility for mainstream fallibility (H. Clark). In the humanisation of its narrators and in its foregrounding of victims' lives as triumphant (Bradshaw), the expectation for gratitude is implicit. For the settler Chinese woman, mired in Colonialist Orientalist narratives that *minimise narratives that discredit the Pākehā mainstream* (Greif, *Overseas* 93), *valorise Pākehā culture* (Voci, "Isn't it Great?"; Kothari et al) and *denigrate China and Chineseness* (Greif, *Overseas* 32, 63; Bradshaw 131-36), this expectation is highly coercive. *Spoken for*, there appears to be no space for her to counter these narratives.

¹⁶³ The replacement of this footage of explicitly Oriental women with, say, Chinese people dressed in contemporary western clothes participating in Pākehā activities – such as cricket, or a beach picnic – would certainly have been congruent with the concluding commentary, and would have mounted a better defence for the community's inclusion in New Zealand, for the message conveyed would then have been: 'Look at these people – they're just like us, how wrong it is to exclude them'. But while this alternative end could be read as more benign, the assimilating imperative evoked in such footage would ultimately amount to a similar subordination.

This chapter has shown how hegemonic narratives stemming from a Colonialist Orientalist Episteme subordinate settler Chinese women. In the Pākehā mainstream, it certainly looks like Chinese women have little choice but to conform (submit) to narratives that prescribe 'Chinese woman'. Subjectivated by this prototype, they are diminished non-speaking, *filial* Model Minority subjects who appear to have no place from where they can challenge the hegemonic order.



**Fig. 12. Chinese women with concert pianist Lili Kraus. Wellington, 22 February 1947.
Leong, Sadie: Photographs relating to Leong and Kwok families. Ref: 1/2-170582-F.
Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.
<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22862776>**

CHAPTER TWO: *AN 'INSIDE' CONVERSATION*

The play between the ordinary and non-ordinary. . . is crucial to the process of reelaborating and reworking the constraints that maintain the limits of speakability and, consequently, the viability of the subject. (J. Butler, *Excitable* 144)

This chapter takes the form of an imagined intimate conversation: a sequence of connected monologues and dialogues in the voices of settler Chinese New Zealand women. It contributes to the fulfilment of the second objective of this thesis, which is to show that despite the Chinese woman subject's subordination by hegemonic narratives, a part of herself remains unassimilated and this marks the limits of her subjectivation. As reflections on lived experiences and everyday practices, the stories told in this conversation demonstrate a range of Chinese women's responses to the hegemonic mainstream narratives (analysed in Chapter One) that co-construct them as 'Chinese woman'. As much of this storytelling characterises Chinese women as subjects who deviate from the 'Chinese woman' prototype, many of the stories told may be interpreted as expressions of extra-hegemonic or autonomous subjectivities. And in accord with the 'private' context of the conversation – that is, in the absence of both Pākehā and patriarchal Chinese audiences¹⁶⁴ – the narratives revealed here may be identified as inside stories. Some of them have been inspired by interviews and research, both my own and the work of other scholars; others by my own personal experiences, conversations and observations.¹⁶⁵ The stories in the conversation presented here facilitate an understanding of settler Chinese New Zealand women's subjectivities in

¹⁶⁴ 'Patriarchal Chinese audience' is defined above in Introduction: Methodology, Methods and Chapter Outlines.

¹⁶⁵ The stories without citations are imagined narratives created from my own personal experiences and observations, and from conversations with settler Chinese New Zealand women not directly involved in the research conducted for this thesis. Because some of the sources I cite refer to speakers identified by pseudonyms or first names only, I have opted, for the sake of consistency, to identify all cited speakers by their first names only.

anticipation of the critical analysis of the relationship between Chinese women and hegemonic narrative constructions of 'Chinese woman' to follow in Chapter Three.

My initial intention with this chapter was to write up a fairly straightforward survey or taxonomy of the ways in which Chinese women have responded to hegemonic Pākehā narratives. I quickly discovered, however, that these responses could not be categorised discretely. The everyday practices Chinese women have deployed entail or are contingent upon other practices such that no one can be extricated from or analysed in isolation from the others. For example, Model Minority behaviour performed for the purpose of placating the Pākehā mainstream involves the assimilation or invisibilisation of Chineseness (B. Yee 117-18). Invisibility is also a consequence of the hard work women are required to do in order to survive in the socio-economic margins, and this cannot be extricated from women's awareness of and resignation to their marginalised status. The insularity that arises from this cannot be separated from the preservation of Chinese culture and tradition, which is intimately linked to homemaking practices that constitute a claim for a confined place, the everyday adjustments of which may be perceived as evidence of Chinese women's awareness of the imperative to *know their place*.¹⁶⁶ The conversation in this chapter demonstrates that Chinese women have responded to hegemonic Pākehā narratives by constructing – that is, secluding, insulating, shielding, bricolage-ing – their home places.

The aim of this chapter is to highlight the interconnectedness of their stories to facilitate the apprehension of atypical snapshots of Chinese women that challenge prevailing perceptions. To this end, the researcher's *critical* voice does not feature within or between these creatively conceived monologues and dialogues. In its characterisation of Chinese women as feeling, *seeing*, first-person speaking subjects, the conversation portrays an immediacy, dynamism and agency absent from the third-person portrayals of Chinese women in typical academic prose. Direct from the mouths of Chinese women, these stories are less vulnerable to the

¹⁶⁶ See, for example, B. Yee 89-90 and Ip, *Dragons on the Long* 124, regarding the difficulties involved in adhering to the parameters of this hegemonically defined place.

semantic loss that inevitably accompanies the abstraction of everyday material phenomena in the language of standard academic discourse. Linked in conversation, these stories portray a community of engaging Chinese women that constitutes an intersubjective nexus: a solidarity that has the potential to ground claims for a substantive extra-hegemonic perspective.

Nigel Murphy has described Chinese women in New Zealand as ‘the invisible of the invisible’: subordinated on account of their ‘Chineseness’ in the mainstream, and on account of their ‘woman-ness’ within the Chinese community (“Researching” 230). This does not mean that Chinese women are twice removed from the Pākehā frontline – that is, from the site where mainstream discursive pressure is exerted most directly (and where hostilities are most keenly felt). Being ‘the invisible of the invisible’ offers no protection for Chinese women because, as Chapter One revealed, the hegemonic narratives that marginalise them on the basis of both race and gender are the same narratives that determine the conditions for their invisibility. There have been, as we have seen, many occasions when Chinese women have been the primary target of discrimination in New Zealand. Being ‘the invisible of the invisible’ means that Chinese women are doubly subjugated. As such, their experiences are qualitatively different from the experiences of Chinese men, and this is true also of their responses to hegemonic narratives. It is certainly the case that many of the practices illustrated in this chapter have been deployed by Chinese men, but where men at times have adopted high profile tactics – for example, expressing their objections on television, or presenting petitions to government¹⁶⁷ – Chinese women have tended to respond by minimising their presence in the public domain to a far greater extent. Denied access to critical speech, they have been excluded from legitimate ‘masculine’ paths of appeal and have had little choice but to respond compliantly – to perform what Rey Chow has theorised as ‘virtuous transactions’ through which they may articulate their

¹⁶⁷ For example, in the television documentary “The Chinese Community”, Jock Ho expresses his objections to legislation restricting Chinese immigration. Regarding petitions, see, for example: G. Wong, “Is Saying” 266-67; Sedgwick, “Persistence” 209, 212; Murphy, *Guide* 369-79.

resistance through ‘surreptitiously creative’ everyday practices beyond the ken of hegemonic discourses (“Virtuous”; De Certeau 96).

The conversation presented here speaks of and demonstrates such practices. It portrays women’s lives from the twentieth through to the twenty-first century with an emphasis on the years spanning 1939 to 1987. In this period, the Chinese in New Zealand were exiled from China, subject to a raft of discriminatory legislation, and coercively assimilated into a very monocultural New Zealand. The adjustments that Chinese women had to make at this time, and their need for community, were considerable. The emphasis in their stories here is on these years because they were, in so many ways, formative. As the main objective of this chapter is to *creatively* highlight Chinese women’s subjective responses rather than historical events (which have already been well documented), I have refrained from explicitly identifying particular dates or periods within the conversation itself.¹⁶⁸ This elision also helps to foreground historical resonances and the continuing impact of enduring hegemonic narratives.

The positioning of these stories at this point in the thesis is inspired by Maxine Hong Kingston’s chapter “The Laws” in *China Men*: a collection of ‘talk-stories’ about Chinese men in the United States of America (152-59).¹⁶⁹ In her writing of *China Men*, the author, unable to stomach mainstream ignorance of Chinese American history any longer, ‘plunks’ “The Laws” ‘right in the middle of the stories’, where it disrupts mainstream Eurocentric perspectives of American history by abruptly drawing the reader’s attention to the chronicle of legislation that excluded and marginalised the Chinese from 1868 until 1978 (D. L. Li, “China” 491-92).¹⁷⁰ The positioning of my generically distinct chapter also has political significance. Situated between the critical discussions of Chapters One and Three articulated in standard academic prose, it centre-stages Chinese women’s

¹⁶⁸ For documentation of historical events and social histories see, for example: *Chinese Poll Tax*; Ip, “Chinese - The First”; Ip and Murphy; Lee and Lam; J. Ng, *Windows* 1-4; Ip, *Dragons on the Long*; Ip, *Home*; Greif, *Overseas*; McNeur; Murphy, *Guide*; Ip, *Unfolding*.

¹⁶⁹ *China Men* has been described as a ‘novel and autobiography’ (Hutcheon 9).

¹⁷⁰ See also Timothy Pfaff, “Talk with Mrs Kingston.” *New York Times Book Review*. 15 June 1980. 1+ as cited by D. L. Li, “China” 491.

subjectivity: the reader is ‘unexpectedly’ confronted by a community of Chinese women speaking directly (that is, in the first-person) about their lived experiences. The conversation here – spoken in the hitherto largely unheard, unknown voices of settler Chinese women – is intended to disrupt prevailing mainstream perspectives of the settler Chinese community and its women, and raise questions regarding the marginal places they have been afforded in New Zealand history. Both the positioning of the chapter and the voices within it highlight the ‘heart’ of the thesis: mainstream ignorance concerning not only the lived experiences of Chinese women, but also their existence as subjects for whom critical speech has long been denied.

In this thesis, the juxtaposition of ordinary everyday speech – as articulated in the stories told in this chapter – with narratives that use the language of standard academic discourse has what I perceive to be ‘insurrectionary potential’ (J. Butler, *Excitable* 145): it is crucial for the tasks of challenging ‘Chinese woman’ as a closed epistemic domain, and for signalling storytelling’s liberating potential.

Don't you hate it when they say, *your English is so good*, like why is that so surprising?

That's because they don't hear you, they see you.

Wow, you speak really good English.

Been here all my life.

Really? Were you born here?

Right here in Wellington.

What about your parents? Where are they from?

My dad's from Otaki, my mum's from Oamaru.

What about your grandparents?

Otaki, Oamaru and Dunedin.

But... where were they from originally?

Otaki, Oamaru and Dunedin.

What about your great-grandparents then?

My great-grandfather came to New Zealand from China in 1884.

So you're Chinese.

*. . . speaking Chinese . . . when I was young, it was just a hindrance . . . a real "No, No". When we go out with our old relatives, they speak loudly in Cantonese and you cringed inside because you knew everybody was looking. Chinese was looked down. . . Everything Chinese was not good. . .*¹⁷¹

My mum always makes me do the talking when we go shopping.

Yeah I hate that.

Friday we had to get the PE shorts.¹⁷² We went to that shop in town, you know, the one near Aunty Kim's café? Me, mum, Danny, and Daisy's in the pram. We're in the shop... and the man behind the counter just stands there *staring* at us...

¹⁷¹ Christine's story, quoted from Choong 33.

¹⁷² PE = Physical Education.

Thinking... what do all these *Chinese* people want?

He didn't even smile or say, 'Can I help you?'

Don't you hate it when they do that? Makes you want to just turn around and leave...

Yeah... but then my mum pushes me and starts telling me what to do... *in Chinese*.

God I *hate* it when they do that –

I know, it's soooo embarrassing...

*Well. . . I had to interpret for Father when I was young . . . and even write English letters for him now and then. . . I shudder to think of the childish English I must have used.*¹⁷³

So then I had to go up to the counter, and mum is talking to me *in Chinese the whole time* I'm trying to talk to the man: 'make sure you get the right size' (I know my size Ma) 'do you need to try them on?' (no way) 'how much?' (it's on the tag) 'why are they so expensive?' (they just are) 'check the change' (ok ok), 'why is the *gwei-lo* 鬼佬 looking at me like that? *See gwei-lo* 死鬼佬!' The man keeps staring at mum...

Probably thinking she's saying horrible things about him...

Then when he gave me the change, he wouldn't even *look* at me, just plonked the money on the counter – like we've got leprosy or something!

Ha! He probably eats at your dad's restaurant every week...

How was your first day back?

You know, the usual... *What did you do in the holidays?*

(We worked in the shop every day.) We went shopping Miss.

That sounds like fun. What did you buy?

¹⁷³ Mavis's story, quoted from Ip, *Dragons on the Long* 38.

(Cigarettes, newspapers, chewing gum, and sometimes jelly beans and comics.) Just food, and some comics.

Did you go away?

No Miss.

What did you get up to then?

(Rolled sausages at the back of the shop every day.) I did some cooking with my mum.

That sounds like fun. What did you make?

We cooked sausages... on the barbeque.

Did you get together with your family? Did you eat Chinese food at the barbeque?

Yeah.

We had a lot of nice hot days, didn't we? What else did you get up to?

(We stayed at the shop until nine every night. I went to the dairy every day to buy cigarettes for Ba. Ba took me to the TAB.¹⁷⁴ When it got busy in the shop, we rode our bikes up and down the street in the dark.) My dad gave me money and I bought a big box of Pebbles,¹⁷⁵ and... he took me horse-riding... on the beach... at sunset.

That sounds like fun, do you and your dad go horse-riding a lot?

He... just... likes to watch.

Do you have your own horse?

No Miss. My mum says they cost too much money.

They certainly do. What else did you get up to?

(Opened and sorted fifty bundles of newspapers). I did a lot of reading.

Well! Aren't you good?

¹⁷⁴ In New Zealand, the local corner store is known as the 'dairy'; it is equivalent to the Australian 'milk bar'. The TAB is a gambling organization, best known for its national networks of betting shops throughout Australia and New Zealand.

¹⁷⁵ Pebbles = confectionary; similar to Smarties or M&Ms.

That's me on the cover... my father was friends with the Tings – they owned the seed company... they used a photo of me for this... said I looked like a 'nice Chinese girl' – wasn't I pretty in pink? Hiding behind the fruit... (my mother said it's just as well you can't see my feet – she always said they were too big)... doesn't my hair look nice? I don't look *too* Chinese, do I? See the stamp here? It says 'approved member'...

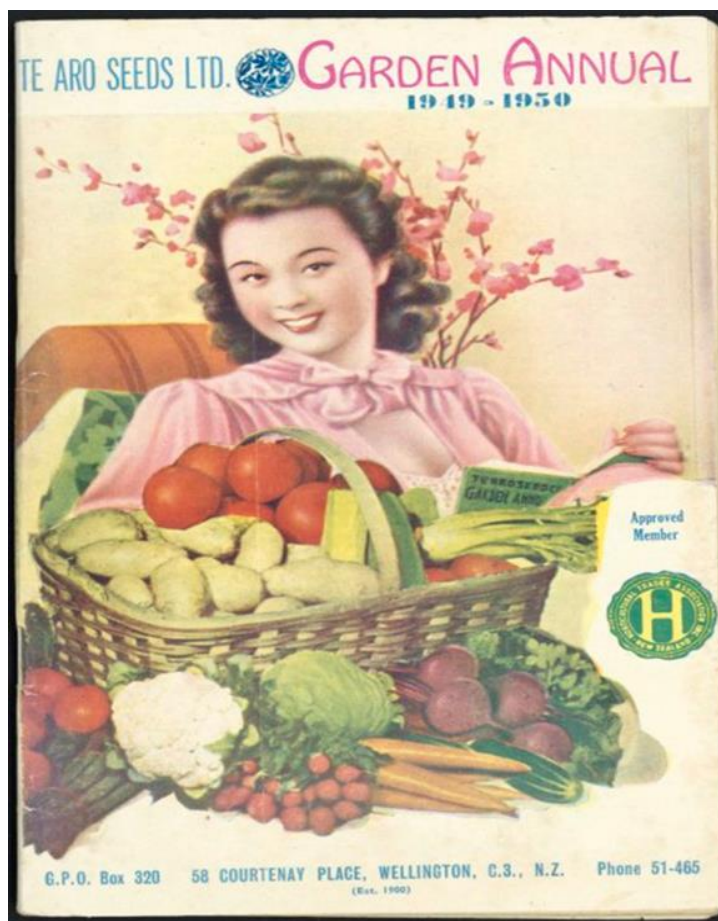


Fig. 13¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Front cover for Te Aro Seeds Limited: Garden annual, 1949-1950. Printed by L T Watkins Ltd., Cuba Street, Wellington. Te Aro Seed Company [Garden guide or garden annual - price lists. 1900s-1940s]. Ref: Eph-A-HORTICULTURE-TeAro-1949-01-front. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22625370>

I always tell my children to be good, keep their heads down and don't do anything to make Chinese people look bad. We worked so hard so they could have a good life... and my parents, my father, he always told us to keep our heads down and behave. Let's face it – we live in a 'white people's place',¹⁷⁷ we have to always be careful... when my father bought a new second-hand truck, do you know what he did?

He park at back.

He parked it round the *back* of the shop so the customers wouldn't see it...

They don't like it...

They wouldn't like it. If they saw it, they'd think we've got too much money, and buy their vegetables somewhere else.¹⁷⁸

When I banking the money every day, I wrap in the newspaper, use old basket, wear the dirty smock, look like poor.

But you can't look *too* poor, they don't like that neither.

You have to hide your money...

The money, better not see.

And better not *talk*. My kids were teased and bullied all the time at school. We just told them, 'Never mind, Kiwi kids are just cheeky'. We never taught them to talk back or defend themselves, we never complained to the school or made a fuss.¹⁷⁹

Why not? Maybe a good kung-fu kick would've shut those bullies up?

Ai-ya 哎咗! Can't do that! Chinese people always say *nothing*, forget about it – *leave* it. Can't be bother... some *gwei-jai gwei-mui* 鬼仔鬼妹 just *stupid*, waste the time talking...

. . . what I disliked most of all was the way the well-off ones swept in as if they owned the place, demanding that "John" get the freshest of this or the

¹⁷⁷ Phrase borrowed from Doris' story in Ip, *Dragons on the Long* 111-12.

¹⁷⁸ Inspired by Violet's story in Ip, *Dragons on the Long* 73.

¹⁷⁹ Law-Wong's story in Ip, *Home* 172-73.

*biggest of that. . . “Oh, and John”, they would say, “bring the parcels to the car. . .”*¹⁸⁰

When I was at university, *the medical girls were really arrogant . . . they really looked down on the Chinese. They were not nice to me at all.* . . .¹⁸¹

*. . . Chinese men were all “John” . . . the customer was always right.*¹⁸²

*When I started as a house surgeon at Oamaru Hospital, some of the patients said, “We are not going to stay here if that Chinese doctor comes”.*¹⁸³

I hated going to the dairy near Yeh-yeh’s house. The woman in there was sooooo mean. We always got served last. If other people came in after us, she made us wait. If there was no-one else, she pretended that she didn’t see us. She’d bark at us and give us the wrong change, and say, ‘speak English! Can’t understand you!’ We spoke *perfect* English! So then I just gave her a list, so I didn’t have to talk to her... Her son was nasty, he used to sit outside the dairy and soon as he saw us, he’d pull his eyes and go ‘ching chong ching chong’ and spit at our feet when we walked past...

See *gwei-jai* 死鬼仔! What can you do? Just put up, that’s all. If talk back, just make all the people angry. Better say nothing, what can you do? I telling my daughter, better stay quiet – Chinese girl not make noise like *gwei-mui* 鬼妹.

女 + 子 = 好

Female

Child

Good

My niece Lucy, *very good girl* 乖女. She do her homework, clean the house, work in the shop, do what her *Ma* 媽 *Ba* 爸 *Paw-paw* 婆婆 tell her, anything they say she do, never complain, never talking back, *never argue* 聽教聽話.

¹⁸⁰ Eva’s story quoted from Ng and Thomson 29.

¹⁸¹ Kathleen story in Ip, *Home* 36-37; quotes italicised.

¹⁸² Eva’s story in Ng and Thomson 29.

¹⁸³ Kathleen’s story quoted from Ip, *Home* 37.

Lucy's a lovely girl, she's going to be a pharmacist... and a doctor's wife – isn't she going out with that Chan boy?

Maybe she wants to stay single –

Nooooo! How – how – how – she can have *children*?

Maybe she doesn't want children...

Of course she want children! So... have to marry.

She could stay single and have children...

Noooooo. Lucy *good Chinese girl*... Any bad thing at home, in the family (you know, like – ah – you know, her father got another woman...) Lucy tell *no-one*. People asking her, she smile and say, thank you asking – everything good, she say *nothing*. She very good girl 乖女, always say *nothing*.

Yeh-yeh 爺爺 never lets us talk when we eat dinner. Only the men are allowed to talk. My mum, and my aunties – they only talk to ask the men if they want their rice bowls filled.

And you not allow to eat first! Have to call A-Yeh 阿爺 call Ba 爸 call Goh 哥 - *sik farn* 吃飯. The men got to be eat first! They working hard, got to be eat first, eat more, more strong... they looking after you, you know...

We worked hard! Soon as I turned fifteen, I had to leave school, work in the shop... help look after my younger brother and sisters...

Even I tired I always cooking nice dinner. Every day cook fresh. A-Yeh 阿爺 say cook, I cook whatever. Anything. Long as he happy I don't mind...

They all got more schooling than me. I worked in the shop till I got married... sore feet standing all day, no wages. But my father always gave me money when I needed it.¹⁸⁴

See? You got to be looking after the men... then, they looking after you...

He was very generous... I didn't mind the work really... he always looked after all of us¹⁸⁵... I remember *stacking all the fruit beautifully... in absolute perfect*

¹⁸⁴ Inspired by 'Mrs B' in B. F. Ng 99.

¹⁸⁵ Inspired by 'Mrs B' in B. F. Ng 99.

rows – I was good at that, stacking all those apples and oranges, and apricots and plums...¹⁸⁶

My face hurts Ma, that boy threw stones at me!

Ai-ya! gwei-jai 鬼仔 cheeky, ah!

It hurts!

See gwei-jai 死鬼仔!

Look, it's all red.

Just stay away from him!

I can't! I have to walk past his house to get to school.

Then you have to run fast! And don't let him see you.

Always got to be quick, got to keep moving... otherway, they see you...

The teacher saw me - I was standing at the door... he saw me and he said: *Well, come on in. . . Stand up straight, child, hold your head up and smile – nothing to be scared of with me. I won't eat you.* I remember the class tittered, and I must've smiled, because then he said: *Goodness, your teeth are yellow, nearly the same colour as your skin. Don't you brush them? I thought your race had nice white teeth. You must be eating too much soya sauce or curry or whatever it is you eat. . .* I spent the whole day holding back tears. After that I felt that when people looked at me they saw me as *an inferior, ugly being*. I really thought there was something wrong with me... felt so ashamed, I couldn't talk to anyone about it – couldn't tell another teacher – they wouldn't have believed me anyway...¹⁸⁷

They worried that all us Chinese kids might be trouble. At our school, the headmaster had to write reports about us to send to the government... just us Chinese kids. We all behaved, we were good as gold, never caused any trouble. Always did as the teachers told us to do. But every six months they wrote those reports... they kept a close eye on us...

¹⁸⁶ Ginny's story in "Stories" part 2); quotes italicised.

¹⁸⁷ Eva's story from Ng and Thomson 28, quotes italicised, and E.W. Ng, Interview 8 Aug 2013.

We always had to watch ourselves. My grandfather used to say: *Be careful when you walk in the streets. . . Some of those larrikins might push you off the pavement in front of the bus and say it's just an accident. You can't tell the truth when you're dead. Some of them hate us. . . They're jealous, say we have no right to be in their country, and why don't we go back to where we belong. So make sure you walk on the inside, close to the shops.*¹⁸⁸

Still not safe. Did you hear about that student from China who was beaten up at the mall here? In the carpark... four o'clock in the afternoon, just minding his own business...

And what about that Korean boy near Greymouth? They never found his body...

You're talking about *criminals*...

You know, in China at the war-time, I got the letter from my husband say we can go to *gum sarn* 金山 - I was soooo happy... government say end of war we have to go back to China take all our children, but I don't care, you know, just happy to see my husband... and you know, at the war-time, New Zealand 紐西蘭 *better*. China *very bad*... here we work hard, some silly people... *doesn't matter*. Plenty *nice* people, we got the customer come every day, say hello, how your children?¹⁸⁹

I remember Mr Davidson – he used to make money come out of our ears...

When the war came... we helped to organise concerts, and street shows for Victory Corner, you know, *if it hadn't been for the war . . . we weren't supposed to show our faces like that in public.*¹⁹⁰

Gwei-lo 鬼佬 like Chinese girl wear the cheongsam 旗袍 – they think sexy.

I've never owned a cheongsam, never even worn one, when would I wear it?

I had a Pākehā boyfriend when I was working in England – he liked me in a cheongsam.

Ha! You just plaything – he not want to marry, you know...

He took me to Amsterdam and Venice...

¹⁸⁸ Eva's story in Ng and Thomson 28 quotes italicised.

¹⁸⁹ Inspired by Lam-Lau's story in Ip, *Home* 90.

¹⁹⁰ Based on Nancy's story in Ip, *Dragons on the Long* 19, quotes italicised.

Just show off –
He see you like colourful bird something, that's all.
Funny how Chinese *men* don't have costumes like that...
Nobody *look* at the man. Girl have to look nice... and be... sweet, you know,
and...



Fig. 14¹⁹¹

Quiet.
And looking after the father mother 爸媽. Even after I getting married, I go
see my mother every week...
Every week?
If A-Yeh 阿爺 let me go...
And only if you wore a skirt.
He doesn't like the woman wear the pant, you know... so when I leaving I
wear the skirt, take the pant put in my bag, go to my friend's house, change, he
never know doesn't matter...
Your father didn't mind?

¹⁹¹ Chinese Lady Shielding Face with Fan from B. Zhao n. pag. Print.

I never see my father – he got another wife, never see. But I see my mother every week. Now I send money every month, look after her until she die. My sister look after me even after marry. We all looking after each other... Chinese women *have* to be always think about the *family*.

What are we without family?

Nothing.

We all got to work together – otherway, who looking after you? You can't rely on government, you know, and lot of people here *still* don't like Chinese people...

That's right, we have to look after ourselves. You can always count on family...

When you respect *A-yeh* 阿爺 *A-Mah* 阿嫲 *Ba Ma* 爸媽...

You mean like when *Yeh-yeh* 爺爺 or *Goong-goong* 公公 come into the room, we have to stand up and greet them...

You looking after the old people, they looking after you...

In the morning we have to make tea and serve it to them...

Two hands...

Of course... *two hands*... like the *jum cha* 斟茶 after the wedding.

You did that? I refused.

Yep - father-in-law, mother-in-law, grandmother-in-law, brothers-in-law times four, sisters-in-law times four... *two hands*... bowed my head a hundred times...

You got a lot of *hoong-bao* 紅包 – you lucky!

Hmmm you mean bribes –

To be a dutiful daughter-in-law...

Of course – must be *beautiful* daughter-in-law. Whatever father mother 爸媽 say, have to *listen* 聽話. I meeting Baba five week before marry. My father say he good man, so... I say ok...

Did you like him when you first met?

Of course – he very handsome you know.

Who introduced you?

My father mother, his father mother *gai siu* 介紹.

What if you didn't like him?

I *like* him 好喜歡.

But what if you didn't?

Of course, we not have to marry.

Was there someone else?

Fortune teller say my husband live far far away, so... must be him.

Could've meant someone else.

My father mother check *everything* - must be: good health, good temper,
good habit, everything...

But Baba drinks – and plays mah-jong – and bets on the horses –

Shhh! He not drinking much...

What about the gambling?

Ai-ya 哎咗! Asking too many question...

When I got married, I moved in with my husband's family...

Bet that was fun.

...mother, father, five brothers, one sister. I was the family slave. Every morning and afternoon I had to serve them tea, cake and biscuits. Every morning I had to brush little sister's hair. She had really long hair, down to her bottom, but father-in-law wouldn't let her cut it so I had to brush all the knots out every morning and plait it. And every night I had to wash all the brothers' feet and put them to bed. Then I had to do the dishes and sort the laundry, and do all the accounts for my father-in-law because he couldn't read English. When I had my own babies, I never had a moment's rest...¹⁹²

¹⁹² Inspired by Lily's story Ip, *Home* 55.

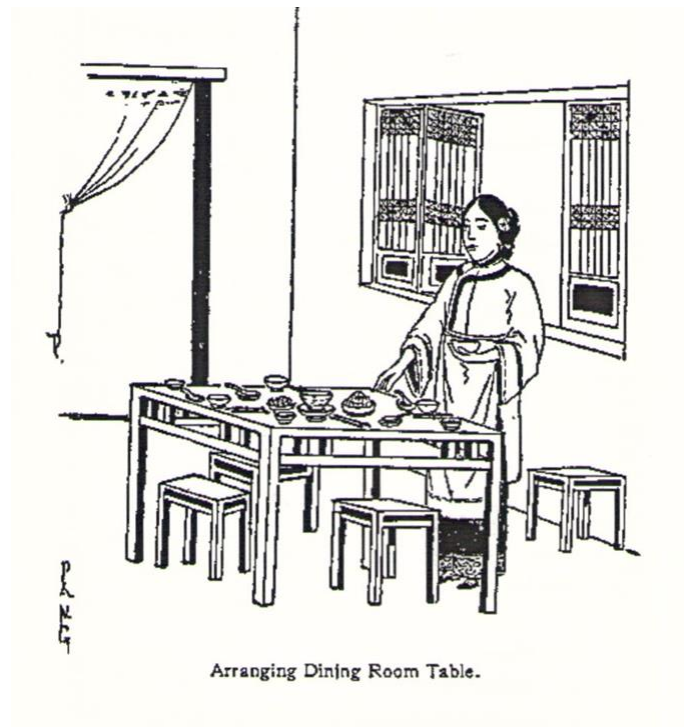


Fig. 15¹⁹³

Well I hardly had time for the children I was so busy working in the shop. My husband fixed an intercom between the shop and our living area at the back. I would buzz them when it was time to feed the baby, and the older kids buzzed me when it was time to change baby's nappies. That's how they grew up. I was so busy... the shop was open from six o'clock in the morning till midnight. We sold lollies and cigarettes, too, and people would come in the morning on their way to work... *midnight wasn't so late*... we lived behind the shop so it was all right really... you young ones don't know how easy you have it...¹⁹⁴

They really have no idea... when I was thirteen I had to keep my dad's accounts for him... I had to get the bank drafts myself, write up the wages book, first in Chinese and then in English, organise the contractor to rotary hoe the garden... I had to do all these things as well as go to school and study and work in the garden...¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ *Arranging Dining Room Table* from B. Zhao n. pag. Print.

¹⁹⁴ Wong Yuk-lan's story in Ip, *Home* 73-74; quotes italicised.

¹⁹⁵ Inspired by Lily's story in "Stories" part 2.

It wasn't easy for us either... as soon as we came home from school we had something to eat and then we'd have to work in the garden until dinnertime. Every day and weekends too. The only time off we had was when we played basketball on Sunday mornings. Sometimes we went to weddings on Saturdays, but only to the reception and the dance, not the church, no time for that. And we couldn't all go to the weddings, we didn't have enough nice clothes to go around, we had to share them... Our father died when us kids were in primary school and our mother only had us to help. She wanted to bring her sisters out from China, but they wouldn't let them in... Her diabetes got really bad and by the time she was forty, she could hardly see. Every couple of weeks we took her to talk to our MP to see if he could help us bring mum's sisters out from China. He was a nice man, but he couldn't do much. Took eight years before they let one of mum's sisters come, and then another two years before the other one came... and then we had to find husbands for them...

女 + 家 = 嫁

Woman

Home

*Marry*¹⁹⁶

You know Auntie she no marry – too fussy, no good. Now no children – *ai-ya* 哎咗!
When she getting old, who looking after her? What she do?

There wasn't much choice in those days. At least the men could go back to Hong Kong or China to find a wife, women weren't allowed to do that...

Not all men can get a China wife – too expensive!

Most of those older men were married already – but they had no money to bring their wives out from China...

Some of them married *sai-yan* 西人... but their children were *half-caste*.

What's wrong with that?

People didn't like it back then...

¹⁹⁶ Note that 嫁 is only used with reference to women; the verb 'to marry' for men is 娶.

Lucky all my children got married to Chinese... When the kids were young, we always used to make them go to all the Association functions, the Easter tournament, all the weddings, so they can meet other young Chinese, understand the *Chinese* way to do things. That way, we know all their friends, we know their parents, we know who all the good families are.

I had to find good wives for all my sons. I told them looks are not important, as long as they have a good heart and take care of you and the family. All our daughters-in-law are good girls... all happy to work for us and put family first...

安

Woman under roof¹⁹⁷ = secure, peaceful and quiet

When we were young, my parents knew just about all the Chinese in the whole country, from Auckland right down to Dunedin. They knew who was so-and-so's son or daughter, who was married to who, and when someone died, everyone knew about it. We were all connected...

From time to time, maybe once or twice a term, some parents of the Chinatown children would appear just before school finished. They'd just go "tap-tap-tap" on the window and shook their heads. We'd all understand that it meant the children should not return home too early. . . We'd know that the police were going to raid Haining Street, Frederick Street . . . houses so it was best for the children to stay away. . . So we'd all stay behind and play skipping or hide-and-seek in the schoolyard for an extra hour. . .¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ The top part of this character is the 'roof' radical; the bottom part is the character for woman; this character, 安, means secure, quiet, peaceful, and safe.

¹⁹⁸ Mollie's story in Ip, *Dragons on the Long* 113-14.

My children come straight back here after school, have a cup of tea, get something to eat. Then they all got their chores to do, all four of them, even the little one. Jocelyn, my oldest girl serves in the shop. The second one, Jessie, she helps me cook dinner. The boys, Jimmy and Johnny unpack the bananas, throw the rotten fruit out, put the boxes away, wash the carrots, sweep the floor – there's always something they have to do... *hey lady - don't you squeeze them tomatoes - you squeeze you buy!* *Gwei-paw* 鬼婆! always have to watch them... yesterday I went to the toilet – *one minute* – came back and tomatoes everywhere! all over the floor - silly *gwei-paw* 鬼婆 knocked them all down! ...after dinner, the girls wash up, and they all sit around that table there and do their homework... then *A-Paw* 阿婆 helps in the shop... she can't talk much English, but she knows the fruit and vegies, and money, that's enough...

How come she never learned to speak English? She's been here more than thirty years hasn't she?

She doesn't want to! She wants her grandchildren to talk to her in Chinese.

My father used to teach us how to write Chinese characters at the weekends, and sometimes – if we had time – we went to Chinese Sunday School...

I always say to the kids – you *have* to study – otherwise you'll be slaving away in a fruit shop your whole life...

Know more, more smart, ah?

The girls have to study too so they can get a better husband – like a doctor or accountant or something – *they* don't want a wife who only knows how to wash potatoes... We don't let them go out after school, and they're not allowed to invite school friends here – no time to *play* anyway. If they go out all the time, they might mix with the wrong crowd. Just look at that Josie – Mary's daughter – she got all mixed up with the *gwei-jai* 鬼仔 and dropped out of school now! That's what happens when you go out with the *gwei-jai gwei-mui* 鬼仔鬼妹, we don't know *what* they get up to...

They're not all bad... my friend Catherine's family is soooo nice. They have breakfast together *every morning*, all dressed up. Her father in a shirt and tie, her mother with lipstick on, the table laid out with teacups and saucers... a special dish

just for the butter... and a toast rack. We eat our toast at the kitchen bench straight out of the toaster. Catherine's dad reads the paper every morning like he's got all the time in the world. Her mum checks her clothes at the door before she goes, brushes her blazer, tucks her scarf in, wipes her shoes... kiss kiss love you love you *every morning...*

What this mean? Love? *Gwei-paw* 鬼婆 talking like that all the time. What's it mean? I love my children, of course, but never *talking about this...* what this mean?

It means Catherine's *important*. When she gets home, her mum's waiting for her with tea and homebaked biscuits, and she asks her about her day. They sit and talk about *Catherine's day* – she actually has a *day* that they talk about...

Ai-ya 哎吔! Too much talking talking no good...

She's *so* nice, she even asks me about *my* day... and when it's raining, she drives us to school and picks us up...

She doesn't have to work.

She asks us what we want to eat... and listens to *everything* Catherine tells her, like it really matters. She can tell her mum anything, like if something bad happened at school...

Huh! My mother would say, *your fault, what can do?*

Children should be *listen* the *mother* –

My mother always used to say listen to the *teacher*, the teacher is always right...

Like even if Catherine's had a disagreement with a friend, she can tell her mother about it.

Children should be listen to the *mother...* when they talking should be talk *Chinese...*

It's so hard when you spend all day at school talking in English... you just forget...

How you forget? You *Chinese*.

Because we talk English all the time... you forget the words, like I can understand them, but when I want to talk, I can't remember them...

I sent my kids to Chinese school, there was a teacher from Hong Kong, nice girl, only stayed for a year. When she went back, we couldn't get another one. They wouldn't let any more Chinese teachers in... so when my kids grew up, they forgot everything! could hardly read any Chinese... only what's on the mah-jong blocks... numbers, north south east west...

Mah-jong was all the Chinese I knew too... I knew how to read and write dates... but like, most of the time we didn't even know when it was Chinese New Year or anything – we never had a Chinese calendar. Sometimes we had mooncakes for the Autumn Festival, but they were so much work to make, and the ingredients were too hard to find... most of the time we didn't bother to make them... ¹⁹⁹

So good now with all these *new* people from Taiwan and Hong Kong, now we don't have to spend all day making *cha siu baos* 叉燒包 and *gow gees* 餃子, just pick up the phone, put my order in...

That's about the only good thing about them –

I hate how they're so *loud*, talking Chinese in the street, everyone staring...

I saw one man trying to haggle at the supermarket!

And everyone thinks we're the same as them – things are much worse now, since *they* came...silly *gwei-jai* 鬼仔 told me to 'go home' yesterday – no one's said that to me for thirty years!

They think we're all the same...

At least they're not ashamed to be Chinese... like we're always trying to hide it, trying not to stand out.

It was really hard to be a Chinese person when I was growing up... I didn't like it...

English people and Chinese - our life completely different!²⁰⁰ We live in the back of a fruit shop, they live in a nice three four bedroom house. Father goes to work, mother stays home...

¹⁹⁹ Inspired by Denise's story in Ng and Thomson 18-19; and Leigh's story in Choong 6.

²⁰⁰ Settler Chinese in New Zealand often refer to white/ Pākehā people as 'English' people.

The first time I went to Catherine's for afternoon tea, they had *butter* knives and *jam* spoons – I didn't know there were such things! And her mother was cooking cauliflower for dinner – *boiled* cauliflower and a white cheesy sauce to pour over it...²⁰¹

They go to ballet after school, we go to Chinese school... They eat meat and three veg for dinner, we eat rice and *harm yue* 鹹魚 and *lup cheong* 臘腸.

I never liked their food much, but I wanted to be like them. I tried so hard... I only spoke English at school, played on the softball team, I even joined the school choir...

You can never be one of them, how could you?

I could never really fit in, the more I tried, the worse it got... I went to a birthday party when I was nine I think... we all had to bring a baby photo of ourselves for a game... My friend's mum pinned all our photos on a board, numbered them, and we had to guess who was who... Guess who was the only baby with black hair and slanty eyes?

...then one day I realised they don't want me, nothing would work because I will always be *Chinese*.

My sister wanted to be just like the English girls – when she saw them playing tennis or horse riding or at the cinema with their boyfriends or sunbathing at the beach, she said she wanted to go and do all those sorts of things and have fun just like them... we all wanted to do those things, to have days off and holidays and not have to work so hard.²⁰²

There was an old Chinese man down the road from us *who walked around with a sack. . . When we children saw him, everyone would scream and scream and run around. We screamed to each other that if we didn't run fast enough he would put us in his sack. I didn't believe he would, but I screamed and ran all the same.*²⁰³

I used to wish I was white.

²⁰¹ Inspired by Eva's story in Ng and Thomson 27.

²⁰² Inspired by Nancy's story in Ip, *Dragons on the Long* 17; and Gemma's story in Choong 30-31.

²⁰³ Kathleen's story in Ip, *Home* 35-36; quotes italicised.

That's only because you grew up here. These new ones, look how confident they are –

They too loud!

They're not loud, we're quiet. They didn't grow up having to bow their heads like us...²⁰⁴

Who says we have to bow our heads? You know, one time I had to go to the auctions by myself because my husband was sick. And I had to take all the kids with me. The auctioneer wouldn't take my bids. He saw me, and my children in the truck, and he said, 'where's your husband? Tell him to get out of bed! How about I sell you the rotten apples? Half price lady!' He kept teasing me and laughing – wouldn't let me bid on anything. I had to argue with him for so long! Then he saw I wasn't going to be quiet, so he let me bid...²⁰⁵

He couldn't understand you.

Nothing wrong with my English!

He couldn't understand you because Chinese women are not supposed to go to places like that.

That's a *man's* place. . .

And Chinese women can't talking like that.

²⁰⁴ Inspired by Kirsten's story in Ip, *Dragons on the Long* 141.

²⁰⁵ Inspired by Lam-Lau's story in Ip, *Home* 93.



Fig. 16²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ Rosie Young on the running board of a Ford truck. Young, Rosie fl 1988: Family photographs. Ref: 1/2-165025-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.
<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22857892>

CHAPTER THREE:

PERFORMING ‘CHINESE WOMAN’

All the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify. (Goffman, *Presentation* 78)

In Chapter Two I *creatively* illuminated Chinese women's autonomous subjectivities, demonstrating, in accord with the second objective of this thesis, the 'inassimilable remainder' which marks the limits of their subjectivation (J. Butler, *Psychic* 29).

Chapter Three continues this project: through *critical analyses* of Chinese women's storytelling, I attempt to locate a space that can support the Chinese woman subject's perception that she is not identical with the hegemonically constructed prototype 'Chinese woman'. The chapter offers a comparative analysis of stories told by Chinese women in interview responses in inside/'Chinese' and outside/'Pākehā' contexts. These stories – which resonate clearly with those presented in the introduction to this thesis, and in Chapters One and Two – reveal Chinese women to be subjectivated by hegemonic narratives in both inside and outside domains. However, the absence of mainstream audiences in the inside interviews allows women to express their extra-hegemonic subjectivities through 'retreat' stories, the sharing of which has the potential to ground assertions for their autonomy on the outside.

I begin with a brief outline of the concepts I borrow from Goffman's dramaturgical schema, and a hypothesis on the effects of mainstream Pākehā narratives on Chinese women's subjectivity. I then analyse Chinese women's interview responses in outside contexts, and their interview responses in inside contexts, drawing particular attention to how these reflect hegemonic narratives of 'Chinese woman'. I have drawn Chinese women's outside responses from conversations in the *Gallery* television documentary "The Chinese Community", Stuart Greif's study *The Overseas Chinese in New Zealand* (both discussed in Chapter One), and Kim Webby's "Stories Our Mothers Told Us", an episode of the NZBC *Asia Downunder* television documentary series, about the plight of Chinese refugee women who arrived in New Zealand during World War Two. The inside

responses are drawn from dialogues initiated by the work of three Chinese New Zealand women researchers: Manying Ip's *Home Away from Home*, Pepe Choong's MA thesis "New Zealand Chinese Women: A Hyphenated Identity of East and West", and my own interviews conducted for this research.²⁰⁷ In conclusion, with reference to Mary Ann Doane's theorisation of femininity as masquerade, I propose that strategic articulations of the distance between the Chinese woman subject and 'Chinese woman' through performance can enable the Chinese woman to assert her autonomous subjectivity – and agency – in the public domain.

Goffman's Dramaturgical Schema

Grounded in the metaphor of theatre, Goffman's schema conceives social appearances as public performances that involve a 'presentation of the self' to an 'audience' on a 'frontstage'. Repeated performances are understood to be 'routines' that are required to be rehearsed 'backstage', away from the audience. The backstage is a place where individuals can relax, be themselves, and indulge in behaviour that on the frontstage would be 'potentially offensive'; for example, 'elaborate griping' (*Presentation* 129). Over time, as routines are repeatedly performed, the requirement for rehearsal diminishes; the 'unthinking ease' with which the individual executes her performance is enabled by her 'anticipatory socialization' (81, 79). Not only is she able to give the impression that she *is* the character that she performs (56-57), but her public image and her self-image become ontologically inextricable.²⁰⁸ The performer is not, however, inexorably or necessarily completely subsumed by the public image she performs on the frontstage. Goffman's schema accommodates autonomy; his identification of two very different kinds of performer allows for a range and therefore degrees of

²⁰⁷ Note that neither Manying Ip nor Pepe Choong are members of the *settler* Chinese community in New Zealand (as defined in Terminology, above).

²⁰⁸ Prasad describes the two as being 'mutually reinforceable' – that is, having no 'ontological separation' (45).

subsumption.²⁰⁹ Goffman's 'sincere' performer wholeheartedly believes that what she performs is 'the real reality': she accepts that she *is* who she performs. His 'cynical' performer, on the other hand, is not 'taken in at all' by her own routine: she perceives a distance between herself and her performance – she believes that she is *not* who she performs (*Presentation* 28-29). Implicit between these two is a spectrum of beliefs and performer-performance distances which accommodate the performer's perception that she is not in fact identical with her public image.

In accord with Goffman's schema, I propose that the Chinese woman performs 'Chinese woman' on a frontstage for a mainstream Pākehā audience. While her performance initially requires rehearsal, with repeated performances her routine becomes naturalised and she comes to see herself as her audience sees her: as 'Chinese woman'. As the Chinese woman's public image *becomes* her self-image, there appears to be no space for her to see herself as other than 'Chinese woman'. I contend, however, that inherent in the woman's self-image is a distance between herself and her performance of 'Chinese woman', which, in order for her autonomy to manifest, needs to be strategically – and cynically – cultivated.

Becoming 'Chinese Woman'

I have a colourless, thin voice. I don't know if I was born with it. . . or whether it just wasted away from too much silence and fearfulness. (Eva in Ng and Thomson 30)

Judith Butler describes the mechanisms by which a subject is 'formed in submission' as 'power that first appears as external, pressed upon the subject, pressing the subject into subordination, [which] assumes a psychic form that constitutes the subject's self-identity' (*Psychic* 2-3). In accord with Butler's description of subjectivation, which I take here at face value, and drawing on the analyses of hegemonic narratives and Chinese women's responses to these presented in

²⁰⁹ Note that this is implicit. Goffman does not explicitly identify a spectrum of performance awareness.

previous chapters, I offer the following as a hypothesis of the process by which we Chinese women internalise 'Chinese woman' in a world where the coercive influence of Pākehā narratives prevails:²¹⁰

- i) On the outside, hegemonic Pākehā narratives characterise 'Chinese woman';²¹¹
- ii) We learn to perform 'Chinese woman', maintaining our public image of 'her' in response to discourses of dis/approbation on the outside derived from these narratives;²¹²
- iii) Over time, with the repeated performances required of us, we internalise 'Chinese woman' such that the distance between ourselves and 'Chinese woman' becomes difficult to discern;
- iv) We come to perceive ourselves as 'Chinese woman' – that is, the hegemonically produced public image 'Chinese woman' generates the self-image 'Chinese woman'.²¹³

How might our everyday lives be explained in accord with this sequence?²¹⁴

Suppose that in the beginning, much of the work I do preparing for my role on the

²¹⁰ Butler argues that in light of the difficulties of accounting for 'two incommensurable temporal modalities' – that is, of power as prior to and outside of the subject, and power as 'the willed effect of the subject', there can be 'no conceptual transition to be made between power as external to the subject. . . and power as constitutive of the subject. . .' (*Psychic* 14-15). It is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss this in detail, but in accord with Butler's use of 'first', and for the sake of argument in this hypothesis I shall assume that a temporalized *process* is involved in the subjectivation of Chinese women as and by 'Chinese woman'.

²¹¹ As discussed in Chapter One.

²¹² As Prasad puts it, we 'outfit' ourselves 'with a persona or "front"' that we 'feel might be best suited for the occasion' (45-46).

²¹³ As Goffman asserts, in this situation, the 'individual may privately maintain standards of behaviour which he does not personally believe in . . . because of a lively belief that an unseen audience is present who will punish deviations from these standards. . . (*Presentation* 87). And as Rey Chow asserts with reference to Ling Shuhua's short story "Embroidered Pillows": 'This "voluntary" incorporation within the woman's self of her prescribed passive status . . . demonstrates. . . the complete efficacy of patriarchal ideology' (Chow, "Virtuous" 98). See also, Stuart Hall's discussion of how 'dominant regimes of representation' have 'the power to make us see and experience *ourselves* as "Other"' (225).

²¹⁴ The account I offer here is intended only as an illustration of the possible impact of hegemonic narratives of 'Chinese woman' on Chinese women's subjectivity. It is not intended to represent the experiences of *all* settler Chinese women in New Zealand.

outside is done within the confines of my family and the Chinese community.²¹⁵ This work may involve listening to the advice of my parents and other elders ('Don't talk Chinese too loud out there'; 'Say nothing, walk away'). *On the inside, I am taught to act like the Pākehā-approved 'Chinese woman' on the outside.* It is stressed upon me that this behaviour is imperative for my survival. On the outside, I observe that, by and large, demonstrating 'Chinese woman' attributes – all of which can be effectively accomplished through strategies of minimisation (that is, where silence and invisibility are key objectives) – meets with approval, and this approval ('Chinese girls are *so* well-behaved') motivates me to continue my performances of 'Chinese woman'. The 'Chinese woman' I perform constitutes my attenuated presence in the public domain, sustained by my attention to my own minimisation there (look away, hang back, bite your tongue), reinforced by the approbation accorded to my compliance with mainstream imperatives ('you speak English *so well!*'), and by the disapprobation accorded to my transgressions of these ('you *must* speak *English*'). After a time, my crossings between 'Chinese' and 'Pākehā' worlds are manoeuvred with increasing dexterity and fluidity, and it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between inside and outside contexts. I may, for example, only be aware that I am inside by the company I keep (Ba 爸 Ma 媽 Paw-Paw 婆婆) or by the conversations I engage in: where I attend, for example, to my parents' Model Minority exhortations. I may only be aware that I am outside when I inadvertently transgress 'Chinese woman' there: by speaking too loud or too much, or through association with 'too many' other Chinese I become 'too' visible and (I am) subsequently, reminded to *know my place* (B. Yee 90, 111-12). As time passes, these indicators may, however, become unreliable. The habit of not talking about racism on the outside becomes a habit of not talking about racism on the inside. My 'Chinese woman' performances may become so ingrained and instinctive, they no longer require direction or rehearsal ('I know Ma, I know'). The distance between inside and outside worlds closes. My presence is instinctively and reflexively

²¹⁵ 'Beginning' refers to both historical antecedents (that is, earliest arrivals) and the incipient phase of Chinese women's awareness of the need to rehearse for/submit to the role of 'Chinese woman'. In well-established, well-assimilated families, the need to rehearse would, of course, be diminished.

minimised such that *I diminish myself* across both these worlds. My perception of my public image becomes such that it segues into my self-image, and ‘Chinese woman’ becomes an integral part of myself; not only do I see myself as ‘Chinese woman’, but the ‘Chinese woman’ within me is engaged in that seeing. The distinction between myself and ‘Chinese woman’ becomes difficult to discern.

However, despite my subjectivation as ‘Chinese woman’, crucially, a part of myself remains inassimilable, for inherent in my self-image of ‘Chinese woman’ lies the potential for disarticulation from ‘her’. My self-image of ‘Chinese woman’ is distinct from the Pākehā-constructed ‘Chinese woman’ for the self-image – the *seeing-myself-as-‘Chinese woman’* – involves my extra-hegemonic or autonomous subjectivity; implicit in seeing-myself is a *subject: I* who sees. My perception-of-myself-as-‘Chinese woman’ is not identical with my manifesting ‘Chinese woman,’ no matter how strongly I may identify with ‘Chinese woman’ (that is, no matter how clearly I see through the eyes of ‘Chinese woman’). Although ‘Chinese woman’ is an integral part of my subjectivity, my non-‘Chinese woman’ subjectivity remains inassimilable: there remains this part of me that is not consumed by coercive hegemonic narratives. My extra-hegemonic autonomy – and agency – lies here, in this reflexive space between ‘self’ and ‘image’, and in my capacity to perceive that there exists a certain contingency in my relationship with ‘Chinese woman’.

Chinese Women on the ‘Outside’

. . . when the audience is present, considerate treatment of them is necessary. . . not for their sake merely, but so that continuance of peaceful and orderly interaction will be assured.

(Goffman, *Presentation* 173)

In this section, I analyse Chinese women’s responses in what I term ‘outside’ interviews, drawing particular attention to how these reflect and affirm hegemonic narratives of ‘Chinese woman’. As detailed in the introduction to this chapter, these responses occur in the context of Stuart Greif’s PhD study, *The Overseas Chinese in New Zealand*, published in 1974, and two television documentaries: “The Chinese Community”, broadcast in 1972, and “Stories Our Mothers Told Us”, broadcast in

2009. I characterise these interviews as ‘outside’ in virtue of the fact that the Chinese women interviewees in all of these were aware *at the time of being interviewed* that they were performing for a mainstream audience. The interviews in Greif’s study were (more or less) conducted in accord with his schedule of questions, and his account of how he implemented these and his ‘public opinion poll’ indicates that participants would have been informed that their responses contributed directly to his PhD research (Greif, *Overseas* 65-73, 120-164, 176-80). Greif also makes it quite clear in his work that he was perceived by his participants as an ‘outsider’ (69, 121). In both television documentaries, the Chinese women participants spoke articulately, and their composure, posture and self-consciousness indicate that they were quite aware that they were being filmed.

The settings – both the contexts, and the texts – of these outside interviews clearly frames Chinese women as ‘Chinese woman’.²¹⁶ This is evident in the questions asked, and in the documentaries – the music, and the clothes that some Chinese women participants wear. The narrative Orientalisation and invisibilisation (assimilation) of Chinese women interviewees in “The Chinese Community” – and in Greif’s study – discussed in detail in Chapter One, is also evident in the documentary “Stories Our Mothers Told Us”. Here Orientalisation is manifest in the footage of war-torn, poverty-stricken China, traditional Chinese music, and in the Chinese-style clothes some women participants wear; and invisibilisation (assimilation) is conveyed in the upbeat jazz music accompanied scenes of New Zealand life, which valorise Pākehā culture, and in the interviewees’ polite couching of the legislated exclusion of Chinese women in terms of ‘discouragement’, which minimises narratives that discredit the Pākehā mainstream. In these framings, it is not surprising that the responses that Chinese women gave tended to reflect the hegemonically prescribed ‘Chinese woman’.²¹⁷ The following observations are

²¹⁶ My conception of ‘setting’ here is more extensive than Goffman’s, which refers to the performer’s physical environment (*Presentation* 32-33).

²¹⁷ Kim Webby, who wrote, directed and presented “Stories Our Mothers Told Us”, informed me that some suggestions from interviewees – for example, regarding footage – were taken on board, and that the women were also free to choose their own clothing and locations for the interviews (Webby).

based on a collation of responses, and as such, are certainly not true of each and every participant; but in their demonstration of marked proclivities, they evidence the coerciveness of the Colonialist Orientalist narratives through which participants' responses are edited in these interviews, and therefore the extent to which the women themselves are subjectivated by them.

I'll make them happy, because I am going to limit myself to Chinese blokes only. It would kill them if I ran off with a European. . . (Jenny in Greif, *Overseas* 122)

In these outside interviews, Chinese women appeared to be tradition-bound and filial, demonstrating respect for parents and family. They seemed content to accept their subordinate status as women, revealing a tendency to defer to the men in their lives (Greif, *Overseas* 124-5, 135, 138, 155). They also seemed insular, expressing preferences for socialising within the Chinese community, and for finding their partners there. At the same time, they valorised Pākehā culture, made light of the racism they experienced, and expressed gratitude for living in New Zealand.²¹⁸ Some were resigned to, and asserted their own assimilation into the mainstream, believing that it offered opportunities for a better life. Jenny, for example, announced: 'I don't want to end up . . . working sixty hours a week in a fruit shop, like my mother. . . I want to marry somebody like my boss, a solicitor (Greif, *Overseas* 122).²¹⁹

In the outside interviews, Chinese women endorsed the Pākehā Progress Narrative and both denigrated and valorised – and essentialised – China; for example, reminiscing about the China they'd left behind and insisting, despite unfavourable comparisons with New Zealand, that their returns there had affirmed their sense of Chineseness. They expressed a sense of inadequacy about being

²¹⁸ See, for example, interviews with Gwen, Fay and Lily in "Stories"; see also Greif, *Overseas* 122-3, 136, 138, 155.

²¹⁹ See also, for example, Greif, *Overseas* 125, 136; and interview with Jenny in "Chinese Community".

insufficiently Pākehā, and about being Chinese.²²⁰ They recognised their subordinate place in the mainstream, demonstrating Model Minority behaviour by minimising experiences of discrimination, and stressing the importance of keeping a low profile and not drawing attention to themselves. Helene, for example, confirmed that ‘a Chinese way of behaving is not to put yourself out, not to make yourself dominant in any way. . .’ (“Chinese Community”).²²¹

In sum, the ways that Chinese women responded in these outside interviews demonstrate very clearly the influence of a Colonialist Orientalist Episteme. There were only a few responses that could possibly be interpreted as deviations from the prototype ‘Chinese woman’. Fay stressed that she had enjoyed a special relationship with her father, despite being a daughter (“Stories” Part 1). Lily praised her independent refugee mother, who had embarked on a business venture despite the disparagement of naysayers within the Chinese community (“Stories” Part 2). Helen raised questions about Greif’s assumptions about Chineseness (135).²²² There were only a couple of responses that could possibly be perceived as offensive to a mainstream Pākehā audience. Jenny asserted that her family descended from ‘a different and, in some ways, better civilization’, and disclosed that her grandfather used to tell her, ‘You are as deceitful as a white foreign devil’ (Greif, *Overseas* 123). Helene was the only respondent to make an explicit complaint about her experiences when she explained her resentment about being asked ‘stereotype questions’ about food and chopsticks, and about being called ‘names’ (“Chinese Community”). It is significant that the interviewers did not respond to these aberrations. Jenny was not asked why she believed that Chinese culture is ‘in some ways better’; Helene was not asked why she resented being asked ‘stereotype questions’. It appears that the Episteme that frames these outside narratives cannot accommodate such anomalies.

²²⁰ See, for example, interviews with Ginny, Lily, Ho Sue Shee, Rita and Fay in “Stories”; interviews with Jenny, Helene and Nancy in “Chinese Community”; and Greif, *Overseas* 123, 138-39, 155.

²²¹ See also, for example, Greif, *Overseas* 135-6, 155; and interviews with Lily, Gwen and Ginny in “Stories”.

²²² Excerpt from this interview above in Chapter One: ‘Chinese Woman’: A Colonialist Orientalist (Re)Construction.

And the hegemonic force of these narratives is such that both the Chinese women performers and the mainstream audience (that is, the interviewers) are compelled to sustain the status quo. What is gained by the audience is a reaffirmation of the hegemonic order, for these performances confirm that Chinese women *know their place*. What is gained by Chinese women in their conformity with 'Chinese woman' is public recognition. Performances that comply with 'Chinese woman' – that is, the stories that Chinese women tell that reaffirm the hegemonic narratives that co-construct 'her' – are celebrated (highlighted) because they perpetuate the hegemonic order.²²³ Those performances that do not comply with 'Chinese woman' are not acknowledged because they have no place in the hegemonic order.

Chinese Women on the 'Inside'

My analysis of Chinese women's inside responses is drawn from the work of three Chinese women researchers. Manying Ip's *Home Away from Home: Life Stories of Chinese Women in New Zealand* (1990) is based on the author's interviews with eight women, all of whom were born overseas (seven in China, one in Canada), and lived a significant part of their lives outside New Zealand. Most of these women had experienced serious hardship during the upheavals of World War Two, and/or China's Communist revolution, and the adjustments they were required to make on immigrating to New Zealand were considerable. Pepe Choong's chapter 'Pioneering Women', from her 2002 MA thesis "New Zealand Chinese Women: A Hyphenated Identity of East and West", is dedicated to interviews with six women who grew up in New Zealand during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. As all of these women had lived most – if not all – their lives, in New Zealand, the difficulties they experienced tended to stem from tensions between family expectations, and their desire to participate more fully in the mainstream and articulate 'acceptable' identities there.

²²³ Goffman would describe such a performance as one that 'highlights the common official values of the society . . . a ceremony. . . an expressive rejuvenation and affirmation of the moral values of the community' (*Presentation* 45).

My own interviewees for this research are five later generation Chinese women who (with one exception) were born in New Zealand. Collectively, these women grew up in New Zealand between World War Two and the 1980s. They are all successful writers who have produced, published or performed their work on mainstream platforms.²²⁴

In my analysis of the inside interview responses, I was interested not only in whether and how they reflected hegemonic narratives of ‘Chinese woman’, but also, and crucially, whether they could reveal subjectivities otherwise elided in the outside interviews. My analysis rests on the assumption that, in the presence of a culturally empathetic Chinese women researcher, and in the absence of an immediately discernible outside audience, there could be no compelling reason for participants to knowingly or ‘cynically’ perform ‘Chinese woman’. I perceived the inside interviews as backstage situations, where participants could, in the company of other Chinese women, relax and ‘be themselves’. I concluded, therefore, that the responses that could be interpreted as performances of ‘Chinese woman’ on the inside suggest that women had internalised the hegemonic narratives that co-construct ‘Chinese woman’ to the extent that they saw themselves as ‘Chinese woman’.

A woman’s lot was to be kind and gentle and to be devoted to her father, husband, and family. (Bickleen in Ip, *Home* 115)

Unsurprisingly, the immigrant women, who likely brought with them to New Zealand many of the more traditional Chinese values they had grown up with, stressed the importance of family and demonstrated an acquiescent, pragmatic attitude to their subordinate status within it.²²⁵ But later generation interviewees also affirmed the importance of filial obligations – at times, with greater vehemence

²²⁴ See Introduction: Methodology, Methods and Chapter Outlines. My interviewees are second to fourth generation Chinese New Zealanders. The published work of four of them is discussed in Chapter Four.

²²⁵ Women identified very closely with their families; see, for example: Ip, *Home* 59, 64, 85, 94-95, 105, 119, 134-35.

than the immigrant women. Significantly, they were no less aware of the subordinate role that they, as women, were expected to play within the family. Eva, revealed: 'My sisters and I always knew that our father was the head of the household. What he said was never questioned and certainly he was not to be answered back, even if we thought he was wrong' (E.W. Ng, Interview 4 Mar 2012). Alison informed me that she 'was brought up . . . very traditionally . . . with a very strong sense of what a good wife is' (A. Wong, Interview 22 Mar 2012). Helene observed that women's roles were 'clearly circumscribed around procreation': that their main job was to supply 'more units of labour to help in the family business' (H. Wong, Interview 7 Nov 2012). And Wendy disclosed that when she was growing up, she was very aware that 'females were meant to be seen and not heard' (W. Yee, Interview 19 Jul 2012).

Like their immigrant women forebears, these women learned how to be 'good' Chinese women through observation, and by heeding the advice of older women in the family and community. But while their compliance with 'Chinese woman' within the family appeared to be in direct response to patriarchal Chinese obligations, and the desire to raise obedient families is, as I have stressed above, certainly based on Confucian *Chinese* ideals, in New Zealand, such ideals have been emphasised – and entrenched (anachronised) – in response to mainstream imperatives for Model Minority citizenship.²²⁶ In order to be tolerated on the outside, Chinese women have had to demonstrate that they *know their place* (B. Yee 89-90); their compliance with filial obligations on the inside bears crucially on their compliance with mainstream imperatives on the outside. The following responses reveal Chinese women's awareness of the importance of such compliance, and how this has informed their beliefs about what being a 'good' Chinese woman entails. According to Helene, it means:

Being "good" . . . respectful of elders; doing as you're told. . . speaking only when spoken to, not answering back. . . [being] humble and keeping a low profile; looking after others before yourself; doing well

²²⁶ In Introduction; and "Becoming 'Chinese Woman'" above in this chapter.

at school; doing nothing to bring shame on your family. . . ' (Interview 7 Nov 2012)

Alison and Eva shared similar sentiments:

You're supposed to make your parents very proud . . . so you needed to lead a good, respectable life . . . and not bring any shame on the family. . . I was a very good girl at home and at school. I always did what my parents said. (A. Wong, Interview 22 Mar 2012)

. . . in the western world I was . . . quiet, hardworking, very shy, silent . . . as unobtrusive as is [sic] possible. . . I behaved in the Chinese way I'd been taught. (E.W. Ng, Interview 4 Mar 2012)

Responses such as these indicate that women were very aware of the need to minimise their presence, both inside the family and outside in the public domain. In the Chinese community, keeping a low profile, working hard and meeting family obligations were perceived as important survival strategies.²²⁷ Several interviewees affirmed the value of extended family and the importance of solidarity within the community.²²⁸ Eva confirmed that the 'core Chinese values' of respect for elders and authority, adherence to traditional family values, commitment to education, and a strong work ethic have remained 'pretty much the same even among second, third, fourth generation' Chinese New Zealanders, and have been crucial to the community's survival 'under adversity in a hostile environment' (E. W. Ng, Interview 13 Apr 2012).

As was the case in the outside interviews, the women in the inside interviews tended to minimise narratives that discredit the Pākehā mainstream. This mostly involved playing down institutionalised discrimination and everyday incidents of racism. Lam-Lau Yuet-sin expressed gratitude for the permits she and her children received to enter New Zealand during World War Two, despite the fact

²²⁷ Ip, *Home* 36-37, 116, 155-56, 172; E. W. Ng, Interview 4 Mar 2012; A. Wong, Interview 11 Apr 2014; A. Wong, Interview 22 Mar 2012; W. Yee, Interview 31 July 2013; H. Wong, Interview 7 Nov 2012.

²²⁸ E. W. Ng, Interview 4 Mar 2012; Ip, *Home* 56, 96, 112, 123, 136, 151; Choong 42; A. Wong, Interview 22 Mar 2012; A. Wong 11 Apr 2014.

that her husband was required to pay a £200 bond to ensure the repatriation of both herself and all her children – including those born in New Zealand – after a two year period (Ip, *Home* 90; Murphy, *Guide* 84). When Law-Wong's children were exposed to racism at school, she told them, 'Never mind, those Kiwi children are just naughty' (Ip, *Home* 172). Wendy recalled that on one occasion when she was called 'ching chong chinaman', her mother merely dismissed the perpetrator as 'a cheeky boy' (W. Yee, Interview 4 Apr 2014). Some women went so far as to point out that racism was not completely undeserved. Wong Yuk-lan stated that she couldn't blame 'the whites' for looking down on the Chinese because some of them were 'so shabbily dressed and so dirty that even I didn't like them in my shop. . .' (Ip, *Home* 74).²²⁹

In the inside interviews, women also valorised New Zealand. They spoke of good friends, community, and the kindness of neighbours, and they expressed their appreciation and admiration for Pākehā values such as 'fair play' and time for recreation (E.W. Ng, Interview 13 Apr 2012; A. Wong, Interview 22 Mar 2012; Choong 28). They also affirmed the Progress Narrative; in particular, acknowledging the benefits to their own everyday wellbeing due to a perceived decline in racial discrimination (particularly in the postwar decades), and to their own socio-economic progress through opportunities for sustained hard work.²³⁰ Many of their valorisations correlate with denigrations of China, Chineseness and Chinese culture. Eva, for example, divulged that she had often wished she wasn't Chinese, that she was envious of the 'easy way' that her Pākehā friends related to their parents and other adults, that Chinese life was 'so oppressive and formal' in comparison (E.W. Ng, Interview 4 Mar 2012).²³¹

Women in the inside interviews also demonstrated awareness of the ways they had assimilated into the mainstream. Alison reported that her family had left behind old customs and traditions 'because of the Christian influence' (A. Wong,

²²⁹ See also Ip, *Home* 129

²³⁰ See, for example, Ip, *Home* 24, 54, 73-74, 112, 116, 129-30, 155-56; also E.W. Ng, Interview 4 Mar 2012; Chanwai-Earle, Interview 26 June 2012.

²³¹ See, for example, Ip, *Home* 37, 64, 91, 92, 138, for more valorisations of New Zealand juxtaposed with denigrations of China, Chineseness and Chinese culture.

Interview 22 Mar 2012). Eva noticed that 'a few Kiwi habits' such as taking holidays, playing sport and enjoying retirement, had 'crept' into her life (E. W. Ng, Interview 13 Apr 2012). And assimilation was not all passive: Alison spoke of trying to fit into the mainstream by studying and working hard (A. Wong, Interview 22 Mar 2012); and Helene made clear her own motivation to assimilate:

I understood my job was to bury as much of my difference as possible and become as much like a European as I could . . . once I started school, I refused to speak Chinese outside the home, and eventually even there. I did over the years of growing up drift away from the culture. It was just part of de-emphasizing the difference.
(H. Wong, Interview 7 Nov 2012)

At the same time, these women observed how their Otherness manifest in their everyday lives and expressed an acute awareness of their marginalisation. Eva remembers having to observe her Pākehā friends in order to learn 'what and how they said and did things', copying 'how they ate' and watching 'which knives and forks and spoons they used. . .' (E. W. Ng, Interview 4 Mar 2012). As a child, Li Shan found that her experiences on the outside were at such odds with her inside life that she was not able to reconcile them:

I had never learnt to play because I had only learnt to work. So I felt playing in the sandpit really senseless and the jungle gym even more senseless. I had no idea why you would even want to do that. . .
(Choong 31)

Wendy noted that official state documents often did not accommodate her identity:

When I fill in a government department form, where you have the option to state your ethnicity, there is almost always no box for Asians, I tick "Other". (W. Yee, Interview 1 July 2012)

Women in the inside interviews expressed shame and feelings of inferiority about being Chinese. This was more evident in the older women who were either New Zealand-born, or who had lived their younger, more impressionable years there. As these women had grown up seeing themselves through the subordinating

eyes of the Pākehā mainstream, it is not surprising that they did not like what they saw. Christine asserted that what she observed was 'all negative. . . like Chinese Spits [sic], Chinese talking loudly, play mah-jong, slurping their soups. . .' and that she 'didn't learn anything positive about being Chinese' (Choong 32). Eva revealed the life-long effects she suffered as a consequence of racist abuse: '[it] shattered my self-confidence and filled me with self-doubt . . . left me feeling not only ugly and unhygienic, [but that] being Chinese I was also unworthy of anything better' (E. W. Ng, Interview 3 Apr 2014). And Kathleen, who immigrated to New Zealand as a five-year-old was adamant that 'as a girl' she 'did not like being Chinese at all' (Ip, *Home* 37).

Acutely aware that their marginal position rendered them susceptible to the vagaries of mainstream tolerance, the women in these inside interviews were very aware of the importance of 'not rocking the boat'. Indeed, the imperative to lay low was so pressing, women were expected to tolerate incidents in which they were treated with flagrant disrespect. With regard to the racist taunts she experienced as a child, Eva revealed, 'These and other slights we had "to swallow" as the Chinese say' (Interview 13 Apr 2012). To this day, it appears that the threat of racist hostilities continues to inform the caution with which settler Chinese women engage with mainstream New Zealand. Helene, for example, disclosed that she chooses 'not to emphasize' her Chineseness 'in contexts' where she feels 'it might provoke a negative reaction'; she informed me, 'until I am able to gauge the attitude, I tend to be cautious' (Interview 17 Jan 2013).

Overall, the inside interviews revealed strong similarities with the outside interviews. Women emphasised the importance of family, valorised and essentialised Chinese culture, acknowledged the subordinate roles they were expected to play both within the family and in the Pākehā mainstream, minimised racism, and valorised Pākehā culture and New Zealand. And in their endorsements of assimilation and Model Minority behaviour and expressions of shame and inadequacy about being Chinese, they implicitly denigrated their own Chineseness. Many of the beliefs and feelings revealed in the inside interviews indicate that the women saw themselves (that is, possess a self-image of themselves) as 'Chinese

woman'. As in the outside interviews, the stories told in the inside interviews appear to evidence the subordinating influence of a Colonialist Orientalist Episteme. It appears, therefore, that the Chinese woman subject's subordination on the inside is co-extensive with her subordination on the outside, for what the woman experiences – and manifests – in both worlds reflects her internalisation of the hegemonically constructed 'Chinese woman'.

There were, however, stories told in the inside interviews that were not told in the outside interviews. Due to the more private settings in which the inside interviews took place, and an implicit cultural empathy on the part of their Chinese women interviewers, participants' disclosures were not only more intimate there, but rather more candid.²³² In their conversations with other Chinese women, many of the stories told on the inside expressed complaints about hegemonic narrators and narratives, what Goffman would identify as 'elaborate griping' (*Presentation* 129): a critical *backstage* language. As the hegemonically constructed 'Chinese woman' has no critical voice,²³³ such griping may be interpreted as an expression of extra-hegemonic, autonomous, *non-'Chinese woman'* subjectivity.

Telling 'Retreat' Stories: Expressing Autonomous Subjectivities

In the inside interviews, Chinese women expressed their autonomous subjectivities by critiquing the hegemonic discourses that subjectivate them as 'Chinese woman'. I term such responses 'retreat' stories, defined here as stories shared in the company of other Chinese women, seldom told either in the presence of a mainstream Pākehā audience, or a patriarchal Chinese audience.²³⁴ (With the exception of one very brief expression of resentment on the part of one participant, retreat stories did not feature in the outside interviews discussed above.) Retreat

²³² That is, away from the public eye of rolling cameras ("Chinese Community" and "Stories") and from interviewers who were clearly not Chinese ("Chinese Community"; Greif, *Overseas*).

²³³ See Chapter One: Speaking for – and Silencing – Chinese Woman. See also, Chow, "Virtuous" 100.

²³⁴ For example, when Lily Doo was interviewed by Manying Ip for *Home away from Home*, her son Thomas expressed surprise at the stories she told, which he had never heard before (G. Wong, "Harsh"). 'Patriarchal Chinese audience' is defined above in Introduction, Methodology, Methods and Chapter Outlines.

stories reveal women's personal concerns and difficulties: what Goffman would describe as the 'unclean . . . cruel . . . degrading . . . disturbing facts' of performers' lives that must be kept 'backstage' (*Presentation* 53). In these stories, women revealed feelings of shame about being Chinese and awareness of the ways they have been marginalised in the Pākehā mainstream; they spoke about assimilating strategies and the importance of Model Minority behaviour; and in the context of their critiques of the mainstream, they strongly valorised Chinese culture and emphasised the importance of family in their lives. By telling retreat stories, these women articulated the critical, reflexive space between their *seeing* selves and the hegemonically constructed prototype 'Chinese woman'.

Many of the retreat stories told in the inside interviews resonate with the stories shared in the inside conversation in Chapter Two. I identified three overlapping categories: performance strategies, complaints about the outside, and personal and domestic narratives about filial obligations, family and everyday Chinesenesses.

Performance strategies were concerned with how women dealt with patriarchal obligations on the inside, and with racism on the outside. On the inside, strategies were informed by an imperative for silence and respect for patriarchal filial obligations. Eva reported that she did not question or dispute her father (E. W. Ng, Interview 4 Mar 2012); and both Wendy and Helene understood the importance of 'not answering back' and speaking 'only when spoken to' (W. Yee, Interview 1 Jul 2012; H. Wong, Interview 7 Nov 2012). In response to racism on the outside, Kathleen disclosed that she would strategically locate herself in places where her exposure to racism would be minimised. For example, as a student in Dunedin, she would take the shortest possible route to medical school each day. Kathleen also found that returning to China to work enabled her to 'feel much better about being Chinese' (Ip, *Home* 37). Strategies for responding to the perennial 'You speak such good English!' and 'Where are you from... *originally?*' were also shared. Li Shan reported having to repeatedly assert her New Zealand identity (Choong 50). Alison stated that she would 'normally be polite' and explain her background (A. Wong, Interview 11 Apr 2014). Helene declared that if she felt the attitude of the person

asking was ‘negative’, she would be brief and emphasise her ‘New Zealand roots’ (H. Wong, Interview 7 Apr 2014). It appears that all of these strategies – remaining silent, keeping a low profile, highlighting one’s assimilation – required these women to *diminish* themselves.²³⁵

Complaints about the outside were responses to injuries inflicted in the mainstream. In these stories, the audience is ‘derogated’ and reduced in abstract distancing terms (Goffman, *Presentation* 168-69). Some women dehumanised the Pākehā mainstream by characterising them with pejorative appellations, such as *gwei-lo* 鬼佬 or *gwei-paw* 鬼婆, or with sweeping generalisations. Kathleen, for example, declared that ‘99.99 per cent of people in Dunedin looked down upon the Chinese’ (Ip, *Home* 36); and Christine asserted that ‘Europeans . . . on the whole, looked down their noses at you’ (Choong 31). In these stories, women were candid in their complaints about their experiences, sharing explicit details about the discrimination they suffered and the extent of their injuries. Eva wrote that a particularly traumatic experience of racist discrimination she suffered as a child seriously undermined her self-confidence: ‘I think it did change my nature – I became less outgoing, more timid. . . ’ (E.W. Ng, Interview 1 May 2014). Helene disclosed that she too has ‘never forgotten’ the racism she has experienced, claiming that ‘to one extent or another it has informed what I do and how I see the world’ (H. Wong, Interview 7 Nov 2014).

The personal stories that women told revealed domestic hardships and tensions within families, and how Chineseness manifests in everyday life. They include references to practices like having to wash the feet of one’s brothers-in-law, fermenting black beans, ching ming 清明 (the grave-sweeping festival), the undemonstrativeness of Chinese parents, relationships between Big Mother 大婆 and Number Two Wife 阿二 (one’s father’s legitimate wife and his first concubine),

²³⁵ Four of my interviewees stated that they did not talk about racism with their Pākehā friends either because they did not want to ‘rock the boat’, or they assumed they would not be understood (H. Wong, Interview 7 Apr 2014; W. Yee, Interview 4 Apr 2014; A. Wong, Interview 11 Apr 2014; E. W. Ng, Interview 13 Apr 2012).

the problems of being perceived as 'Gold Mountain women' (too wealthy)²³⁶ – and myriad other aspects and expressions of Chineseness that a mainstream Pākehā audience could find difficult to comprehend.²³⁷

In her storytelling with other Chinese women in which she shares her strategies, complaints, personal difficulties and everyday experiences, the Chinese woman's non-'Chinese woman' perspectives are validated in an intersubjective context. This nexus of shared experiences consolidates a specific *seeing* position: a collective critical gaze. At the same time, the woman's narrative is the ground on which she reflexively perceives herself as 'Chinese woman'. In her complaints and stories of personal hardship she can see herself as Othered and subjugated; in her performance strategy narratives she can see that she is not completely and always 'Chinese woman'. Telling these stories, the woman subject *who perceives* is distinct from the 'Chinese woman' *that* she perceives. Through storytelling, she inhabits and articulates the distance between herself and 'Chinese woman', revealing both her autonomous subjectivity and extra-hegemonic agency in reflexivity. When Li Shan reflected on the story of her father's disapproval of her pursuit of university education, (he told her, 'if you are too clever, you don't get married'), she said, 'When I think of that statement I am somewhat horrified but I am more horrified by the fact that I actually believed him' (Choong 40). Li Shan is disturbed by her unthinking submission to the belief that the limits of her life lay in the 'Chinese woman' duties ascribed to her. Her autonomous subjectivity – and extra-hegemonic agency – through reflexivity is manifest in this realisation.

In the inside interviews, Chinese women's stories are told in a considerably less fettered environment. In the comparative absence of hegemonic narrators, hegemonic narratives can be openly critiqued.²³⁸ By enabling the woman's apprehension of the critical distance between herself and the hegemonic narratives

²³⁶ That is, by relatives in China

²³⁷ See, for example, Ip, *Home* 55-57, 69-70, 73, 80, 84, 87-91, 106, 111-13, 121-22, 130, 165-66

²³⁸ I say *comparative* absence because such narrators are 'present' in the sense that their narratives have been internalised to some extent by both the Chinese women interviewers *and* interviewees themselves.

about her, the sharing of retreat stories with other Chinese women configures a backstage space within which her autonomous subjectivity is expressed and affirmed.²³⁹ I contend that such affirmation can ground the woman's assertion of autonomy on the outside. However, because retreat stories either explicitly or implicitly critique hegemonic narratives, and because Chinese women are marginally positioned narrators, they need to be articulated with care. The frontstaging of retreat stories – that is, before an audience of hegemonic narrators on the outside – therefore requires a judicious surreptitious approach.²⁴⁰

To this end, Mary Ann Doane's theorisation of femininity as masquerade is instructive. Like Goffman's 'cynical' performer, Doane's woman subject is not 'taken in' by her own performance. Fully aware that her performance is a performance; she wears her 'mask' of 'womanliness' in order to distance herself from 'womanliness', thereby creating a space from where she can critique and resist the hegemonic narratives (that co-construct 'womanliness') that subordinate her. I (mis)quote Doane here (with the insertion of 'Pākehā/Chinese', and 'womanliness' and 'femininity' replaced with 'Chinese woman'):

The masquerade, in flaunting '*Chinese woman*', holds it at a distance. '*Chinese woman*' is a mask which can be worn or removed. The masquerade's resistance to *Pākehā/Chinese* patriarchal positioning would therefore lie in its denial of the production of '*Chinese woman*' as closeness, as presence-to-itself. . . . *To masquerade is to*

²³⁹ As noted above, the 'elaborate griping' (Goffman, *Presentation* 129) that is the modus operandi for retreat storytelling is a critical 'backstage language', which may be identified as an expression of autonomous subjectivity. A nexus of such 'gripings' – from a collective of Chinese women – configures a backstage *space* where that autonomous subjectivity can be affirmed.

²⁴⁰ Due to the inextricability of 'Pākehā' and 'Chinese' narratives – and the authority of the former – 'hegemonic narrators' could also, of course, be those in the settler Chinese community who abide by Model Minority imperatives and are concerned with maintaining the status quo. For example: in 1994, following a television appearance in which Manying Ip objected to an advertising campaign that pitted New Zealand against China in the lead up to 1996 Olympics, she was publicly rebuked in a Chinese newspaper advertisement by an elderly Chinese man who accused her of bringing 'harm to the community' because she was 'too high profile' (Ip, "Quick").

*manufacture a lack in the form of a certain distance between oneself and one's image. . . (66)*²⁴¹

The Chinese woman's masquerade or performance of 'Chinese woman' allows her to express her autonomous subjectivity on the outside. It empowers the woman because not only does she inhabit a space where she can refuse to 'be' 'Chinese woman', she can dissemble that refusal. Doane argues that 'the effectivity of masquerade' lies not only 'in its potential to manufacture a distance from the image' but 'to generate a problematic within which the image' (in this case 'Chinese woman') 'is manipulable, producible, and readable by the woman' (87). That is, the very fact that the woman's non-'Chinese woman' perspective is unrecognised by her audience enables her to assert her autonomous subjectivity *and* her extra-hegemonic agency – to both resist and deploy 'Chinese woman' for her own ends. Unseen, from behind the 'Chinese woman' mask, she is able to look back at her audience, to gaze at them critically.

I do recall my first commercial. . . I played a girl in a fruitshop and had to throw an apple at the camera . . . it was a stereotype. . .
(H. Wong, Interview 23 Apr 2013)

In this account of one of Helene Wong's early acting experiences, the distance between Helene and 'girl in a fruitshop' (a genus of 'Chinese woman') may not have been registered by an audience viewing this commercial; that is, the audience may not have been aware that the actor Helene was *performing* 'girl in a fruitshop' – that she was actually *not* 'girl in a fruitshop'. But Helene (the Chinese woman subject) did recognise that the role she was playing was a stereotype, that she was *not* 'girl in a fruitshop'; and this recognition points to the critical distance between Helene (the Chinese woman subject) and 'girl in a fruitshop' – to a subjectivity unseen by the audience. Helene's resistance to 'girl in a fruitshop' is here dissembled by her performance, within which the act of throwing the apple at the audience both conceals and constitutes her critical gaze.

²⁴¹ My emphases.

This chapter has shown that in the company of other Chinese women, away from both hegemonic Pākehā and patriarchal Chinese narrators, the telling of retreat stories enables Chinese women to express their non-‘Chinese woman’ subjectivities. I propose that the reflexivity in retreat storytelling can strategically inform outside performances of ‘Chinese woman’, enabling the woman to express her autonomous subjectivity in the form of a surreptitious critical gaze. Telling retreat stories is a narrative strategy that has the potential to facilitate the woman’s extra-hegemonic autonomy and agency in the public domain. The following chapter offers a further analysis of retreat storytelling alongside a range of other narrative strategies deployed by Chinese woman writers in their written public performances.

CHAPTER FOUR:

WRITING ‘CHINESE WOMAN’ AND OTHER STORYTELLING STRATEGIES

You try and keep on trying to unsay it, for if you don’t, they will not fail to fill in the blanks on your behalf, and you will be said.

(Trinh T. Minh-ha 80)

In Chapter Three I contended that the Chinese woman subject actuates the space between her seeing self and the hegemonic narratives that conspire to produce the prototype ‘Chinese woman’ by sharing retreat stories on the inside, and that in so doing, she expresses her autonomy. This chapter analyses the public exploitation of this space by four Chinese women writers. In accord with the thesis’ third key objective, I attempt to show how the Chinese woman subject’s autonomy and agency are grounded in the subversion of the very narratives that subordinate her. Through close critical readings and with reference to personal interviews,²⁴² I analyse the narrative strategies deployed in the following published works, which I conceive here as public performances: Eva Wong Ng’s novel for younger readers *Chinatown Girl: The Diary of Silvey Chan, 1942* (2005); Alison Wong’s novel *As the Earth Turns Silver* (2009); Lynda Chanwai-Earle’s play *Ka Shue (Letters Home)* (1996), and Helene Wong’s essays “Image, Identity and Media” (1998) and “Ching Chong Chinamen: When Friends Become Strangers” (1995).²⁴³ In their demonstration of diverse narrative strategies, these works convey a range of critical gazes with varying degrees of transparency, ranging from reticent and placatory to cynically parodic to disorienting to vociferous and directly confrontational. They illustrate variously the ingenious ways these writers have drawn on their own lived

²⁴² For the most part, my own interviews; however, I also refer to interviews conducted by other scholars and writers.

²⁴³ The dates here refer to first appearances in the public domain: that is, first publications of Eva Wong Ng and Alison Wong’s novels; the premiere of Lynda Chanwai-Earle’s play; and initial presentations of Helene Wong’s essays as lectures/talks. Except for Eva Wong Ng’s novel, the works I actually consulted for this thesis do not refer to these first appearances; see Works Cited below.

experiences in their responses to – and author-isations of – ‘Chinese woman’. In the concluding part of this chapter, I consider how these works have been received. Specifically, I raise the question of whether the storytelling strategies deployed by these writers are sufficient to garner recognition for Chinese women’s autonomous subjectivity – and separate identity – in the Pākehā mainstream.

Eva Wong Ng, Chinatown Girl: The Diary of Silvey Chan, 1942: A ‘Virtuous Transaction’

First published in 2005, Eva Wong Ng’s *Chinatown Girl: The Diary of Silvey Chan, 1942*²⁴⁴ is set in Auckland, where the author herself grew up during World War Two. Although the novel’s events are not ‘autobiographical’, the author informed me that she did draw ‘widely’ from memories of her own childhood experiences and ‘inadvertently’ revealed ‘a good deal’ about herself in her characterisation of the protagonist (Interview 21 Feb 2014). In light of this, I have read *Chinatown Girl* as an expression of this Chinese woman writer’s subjectivity. The novel has a significant mainstream presence. Not only was it nominated as a finalist for the 2006 New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults (“Winners”), but by virtue of being part of the renowned Scholastic Press *My Story* series of historical novels for younger readers,²⁴⁵ it has a *publicly recognised place in New Zealand history*. In view of the hegemonic narratives that continue to subordinate Chinese women in New Zealand in the twenty-first century, the public place afforded this story of a 12-year-old Chinese girl seems worthy of interrogation. In my reading of the novel, I was particularly concerned with discerning the narrative strategies the author utilised to ‘earn’ this place.

Reading *Chinatown Girl*, the questions that most concerned me were: How does the Chineseness portrayed in the novel conform to contemporary notions of New Zealand history? And, to what extent does the protagonist comply with the

²⁴⁴ Hereafter, *Chinatown Girl*

²⁴⁵ All the novels in the series, written in first-person diary format by child protagonists, are set during significant periods in New Zealand history. Scholastic publishes similar series in the U.S.A., Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom.

prototype 'Chinese woman'? Out of all the works discussed in this chapter, *Chinatown Girl* appears to be the most compliant with hegemonic mainstream narratives; accordingly, Rey Chow's conceptualisation of Chinese women's subjectivity as informed by 'virtuous transactions' offers a most useful frame for analysis. 'Virtue', according to Chow, has a contractual basis: it requires the Chinese woman to 'sacrifice' a part of herself in exchange for 'a social place'; for the Chinese woman *writer*, this 'social place' constitutes public recognition ("Virtuous" 94, 104).²⁴⁶ In my analysis of *Chinatown Girl*, I begin by identifying the ways the author *fulfils* her contractual obligations with the Pākehā mainstream. I then attempt to show that although the obligations entailed by 'virtuous transactions' constrain the author, she nonetheless has room for manoeuvre: that by strategically telling retreat stories, she is able to assert her autonomous subjectivity.

Eva Wong Ng contends that the Labour government's Poll Tax Apology in 2002²⁴⁷ enabled Chinese New Zealanders to speak publicly, for it endorsed for the Chinese community a legitimate *place* in the mainstream. With official recognition of past injustices suffered by the settler Chinese community, a new subject position was created – a position from which members of this community could share their stories:

At last the NZ-Chinese feel they have earned a rightful place in NZ society. That acceptance gives them self-confidence to hold their heads up, to speak out and begin telling their own stories. (Interview, 4 Mar 2012)

The years since the Apology have certainly seen an increase in settler Chinese stories in the Pākehā mainstream, and the majority of these stories have been told by women (Appendix 26).²⁴⁸ But as the following analysis of *Chinatown Girl* shows, the 'rightful place' these storytellers have 'earned' is configured by hegemonic mainstream narratives that constrain the Chinese woman writer's voice.

²⁴⁶ Chow's 'virtuous transactions' discussed in Introduction: Conceptual Frameworks.

²⁴⁷ For full transcript of the Poll Tax Apology, see Appendix 23.

²⁴⁸ See also, Introduction: Settler Chinese New Zealand Women's Storytelling.

The coerciveness of the Progress Narrative is most apparent in the framing of the novel. Eva Wong Ng herself revealed that in her writing of *Chinatown Girl* she ‘did not want to dwell too heavily on the negative effects of former racist times. . .’ (Interview 13 Apr 2012), and that she ‘wanted to give a more moderate view to reflect how in the 1940s the stereotypes had shifted somewhat from earlier days’ (Interview 21 Feb 2014). Accordingly, the picture painted in the novel of everyday life for the Chinese community in New Zealand during World War Two is prettified – and anachronistically progressive. Told through the diary entries of 12-year-old Silvey Chan, *Chinatown Girl* portrays the Pākehā mainstream as a benign, mostly fair and happy place where racism is anomalous and legislated discrimination belongs to the nation’s past. But the year is 1942, and while New Zealand’s attitude toward the Chinese community had certainly softened somewhat in response to the country’s alliance with China against Japan a few years earlier, and the government had allowed several hundred Chinese women and children to enter the country as refugees,²⁴⁹ the Chinese were still perceived as ‘outsiders’. Not only were their refugee women and children permitted only temporary entry under very strict conditions, the Chinese community as a whole remained subject to a raft of (other) discriminatory legislation. At this time, police (under the Drugs Regulation Act) were still authorised to conduct ‘opium raids’ without warrant on Chinese businesses and residences; Chinese were barred from naturalisation; all Chinese who were not naturalised were required to be registered as Aliens and kept under government surveillance; and while the Poll Tax had been waived in 1935, it was not officially repealed until 1944 (Appendix 3; Murphy, *Guide*). It is unlikely, therefore, that life for Chinese people in New Zealand in 1942 was quite as benign as it is portrayed in the world of *Chinatown Girl*.

Kim Wilson’s study of the Scholastic Press Historical Journal Series for younger readers confirms that the *My Story* novels are indeed ‘ahistorical’ in their ‘ideological treatment of content’ (104). Wilson argues that their preoccupation with contemporary ideals such as social justice, fairness and equality appears to be

²⁴⁹ 249 women, and 244 children (Murphy, *Guide* 84).

based on an assumption that these also prevailed in earlier times; they ignore the likelihood that in reality such ideals were not valued in the past as highly as they are in the twenty-first century (103-25). In accord with Wilson's reading, the *Chinatown Girl* world in which the settler Chinese were treated fairly and considered to be 'equal' citizens, and where racial discrimination was anomalous, does appear to 'deviate from the historical record' (Wilson 124).²⁵⁰

In *Chinatown Girl*, racism is certainly minimised. Objections to institutionalised discrimination are referred to only retrospectively: historicised – and contained – in the nation's (not so remote) past in a family history project that Silvey completes for a school assignment. In this context, anti-Chinese legislation is portrayed as a relic of an unenlightened yesteryear, assigned to a place where their value lies in heralding 'how far we have come' (155). At the same time, contemporaneous everyday incidents of racism are portrayed in the novel as anomalous acts executed by atypical 'bad' characters. Wally, who terrorises 'us Chinese kids', belongs to a 'gang of toughs': known bullies and vandals whose behaviour, it is implied, is at odds with the civility that prevails in a benign, inclusive and decent Pākehā world (18-19).²⁵¹

But in this world, Chinese women and girls cannot speak openly about racism. Silvey's Pākehā schoolteacher, Silvey's father and her grandfather voice their objections to institutionalised racism; but Silvey, her mother, aunt, sisters and Chinese girlfriends do not – cannot – speak of such things (56, 58, 67, 95, 155). In Silvey's personal life, it is Judy Brown, her Pākehā friend, who 'thumps' the bully Wally; but when Wally gets 'cunning' and takes to waiting until Silvey is alone

²⁵⁰ That is, if historical records can be assumed to accurately reflect everyday social realities. Wilson's study found such deviations to be true across the whole series of these novels, not only *Chinatown Girl*. Louise O'Brien makes a similar observation about Alison Wong's novel *As the Earth Turns Silver*; she notes that: '... the heroes of this novel are endowed ... with noticeably modern sensibilities, jarringly at odds with the representation of their historical and cultural milieu. They argue for equal rights for women, cultural relativism, and Māori land claims, in this early 20th century context. ...' (10).

²⁵¹ This is in keeping with Kim Wilson's observation that in the Scholastic Historical Journal Series of novels, racism is treated as an 'embodied entity' rather than an 'institutionalized ideology that underpins social relations' (187).

before ambushing her – and shouting ‘Ching Chong Chinaman, cooked his mother in a frying pan, Ya, Ya, Ya!’ – Silvey’s retort (‘Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me’ (19)) has no witness. In the world of *Chinatown Girl*, Silvey the Chinese girl’s rejoinder is not acknowledged. The story of this incident, in which Silvey’s transgression of the quiet and docile ‘Chinese girl/woman’ goes unrecognised, demonstrates that there is no place in this world for her to express her autonomous subjectivity. Not only are Silvey’s friends absent, she is unable to confide in her parents (who have advised her that silence is the best response (19)). Within the world of the novel, the story of this painful experience must be confined to the pages of Silvey’s diary.

The ways that racism has been minimised in *Chinatown Girl* reveal not only that Chinese women/girls could not speak openly of racism in New Zealand in 1942, but also that similar constraints operate in the early twenty-first century. In accord with Eva Wong Ng’s endorsement of the Progress Narrative (above), racism – a narrative that *discredits the Pākehā mainstream – is minimised* in this novel.

The author’s compliance with other hegemonic narratives stemming from a Colonialist Orientalist Episteme is clearly discernible throughout the novel. Most conspicuously, *Chinatown Girl* *essentialises Chinese people and Chinese culture*. Immediately apparent is, of course, the novel’s Oriental title, which the publisher insisted was most appropriate despite the author’s protests about its historical inaccuracy.²⁵² Relatedly, there appear numerous Oriental exhibitions the explicit ‘explanatoriness’ of which appears to anticipate mainstream conceptions of Chineseness. There are, for example, detailed descriptions of: Silvey’s mother’s traditional Chinese wedding (complete with sedan chair festooned with red curtains), Chinese New Year celebrations, Tai Chi, calligraphy, Chinese poetry,

²⁵² When the Scholastic editor insisted that the title was ‘short and snappy and said what the book was about’, the author pointed out that it ran counter to the ‘historical accuracy’ that the *My Story* series required (E.W. Ng 21 Feb 2014; 10 Sept 2014). Although there was a modest cluster of Chinese businesses in 1942 in Greys Avenue, Auckland, where the novel is set, the area was never known as ‘Chinatown’. M. Taher, however, noted in 1970 that ‘with *predominantly* Chinese dormitories, boarding houses, shops and restaurants’ up until the 1950s, Greys Avenue ‘presented the *appearance* of a miniature Chinatown’ (64) (my emphasis).

Chinese school, food and family relationships. In her diary entries, Silvey reveals her knowledge of how she is expected to perform as a Chinese woman in accord with the values of her family and the Chinese community to which she belongs. For example, she acknowledges the imperative to address her elders by their correct names (113); and in her description of the Chinese New Year picnic where Silvey's mother and her friends are called upon to participate in the 'mum's running race', she writes: 'All the ladies needed a lot of persuasion. . . It seems part of *being a Chinese woman* is to appear reluctant to put yourself forward, especially for such a public display. . . ' (87).²⁵³

The stories told in the novel also reveal the protagonist's assimilation, which may be read as the writer's *valorisation of Pākehā culture*. This is evident in the protagonist-narrator's liberal use of vernacular colloquialisms ('battleaxe', 'beaut', 'good riddance to bad rubbish' (13, 14, 41)); in the cultural hybridisation of her everyday life ('Lunch was sandwiches filled with sliced Chinese sausage and lettuce, marmite and cheese, or honey' (86)); and in her *denigration of Chinese culture* ('Afterwards we had a homemade apple pie with custard. Everything was much tastier than Chinese food. I think a roast dinner is my favourite meal too' (150)). Such denigration is implicit in Silvey's confessions about her resistance to patriarchal Chinese constraints; evident, for example, in her revelation that she's going to be a 'career girl' and 'never . . . have any boyfriends' (43), and in her declaration that she'd love to jitterbug, except 'Ba says it's not proper for a Chinese girl to be doing things like that in public' (179). Chinese culture is explicitly denigrated in Silvey's expressions of frustration about being a subjugated Chinese female. While some of her complaints are about fairly minor everyday irritations (for example, that she has to do everything her older brother tells her to do, and that he 'gets away with everything' (29)), others are accompanied by ardent valorisations of Pākehā culture, and reveal a rather more critical perception of the ways that traditional Chinese patriarchal narratives subordinate women:

²⁵³ My emphasis; see also pages 11, 150.

Seems that females didn't feature in Confucius's teachings, except as mothers of obedient sons! A good thing I was born in 20th century New Zealand, because I'm not sure I want to be a Confucianist if females count for so little. At Sunday School, when I heard that Jesus loves everyone, including women and children, it made me feel happy. I think I'd rather be a Christian. (152-53)

In accord with the hegemonic narratives that subjectivate Chinese girls/women in the world of *Chinatown Girl*, it appears that Silvey *cannot speak* freely. Indeed, there are several occasions in the novel when this is made clear. Both Silvey's parents complain that she asks too many questions (51, 78), her mother chastises her for not thinking before she speaks (11), and Ah Yeh (her grandfather) sternly expresses his disapproval when he hears Silvey and the other children speaking English amongst themselves: 'Speak Chinese,' he chides, 'or you'll turn into a *bak gwei jay*' (45). What this means is that if Silvey does not speak Chinese like a 'good' Chinese girl, she can no longer *be* a Chinese girl, for she will turn into a *white ghost boy*.

But Silvey the Chinese girl/woman can and does speak. For amidst and within the stories that comply with Colonialist Orientalist narratives there is discernible a critical distance between how she perceives herself – that is, as a *speaking* Chinese girl/woman who deserves to be treated fairly and with respect (29, 49, 95) and to enjoy certain freedoms (177, 179) – and the 'Chinese woman' she knows she is expected to be (87, 113). It is through her various failures to identify with 'Chinese woman' (some of which are cited above) that Silvey's critique of the hegemonic narratives that constrain her are expressed in the form of retreat stories. Revealed in the ostensibly private pages of her diary, these stories may be identified in Silvey's responses to racism (18, 19, 49), her accounts of family obligations (29, 45, 113), and in her disclosures about how Chineseness manifests in her everyday life in ways perhaps not readily apprehended by readers in the mainstream (16, 37, 109, 146). In the context of the novel as a written performance, these stories constitute *public* assertions of the author's autonomous non-'Chinese woman' subjectivity.

Although the protagonist Silvey is frequently silenced within the diegetic world of the novel, the textual revelations of her ‘insignificant sufferings’ in the public performance that is the novel constitute the *Chinese woman writer’s* critique of the hegemonic narratives that subordinate *her* (Chow, “Virtuous” 104) – and this marks the limits of the writer’s subjectivation. Eva Wong Ng’s compliance with hegemonic narratives in *Chinatown Girl* may therefore be read as a ‘virtuous transaction’: a fulfilment of contractual obligations in exchange for public recognition that at the same time affords space for the writer’s assertion of autonomous subjectivity. In the context of this transaction, the performance of ‘Chinese woman’, exhibited in the novel’s fidelity to the Colonialist Orientalist narratives that co-construct ‘Chinese woman’ (evident, for example, in the endorsement of the Progress Narrative and displays of ‘Chineseness’) facilitates the telling of retreat stories that draw attention to the oppressiveness of the hegemonic narratives that subjectivate the writer. Hence, the writer’s ‘virtuous transaction’ involves a strategic performance of ‘Chinese woman’ (genus ‘Chinese woman writer’) that obscures and therefore facilitates her critical gaze.

***Alison Wong, As the Earth Turns Silver: Between ‘Turtle Eggs’ and ‘Barbarians’*²⁵⁴**

Alison Wong’s award-winning novel *As the Earth Turns Silver*²⁵⁵ (published in 2009) was motivated by her discovery of her great-grandfather’s unsolved murder in Wellington, New Zealand, during the First World War (A. Wong, Interview 22 Mar 2012). Set in Wellington with brief excursions to Dunedin and Kwangtung (today Guangdong), China, it tells the story of a love affair between Yung, a Chinese

²⁵⁴ In Cantonese, ‘turtle egg’ *gwei dun* 龜蛋 and ‘barbarian’ *yeung gwei zi* 洋鬼子 are pejorative terms – the first used to refer to Chinese men; the second, Caucasians or Europeans.

²⁵⁵ Hereafter, *ATETS*. The novel won the Jane Frame Fiction Award in 2009, and the New Zealand Post Book Award for Fiction in 2010. It was also shortlisted for the Australian Prime Minister’s Literary Awards in 2010 and longlisted for the 2011 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award (A. Wong, “Personal” 73; see also “Wong, Alison”).

immigrant, and Katherine, a Pākehā widow. The novel spans the years from 1905 to 1922,²⁵⁶ a period that saw significant political and social turmoil in China,²⁵⁷ New Zealand's participation in the First World War, and widespread support for legislation aimed at excluding the Chinese from New Zealand.²⁵⁸ Amid constraints on the writing of the novel – both from within the Chinese community and the Pākehā mainstream – the narrative strategies deployed throughout demonstrate the author's reflexivity and adroit navigation of the space between herself and the hegemonic narratives that co-construct 'Chinese woman'. Ranging from retreat storytelling to parodic re-citals of sinophobic narratives to withholding translations of Chineseness, the strategies deployed in *ATETS* constitute both critical and subversive expressions of the author's autonomous subjectivity and agency, which clearly draw attention to the limits of her subjectivation.

In my interviews with Alison Wong, she revealed the different ways that the hegemonic discourses that co-construct 'Chinese woman' hindered the writing of the novel.

One of the first difficulties the author encountered was the patriarchal regulation of women's storytelling within the Chinese community. During the research that the author undertook for the novel, it came to her attention that other Chinese women researchers she was acquainted with were hindered in their attempts to interview Chinese men. 'They are not,' she revealed, 'respected in the same way as a male is' (A. Wong, Interview 22 Mar 2012). That men are the gatekeepers – or at least, endorsers – of the community's stories is also reflected in the author's own experience:

. . . when I started work on *As the Earth Turns Silver*,²⁵⁹ I asked my father's permission to write it. He said, yeah, go ahead, it needs to be

²⁵⁶ The brief prologue to the novel, an opening reflection, is dated 1896.

²⁵⁷ In China, this period saw the overthrow of the Ching dynasty in 1911, the founding of the Republic in 1912, the formation of the Communist Party in 1921, the "warlord era" between 1916 and 1928, and continued colonial incursions by European powers.

²⁵⁸ See, for example: Murphy, *Guide* 7; Ip and Murphy, 23-24; Appendices 3, 7, 9, 10.

²⁵⁹ Alison Wong began her research for *ATETS* in 1996 (Interview 7 Jul 2015).

written. . . I thought, I don't care what anyone else says, this is my . . . father's grandfather, his family – if my father gives me permission, I don't care if everybody else doesn't give me permission. . .

(Interview 22 Mar 2012)

When asked if she would have gone ahead and written *ATETS* if her father had declined to give her permission, the author was uncertain. However, the *perceived imperative* for permission – granted or otherwise – was clearly a constraining factor, particularly in light of the novel's potentially controversial subject matter.²⁶⁰

Relatedly, the second concern was the author's apprehension about the Chinese community's response to the novel:

When I started. . . I was actually quite scared of writing it because I thought I'd get . . . criticised by the Chinese . . . there was an attitude by some people: don't air the dirty laundry . . . and potentially provoke more racism or controversy. . . I was worried about what I'd get wrong. . . (Interview 22 Mar 2012)

The author's concerns were certainly not unreasonable. With the resurgence of racism in the 1990s in response to the influx of Asian immigrants into New Zealand, the settler Chinese community had become hyper-vigilant and acutely aware of the capriciousness of mainstream tolerance. Many settler Chinese, having worked diligently over several generations to assimilate and uphold their Model Minority reputation, were understandably disturbed by the sudden upsurge in hostilities (Fung). In this climate, anything that had the potential to provoke further antagonism from the Pākehā mainstream needed to be given careful consideration.

The third constraining factor was the difficulty Alison Wong experienced in her attempts to articulate Chineseness. As a well-assimilated fourth generation Chinese New Zealander, the author found that while she 'felt at ease writing Pākehā

²⁶⁰ It is not clear whether her father's permission was *required*, for the author states that she does not know whether or not she would have written the novel without it. She did, however, state that: ' . . . with important potentially controversial things in my life I talked with my father and mother. Sometimes they could have major concerns which I would listen to. . . I did try to be respectful' (A. Wong, Interview 16 Jul 2015).

characters' (Lancashire), it was a considerable challenge to develop the novel's Chinese characters:

I had to really concentrate on my Chinese background to write it. I was really trying to see if I could understand what Chinese-ness was, trying to figure out what were particular characteristics of my family and what was quite essentially Chinese. (Tay)²⁶¹

There are places in *ATETS* where the artifice involved in the author's attempt to essentialise Chineseness results in highly Orientalised characterisations and situations, which, due to their familiarity and enduring truth, border on cliché (talk of female infanticide and the imperative to produce sons, for example (98, 120-21)). The Chinese women in the novel appear in many places to be explicitly exotic, characterised with references to food, family, cultural practices and the patriarchal traditions that subordinate them. For example, in the characterisation of Yung's wife in China, her seclusion as a Chinese woman is portrayed with well-known motifs – including sedan chair, curtains, classical Chinese novel and needlework – that enable the reader to easily recognise her as a tradition-bound Oriental 'Chinese woman' (95).²⁶² Yung's wife is also portrayed as a typically *diminished* 'Chinese woman': a woman so well subjugated by hegemonic narratives that she has no name, and barely takes up any space:

. . . her long face captured in *a perfect state of non-being*. Her hands rested stiffly on her lap. . . She sat in a huge wooden chair, her elbows turned out, *barely touching the carved sides*. It made her seem *very small* – *a pale-skinned woman* in loose silk . . . below the full silk trousers, *impossibly small* silk shoes. (184)²⁶³

Throughout the novel, the Chinese women characters are not only subordinate, they demonstrate awareness of their minor status through an unwillingness to

²⁶¹ See also, A. Wong, "Personal" 69.

²⁶² See also, pages 95, 98, 97.

²⁶³ My emphases, highlighting the phrases that portray her as a diminished 'Chinese woman'. The author affirmed that both Yung's and Shun's wives in China are deliberately unnamed in order to illustrate the fact that Chinese women were not included in Chinese genealogies (Interview 18 Sept 2014).

assert themselves. Shun's wife (in China), for example, speaks in broken English, as though she is aware that she should not be speaking (102-104); and Mei-lin, Shun's concubine in Wellington, is portrayed as peripheral to the men in her life:

She set out two pairs of chopsticks, two china spoons, two pale green rice bowls. She served the father of her son and his brother, then sat down away from the table, holding Wai-wai on her knees . . . watching them. . . (107)²⁶⁴

Due to the extent of the author's assimilation, it is not surprising that the characterisations of Chineseness in *ATETS* are drawn from the same hegemonic narratives that construct 'Chineseness' in the Pākehā mainstream. (Indeed, it is, perhaps, inevitable that the author's voice would be heavily influenced by these narratives, particularly in light of the lack of settler Chinese voices in the field of 'New Zealand literature' up to and including the 1990s. In fact, Alison Wong revealed that when she first conceived *ATETS* in 1996, following a family reunion celebrating the centenary of her great-grandfather's arrival in New Zealand in 1896, there were no fictional mainstream stories about settler Chinese people that she could relate to (Interview 22 Mar 2012)).²⁶⁵ On an initial reading, the stories within the novel do appear to be quite compliant with Colonialist Orientalist narratives. Accounts of racism – that is, *narratives that discredit the Pākehā mainstream* – are, for example, *minimised*: 'legitimised' in well-known Pākehā-endorsed stories about the Poll Tax legislation, and confined to anomalously tragic events instigated by deeply troubled characters (11, 76, 176). (It is noteworthy that the Chinese characters murdered in the novel die at the hands of Pākehā men deemed to be of unsound mind). But a close critical reading of *ATETS* reveals discourses of racism to be subversively referenced and, entwined with patriarchal 'Chinese' narratives,

²⁶⁴ See also pages 124-25.

²⁶⁵ The author stated that she was disturbed by the 'often racist, stereotypical, unflattering' portrayals of Chinese people and culture as 'either ugly and negative or exotic' in early twentieth century mainstream New Zealand literature (she disclosed, for example, that reading Katherine Mansfield's "Prelude" was both 'alienating and shameful'). Not only did the author feel confronted by the realisation that 'no one spoke for the people' she 'came from', she also wondered ' . . . how in these circumstances can anyone identify with the Chinese or be proud to be one?' (A. Wong, "Writing" 4)

deployed counterhegemonically through strategies that involve: the appropriation of anti-Chinese or sinophobic narratives through rigorous re-cital, cynical valorisation of the Pākehā mainstream, retreat storytelling, assertion of non-‘Chinese woman’ subjectivities in characterisations of Chinese women, and withholding of translations of Chineseness. I discuss each of these in detail below.

Throughout *ATETS*, the author rigorously re-cites and thereby appropriates well-known sinophobic phrases such as ‘the Asiatic problem’ (32-33), ‘chink’ (39) and ‘chow’ (54), and familiar stories about the evils of ‘Chinamen’, such as the following:

‘You ever been down there? The opium’s so strong you can cut the air with a knife. It makes your skin creep, all them Chows. . . ’
. . . ‘Dad said if you ever went down Haining Street you got kidnapped and boiled in a copper and made into preserved ginger’
(54)²⁶⁶

In the chapter “Better than a Dog”, Mrs Newman’s²⁶⁷ reminders of the reasons why Katherine should not liaise with a ‘Chinaman’ recall many of the sinophobic narratives that prevailed in the early twentieth century:

[They] undercut us with prices that would put a decent working man in the poorhouse. . . They suck the country dry and then return to the Flowery Land with everything that is rightfully ours. . .
. . . only the lowest class of women . . . consort with Chinamen. (149)
You marry a Chinaman and you lose the right to vote, you won’t get the old-age pension . . . you lose everything. . .
He’s a Chinaman. That makes him worse than a Jew and maybe a little better than a dog. (150)

²⁶⁶ This is a well-known story; see, for example: Lawlor 99; Lee and Lam 132. Haining Street, Wellington, known for its cluster of Chinese residences and businesses, was exoticised and highly sensationalised in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Shum, “Remembering” 75-86).

²⁶⁷ Protagonist Katherine’s employer

On a cursory reading, these re-tellings appear to be faithful reiterations of Pākehā narratives of the kind perhaps expected from a ‘virtuous’ ‘Chinese woman’ writer. However, a closer more critical reading interprets this fidelity not as diligent compliance, but rather as subversiveness manifest as parody. Indeed, with its veritable slew of sinophobic narratives, the chapter “Better than a Dog” may be read as a performed reminiscence of well-known stories that constitutes a condensed critical portrait of the Pākehā mainstream in the early twentieth century.²⁶⁸

The second narrative strategy, cynical valorisation of the Pākehā mainstream, operates with similar economy. In the chapters in which the lives of the novel’s Chinese characters are foregrounded, the Pākehā mainstream is, for the most part, portrayed as a hostile and dangerous place: a place where Mei-lin and her Chinese women friends rarely venture beyond their homes, where shop fronts are maliciously damaged and urinated on, and where Yung and Katherine can only meet under cover of night. And the ‘Pākehā’ chapters portray a world of xenophobic contempt: here Katherine’s son Robbie is, from an impressionable age, heavily influenced by Lionel Terry and his sinophobic treatises;²⁶⁹ here we have a legal system that shows mercy to Terry and begrudgingly protects ‘Chinamen’ (*‘God! Here was the Chief Justice, fellow hater of the Asiatic element, having to protect Chinamen!’* (36)); and here, Katherine wishes that she could change the colour of Yung’s skin (223). It is not surprising therefore, that from the perspective of the novel’s Chinese characters, if the Pākehā mainstream is to be valorised, it must be cynically so:

Down Frederick Street, at the Anglican Mission, Annie was upheld as a shining example of Christian womanhood, but all Chinese knew she was a very good Confucian. Annie knew how to live in barbarian

²⁶⁸ The author states that the chapter “Better than a Dog” was intended to illustrate ‘the reality of the times’, and it certainly does so with significant economy (A. Wong, Interview 18 Sept 2014).

²⁶⁹ The infamous Lionel Terry was convicted for the murder of Joe Kum Yung in 1905 and sentenced to life in a mental asylum. Terry’s story is discussed above in Introduction: Economic Scapegoats, Alien Invaders and Ching Chong Chinamen: a ‘Chinese’ History.

lands – she was born in Australia. She spoke fluent Australian and she could read and write. And because she was coming to marry the Missioner, she was counted as clergy and didn't have to pay the poll tax. (76)²⁷⁰

The praise here for Annie Wong and her Pākehā attributes is clearly tempered by appreciation of her Chineseness, and by the recognition that it is these very attributes – evidenced by her marriage to a Christian and her fluency in the mainstream's language and culture – that exempt her from legislative discrimination. The use of the pejorative term 'barbarian' and the obtuseness of the phrase 'fluent Australian' clearly indicate that the effusiveness with which this praise is written is derisive – and cynical – rather than sincere.

Both these strategies – the appropriation of sinophobic narratives through rigorous re-cital and the cynical valorisation of the Pākehā mainstream – may be recognised as performances of 'Chinese woman' by virtue of their apparent compliance with (that is, they parrot) hegemonic mainstream narratives. But it is this 'compliance' – this *ostensible* conformity – that dissembles the writer's assertion of her non-'Chinese woman' subjectivity, which only upon close scrutiny may be identified as a critical gaze.

The third narrative strategy involves the telling of retreat stories. Not normally told in the presence of mainstream Pākehā or patriarchal Chinese audiences, these are publicly narrated by the writer in the performance that is the novel: integrated into the narrative in observations and conversations, and portrayed through the Chinese characters' actions. In terms of content, the retreat stories in *ATETS* clearly correspond to those in the inside interviews discussed in Chapter Three. They reveal *performance strategies* in response to racism on the outside:

'Ignore the barbarians,' his brother always said. 'Never give them an excuse to retaliate.' (13)

²⁷⁰ This section of the novel is written from the third-person perspective, mediated through the perspective of Mei-lin, Shun's concubine in New Zealand.

Shun rubbed his gammy leg. He told his brother not to go out after dusk. Not to go out at all, not unless absolutely necessary. (30)

That night, Yung took the scissors from the drawer in the kitchen and cut off his braid. . . He did not recognize himself. He felt as if he were growing paler or maybe pinker – because that was the true colour of barbarians. . . He looked at his face, at his hair. He felt as if even his name was translating. He put the braid at the bottom of a drawer and covered it with his most intimate apparel. (15)

They *complain about the outside world*, and Other and derogate its inhabitants:

Husband says the New Gold Mountain is full of white devils. They smell like sheepmeat and butter; they don't like *Tongyan*. (104)

He didn't understand English – the language, like the people, kept changing the rules. (123)

They reveal *personal hardships* and *little-known Chinese practices*:²⁷¹

One morning it was faeces smeared in arcs over the front window. Afterwards Yung washed with soap and hot water, smelling his hands, then washing them again and again until his skin felt tight and pale and papery. (146)

Mei-lin laughed. She had whispered endearments to him, then called out loudly, 'Good-for-nothing slave girl!' so the spirits would believe he was just a worthless girl and wouldn't steal him away. (118)

The fourth narrative strategy involves the assertion of autonomous subjectivities in characterisations of Chinese women. In *ATETS*, Chinese women characters are given voices with which to speak at length; for example, the wives of the brothers Shun and Yung are accorded separate chapters in which, as first-person narrators, they tell their own stories about their lives in China. Chinese women in the novel also appear in scenes through which their non-'Chinese

²⁷¹ That is, practices not widely known within the Pākehā mainstream, and therefore not normally referenced in exoticising Colonialist Orientalist narratives.

woman' subjectivities are expressed. Mei-lin's resistance to patriarchal Chinese imperatives is poignantly portrayed in the story of her unwillingness to comply with Shun's insistence that their baby son travel to China to be brought up there by his wife. In the following scenes, her autonomous non-'Chinese woman' subjectivity is defiantly expressed:

'She's the Wife,' he said quietly. 'She has no sons.' . . .

Shun put his hand on her shoulder.

Turtle egg, she thought. *Bastard*. She swung round on him, saw his eyes flicker wide, his hands lift as he stumbled backwards. She stopped, turned back to the baby. . . (106)

She tried to turn, to push him away, but he held her, pushed hard into her. At the window lace curtains lifted and fell. She could see clouds in a small rectangle of sky, ghost lit, moving, moving away, and she couldn't breathe, couldn't open her mouth or twist herself free. She heard a cry she did not recognise, a wrenching, her nails clawing across his cheeks.

'Bitch!' He punched her hard in the face. Got up, grabbed his clothes. . . (107)

Afterwards, she returned to his bed, but always retired early, turning her back to the door when she heard him climb the stairs, never turning, even onto her back, until she heard his deepening breath. . . (114)

He avoided her eyes.

'What's wrong with you? Are you mad? Are you a coward?'

He almost hit her, but the look on her face stopped him. The hard, steady gaze, the set of her mouth against him. (115)

In these scenes, Mei-lin resists Shun – the father of her son – by either turning her back on him or confronting him directly. Shun, clearly stunned by her feistiness ('his eyes flicker wide'; he stumbles), responds by either trying to 'eliminate' her (by striking her), or by ignoring her (by escaping her, and avoiding her eyes). It is noteworthy that both Shun and Mei-lin are bewildered by Mei-lin's insubordination:

she does not recognize her own cry; he cannot look at her. As a Chinese woman who transgresses 'Chinese woman' by asserting her autonomy, Mei-lin is an unfamiliar incomprehensible subject.

The fifth narrative strategy in *ATETS* involves the withholding of translations of references to the more esoteric elements of Chinese culture, which signals the author's unwillingness to be completely subsumed by hegemonic mainstream Pākehā narratives. For Alison Wong, such withholding may well be interpreted as an attempt to reclaim what was lost in the process of her own coerced assimilation. The author recalled how her parents were compelled to perform their Chineseness transparently for a Pākehā audience:

When I was a baby, a woman who worked for my parents in their fruit and vegetable shop became paranoid about them speaking to us in Chinese (she thought they were speaking about her behind her back), and so my parents stopped speaking to us in Chinese, and I grew up speaking English. This was a lasting regret for me. I know the sound of Cantonese but understand only a smattering of words and phrases. I could not communicate with my grandparents. (A. Wong, "Field")

In the context of this history of subjection, the author's desire to claim sovereignty in the writing of her novel may be interpreted as counterhegemonic resistance. In my interview with her, the author disclosed that she was motivated by a strong desire to portray the Chinese characters in *ATETS* as 'real people' in order to incite empathy; but as much as she wanted readers to understand these characters, she was adamant that 'authenticity' would not be sacrificed for accessibility. There is, therefore, no glossary to explain the Cantonese phrases used liberally throughout *ATETS*, and no explanations to support portrayals of or references to Chinese culture.

I wanted to make it . . . understandable for a general audience . . . but only if that also worked for a Chinese reader . . . it had to be . . . authentically Chinese. . . I didn't want to explain everything. . . I was very aware that there'd be a whole lot of things that people would

not . . . fully understand. . . I thought, too bad . . . if people really wanted to know, they could do some research and . . . find out themselves. (A. Wong, Interview 22 Mar 2012)

For mainstream Pākehā audiences familiar with Oriental stories replete with stereotypical characters involved in readily recognisable cultural practices (for example, eating with chopsticks; getting married in red), such withholding can be bewildering, for it draws attention to an unknown – and more worryingly, potentially unknowable – Chineseness. But such ‘unclassifiable strangeness’, which has long been the basis of mainstream aversion to the Chinese presence (Ferrall et al 9),²⁷² can ground the Chinese woman writer’s autonomy for it points to the limits of her subjectivation by hegemonic narratives. In her refusal to render transparent the novel’s Chineseness, the author expresses an unknown autonomous subjectivity, thereby asserting her extra-hegemonic agency.

Despite the discourses that constrained the writing of *ATETS*, the author was able to assert her autonomous subjectivity and agency through a range of narrative strategies. While the last three strategies – the telling of retreat stories, assertion of non-‘Chinese woman’ subjectivities in characterisations of Chinese women, and withholding translations of Chineseness – clearly defy hegemonic narratives of ‘Chinese woman’, the earlier strategies may be identified as *cynical performances* of ‘Chinese woman’. Both the appropriation of sinophobic narratives through rigorous re-cital and the cynical valorisation of the Pākehā mainstream demonstrate the author’s tactical inhabitations of the critical space behind the ‘Chinese woman’ mask. In conjunction with the more defiantly transgressive strategies, these performances simultaneously exploit and resist the hegemonic narratives that co-construct ‘Chinese woman’. In *ATETS*, the Chinese woman writer’s assertion of an autonomous subjectivity and extra-hegemonic agency is clearly and variously grounded in the subversion of the very narratives that subordinate her.

²⁷² In their account of turn of the century Australasian Orientalism, Ferrall, Millar and Smith identify an enduring visceral cause of mainstream antipathy toward the Chinese to be founded on a ‘proteophobia’ or ‘fear of formlessness’ (9, 21).

Lynda Chanwai-Earle, Ka Shue (Letters Home): A Disorienting Monodrama

*Ka Shue (Letters Home)*²⁷³ tells the story of three generations of women in a Chinese New Zealand family. Based on Lynda Chanwai-Earle's own family history,²⁷⁴ the play is set in both China and New Zealand between the years 1937 and 1989, and explores the lives of grandmother 'Paw Paw', daughter 'Abbie'²⁷⁵ and granddaughter 'Jackie' through a series of monologues. *Ka Shue* premiered in Wellington in 1996, and was the first theatrical production about Chinese New Zealanders to be performed for mainstream audiences; as such, it has been described by both reviewers and scholars as 'groundbreaking'.²⁷⁶ In the following analysis, I argue that the play's 'groundbreaking-ness' lies less in the fact of its articulation of Chinese New Zealand stories in the public domain, and more in the audacity with which these stories are told.²⁷⁷

Lynda Chanwai-Earle has worked not only as a professional playwright and actor, she has also been a film director, poet, creative writing facilitator in women's prisons, and journalist on both television and radio. The playwright informed me that her writing has, without doubt, been inspired by her 'varied careers', and that her 'desire to take artistic risk and push boundaries' stems from her 'exposure to many diverse peoples and cultures' (Interview 2 Sept 2015). It certainly appears that the candour and forthrightness with which the stories in *Ka Shue* are told are

²⁷³ Hereafter abbreviated to *Ka Shue*.

²⁷⁴ Lynda Chanwai-Earle admits that *Ka Shue* is 'close to the bone' as far as her family history is concerned' (*Ka Shue* 5).

²⁷⁵ Abbie is the daughter of Paw Paw's husband's concubine.

²⁷⁶ See, for example: H. Chung, "Autoethnographic" 83; Chanwai-Earle, Interview R. Liang; Battye, *Drama Cuts* 2; "Lynda". Paloma Fresno Calleja describes it as 'the first work ever to tackle the history of the Chinese community in New Zealand' ("Rocking" 139); and Ewen Coleman describes it as an 'original concept'. Interest in the play has endured: it has been a prescribed text in the secondary school curriculum and in tertiary institutions since 1998 (Chanwai-Earle, "Ka Shue in School"; "New Zealand Scholarship").

²⁷⁷ Appendix 26 includes settler Chinese New Zealand stories told by settler Chinese women that were shared in the public domain prior to *Ka Shue* (1996). In addition, James Ng's first two volumes of *Windows on a Chinese Past* were published in 1993 and 1995. Other works that presented settler Chinese New Zealand stories in the public domain before 1996 include Jye Kang's novel *Guests of the New Gold Hill*, published in 1985, and Leon Narbey's film *Illustrious Energy*, which first screened in 1988.

informed by a well-developed critical gaze. While the stories in the play are similar in content to those told in *Chinatown Girl* and *ATETS* (for example, they include accounts of racial discrimination and the oppressiveness of Chinese women's lives), the *storytelling* in *Ka Shue* is significantly less inhibited, and the play's transgressions of 'Chinese woman' more confronting. The reflexive distance between the Chinese woman playwright and the hegemonic narratives that co-construct 'Chinese woman' is foregrounded through a range of narrative strategies; these intersect and configure a series of monologues that constitute dramatic *critical* performances, which effectively *disorient* hegemonic conceptions of Chinese women. These strategies may be broadly categorised as: exposition and appropriation of sinophobic narratives by Chinese women characters, reconstruction of the Oriental 'Chinese woman', retreat storytelling, and monodrama. I discuss each of these in detail below.

In the preamble of the script for *Ka Shue*, Lynda Chanwai-Earle refers to herself as a 'descendant of the "Poll Tax"', thereby asserting her authority to narrate the stories that follow (5). The playwright's commitment to revealing the impact of legislative and other oppressive mainstream discourses on Chinese lives is manifest in the freedom of voice afforded the play's characters.²⁷⁸ In *Ka Shue*, Chinese women re-tell hegemonic sinophobic narratives from their own very personal perspectives, revealing experiences and subjectivities likely to be unfamiliar to mainstream Pākehā, and confronting for Chinese New Zealand audiences for whom such stories were likely to have been long buried.²⁷⁹

An excellent example of the forthrightness with which the play's Chinese women characters expose sinophobic narratives can be found in the grandmother Paw Paw's monologue in Act Two, Scene 3, in which she makes plain the extent of her suffering:

²⁷⁸ Lynda Chanwai-Earle has openly declared her refusal to 'sanitise a story just to please a section of the audience because I'm frightened I might offend them' (Calleja, "Rocking" 139).

²⁷⁹ Conversations about the history of the Poll Tax in New Zealand became more public in the mid-1990s, around the time *Ka Shue* premiered. See, for example: Murphy, *Poll-tax*; Fung.

This Parker kid little shit. He say to Cyril, 'Ching chong Chinaman, eatee doggie in fry pan!' Punch Cyril! It very hard for Cyril. He not allow fight back. Give us bad name. [Pause] Guilo²⁸⁰. . . call us 'alien'. Say we pay one hundred pound or not come. It take long time save, I sell family gold, just to come! . . . Everything different here. . . New Zealand government not charge anyone else fee but Chinese. They let us in New Zealand, say we be good and only stay two year. Until war over. Then we all go home. Back to China. . . [angry] Why we go back when Japanese everywhere?!! (25)²⁸¹

Paw Paw tells this story of everyday and institutionalised racism directly after her account of a typical day in which she rises in the cold dark of the morning to open the family's fruit shop for business, where she is confronted by 'Mr Jone', who 'always come too early – complain service slow'.²⁸² The shifts between Paw Paw's complaints about 'Mr Jone', her ruminations about her son Cyril's victimisation at the hands of the 'Parker kid little shit', and her umbrage at being labelled 'alien' reflect the pervasiveness of sinophobic narratives in her life (25). The monologue not only draws the audience's attention to (hitherto) little-known historical narratives, it challenges long and widely held beliefs – in both the Pākehā mainstream and the Chinese community – about New Zealand's self-proclaimed 'superior' race relations (Calleja, "Monodramas" 108), and draws attention to a previously unrecognised subject: an outspoken Chinese woman.

Beyond the critical reiteration of hegemonic sinophobic narratives, the *appropriation* of these by the play's Chinese women characters demonstrates a conspicuous, more confronting transgression of 'Chinese woman'. The following is another excerpt from Paw Paw's monologue in Act Two Scene 3:

²⁸⁰ 'Guilo/s' is an alternative romanisation for gweilo/s 鬼佬.

²⁸¹ 'pay one hundred pound' refers to the Poll Tax; 'only stay two year' refers to the temporary visas that a limited number of refugee Chinese wives and children were given to enter New Zealand at the beginning of World War Two (Appendix 3).

²⁸² Chinese fruit shops were in this period typically open very long hours out of economic necessity; see, for example, Wong Yuk-lan's story in Ip, *Home* 74.

We ate pigeon from park one day. Why not? Maybe I shoulda kill next-door Parker dog. One day stupid mutt got one of my chicken. Mr Parker not even say sorry. [Pause] Better I not. Make government unhappy – if I eat neighbour dog. Guilos...! So stupid! We only people with sense. If you hungry just whistle and it come. No need hunt or fuss! [Pause] And him. Mr Parker. He no better than a dog as far as I can see. . . (25-26)

That ‘Mr Parker’ is ‘no better than a dog’ is an appropriation of a well-known late nineteenth century, early twentieth century Pākehā derogation of the Chinese.²⁸³ Appended to a popular sinophobic narrative – that the Chinese eat dogs – the monologue is all the more subversive. Paw Paw’s speech reveals her here as contemptuous: she clearly disrupts the model of the docile and deferential *Pākehā-valorising* ‘Chinese woman’. Similarly subversive, though rather less menacing, is the daughter Abbie’s declaration that ‘The trouble with us Chinese is that we’re supposed to be inscrutable. . .’ (14, 18). In signalling her awareness of ‘inscrutability’, an attribute perceived in the mainstream as typically ‘Chinese’, Abbie *undoes* ‘inscrutability’; for the critical gaze she asserts reveals a distance, and therefore contingency, between her Chinese woman self and ‘inscrutability’. Like Paw Paw’s appropriation of the ‘dog’ derogation, the ambiguity of Abbie’s revelation (maybe she is ‘inscrutable’, maybe she isn’t) undermines the capacity of Pākehā narratives to totalise her as ‘Chinese woman’.²⁸⁴

The Chinese women protagonists in *Ka Shue* reveal their experiences under the regime of patriarchal Chinese narratives as well. In intimate disclosures and ruminations, ‘unspeakable’ stories about inside life are laid bare in their monologues, revealing the pervasiveness of traditional misogynous beliefs (30) and the harshness and brutality of filial obligations and family life:

²⁸³ See, for example, discussion re: anti-Chinese diatribe spoken by ‘Mrs Newman’ in analysis of Alison Wong’s *ATETS* above.

²⁸⁴ Paloma Fresno Calleja describes this as an ‘ironical and unreliable self-identification, as pronounced by a character who has renounced her Chinese background, and clearly subverts the role of the passive oriental woman’ (“Monodramas” 7).

PAW PAW. [to baby Abbie] Wishee you die with her, wishee she
jump down well with you inside her stomach! (21)

PAW PAW. You give us bad name. Not care about family? . . . Selfish
child. We send you to good school. What you do for us, eh?
You thanking us by sleeping with guilo . . . ! . . . Don't think
you can put your face round here! You not come home – no,
no! Never come home now! You are . . . are . . . slut! [*spits*].
. . . Abbie you come back or I tell Babaa . . . He cut you
allowance! You leave – got no money . . . you die, starve to
death! (24-25)

The play's inside stories explicitly challenge hegemonic narratives about Chinese women. Abbie's monologues undermine widespread assumptions about Model Minority Chinese families ('My mother calls me a slut. You don't believe me do you? Yes, my own mother! . . . my parents are respectable, law abiding citizens. . .' (19)) – and Model Minority Chinese daughters. In Act Two Scene 8, Abbie tells the story of how she was made to 'recite the Chinese book 四書' as a child, that her punishment for getting a word wrong was to be starved (*reduced* to fit the model 'Chinese woman'), that growing up in this confined space, groomed as 'Chinese woman', ultimately enabled her to subvert 'her' in spectacular fashion. In the following scene, in which Abbie speaks to Paw Paw at her grave, the subversiveness of flaunting or masquerading 'Chinese woman' is manifest:

I stayed nice and slim for those cheongsams . . . I wore them. A
bright-coloured bird. All that expensive plumage to attract a
husband. [*laughs*] Only, I started to enjoy the effect. I was exotic. Oh
yes. By the time I was eighteen I had all the boys at university
following me – just whistle and they'd come. Your daughter the
whore. . . All the Chinese boys ran away. They were terrified of you.
Old dragon lady! (31-32)

Many of the play's appropriations of mainstream and patriarchal Chinese narratives may be identified as retreat stories, for they are complaints and tales of personal hardship within which the oppressiveness of hegemonic narratives is

exposed, derogated and strategically dealt with.²⁸⁵ However, unlike the retreat stories in either *Chinatown Girl* or *ATETS*, those told in *Ka Shue* appear as conspicuously performed transgressions of 'Chinese woman'. This is certainly made manifest by virtue of the text being a dramatic work written for performance, where the series of monologues sequentially highlights – that is, *centre-stages* – each Chinese woman character and bestows upon her a voice that when spoken, is comparatively unfettered by hegemonic intrusions.²⁸⁶ During the telling of these retreat stories, the audience is confronted with what Goffman would recognise as 'potentially offensive' 'backstage language or behaviour'; some of these stories, for example, are told in 'dialect' or 'substandard speech' and include ridicule, cursing and shouting, and there are more than a few occasions of 'elaborate griping' (*Presentation* 129). Indeed, as many are told with flagrant disregard for 'Chinese woman', the critical gaze they configure is quite disorienting.

In *Ka Shue*, stories are told by characters who look like 'Chinese woman' but who do not speak like 'Chinese woman'. Throughout the play, the conspicuous Orientalisation of the setting, props and actor(s) certainly conspires to affirm the hegemonically constructed 'Chinese woman'. The directions given in Act One, for example, suggest that props could include a red backdrop, rice bowl and chopsticks, a mah-jong tile, red paper and long red cloths; and under the assumption that the play will be performed as a monodrama, the suggested costume for the sole actor is 'a simple black Mandarin-styled garment'.²⁸⁷ It is not difficult to see the appeal that the play's 'Chinese' exhibitions would have for an audience with Orientalist preconceptions. In addition to these props, some of the characters (the inscrutable

²⁸⁵ As defined in Chapter Three: Telling 'Retreat' Stories, retreat stories may be categorised as performance strategies, complaints, and/or personal domestic Chinese stories.

²⁸⁶ I say 'comparatively' because the one-sided conversations in several of the monologues clearly imply the presence of a hegemonic interlocutor; see Act One, Scenes 3, 8, 10; Act Two, Scenes 1, 4, 6, 8.

²⁸⁷ According to the 'Production Notes', the play may either be performed as a monodrama by one actor, or by a full cast of actors (Chanwai-Earle, *Ka Shue* 5). However, the directions at the beginning of Act One assume a sole performer (7). Due to the lack of availability of Asian actors, Chanwai-Earle wrote *Ka Shue* with 'monodrama in mind', and subsequently played all of the characters in the play's premiere in Wellington, in March 1996 (Chanwai-Earle, Interview 9 July 2012; Calleja, "Rocking" 141).

businessman; the scorned concubine), sounds (broken English; swells of Peking opera), cultural references (the legend of 'Jie Zitui' 介之推), and images (Tai Chi on the banks of the Pearl River) appear to be, as George Parker describes, 'straight out of the popular Western subconscious of the Eastern Other' (187). Certainly, the first scene, which opens with Lady Li's line, 'My father name me, Shrimp Dumpling!' directed to be spoken 'in broken English with a Cantonese accent' (7), is the kind of introduction that sets up Orientalist expectations, which are then amply met through the exhibitions of 'Chineseness' in the scenes that follow.

Close scrutiny of the Chinese women characters' delivery of their stories throughout *Ka Shue* also reveals a level of compliance with 'Chinese woman'. The only characters who speak directly and only to the audience are the grandfather Gung Gung²⁸⁸ (the only male character), and Lady Li. This is significant, for it conforms with hegemonic perceptions of Chinese women, who in accord with 'Chinese woman', cannot *talk back* to the narrators who produce 'her'.²⁸⁹ While the concubine Lady Li addresses the audience directly in four scenes, her story is peripheral and her presence spectralised: she appears as The Ghost, a *disembodied* Chinese woman. Lady Li is also conspicuously Orientalised: in each scene that she appears in she stands 'centre upstage' beneath a suspended Chinese headpiece (7, 11, 15, 23, 33); her presence is accompanied by windchimes (7) or the music of Peking opera (19); and she narrates the legend of Jie Zitui and the 'Clear and Bright Festival' 清明 (15-16, 23-24, 33). As Lady Li is the only Chinese woman in the play who speaks to the audience at length, it is noteworthy that her speech is undermined by her Oriental spectral presence; for her attenuated voice reflects the marginalised place from where settler Chinese women in New Zealand must speak.

Within the context of these Orientalisations and reproductions of 'Chinese woman', hegemonic narratives of 'Chinese woman' are repeatedly undermined

²⁸⁸ Alternative spelling for Goong Goong 公公.

²⁸⁹ The monologues of the grandmother Paw Paw, the mother Abbie, and the granddaughter Jackie take the form of intimate communications with each other, or with other family members through letters, telephone conversations, and reminiscences. Out of these three characters, only Jackie has occasion to speak directly to the audience, and her addresses are very brief scene-setting asides (8, 16).

throughout the play. In addition to the conspicuous transgressions conveyed in the telling of retreat stories, the sequence of the play's scenes (also) challenges audience preconceptions of Chinese women. After the first scene, set in Kwangtung Province, China, 1940, in which The Ghost Lady Li stages a highly Orientalised 'Chinese woman' appearance, declaring her name – 'Shrimp Dumpling'—and her concubine status, and re-enacting her suicide in Cantonese accented broken English and Oriental headdress, the play cuts to Scene 2, Beijing, 1989, in which granddaughter Jackie reads, in fluent New Zealand English, a letter to her mother Abbie, in which she irreverently refers to her grandmother Paw Paw as 'an old dragon'. In (Act One) Scene 3, set in Kwangtung, China, 1937, Paw Paw, '*angry*' and '*derisive*', tells her mother she must travel to New Zealand to be with her husband (Gung Gung) (10-11). In (Act One) Scene 4, The Ghost Lady Li reappears to begin her retelling of the legend of Jie Zitui.²⁹⁰ The scenes in which Lady Li and Gung Gung appear characterise and reinforce 'Chinese woman': Gung Gung's monologues emphasise Lady Li and Abbie's beauty and other man-pleasing qualities, and Lady Li is (as I have detailed) spectralised and conspicuously Orientalised. These scenes are interspersed throughout the play such that the audience is exposed to a succession of juxtapositions of *performances* of 'Chinese woman' and *transgressions* of 'Chinese woman', a sequence that unsettles hegemonic perceptions of Chinese women.

Read as a monodrama (where one actor performs all the characters),²⁹¹ the play further challenges the hegemonically constructed 'Chinese woman'. The playwright suggests that the sole actor remain onstage during the entire performance, with no costume changes and that character changes be portrayed through voice and body (7). The scenes are fairly brief and there are twenty-two of them, requiring the sole actor to effect a sequence of twenty character changes in

²⁹⁰ And the origins of the 'Clear and Bright Festival' 清明節, otherwise known as Ching Ming, or the 'grave-sweeping' festival.

²⁹¹ Due to the lack of availability of Asian actors, Chanwai-Earle wrote *Ka Shue* with 'monodrama in mind', and subsequently played all of the characters in the play's premiere in Wellington, in March 1996 (Chanwai-Earle, Interview 9 July 2012; Calleja, "Rocking" 141).

just 65 minutes (4).²⁹² This rapid succession of character transformations, in which the actor's body is a palimpsest on which the lives of five characters are inscribed, erased, and re-inscribed, portrays an identity (if we can refer to the single body as a single identity) that is not only multifaceted, but unstable and ambiguous. The audience is required to focus on the idiosyncrasies of each character *as they are performed* and at the same time attempt to reconcile these with the representations of 'Chineseness' on stage and on the actor's body. Add to this the play's disrupted chronology (it shifts back and forth from the 1930s to the 1980s and points between), which fractures each character's depicted subjectivities and subject positions, and it is not difficult to see the play's potential to *disorient* hegemonic preconceptions about Chinese women (Calleja, "Monodramas" 3, 7, 9).

Ka Shue clearly demonstrates the Chinese woman writer's counterhegemonic resistance. The sole actor as ground for multiple character changes must, by virtue of the sequence of articulations and disarticulations required of her, navigate the space between herself and the characters she plays; indeed, it is the actor's command of the various relationships she has with 'Chinese woman' that foregrounds her extra-hegemonic autonomy. It is implicit that the actor can choose to either perform or not perform a character, and this contingency – between the actor and her roles – and the agility with which she manoeuvres between them, points to her agency. Furthermore, the audience's response to these performances – that is, their confusion/shock/departure – informs the Chinese woman writer/actor that she has performed an unanticipated, hitherto publicly unrecognised subjectivity.²⁹³

²⁹² Act One, Scenes 9 & 10 are the only two in sequence which feature the same character (Abbie).

²⁹³ For example: reviewer Laurie Atkinson expressed confusion about character changes and identity; and Dave Andrews, for all his Orientalist perceptions, describes the play as brushing aside 'preconceptions about lotus blossom female charm'. Chanwai-Earle reports that some people were concerned about the play's 'sometimes painful subject matter' (Chanwai-Earle, Interview R. Liang); and that some 'very offended' members of the Chinese community walked out of performances (O'Donnell 377).

Helene Wong, “Image, Identity and Media” and “Ching Chong Chinamen: When Friends Become Strangers”: Unmasked

Helene Wong is a pioneer. She was the first Chinese New Zealand woman to appear as a professional actor on stage (in 1971) and on television (in 1976) (H. Wong, “Helene Wong”); and in 1978 she made headlines as the first woman member of the Prime Minister’s Advisory Group, serving as social policy advisor to Robert Muldoon until 1980 (Hamilton; “Appointee”; “Think Tank’s”). A self-declared ‘hyphenate’, Helene Wong has also worked as a theatre director, television program manager for New Zealand on Air, film critic, and script consultant for television dramas and films.²⁹⁴ She is also an accomplished filmmaker, having directed and presented “Footprints of the Dragon”, one of the ten top-rated documentaries screened in New Zealand in 1995.²⁹⁵ Helene Wong’s background in the arts and in politics informs her outspoken critiques on racial discrimination directed toward New Zealand’s Chinese communities.²⁹⁶ In what follows I analyse two of Helene Wong’s essays, both of which were initially delivered as lectures in mainstream forums. First presented at the Thinking Markets Documentary Conference at the University of Auckland on October 3, 1998, “Image, Identity and Media”²⁹⁷ criticises stereotypical characterisations of Asian communities in mainstream media. First presented as part of the Clinton Roper Peace Lecture Series, Celebrating the UN Year of Tolerance for the Foundation of Peace Studies, Aotearoa/New Zealand, on 26 September 1995, “Ching Chong Chinamen: When Friends Become Strangers”²⁹⁸ interrogates the impact of the 1990s resurgence of racism on New Zealand’s Chinese communities.

²⁹⁴ Script consultant credits include Leon Narbey’s acclaimed *Illustrious Energy*. Helene Wong has also been known as Helene Knox.

²⁹⁵ The documentary was produced as part of the government-funded NZ On Air *Immigrant Nation* series. It was reported 8th out of the top 10 documentaries in terms of viewer numbers; see “What We Watched in 1995”; “NZ On Air 1994-95”. NZ On Air is the government broadcast funding agency that supports local television, radio, music and digital media for New Zealand audiences.

²⁹⁶ In a recent interview, the writer confirmed that the different ‘strands’ in her work enabled her to ‘be more aware and analytical’ of how these communities are perceived and positioned (Interview 25 Aug 2015).

²⁹⁷ Hereafter, “Image”.

²⁹⁸ Hereafter, “Chinamen”.

Of all the works by settler Chinese women writers discussed in this chapter, these essays are by far the most provocative. Unmediated by the artifice in the strategies deployed in the imaginative narratives of *Chinatown Girl*, *As the Earth Turns Silver*, and *Ka Shue*, their critical gaze is rather more transparent. What distinguishes them from the above works is that the author does not masquerade as ‘Chinese woman’ in her assertions of autonomous subjectivity. Unlike the writers discussed above, whose responses to hegemonic narratives involve performances of ‘Chinese woman’ – through ‘virtuous transactions’ (*Chinatown Girl*), critical appropriations (*ATETS*) or disorienting characterisations (*Ka Shue*) – Helene Wong does not speak from behind a ‘Chinese woman’ mask. In these essays, the distance between herself and ‘Chinese woman’ is foregrounded. The writer bares her autonomous subjectivity, indicating very clearly the limits of her subjectivation.

What is immediately obvious in both “Image” and “Chinamen” is that the author’s writing/speech does not reflect the hegemonically constructed ‘Chinese woman’. There is no evidence of pandering, hedging or minimising; no valorisations (deferential, cynical, parodic or otherwise); and no mention of ‘exotic’ or ‘Oriental’ with reference to either Chinese women or the Chinese community, except in the context of denigrating Pākehā narratives. These essays reveal the author’s acute awareness of the hegemonic narratives that subjugate her. With a determinedly insubordinate demeanour, she vehemently defies ‘Chinese woman’ by: interrogating hegemonic discourses, strategically deploying autoethnographic narratives,²⁹⁹ and articulating counterhegemonic directives. I discuss each of these strategies in detail below.

In her interrogation of the mainstream hegemonic discourses that have kept the Chinese community marginalised, the author is particularly critical of the Progress Narrative. In both essays she points out how little has changed in New Zealand:

²⁹⁹ I call these ‘autoethnographic’ in the sense that personal autobiographical narratives are shared to support the writer’s articulation of arguments about mainstream culture; discussed above in Introduction: Methodology, Methods and Chapter Outlines.

. . . Western media treatment of Asian peoples has been predominantly derogatory at worst, non-existent at best. . . perhaps I can give you some idea. . . in two headlines: the first from a self-proclaimed “unprejudiced monthly magazine” called “Fair Play” – “THE CHINKEY INVASION”; the second from a local suburban newspaper, the Eastern Courier – the very catchy “THE INV-ASIAN”. The first headline was in 1894, the second in 1993. (“Image”)

I’m not impressed by politicians like Roger Maxwell, who liken the prejudice against Asians to the Australians’ “Kick a Pom a day” slogan, saying “It happens all the time but it isn’t a long-lasting attitude”. He doesn’t think a century is long-lasting?. . . we thought it had disappeared, it has clearly only been lying dormant. (“Chinamen”)

The author’s sense of indignation in response to continued marginalisation despite the efforts of the Chinese community to assimilate and abide by mainstream Pākehā imperatives is particularly evident in “Chinamen” (‘Had a century of keeping our heads down and being law-abiding, hard-working, quiet achievers really counted for nothing?’) Here she recites a selection of sinophobic narratives, which range from the explicitly derogatory to more benign generalisations. In addition to quoting denigrating appellations (‘filth-begrimed, opium-besotted horde of Mongolian monstrosities’, ‘Yellow Agony’, ‘Chow Curse’), offensive cartoon images are described in unflinching detail (‘over-the-top caricatures of pig-tailed, slant-eyed coolies with oversize teeth jumping over walls or wrapping octopus arms around Māori maidens’), and mainstream political heroes vilified (Richard Seddon is described as ‘that great political icon. . . who preached European superiority. . . who said, “there was about the same distinction between a European and a Chinaman as that between a Chinaman and a monkey”’).

The author’s objections to mainstream discrimination are not limited to the salient narratives of yesteryear; she also identifies clear late twentieth century resonances, arguing that gross generalisations and stereotypes remain pervasive. It is observed, for example, that the term ‘Asian’ is widely used as a ‘catch-all’, often

accompanied by a 'contemptuous tone'; that the 'BMW's and Rolexes and porticoed mansions' attributed to all 'Asian' immigrants are 'red rags to many a Kiwi bull'; and that in (mainstream) movies and television, Asian women are almost without exception variously portrayed as 'prostitutes, sexy sirens, exotic schemers and submissive wives' ("Chinamen").

In "Chinamen", mainstream tolerance is scrutinised through the author's observations of contemporary attitudes toward the Chinese community, and determined to be a pretext maintained for the purposes of luring the Chinese into the country because they are perceived to be 'money machines' whose presence benefits the nation's economy. That the motive for tolerance is mercenary is supported by the author's observation of those she had considered to be 'well-disposed toward the Chinese', who have commented on 'Asian children taking over the classroom', made 'disparaging remarks about big houses and big cars', or expressed fears of 'Triads and an increase in crime'. The view that tolerance is a veneer is clear also in "Image", where the author laments that the representation of minority cultures in mainstream media is motivated either by 'official mandate' or 'because of an angle that is newsworthy or sensational'. Here she states vehemently:

*I know that TVNZ screens Asia Dynamic under sufferance, burying it at 9.30 on a Saturday morning, when everyone, Asians and others alike, are out doing Saturday morning things. . .*³⁰⁰

*I know that without the statutory requirement upon NZ On Air to fund minority programmes, I would not have made my documentary on Chinese immigrants. . .*³⁰¹

It appears that the interrogation of Progress requires the author to situate herself at a certain – Othering – distance from the mainstream, in a stance that mirrors that of those who Other *her*, for she writes: 'Prejudice and racism towards us have clearly not gone away, and we look at Europeans with new eyes, and

³⁰⁰ Author's emphasis.

³⁰¹ Author's emphasis; reference to "Footprints of the Dragon".

wonder' ("Chinamen"). The author's awareness of herself as Other is inseparable from her apprehension of herself as subordinated, and the accumulation of these apprehensions – or *injuries* – is what accounts for the distance between her and those who Other her. In "Chinamen", the author discloses her personal experiences of racism and discrimination through autoethnographic narratives that lay bare the extent of her vulnerability.³⁰² She shares, for example, a story about her mother's distress upon discovering that members of the wider community the family had lived in and contributed to for decades (under the assumption that such contributions were valued) secretly referred to the family as 'Chows'; and a disquieting excerpt from a letter she received in which the writer explicitly expresses their hatred for Chinese New Zealanders. While not all of the personal stories in "Chinamen" reveal encounters marked by such blatant contempt, the author notes that acceptance in the mainstream seems contingent upon her efforts to assimilate or minimise her Chineseness: 'I recall how pleased I was when people used to say to me "Oh, I don't think of you as Chinese". . . Does it mean that if they did think of us as Chinese they wouldn't give us the time of day? ("Chinamen")'. The author's reflections on being identified as Chinese/'Asian' demonstrate clearly how hegemonic mainstream narratives undermine her everyday life. She admits, for example, to feeling constrained by:

a mix of wariness and self-consciousness when approaching strangers – will I be abused and told to 'Go Home'? If I'm driving and forget to indicate that I'm changing lanes, am I going to get the fingers and be yelled at for being an Asian driver? As trivial as such incidents might seem, let me assure you that the shock and deep sense of injustice that they engender is not. ("Chinamen")

Reading these essays, I am given the impression that this 'deep sense of injustice' motivates the author not only to talk back, but to take it upon herself to

³⁰² Apart from a reference to the author's own documentary, there are no personal stories in "Image"; however, "Image" is obviously driven by the author's personal concerns.

issue counterhegemonic directives. In “Chinamen”, for example, the following imperative is prefaced with ‘what the European needs to do’:

. . . overcome your fear of the different . . . relinquish the monocultural stance. . . Visit Asia. Or any country where white is not the dominant colour. Stand in a place where you’re the only white face and you can’t understand the language. Feel the fear.

The Chinese community is also criticised, for its complicity. The author is of the view that its passivity and compliance with traditional patriarchal imperatives has kept them confined to the margins; that while Chinese people may ‘grumble’ about their situation, they tend to do nothing:

. . . preferring, like bamboo, to bend with the wind, or fold our tents and move on. . . Confucian habits die hard, and most of us of Asian descent have been socialised as wimps. We bow to authority and we go with the crowd. We passively accept. (“Chinamen”)

The author encourages individuals in the community to speak up and tell their own stories: ‘we’ve got enough Chinese doctors and accountants – let’s get some storytellers going’ (“Chinamen”). In “Image”, she challenges the longstanding belief that low profile, compliant Model Minority behaviour ensures the community’s survival in the mainstream, warning that, ‘unless we build . . . our profile’, ‘we may just end up falling off the edge’.³⁰³

In these essays, Helene Wong tells her own stories about the impact that hegemonic discourses of ‘Chineseness’ have had on her life, strategically deploying autoethnographic narratives that by virtue of their intimacy (personal hardship), grievances (complaints), and articulation of directives (performance strategies), may be identified as retreat stories. These stories reveal and convey the author’s reflexive awareness of the ways she is subjugated, enabling her to *look back* at those who subordinate her. “Image” and “Chinamen” are unsettling because – unlike the works analysed above – the critical gaze they convey is unmediated by

³⁰³ Here the Chinese community’s situation is contextualised as part of the broader predicament of Asian communities in New Zealand.

performances of 'Chinese woman'. Barefaced, the author directly and emphatically disorients hegemonic perceptions of Chinese women. As I have already pointed out in my analyses of *ATETS* and *Ka Shue*, such disorientation is potentially empowering for the Chinese woman writer because it signals the limits of her subjectivation. Whether such limits can be apprehended in the public domain, however, is a different matter.

Can Chinese Women Speak?

Oh lucky me
I am of some use
I am of some inspiration
to the two men
across the lunchcounter
I remind them of the
last Chinese restaurant
they took their family to
did you know that
Chinese food was delicious?

(Frances Chung 22)

The analyses above reveal the range of narrative strategies that Chinese women writers deploy to express their extra-hegemonic subjectivities through their work on public platforms. To conclude this chapter, I consider a selection of mainstream responses to these works. My analysis of these below suggests that while the strategies that Chinese woman writers utilise certainly enable them to express their autonomous subjectivities, the hegemonic force of narratives stemming from a Colonialist Orientalist Episteme ultimately inhibits recognition of their autonomy in the public domain. Consistent with mainstream narratives about Chinese women (Chapter One), and Chinese women's responses in the outside interviews (Chapter Three), published writing by Chinese women is both Orientalised and invisibilised (assimilated) in accord with a prototype 'Chinese woman'.

Alison Wong's novel *As the Earth Turns Silver* has been subject to misreadings by both publishers and reviewers who have interpreted the story from

the perspective of the novel's Pākehā protagonist, Katherine; the novel has been read – and promoted – as a *Pākehā* story, rather than as the Pākehā *and* Chinese story intended by the author.³⁰⁴ The following blurb, taken from the back cover of Picador's 2010 edition, clearly demonstrates this preference:

It is New Zealand, and the first decade of the twentieth century. Katherine McKechnie is struggling to raise two children following the death of her husband, when a chance encounter with a Chinese shopkeeper blossoms into friendship and, eventually, love.

Racial tension and prejudice mean the two must keep their relationship secret, but Katherine's son, Robbie, learns the truth and, on the eve of World War I, as young men everywhere are swept up on a tide of macho patriotism, takes his family's honour into his own hands – with devastating consequences.³⁰⁵

The Chinese story is here clearly subsumed beneath the Pākehā story. This is signalled at the outset with the assertion of New Zealand, the naming of the Pākehā heroine, and a description of her circumstances: it is her story that is highlighted and valorised (with phrases such as 'struggling', 'patriotism' and 'honour'). There is no mention of Yung's struggles, or China, no reference to his family, or his patriotism; yet he is the novel's other key protagonist. Although Yung's Chinese world is portrayed in roughly half the novel's chapters, he is referred to in this blurb only as 'a Chinese shopkeeper', portrayed as an incidental character whose story seems peripheral, for his presence is defined by the Pākehā heroine's 'chance encounter' with him.

The Chinese story in *ATETS* has also been inappropriately exploited. Alison Wong informed me that the novel's French publisher, 'wanting Chinese exoticism',

³⁰⁴ See, for example, Broadbent; Chaloner; Sheahan-Bright. Alison Wong insists that the story 'has two sides' and that 'it's meant to be equally Chinese and European' (Interview 22 Mar 2012).

³⁰⁵ The author stated that she had 'some influence' in the writing of the blurb, and in the choice of book covers, but maintained that not all decisions 'fit well' with her, that she 'would've done things quite differently', and that ultimately 'there's a hang of a lot that you don't have much control over' (Interview 22 Mar 2012).

settled on the title *Butterfly Lovers* after a well-known Chinese love story, and that they had previously suggested *The Chinese Lover*, much to the author's chagrin ('I said no way!' (Interview 22 Mar 2012)). The author did, however, concede that publishers 'know their audience' (Interview 22 Mar 2012), and this has indeed been confirmed by their book club notes, and by independent reviews that variously refer to the novel's Chinese characters as 'Oriental people' (Sheahan-Bright 8),³⁰⁶ describe the story as 'fascinating' (Auld; Rainey-Smith) and consider *ATETS* to be reminiscent of the work of Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan, although the reasons for such reminiscence are not articulated (McQueen; "As the Earth" *Backyard*; Farrell).³⁰⁷ These readings are clearly informed by Colonialist Orientalist narratives that essentialise and marginalise the novel's Chinese characters, lives and perspectives; and they effectively diminish the Chinese woman writer's voice, for amidst such constraints the story she tells can only be apprehended as a familiar 'Chinese' story – it can say nothing new.

Mainstream responses to *Chinatown Girl* were very similar. As with *ATETS*, the Chinese stories in the novel are subsumed beneath the Pākehā stories. In the publisher's "Teacher Notes" that guide school students' readings, both the marginality and exoticism of the novel's Chinese characters are highlighted (Scholastic). First, the lives of Silvey and her family are situated beneath the bigger story of New Zealand during World War Two. This reading is implicit in the suggested post-reading activities, with only two (out of nine) focusing on Silvey the protagonist, and where the one activity that mentions the Chinese community

³⁰⁶ Sheahan-Bright also suggests under 'Questions for Discussion' that readers look at 'photos of Chinese people in New Zealand' in order to consider 'the relationship between Chinese and Europeans in Wellington' (8). A link is included to *Te Ara, the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/511/haining-street-wellington>, revealing two photographs of Chinese men in rural Otago; one photograph is dated 1888, the other c.1900. It is difficult to see how these images relate to *ATETS*, for in the New Zealand chapters, the novel is set largely in urban Wellington, between the years 1905 and 1922.

³⁰⁷ See also various reader reviews of the novel at <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/6606872-as-the-earth-turns-silver>. With regard to literary style, *ATETS* is nothing like Maxine Hong Kingston's *Woman Warrior*, or Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*. Alison Wong herself has asserted that her work is 'totally different' to Maxine Hong Kingston, and is of the opinion that parallels are drawn only because 'we're both Chinese' (Interview, 22 Mar 2012).

emphasises government policies and mainstream attitudes toward them (7-8). Second, the Progress Narrative clearly frames the reading of the novel. This is affirmed in the reading comprehension and discussion questions, for example: ‘How is life different for Chinese living in New Zealand today?’ (2); and ‘Explain why you think these attitudes existed and how they gradually changed’ (7). Third, discussion prompts about Silvey and her family characterise them as Others whose marginality and exclusion is emphasised by words like ‘emigrants’ (as opposed to ‘immigrants’) (1, 2, 4, 7), and ‘fascinating’ (1), and whose perceived grossness (that is, lack of specificity) is reinforced by erroneous generalisations. For example, the question ‘Why did *so many Chinese* end up settling in New Zealand?’ (2) connotes the Yellow Peril hordes who did not in fact make it to New Zealand;³⁰⁸ and although Confucius is notably derogated in the novel in the context of a complaint by Silvey about the status of women (E. W. Ng, *Chinatown* 152-53), this is overlooked and instead, a rather broad question is raised about him – ‘Why is he such an important figure to the Chinese?’ – one that references Confucius as a gross marker of ‘Chineseness’ (6). That Confucius grounds the ambivalence Silvey feels as a Chinese *girl/woman* is altogether missed. Indeed, in “Teacher Notes”, there appears to be no recognition of the protagonist’s plight as a Chinese girl/woman.³⁰⁹

The subsumption of the Chinese story beneath hegemonic Pākehā narratives makes it vulnerable to misreadings. Reviewer Barbara Murison, who describes the life of Silvey and her family as ‘beyond our ken’, criticises the novel’s narration of its historical background through the remembering of elders in the Chinese community. She claims that ‘many readers’ (whom she does not identify) ‘find this irritating because it cuts into the story without adding much to the sequence of events, making it a story within a story’. These objections demonstrate a lack of

³⁰⁸ My emphasis; in fact, the numbers were very small (Appendix 2). Also, the author encourages students to ‘use the glossary provided . . . to clarify their understanding of Chinese words included’ (Scholastic 2); the words in the novel’s glossary are, in fact, *Cantonese* words.

³⁰⁹ The main themes in the novel are identified as ‘hardships of war, the importance of retaining culture and language, racial prejudice and growing up’ (Scholastic 1-2). One of the activities suggests a ‘character description’ for Silvey the protagonist, but mentions neither her femininity nor her Chineseness (7).

awareness of the filial imperatives that undergird the narrative. In *Chinatown Girl* the secondment of the historical background stories to Silvey's elders is crucial to the characterisation of Silvey as a 'good' 'Chinese girl/woman', for it simultaneously enunciates filial respect and ameliorates the impropriety of the diary's first person perspective, which is all the more audacious for being the voice of a female narrator.³¹⁰

A Colonialist Orientalist gaze has also clearly informed mainstream interpretations of *Ka Shue*. If reviews are anything to go by, audiences at performances of *Ka Shue* certainly appeared to appreciate the play's exhibitions of 'Chineseness'. Ewen Coleman, for example, describes the play as being 'like a Chinese puzzle'. Dave Andrews refers to Chanwai-Earle's writing as 'calligraphy'. He also questions the appropriateness of the label 'family play', drawing explicit contrasts between the 'Western family', which he defines as peopled by 'butlers, vicars, and pompous fathers', and the playwright's lineage 'back to myths of Inner Kingdom great grandfathers and concubines', concluding that *Ka Shue* is about as far from 'a "family" genre as Shanghai from Shropshire'.³¹¹ Megan Lane's review is similarly excluding; implicit in her account of the play, which she describes as being 'about the isolation of living in a country *other than your own*' is the belief that the Chinese in New Zealand are Others who belong elsewhere.³¹² As with Eva Wong Ng's *Chinatown Girl*, Orientalist readings of *Ka Shue* correlate with a lack of recognition for Chinese women's unique subjectivities. In Susan Battye's *Drama Cuts: Teacher's Resource Book*,³¹³ a text for secondary school students, suggested questions for discussion are of a very general nature. For example, with reference to Act One, Scene 12, in which Paw Paw flees Hong Kong during the Japanese

³¹⁰ In the "Author's Note to the Original Edition" to *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, Jade Snow Wong writes, 'The submergence of the individual is literally practiced. . . In corresponding with an older person like my father, I would write in words half the size of the regular ideographs . . . when referring to myself. . . Even written in English, an "I" book by a Chinese would seem outrageously immodest to anyone raised in the spirit of Chinese propriety' (xiii). Eva Wong Ng herself recalls being particularly inspired by *Fifth Chinese Daughter* when she was growing up (21 Feb 2014).

³¹¹ Kathy Ooi makes a similar observation about this particular review ("Insider" 327-28).

³¹² My emphasis

³¹³ This accompanies Battye's *Drama Cuts*, an edited collection of well-known twentieth and twenty-first century plays written by Commonwealth writers.

invasion – a scene that depicts the insidiousness of filial obligations, for Paw Paw voices her angst and ambivalence about having to take care of the baby Abbie (who is the daughter of her husband's concubine) – the question for discussion suggests only that the reader consider what the monologue reveals about Paw Paw's 'hopes and fears' (26). Despite Battye's recognition of the play as a 'feminist drama', important issues such as misogyny and the onerousness of filial obligations, which inform the plights of the play's Chinese women characters, are not mentioned at all (14).

If we accept mainstream responses as a gauge that measures public recognition of Chinese women's autonomous subjectivities, then the narrative strategies deployed by Chinese women writers in *Chinatown Girl*, *ATETS*, and *Ka Shue* appear to have failed. It certainly appears that the hegemonic force of Colonialist Orientalist narratives is such that expressions of autonomous subjectivity cannot ground recognition for Chinese women's separate identity in the mainstream, no matter how ingeniously these are expressed. It seems that no matter *how* she speaks, the Chinese woman is perceived and reconstructed – re-Orientalised – as 'Chinese woman'. This is manifest, for example, in Dave Andrews' review, where acknowledgement of Lynda Chanwai-Earle's non-'Chinese woman' subjectivity:

[*Ka Shue*] brushes aside preconceptions about lotus blossom female charm. This writer wants to be heard cooing, snarling, arguing or even screaming with terror. . .

is immediately tempered by a re-Orientalisation of her work that reaffirms her 'Chinese woman' writer identity:

And why not? Her calligraphy strokes in grandmothers and students, gamblers and social climbers. There is even time for some disdainful lesson in why you should never play Mah Jong with a Chinese.

It appears that the Chinese woman writer who 'appropriates the gaze' cannot have her gaze recognised in the public domain, for it is terminated there by

hegemonic discourses that (re)subjectivate her as a 'Chinese woman' writer whose vision is defined and therefore limited by her 'Chineseness'.³¹⁴

The terminating force of hegemonic mainstream narratives is most brutal when the Chinese woman subject is recalcitrant; when her appropriation of the gaze involves an outspoken unequivocal repudiation of the hegemonic narratives that frame her as 'Chinese woman'. When an interview in which Helene Wong urged the Chinese to 'stand up now and speak out against prejudice' was published in a newspaper (G. Wong, "Challenge"), she received a disturbing letter from a reader, an excerpt of which I re-present here:

We have been fighting you yellow cunts for the last fifty plus years with great results. It doesn't matter where you're born or what clothes you're in – you are still the enemy. Please make noises as it will make us hate you even more. The only good gook is a dead gook. ("Chinamen")

The writer of the letter was clearly threatened by Helene Wong's assertiveness – that is, her expression of non-'Chinese woman' subjectivity; as such, their response could be perceived as an – albeit contemptuous – acknowledgement of her autonomy. The letter's explicit sinophobic sentiments draw on discourses the hegemonic force of which is difficult to contend with, and Helene Wong herself draws attention to the letter as a potent and typical example of the kinds of narratives that continue to prevail in mainstream New Zealand ("Chinamen"). The letter-writer's 'request' to 'please make noises as it will make us hate you even more' affirms in no uncertain terms that the subordinating force of these narratives is such that the Chinese woman who dares to assert her critical gaze will be *further diminished*.³¹⁵

³¹⁴ The woman's gaze, as Mary Ann Doane observes, 'must be dissociated from mastery' (67-68). See also, L. Williams (85, 97).

³¹⁵ There is an analogy here with women's subjectivity in cinema: in her analysis of women who 'look' in classical Hollywood films, Linda Williams notes that the violence used to (re)subjugate them is directly proportional to the extent to which they express their autonomy (97).

In Chapter Three I contended that as a settler Chinese woman, I instinctively limit myself.³¹⁶ As this chapter has shown, there are good reasons for this: speaking up is dangerous. It does not matter whether I articulate the distance between myself and ‘Chinese woman’ clandestinely or conspicuously; when I expose my backstage self on the frontstage, I am vulnerable – and viscerally so. Because no matter how agilely I articulate the critical distance between myself and ‘Chinese woman’, no matter how adept I am at the masquerade, I cannot completely disengage from ‘Chinese woman’. The hegemonic narrator retains the power to close that distance, to remind me that ‘Chinese woman’ is, in fact, integral to my subjectivity. While the narrative strategies I deploy on the outside enable me to perceive certain limits to my subjectivation and enhance my awareness of my autonomy, the injuries I suffer from audience responses (through their re-Orientalisations) remind me that such subjectivation endures. It appears then, that what is gained in the reflexivity that storytelling affords – that is, validation of my extra-hegemonic subjectivity; an enhanced awareness of my autonomy – is lost in the context of a public performance. Whether ‘Chinese woman’ is masqueraded or manifestly repudiated, ‘she’ constrains my autonomy. As a Chinese woman subject, my critical gaze is a locked subjectivity: I cannot enunciate what I see in the public domain.

But there is hope. First, my critiques of patriarchal Chinese narratives – read on the outside as ‘inside’ stories that confirm the oppressiveness of Chinese women’s lives – ultimately (also) undermine the hegemonic mainstream narratives served by these. Second, the sharing of retreat stories validates our lived experiences, for they facilitate the formation of communities that constitute robust subject positions from where we can individually and collectively express our autonomous subjectivities and assert our separate identities. Lynda Chanwai-Earle recalls the responses that *Ka Shue* provoked among settler Chinese women:

There were women of my mother’s generation and also younger . . .
in tears after performances saying, ‘that was my story you were

³¹⁶ In the section ‘Becoming “Chinese Woman”’. See also Introduction.

telling!' I also had a young woman coming up to me and saying, 'I saw your play in Christchurch and it changed my life and my sister's. We are both Eurasian and we never had anything to do with our Paw Paw, she spoke Cantonese and we could not understand her. But I saw your play and I was really moved and we really made an effort to speak to her'. . . (Calleja, "Rocking" 138)

Chinatown Girl and *As the Earth Turns Silver* gave rise to similar responses; both Eva Wong Ng (Interview 13 Apr 2012) and Alison Wong (Interview 22 Mar 2012; "Personal" 73) revealed that they were contacted by Chinese women (and men) in the community who felt that their novels spoke 'for them'. And my own response to Helene Wong's essays is certainly informed by a sense of personal validation.³¹⁷ Through the sharing of retreat stories in these works, *intersubjective nexuses* are produced: new subject positions from where settler Chinese women can relate to the experiences of other settler Chinese women. In this respect alone, these works are valuable. Within these nexuses, diverse perspectives may be accommodated and the potential to challenge and subvert the hegemonic force of the narratives through which we have been subordinated is enhanced. To this end, the strategic frontstaging of our autonomous subjectivities on the outside through storytelling is certainly worth pursuing.

In this chapter, I have drawn attention to the different narrative strategies that four settler Chinese New Zealand women writers have engaged to explore the space between the hegemonic discourses that co-construct 'Chinese woman' and their subjective lived experiences. The following chapter constitutes my own exploration of this space. The narrative strategies that I utilise, some of which I borrow from the works analysed above, highlight my work as a performance. The title's deployment of a familiar trope explicitly parodies Orientalising hegemonic

³¹⁷ Helene Wong reports that she cannot recall specific responses from Chinese women to her essays/lectures; as lectures, they were delivered in 'a more general European context' (Interview 9 Oct 2015).

narratives, foregrounding at the outset the need to don a 'Chinese' mask in order to articulate and assert my separate identity.

CHAPTER FIVE:
SUNDAY GARDENING:
THE ADVENTURES OF JOHN CHINAMAN
ON THE NEW GOLD MOUNTAIN

I write to show myself showing people who show me my own showing.

(Trinh T. Minh-ha 22)

SUNDAY GARDENING

The Adventures of John Chinaman on the New Gold Mountain

*Great-Grandfather Chin Bak Sui left his village
in Taishan, south China, in 1884.
He sailed to Wellington, New Zealand.
There, he became 'John Chinaman'.*

CAST

Family:

Ping & Stan

Their children: Loretta, Lenore, Joseph, Starlet

Grandfather/A-Yeh/Yeh-Yeh: Stan's father

Grandmother: Stan's mother

Aunty: Stan's sister-in-law

Robert: Stan's older brother

Maisie: Robert's wife

Their children: Arlene, George, Archie

Charlie: Stan's younger brother

Doreen: Charlie's wife

Joe: Stan's youngest brother

Betty: Joe's wife

Their children: Tracey, Brenda, Kevin

Loretta's friends:

Linda, Christine, Duggy, Delia

Neighbours:

Angie & Stavros

Their children: Sharon, Cherie, Stevie

Rae & Rick

Their children: Donna and Joanne

The McAllisters

PROLOGUE

In the south of China³¹⁸
where my grandmother
and my mother grew up
they lived on rice
Soft and sticky
it gave rise quickly
to feelings of satiety
and vitality
They were well
until my mother turned five
and grandmother left
her in the care of an uncle
from the north
who liked his noodles
wound around
my mother's secret places:
a febrility
born of iniquity
no less
Years later mother fled
to the antipodes
where she learned
to roast lamb and potatoes
to butter white bread
to plug her past
with acerbity
and tenacity

³¹⁸ Poem adapted from G. Yee, "Staples"

born of rage
at grandmother who died
in the land of Coke
and fried potatoes
who left the south of China
after sending a letter to Mao
sealed with grains of rice
stolen from my mother's bowl:
an audacity
born of necessity
apparently

The Chinese? They come from China. They all came by boat. They had tough lives over there, what with the Japanese and Chairman Mao. Here they stick together in their laundries and fruit shops. They work hard, seem happy enough. Lucky to be here.

I was born in Canton, in China, in the south where your Paw-paw 婆婆 and Goong-goong 公公 were born. Goong-goong had two wives. My mother was the first wife. I have seven sisters and five brothers. When I was five, Paw-paw left us to work for the Government. She was so busy, she couldn't look after us all. I had to go live with an uncle and aunt. I did not see my mother again until I got married to Baba 爸爸.³¹⁹ I was very lucky because my sister found me a Gold Mountain Man 金山客. But when I got to New Zealand, ai-ya 哎咿 – it was too quiet. Gwei-lo 鬼佬, gwei-paw 鬼婆 were friendly, but there was only one store that sold Chinese food – some dried goods, not much. We had to wait for Yeh-yeh

³¹⁹ Baba = Stan

爺爺³²⁰ to send supplies from Hong Kong. Auntie Maisie showed me how to cook western food 西餐. But I didn't like it much – everything was white or brown – no colour: mashed potatoes, roast lamb, white bread, butter, cream, and vegetables boiled yellow.



Fig. 17³²¹

³²⁰ Yeh-yeh = Stan's father

³²¹ Demelza Wong. *Rice Bowl*. 2015. Ink on paper. Private collection.

HAPPY VALLEY

When the mother runs out of push, they put the stirrups on. She lies with her legs up at right angles, ankles shackled. 'Don't run away now,' the doctor jokes. She's been labouring for thirty-six hours.

The doctor stings the mother and slices her open – her flesh gives way like a ripe avocado and her heart beats so loudly she fears the baby will be born deaf. The doctor inserts the salad tongs, scrapes the baby out and hauls it up by the ankles.

The room is silent, the air ceramic. There are no congratulations, no gender revelations – nothing. Until the suction machine starts up and the nurse pokes the tube into the baby's mouth. It cries. They clamp the cord and cut it.

The doors burst open and the Grandmother and the Aunty rush into the room. They run straight for the baby already wrapped in a flannelette sheet. The nurse hands the baby to the Grandmother and says, 'It's a girl'. The Aunty sighs and the Grandmother says, 'Never mind'.

The mother – still on her back, feet numb, legs white, nether regions exposed – cranes her head to see. The Grandmother brings the baby over. The baby's eyes are closed, her lips are purple, and she has a red 'V' on her forehead right between her eyes. The mother frowns. As she reaches out to finger the 'V', the placenta slithers out between her legs and plops into a kidney dish. The doctor hands it to the nurse. The Grandmother scurries over, lowers her glasses, picks up the placenta and examines each cotyledon: 'Ah...good,' she says, '... very, very good.'

Chinese women squat in the fields to have their babies. When they're done, they swaddle them to their bodies and go straight back to work, harvesting rice or picking cotton or peanuts or lychees. That's if it's a boy. If it's a girl, they'll smother it, or leave it by the side of the road, or drop it down a well. If the mother is very caring, she might leave it

outside the house of a rich family and hope that they'll take her in and raise her as a servant.

Grandmother 奶奶 and First Aunt 伯母 waited outside the operating theatre. As soon as you were born, they rushed into the room. Of course they had hoped for a boy. But you were healthy and I was happy.

Visitors bring the new Chinese mother a tonic soup believed to restore her strength in the post-partum period. It has a very strong and objectionable vinegar smell and is made from pigs' trotters and ginger and all manner of other exotic things.

PIG'S FEET AND BLACK VINEGAR SOUP (for confinement)³²²

Ingredients: Pig's feet/leg x1

Fresh ginger 10lbs

Sweet vinegar 2 pints

Black rice vinegar 1 pint

Hard boiled eggs (as many as you wish)

- 1. Wash ginger and leave out to dry for one day.*
- 2. Peel ginger and cut into ½ inch pieces.*
- 3. Fry ginger in wok for 5 minutes.*
- 4. Pour 2 pints of sweet vinegar into a large clay pot and heat to boil.*
- 5. Add ginger. Reduce to simmer for one hour, then set aside.*

³²² Adapted from Lisa Tong and Tracy Tong's recipe (Tong and Tong).

6. *Meanwhile, pluck the hair out of the pig's feet, and wash under warm running water.*
 7. *Chop feet into edible size chunks and wash again.*
 8. *Blanch feet in boiling water for 5 minutes.*
 9. *Heat the sweet vinegar and ginger soup.*
 10. *Add pig's feet, 1 pint of black rice vinegar, and the de-shelled hard boiled eggs.*
 11. *Cover, bring to boil and simmer until feet are soft.*
 12. *Add palm sugar for extra sweetness if desired.*
- **This soup warms the body. The black vinegar purifies the blood. The pig's feet are a good source of iron and calcium.*

There are two weeks in the hospital: silk flowers and fruit, hand-knitted matinée jackets and, delivered by the Aunty, urns of *tong* 湯 to build up the mother's strength. Every evening the baby has her cheeks prodded with her father's stubby cigar fingers and every morning the Grandmother watches her through the nursery window. On the day they leave the hospital, she tells the mother, 'ah you are so lucky – your baby has a nice fat face and she never cries – she will be easy to raise.'

These beliefs the Chinese have in the prophetic nature of human physiognomy are primitive and unscientific.

Grandmother read your face and told me you would be an easy child. It's just as well, she said, for girls must be quiet and gentle.

At home, the Aunty serves bowls of soup and fuss. The mother is seldom alone with the baby, not even in the mornings before the sun comes up. The Grandmother gives instructions at every feed. 'Hold her like this', she says, 'not too long now', and when the mother is silent: 'don't sulk – you'll spoil the milk'.

As a woman, even my silence must be virtuous.

The Chinese mother rests for an entire month after giving birth. She does not leave the home, and the female members of the family take care of her and her newborn child. With her every need attended to, she is able to relax and recuperate fully at her leisure.

Then I took you home, back to the apartment where we lived with Yeh-yeh, Grandmother, First Uncle, First Aunt and your cousins. I was not allowed to go out until you were one month old. I could not relax – I had Grandmother and Aunt telling me what to do and what not to do every minute of the day. I was so afraid of doing something wrong, I could not sleep well at all.

When the baby is one month old, there may be a celebration of sorts. In accord with the Chinese (ten month) calendar, this marks the child's first year of life. In accord with the culture's gender preference, celebrations for boys are generally grander than for girls.

The party is held at the Dragon 龍. The baby, a tightly wrapped parcel, is passed from table to table. The Grandmother holds her for the longest time, beaming and flashing her gold teeth at the camera. There are fifty-seven guests in all. They sit at big round tables with lazy susans laden with so much food they can barely turn. The men drink beer and whisky and the women sip lemonade.

The mother sits demurely in her pink cheongsam and white shoes. She says little, eats nothing. As the afternoon wears on, her breasts begin to ache and her

underarms grow wet beneath the cheongsam, which is not one hundred per cent silk as the tailor had promised, but synthetic, man-made: like the children playing under the tables, the dumplings in bamboo steamers, and the cigar smoke stratus clouds streaked across the room: all of them, man-made.

The baby cries all the way home in the car. In the excitement, the Aunty had left the bottles at the Dragon. The father, jolly from too many whiskies, chuckles and pokes his stubby fingers at the baby's face. It doesn't help the crying. Stopped at a red light, the father gropes the mother's thighs and finds a small box.

'What's this?'

'The leftover eggs.'

The father pulls out a little pink egg, pushes it in the baby's face:

'Hey look! An egg!' he shouts.

When the baby takes no notice, he cracks the egg on the steering wheel, flicks off the shell and eats it. When they get back to the apartment, the front of the mother's cheap cheongsam is soaked with milk and there is a piece of cochineal-coloured eggshell stuck to the hem.

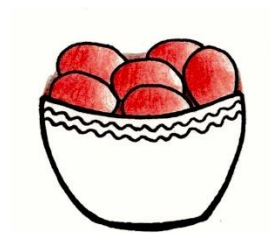


Fig. 18³²³

I was very tired at your one month party. I had been up all night trying to get you to feed from a bottle. My breasts were heavy and sore and I didn't know how to stop them leaking. The cigar smoke at the restaurant made me nauseous. On the way home I had a terrible headache – Baba was drunk, you were hungry, and Aunty was fussing. I was longing to get home to bed.

³²³ Demelza Wong. *Red Eggs*. 2016. Ink and pencil on paper. Private collection.

They name the baby *Siu Yuk* 小玉 which means 'Little Jade Precious Pure and Graceful'. Her father calls her *Loretta*. One morning in late June when the humidity is some ninety per cent, he takes a streetcar down to the registry office. There, he leans over the counter, blowing cigar smoke at the clerk as she strokes in black fountain pen:

Mother's Maiden Name:	<i>Cho</i>
Father's Occupation:	<i>Merchant</i>
Place of Birth:	<i>Hong Kong</i>

Chinese children in New Zealand are usually given Western names that bear no relation to their Chinese names. Often the parents will choose names or words they simply like the sound of, or name them after people or places they know or have heard of. (In the North Island one couple, whose surname is 'Wong', named their firstborn son 'Wellington' because the father grew up in Wellington and his favourite place was Milford Sound). The more enlightened parents will choose names that they think will help their children assimilate into New Zealand society.

小

Baba named you after the kind woman who lived next door to them in Tennyson Street – that awful old house with rats in the walls and holes in the floor. With Yeh-yeh and Grandmother back in Hong Kong, Baba and your uncles had to fend for themselves. They were just boys – they wouldn't have coped without Loretta. She cooked for them, and

mended their clothes, she even took care of them when they were sick. I chose your Chinese name. It's a pretty name. All your girl cousins and your sisters have this 'Siu' 秀 as part of their names. It is very suitable for a girl.

All names given to Chinese children have a significance generally indicating the prominent features in their owner's characters. . . .³²⁴

It's August, summer, sticky. The father roams the apartment in boxer shorts and a white singlet stripped hourly and thrown into the bathtub for the mother to gather and wash later in the evening. The dogs – great bony wolves – are flopped on the floor, panting on the parquetry. Loretta is lolling on the dining room table naked. Her mother is standing close, folding nappies.

You shouldn't talk about Baba in his underwear.

Enter the father with his camera. He shouts at the mother, 'Pick her up!' The mother picks the baby up, stands obedient while the father clicks.

Grandfather shuffles out of his bedroom, eyes half-closed. 'What's all the fuss?' Aunty, in the kitchen, makes soothing noises about cold lemonade. Grandfather sits down in his chair by the window.

'A-Yeh...' the mother begins.

'What?'

'Can I... go visit *Jeh-jeh* 姐姐 today?'

Grandfather snorts. 'Go then... go!' and, 'put some clothes on!' He's noticed the mother's brand new pedal-pushers, the ones she bought last week from *Wing On*.

³²⁴ "Sketcher"

Aunty appears with a glass of lemonade for Grandfather. She takes the mother aside. 'You're a mama now. You have to dress like a... what about that blue dress?'

The mother goes back to the nappies. The baby gurgles. Grandfather burps, plonks his glass on the table, leaves. The wolves follow. The mother picks up the baby and walks over to the window. She can hear her husband snoring in the bedroom. She can see the racecourse at the bottom of the hill.

They were very good to me. When I was eight months pregnant, Yeh-yeh told me I could have a rest from washing all their clothes. And after you were born, Aunty helped me with the household chores. I had to ask permission before I went out, but they always let me go.



Due to the lack of marriageable Chinese women in New Zealand, many young Chinese men must travel to China or Hong Kong to find a suitable spouse. This unfortunately increases the Chinese population, but the alternative – Chinese men taking European or Māori women as partners – is far worse.



Fig. 19³²⁶

The father puts on his best tie, the dark green diagonal-striped one. He's wearing a dark blue suit and his hair is slicked back with *Brylcreem*. He looks dapper in a wannabe-Elvis kind of way. The mother takes the rollers out of her hair, runs coral lipstick along her lower lip, mashes her lips together. She buttons up the jacket of her pale blue suit, slips on her cream slingbacks and clops out to the living room. Grandmother is holding the baby. 'Leave her with us,' she says, 'we'll raise her.'

Aunty zips up the carry-on bag. It's stuffed full of neatly folded nappies and bottles. 'Put all the dirty ones in this bag here,' she says, 'here's some *cha siu baos* 叉燒包 to eat on the plane – they're cold, but they'll be all right. It's such a long way, you have to have something to eat...'

Aunty hugs the baby and the mother tight and says, 'Bring her back soon.' Grandmother drops a little red envelope into the mother's handbag: 'For her first birthday,' she says, and shuffles back to her bedroom. Grandfather is sitting in his chair by the window, slurping tea.

The mother says, 'A-Yeh 阿爺, we're going now.'

And Grandfather says, 'You going now?'

I was nervous about leaving. We didn't know when we would be back. But Baba told me New Zealand was a good place and that we would have a good life there – as long as we worked hard and stayed respectable.

³²⁶ Brylcreem. Advertisement. 1964. Television. *Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision*. The New Zealand Archive of Film, Television and Sound. Web. 15 Nov 2015.

TRANSIT

The fortune-teller had the entire history of China etched into his face. In 1963 he told Ping that: i) she would marry a handsome man; ii) her firstborn would be a girl; and iii) that she would travel to the bottom of the earth to live.

I never been the plane before. We stop Australia – Sydney, see Baba’s friend, only can stay two day.³²⁷ Then here. Everybody very friendly, but I couldn’t understand one word. Ai-ya – so quiet. I scare, feel sick, my heart go too fast boom-boom-boom.



Fig. 20³²⁸

Robert is at the airport to meet them. He looks like Stan – only with less hair – and he has the same stubby baby-cheek-poking fingers. They pile into his Holden, Stan in the front and Ping at the back with Loretta in her arms. The two brothers talk about old friends. It’s night and all that can be seen from the car are the black roll of flatlands, coniferous shadows, and rows of squat box bungalows, rooves pitched low.

Ping scans the streets for people.

³²⁷ Until 1972, Chinese New Zealanders were only permitted 72 hour transit visas in Australia (Appendix 3; Murphy, *Guide* 288).

³²⁸ New Zealand Apple & Pear Marketing Board. Advertisement. *The Press*. 5 September 1964: n. pag. Print.

Their house is a pink brick bungalow with a large garden and a front door partly shaded by an apple tree. The first thing Ping notices is the chill. Then, the quiet: No traffic drone. No television. No music. No clacking mah-jong tiles, no scraping chairs, no sizzling woks, no cleavers banging. No human squabble. Seventy-three in the evening: the whole world asleep.

For these immigrants from the impoverished, overcrowded villages of China, New Zealand is a paradise.

Ping is careful. Grandmother had warned her before they left: 'Don't ask Maisie about the baby.' When Maisie is around, she doesn't sing to Loretta or play games with her, she doesn't praise her when she rolls over on the carpet, she doesn't even express her pleasure at how gentle Maisie's children Arlene and George are with her.

It is early Saturday evening. Stan is out and Ping is in the bath. Loretta cries out. A minute passes. The crying grows louder. Ping prays that she'll settle. A door slams. The crying is muffled. Ping jumps out of the bathtub. She finds the bedroom door closed, Loretta screaming in the dark and Maisie lurking in the hall hissing, 'can't you keep that baby *quiet*?'

Later, Stan returns home reeking of beer and cigarettes.

Ping: 'I'm worried about Maisie.'

Stan: 'Hmmm?'

'I think she hates Loretta.'

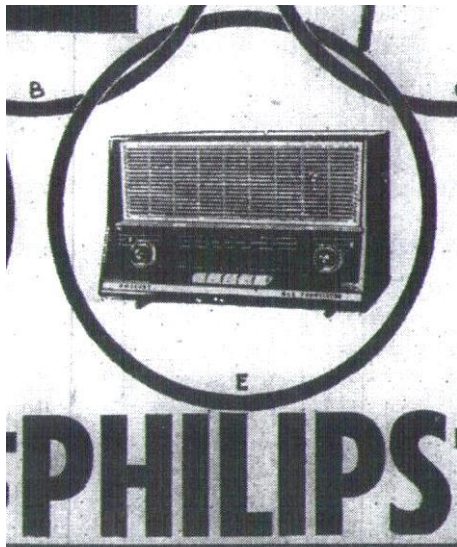
'She's still grieving.'

'You didn't see the way she looked at her – like – like - she wants her *dead*.'

'It's nothing...' Stan mutters, somewhat dismissively, and Ping seethes at his beer-infused cheer, 'she's always been a bit strange.'

The next morning Ping finds a blanket and ties Loretta to her back. Maisie sniggers, tells her she looks like a peasant from the village. 'You're not in China anymore you know.'

We never talking about Auntie Maisie lost the baby. The dead thing always bad luck.



PHILIPS CONTINENTAL CORDLESS

Room to room transistor radio which operates anywhere independently of the mains. Full broadcast and three shortwave ranges.

Fig. 21³²⁹

Chinese women of good reputé keep indoors. . .³³⁰

Robert has found Stan a job as a welder in the factory he works at. They make bicycles. Every morning at seven, they head off in the Holden. Maisie walks Arlene to school. Ping gets breakfast for George and Loretta. She's learning about hot milk and Weetbix, Marmite and buttered toast.

Ping never knows when Maisie will return. Some days she's back in minutes, other days late morning; once she didn't return until it was almost time to get Arlene from school.

But Ping is happy looking after George. He plays with his trucks in the yard, and sings in the sandpit. In the afternoons he and Loretta nap without fuss and Ping retires to the bedroom.

³²⁹ Image and text excerpts from Philips Continental Cordless. Advertisement. *The Press*. 29 September 1964: 11. Print.

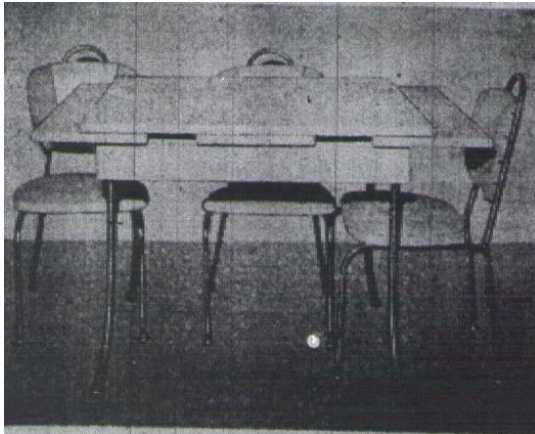
³³⁰ "Passing"

While the babies sleep, Ping traces the patterns on the cornices and ceiling rose. For company she turns on the radio on Stan's side of the bed; she can't understand the words but the static between them is strangely comforting. Every now and then, the phone rings. It's always for Maisie. Once a lady came to the house, selling encyclopaedias. Ping, though desperate for company, could only shake her head and say, 'sorry, no please' before closing the door.

Sometimes, when the children are asleep, Ping ventures down the gravel drive and out onto the street. Never far, just a few steps. Once she ran into Maisie returning from god-knows-where. When Maisie saw her, she scowled a Maisie-scowl and said, 'What are *you* looking for?' Ping couldn't speak – the hollow in her chest forbade it.

*Every day I stay home. Couldn't go out. Nowhere to go. Afternoon, George and you sleeping.
I washing the clothes, then nothing to do.*

Ping, Stan and Loretta move out of Robert and Maisie's house and into an old weatherboard cottage two miles down the road. The house has a large backyard and an outside toilet and laundry complete with wringer washing machine. They share a long driveway with the neighbours; a low hedge divides the two properties at the rear. Ping doesn't enjoy cleaning the grease off the kitchen walls or the scum in the old clawfoot bath, but she's thrilled to finally have her own domain to rule over. The first week in their new home they buy (secondhand): i) a floral lounge suite; ii) a green Formica dining table with chrome legs – Ping has Stan put it in the kitchen where it doubles as her workbench; and iii) a cot for the new baby, born on the last day of winter.



**Draw-leaf tables in lovely
FORMICA are the answer to that
extra accommodation problem at a
moment's notice.**

Fig. 22³³¹

There's a fireplace in the kitchen and one in the living room. Stan lights the fires before he leaves for work each morning. It's early spring and the days have not yet begun to warm. The back lawn is crisped white with frost in the mornings and only the edges furthest from the house thaw in the midday sun. Despite the cold, Ping scrubs her babies' nappies by hand every morning in the outside laundry and hangs them out to drip. When she brings them in around four in the afternoons, they're still damp and smell of chimney smoke. Loretta is walking now, toddling the garden path in George's old navy blue walker. The new baby – they named her Lenore – sleeps most of the day and all through the night. She's a roly-poly thing with a shock of black hair and a port wine stain along her right jaw and neck.

Ping and the neighbours – a teacher and his wife and their three girls – become friends. The wife teaches Ping words like 'tea-towel', 'Steelo' and 'jersey', and how to make custard.

Mrs Hamilton very kind lady, she say I learning fast.

³³¹ Image and text from: Formica Furniture. Mair & Co. Advertisement. *The Press*. 3 May 1956: 19. Print.

It is our duty to educate these people about our way of life. They can learn a great deal from us and thereby contribute positively to our nation.

Robert and Stan pool their money and buy themselves a business frying fish and chips. They work out of a little shop in a block opposite the river. It's a six-day-a-week business. As there's a lot of new construction going on in the area, most of their customers are builders and road-workers – big burly blokes with spade hands and shovel appetites.

Ping and Maisie take it in turns to ~~help out~~ work in the shop. Loretta is kept in a highchair out the back with a bottle of sugar water and a box of straws; Lenore, a good baby, is left home alone. She seldom cries and she sleeps all day. Ping feeds her in the mornings before she leaves for work, and tucks her in the cot with a full bottle. In the afternoons when they return, Lenore is asleep, a tiny ball in a corner of the cot, empty bottle tossed out on the floor.

We so busy, lucky Lenore good baby. When we come home, she still sleeping.

GOOD LUCK AND PLENTY

as pretty as miss hong kong

in summer my mother stomped around the house
in bare feet. she didn't pad, she stomped.
she stomped because she hated the heat, the house
and raising children in the heat in the house.
she stomped because god had given her a gambling man
and a job frying fish six days a week.

at night when all was done for the day, my mother would sit
on our second-hand hemp sofa, tuck her feet sideways
like a mermaid and watch television.
she liked selwyn toogood's 'money or the bag'
because she wanted to win the sewing machine and she loved
the annual miss universe pageant because she wanted to win
that too. she would ask my ogling dad if he thought she
was as pretty as miss hong kong.

I would be sprawled on the floor with a book
not far below her feet.
my mother's feet were the colour of cooked chicken (though bonier)
and the heels were cracked dry and black.
she never had the urge to moisturise or to do that thing
where you slough off the dead skin: *exfoliate*.

I yearned to pull at the crusty bits myself
sure that if I could yank the skin off
I would find my *real* mother underneath.
but we were forbidden to touch any part of her body.
(my little brother stroked a toe one day, and for his trouble
received a kick and a blood nose.)

when my mother dressed up to go out
she would spend hours setting her hair and powdering her face

and she'd put her feet
in pretty sandals. that her crusty black heels
were on show didn't seem to bother her in the slightest.
I think they were her parting shot,
a way of saying as she left a place: 'yes, I do look nice, don't I?
but *look how hard I have to work for it*'.

Every day so busy so tired, but we always washing the feet every night before sleep.



Fig. 23³³²

Stan buys Ping a brand new house in a brand new housing estate. It's red brick. Outside there's nothing but dirt and gravel and rocks the size of golf balls. The front door has windows of horizontal ribbed glass, like the washboard Ping keeps in the laundry. There's a fireplace in the living room and a stainless steel shower base in the bathroom. Ping is ecstatic. She loves the new house smell, the grey carpet with the red and yellow flowers, the red faux-velvet curtains, the fawn striped wallpaper

³³² Author's family home; Christchurch, New Zealand. c.1968. Personal collection. Photographer unknown.

embossed with sprigs of wheat. She plants a Granny Smith apple tree in the middle of the yard. One morning, Loretta wakes to find a billygoat chewing on it.

Why you write about the new house?? Gwei-lo gwei-paw don't like it, you know. Bak-bak 伯伯 Sook-sook 叔叔 buy the old house. Baba buy NEW house look like we got too much money, make the people jealous.

The number on their letterbox is '18'. Ping tells Loretta that '8' is a lucky number, a fat number that means good luck and plenty. Next door at number 16 live Angie and Stavros: they have two girls a couple of years older than Loretta and Lenore. On the other side, at number 20, are Rae and Rick – they also have two girls. Down the back live the McAllisters, who keep to themselves; they have two boys, though the father/husband has only one leg. The billygoat belongs to Angie and Stavros.

Please, if we must have immigrants... let them come from Britain. The average New Zealander does not want foreigners. One only needs to go across to Australia to see what the large importation of foreigners has done to that country. Ask any real Australian what he thinks of many of the New Australians. Let's not fill our lovely country with other than our own kind.

Yours, etc. ENZEDDER³³³

There's banging at the bottom of the garden. Mr McAllister is knocking posts in for a new fence. One of his boys is playing in the long grass. He's dressed like his father in white singlet, khaki shorts and black gumboots. Loretta pulls on her gumboots –

³³³ Enzedder

red ones – and wanders down to watch. The boy sees her and stands up, thumb in his mouth. Loretta is close enough to hear him suck. The boy has blue eyes and long blond hair and freckles all over his face and arms. His top lip is swollen and there's dried blood at the corner of his mouth.

There's a sudden thud and the ground beneath Loretta's feet shakes, then a man shouting: 'Whadda *you* lookin' at?', uneven footfalls, *an abominable white singlet*. Loretta is so disturbed by the sight of Mr McAllister's grass-stained prosthetic leg advancing toward her, she barely hears him hiss, 'Bloody *ching-chong* – go home!'

叩頭³³⁴

Ping zips a five cent coin into the pocket of Loretta's dress: 'That's for the bus,' she says, 'I'll be sitting right up the front.' She braids Loretta's hair, ties it with a red ribbon. 'Remember, if you need to go to the toilet, just put up your hand and say, *excuse me missus*'.

In the classroom, neighbour Rae does all the talking. Ping sits Loretta at a table, draws her a green crayon house, tells her to colour it in. Loretta spends the morning looking over her shoulder for her mother. She needs to go to the toilet, but she can't remember how to ask.

In the afternoon, Missus brings out a cardboard doll with paper clothes, and points to cut-out pictures of the sun, wind and rain on the blackboard.

When the bell rings, dark clouds hover. The climbing frames are grey and the boys at the top have pink faces. *Nah-na-na-nah-na-nah-na-na-nah-na! I'm the king of the castle and you're the dirty rascal!*

³³⁴ *kow tow*

Frequently, Chinese children know not *one word* of English when they begin school. The transition would be so much easier if their parents made the effort to expose them to our language from infancy. It is difficult, however, because the majority of them insist on sticking to their own kind.

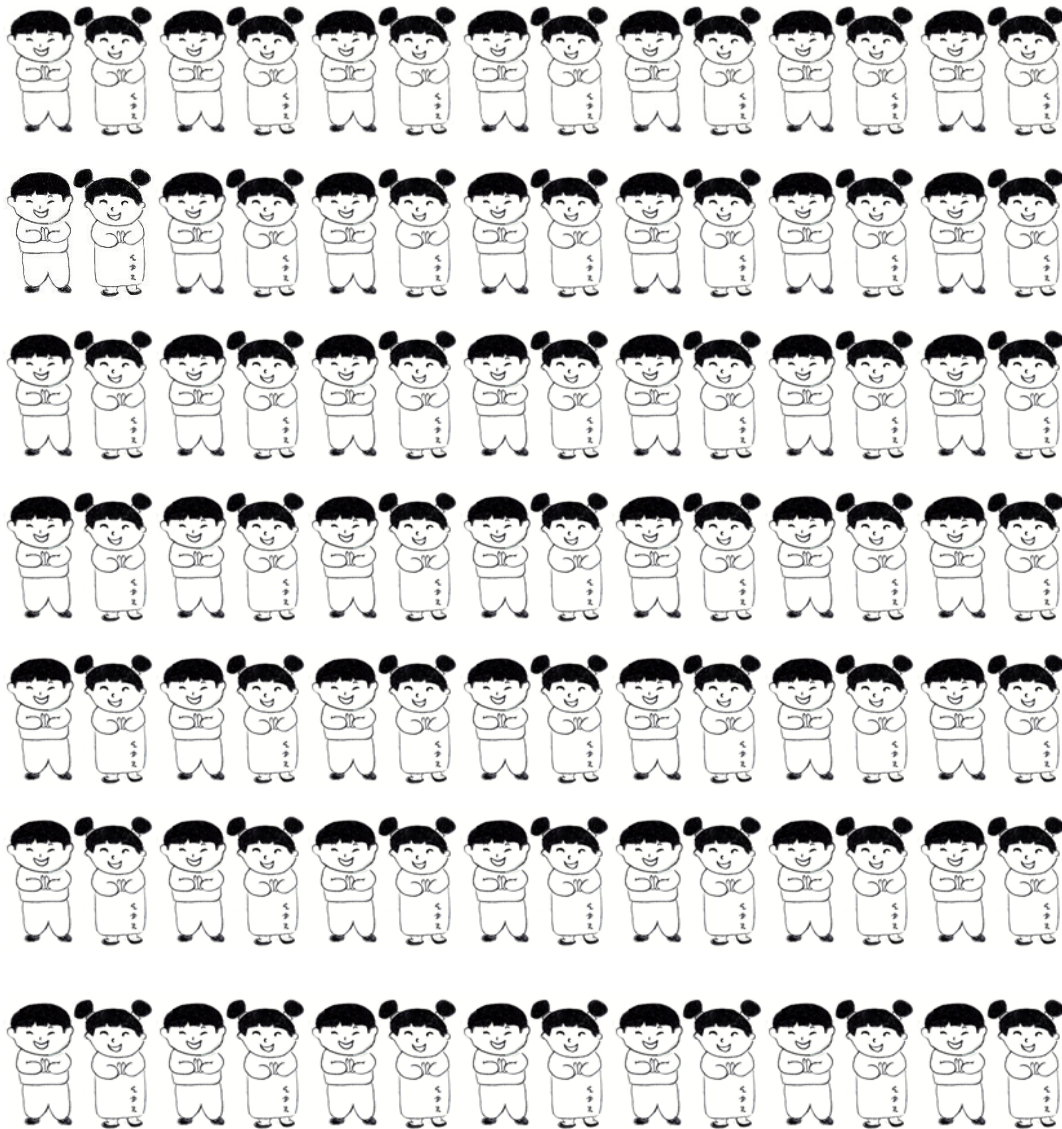


Fig. 24³³⁵

³³⁵ Zachary Wong. *Chinese Children*. 2016. Ink on paper. Private collection.



Fig. 25³³⁶

It's afternoon and winter: Loretta gets home first, in through the back door, tosses her bag on the floor, heads straight for the kitchen table. There's a chrome silver teapot on a raffia mat and pink iced finger buns straight out of the oven – the icing is gooey and the bread crunchy. Ping slices them open, smears butter inside. Loretta quickly eats two and slurps her milky tea. Lenore trails in, cheeks red from the wind, and Baby Joseph wakes. Ping eases him into the highchair and heats a bottle of milk for him.

There's a tap at the back door. It's Angie. She can hardly move, her baby bump is so big. (Ping pours her a cup of tea: milk and one sugar.) She's here to complain about Rae's new puppy. 'It barks all bloody night', she says, 'how's anyone supposed to get any sleep? They should at least keep the damn dog inside at night, how hard is that? What with the bloody dog and this one kicking and Cherie's blimmin' teeth and Stavros snoring,

no chance of getting any sleep, I told that Rae, I told her, keep the bloody dog inside, you know what she said? *But then he keeps us awake!* how considerate, just lock it out and keep the whole street up why don't you, as long as you get your beauty sleep darling, don't give a shit about anyone else...'

Ping nods and smiles and pours more tea.

I drinking tea with milk now. Getting used to it.

³³⁶ Tiger Tea. Four Square New World. Advertisement. *The Press*, 27 October 1971: n. pag. Print.

It's 11pm and Loretta is slouched on the sofa, pyjama top rolled under her chin. Ping is standing over her, arms folded, and Doctor Blackie is kneeling on the carpet, holding a stethoscope on her abdomen and shaking his head. 'I can't find anything,' he says, 'she seems all right to me.' Ping protests, 'But she complain sore tummy all day, all night.' Doctor Blackie puts the stethoscope in his bag and sighs, 'There's nothing wrong with her Mrs Chin, nothing at all.' Ping glares at Loretta. Loretta bites her lip and picks at her belly button.

Ai-ya 哎吔 – you sick I don't know what to do Baba go out I ring the doctor but I can't talking he talking I can't understand you understand?

Stan gets home at 1am reeking of beer and cigarettes. He falls into bed and reaches under Ping's nightgown. Ping elbows him and he vomits all over the pink candlewick.



Fig. 26³³⁷

³³⁷ Candlewick Bedspread. The Farmers' Rangiora. Advertisement. *The Press*. 3 September 1964: 18. Print.



Fig. 27³³⁸

'Can't we just see?'

They're all standing over her now. Slowly, Loretta opens her lunchbox, brings out the remains of her lunch.

'What's *that*?' Duggy's eyes are popping out of his pudgy brown face.

They want sandwiches for lunch. Sandwiches. How can feel full? How?

Duggy: 'I've got peanut butter sandwiches.'

Linda: 'I've got hundreds and thousands.'

Christine: 'I've got egg, what about you Loretta? What have you got?'

Loretta's got a *doong* 粽 – sticky rice with pork and peanuts wrapped in banana leaves. She's eating surreptitiously, reaching in and pinching chunks with the lid of her lunchbox over her hand.

'Nothing.'

'What is it?'

'Have you got fried rice?'

'Chow mein?'

Loretta shakes her head.

'What is it?'

Duggy makes a grab for her lunchbox. Loretta turns away.

'We just wanna see.'

³³⁸ An Adventure in Cooking. Minsons. Advertisement. *The Press*. 8 January 1974: n. pag. Print.

While the Revolution has for the most part eradicated bound feet and pigtails in the rising generation, it has a hard struggle in its attempts to stamp out opium, gambling, and the keeping of concubines.³³⁹

‘*Aiya!* What’s the matter with Loretta? Skinny like a chopstick!’

Betty shooshes Robert and places a chicken wing in Loretta’s bowl of rice.

‘Eat more, ah?’

It’s Saturday evening at Betty and Joe’s and everybody’s there except Stan, crowded around the carved rosewood table in the tiny dining room with the blue floral carpet and Betty and Joe in their wedding finery looking down from the picture rail. As usual, there’s too much food: platters of *doong gu* 冬菇 slick with oyster sauce are crammed next to snow peas and cashews, crispy-skinned flounder, whitebait patties, tureens of lotus root soup and glass bottles of Fanta and Coca-cola.

‘These the snow peas you grew?’

‘Hmmm... so many this year.’

‘Too much salt in the whitebait.’

‘Got many lotus roots left?’

‘Nearly all gone... you?’

‘A-Yeh 阿爺 will bring some.’

‘More rice?’

At 11:45pm the post-dinner mah-jong game is still going. The younger children, tired out from hiding, seeking and sliding down the banisters, are curled up on the floor beneath their mothers’ feet. Loretta and George are sitting cross-legged in front of the grandfather clock in the hall, waiting for the clock to strike midnight. When the gong sounds, they fling the living room door open and shout, ‘It’s twelve o’clock! Time to go home!’

³³⁹ “Social Conditions”

The mothers sigh, stretch and demolish the remainder of the wall. They gather up their winnings and their babies.

In the driveway, Ping's headlights shine first on the spot where Stan's car should be. She shakes the children awake, hustles them to the front door, fumbles for keys she's left on the kitchen counter. Loretta and Lenore stand shivering, their hands in their armpits. Baby Joseph clutches the hem of Ping's coat. Ping groans and marches back to the garage. They all get back in the car.

Nobody says anything. Loretta, Lenore and Baby Joseph fall asleep.

2:18am:

'Where have you been? It's two o'clock!'

'What are you doing out here?'

'Where have you been?'

'Forgot your key?'

'What time do you call this?'

'Ai-ya! You really are stupid, forgetting your key!'

'Where have you been? We've been freezing to death for hours...'

'Forgot your key?!'

'Where have you been all night? Useless father, out all night, gambling all our money away...'

'Useless mother, making your children sleep out in the cold...'

It's minus two degrees and next door, Angie is looking down from her bedroom window at Ping and Stan and the air between them charged white.

Every night he go out every night he doesn't tell me where he go what he do I don't know.

叩頭³⁴⁰

...the rule in marriage is that the husband commands and the wife obeys. In all matters it is the husband who will decide, and it is the duty of the wife to conform to his decision.³⁴¹

Ping has a new habit. First thing in the morning she sticks her head into the girls' room and yells, 'Get up lazybones!'

When Loretta opens her eyes, she hisses, 'You dead girl 死女 – you're not even sick – why'd you make me call the doctor?'

Then she slams the door.

You was two.

Man knock the door, looking for Baba. He want money. Lots of money. Man said better pay quick. I said, 'what's problem? why?' He – has – 'nother – daughter! 'nother woman!

How I put up? how I put up? but I put up.

Miss Brown the teacher has decided that for exercise, the class will do square-dancing every afternoon. Each boy must choose a girl to dance with. Brett chooses Loretta. Brett is tall and pale and skinny. He has fat red lips, droopy eyes and freckles. He stutters. His hands are cold and clammy. When the boys go to one side of the courtyard and the girls to the other, Loretta hides at the back.

One lunchtime, Linda invites Brett to sit with them. 'He likes you Loretta, let him sit with us.' So Brett sits next to Loretta in their little circle in the playground and chews his Marmite sandwiches. He nods and laughs – a curious, almost noiseless laugh, like air being let out of a bicycle tyre in spurts – and he doesn't say a word. The next day he sits with them again. And the next. Slowly he begins to

³⁴¹ "Whole Duty"

Speak, but he stutters so badly that Linda – trendy Linda with the purple vinyl vest and power-socket hair – can't stop herself butting in.

When Brett says, 'My m-m-mum and d-d-d...' Linda announces, 'My mum and dad don't make love anymore.'

Brett frowns at the grass, and when Duggy burps, 'How do you know?' and Christine asks, 'Are they getting a divorce?' Linda says, 'Nah. Nana says that's just what happens when you get married.'

Linda knows stuff: 'Some girls are so stupid – they think they're gonna bleed to death when they get their period. Isn't that the stupidest thing you ever heard?'

Loretta doesn't even know what a period is, though she has a vague idea it has something to do with the bag of big white pads and the elastic belt with safety pins her mother keeps on the toilet cistern.

Linda knows stuff: 'Some girls think you can get pregnant if you *kiss!*' And to prove the inanity of this belief, she purses her lips and sucks the apple of Duggy's fat cheek.

Duggy wipes the wet patch with the back of his hand, and Christine says: 'Do it again – slowly... on the lips.'

Duggy sits motionless, eyes wide. Linda pecks his tight-lipped mouth. Then she turns to Christine: 'You do it now.' When Christine obeys, Linda claps her hands and pounces on Loretta. 'You and Brett now!'

Loretta shakes her head.

'You have to!'

Loretta shakes her head.

Linda: 'Spoil-sport!' and she gives Brett a kick. 'Do it Brett, do it!'

Brett doesn't dare refuse. He puts an arm around Loretta and pecks her on the cheek with his red rubber lips.

Linda: 'No! Lip-kiss, lip-kiss!'

Brett closes in and when his freckles merge, Loretta snaps her eyes shut. Marmite-breath-rubber-lips-Marmite-slobber-*yay-they're-doing-it-they're-doing-it!*-clapping-clapping-*yay!-was-that-your-first-time-Loretta-was-it?-slapping-clapping-was-it?-was-it?-was-it??*

What is the *point* of this anecdote?? Is this a story about assimilation or – god forbid – miscegenation? If so, then these people – albeit children – need to be more clearly characterised. There is no *Chineseness* discernible here. Couldn't you have Loretta wipe a few grains of rice from her mouth... or explore the boy's point of view perhaps? How does *he* feel about kissing this exotic little Chinese girl? Does she taste of soy sauce or smell like Tiger Balm?



Fig. 28³⁴²

~~~~~  
A VARIETY OF DISHES, USING CHOPS <sup>343</sup>

Lamb cutlets  
Curried chops  
Sweet and sour chops<sup>344</sup>  
Hot-pot of chops  
Casserole of chops and vegetables

~~~~~

It's Sunday, day of rest. Ping has invited a crowd for lunch. There's Maisie and Robert and their children Arlene, George and Baby Archie; there's Joe and Betty and their kids Tracey, Brenda and Baby Kevin; there's Charlie and Doreen and their

³⁴² Zachary Wong. *Chinese Girl*. 2016. Ink on paper. Private collection.

³⁴³ Inspired by Celia Timms.

³⁴⁴ It is wonderful to see this kind of culinary assimilation!

baby-yet-to-be-born. Ping has roasted lamb and potatoes and pumpkin and parsnip. She has boiled peas. For dessert there's ice-cream and jelly, and fruit salad out of a tin. After lunch, the men sit on the front step, smoke their Rothmans and watch over their babies eating gravel in the drive. Stan plays guitar and Robert plays the harmonica. The older children are in the girls' bedroom. They're Donna Summer, Debbie Harry, the Jackson Five: hairbrush popstars bouncing on the beds.

The mothers wash up and settle into their mah-jong game.

Maisie: 'They'll be here soon.'

Betty: 'Who?'

Doreen: 'You mean A-Yeh?'

Ping: 'Next week.'

Maisie: 'You got your room sorted?'

Ping (horrified): 'What? They're not staying with us!'

Maisie: 'We had them last time.'

Betty shakes her head: 'Our spare room's a mess, and we haven't fixed that broken window yet.'

Doreen laughs: 'Only one room at our place.'

Maisie and Betty and Doreen turn to Ping, and Maisie says, 'No choice Ping.'

春 ³⁴⁵

Not only is the wife to obey her husband... she is to be even more attentive and respectful to his parents than towards her own... She must inquire after their health night and morning... always meet them with a smiling countenance, obey their orders, bring them food and drink at appointed

³⁴⁵ *cheun*

times... fulfil all their wishes without delay, and make every effort to satisfy them.³⁴⁶

When Yeh-yeh 爺爺 stay our house, so much work, all day cooking, cleaning, making the tea, but I good daughter-in-law, never complain. Yeh-yeh is the boss whole family. We – Maisie, Betty, Doreen and me – we are good daughter-in-law, no trouble, just all the time say yes. That’s why they choosing us.

It’s October, twenty-four degrees. The plane has landed. Loretta, Lenore, Arlene, George, Tracey, Brenda and Baby Joseph have their faces pressed against the windows. They’re watching the stairs-on-wheels being pushed across the tarmac to rest beneath the plane’s doors. They’re watching the baggage handlers prepare to unload. The doors open and a couple of air hostesses flank the front and rear. Grandmother is the first to disembark. She is wearing a dark blue tunic and pants and carrying a big black handbag. As she steps out, she squints and raises a hand to shield her eyes. The air hostess smiles and her lips move. Grandmother ignores her, grips the handrail and descends. Grandfather, in dark grey suit and tie, follows close behind.

Arlene: ‘They look half asleep.’

Loretta: ‘Yeh-yeh always looks half asleep.’

George: ‘Cos he’s only got one eye.’

Tracey: ‘Phew! They must be hot in those clothes!’

Stan: ‘Quick! Everybody downstairs!’

Maisie: ‘What’s the rush? They’ll be ages yet.’

But Stan hates to be late for anything. He rounds up all the children and they troop downstairs. They wait forty-five minutes before Grandfather and Grandmother appear through the double doors. Maisie has all the children lined up

³⁴⁶ “Whole Duty”

from tallest and eldest to youngest and smallest. Baby Joseph stands wide-eyed in brown corduroy at the end of the line.

First Grandfather shakes hands with his sons Robert, Stan, Joe and Charlie. He grunts at the wives. The wives greet Grandmother and Grandmother nods. Then Grandfather and Grandmother inspect the grandchildren, Grandfather walking down the line with his hands behind his back, Grandmother following like the Queen inspecting her military guard. Each child mumbles a greeting, keeping his or her eyes on the ground. Grandmother stops at Baby Joseph, pats his cheek and says, 'Who's this big boy?'

Then Grandfather brings out his wallet and distributes twenty dollar bills to all the children.

We are happy for them to learn our ways because the Chinese woman - especially the daughter-in-law – has a miserable life. From the moment her marriage is arranged, she is a virtual slave. Chinese women enjoy few of the freedoms – or happiness – of our own women.

Sunday afternoon at Betty and Joe's house: a timber Victorian with a glasshouse out the back, a plane tree with a swing on the side, a verandah and a yard big enough for cricket with sixes out the front.

Betty is in the kitchen with Arlene and Tracey. They're mashing bananas for cake.

Outside, Brenda is pushing Lenore on the swing.

In the dining room, George is playing Monopoly with Loretta, who's whining because she's landed in jail.

Joe, Stan and Robert are in the living room, smoking cigarettes and reading the sports pages of the newspaper.

Maisie is in the toilet with Baby Archie.

Baby Kevin and Baby Joseph are asleep together in the cot in the main bedroom.

Grandfather is walking around and around the sprawling front lawn.

Grandmother is sitting on the veranda step shelling peas.

Ping is in the glasshouse, picking weeds and weeping.

叩頭³⁴⁷

In the yard, Loretta and Lenore are threading dandelions while Ping sows spring onions.

Over the back fence, the McAllisters are at it again.

Lenore: 'Why are they fighting?'

Loretta: 'They're prob'ly getting a divorce.'

Lenore: 'How come?'

Loretta: 'Cos they fight all the time.'

Lenore: 'I'm going to marry Daddy.'

Loretta: 'He's already married to Mummy.'

Lenore: 'Then I'll marry Joseph.'

Loretta: 'You can't marry your own brother, stupid...'

Ping's hoe hits a rock: 'Talk Chinese! Otherway... *he...*' (Ping's eyes slide menacingly toward the back fence and the dandelions in Lenore's fist tremble)
'...will *beat you dead* 打死你!'

When you talking like the gwei-mui 鬼妹 I can't understand I scare my heart go boom-boom-boom.

³⁴⁷ *kow tow*

It's fifteen degrees outside and the sky is grey. Miss Brown is taking the class swimming. It's a twenty minute walk to the pool through the long grass behind the pink and grey bungalows of the new housing estate.

They undress behind concrete walls with cloud for cover. Miss Brown stands shivering beside the pool, arms folded over her thick cable-knit jumper. Loretta is a 'non-swimmer'. There are three of them. Miss Brown has devised games for them at the shallow end: blowing a ping-pong ball from one side to the other, making like a starfish face down in the water, fetching rings from the bottom of the pool.

At home, Ping wrings out Loretta's wet togs and towel. 'You silly girl – swimming in this weather.'

The next morning, Loretta has a temperature. 'I *told* you not to go swimming,' her mother scolds. Ping, Stan, Baby Joseph and Lenore go off to work and school, and Loretta stays home in bed.

It is evening by the time they all return. Loretta wakes to the television playing, Baby Joseph screaming, her mother banging the meat cleaver in the kitchen. Stan's cigarette smoke wafts in from the living room and her throat itches. The curtains are open, and although the night pressing in on the window is cold, Loretta is burning.

'*Sik farn* 吃飯!' her mother shouts, 'eat dinner!' There's a scuffle: chairs scrape, chopsticks clack, china bowls rattle; then her father's voice booming: 'Where's Loretta?'

Angry footsteps in the hall. The door opens and the ceiling light flickers. Loretta squints up at her mother barking, 'Eat dinner!' There's a whiff of fish and chip grease when Ping throws the blankets off the bed. Loretta tucks her chin to her chest. 'Not hungry.' 'Eat dinner!' 'Not hungry, Mummy.' Loretta curls foetal on the sweat-soaked mattress. 'I *told* you not to go swimming!' Ping grabs her arm, yanks her up. The floor beneath Loretta's feet shifts, but she straightens abruptly in response to her mother's sharp-knuckled imperative: 'Drink soup 飲湯!'

Ai-ya! Why you not listen to me? You sick your fault – aiya, too much trouble.

like the meaning of 'love' ³⁴⁸

on my eighth birthday
you gave me a pencil case
and a dictionary
unwrapped
here, take it, you said
my mother never gave me
anything

the dictionary was orange
(my favourite colour)
I read it like a thriller
under the bedclothes
at night
with a torch

you borrowed it
from time to time
to do your homework
you learned the meanings
of words like "hard" and "work"
and "important"
and the importance of modifiers
like "too", "so" and "very"

then you were able to tell us
that your sisters
lived "very far away"
that when you were young
you were "so poor"
that all your life
you have "been very hard work"

³⁴⁸ G. Yee, "Like"

that we were “too young”
to understand why
you confused your “r”s
with your “l”s
so “lollies” were “lorries”
and “writing” was “lighting” –
but you had no problem
with “lonely”:
“When we come here you just baby
Daddy work all day
I so lonely”

and the radio made noises
like the meaning of “love”
eyes dry, you confessed
you could not comprehend
your mother left
when you were a girl
there were so many children
you didn’t even get
a proper name
no shoes, no food, no hugs
no mother –
I understood these simple negations
but “no name” meant nothing:
“a thing of no importance, value, or
concern” – a lie

until the day I left home
you gave me my papers
and on the thick green page
that was proof of my existence
I saw what your mother gave you:

Stroked in black fountain pen
Under "Name of Mother" –
The word "Daughter"

From time immemorial the Chinese woman has been a mere cipher. So unimportant is she that when a man has only daughters he says he has no children, and very often they are not even given the dignity of names, but are simply called first-born, second-born, and so on.³⁴⁹

My mother First Wife. I am First Wife, Number Four daughter, Number Four sister. I have three children. First-born is the girl. Second-born another girl. Number One is the boy.

Loretta has been ill for a week. She has been home alone, sleeping most of the day, waking only to cough, or stagger to the toilet. The phlegm gets caught in her throat and she sits up in panic, clutching the rickety bedhead. Hot tears roll down her cheeks and settle in the hollows of her collarbone. She hears the next-door billygoat bleat. All day she eats nothing, drinks nothing.

Evenings Ping pulls her out of bed to sit at the kitchen table to drink buk choy and ginger soup or to eat *jook* 粥. On the seventh day when the sheets are changed, Loretta flops onto her sister's bed and Ping hisses, 'you're not *that* sick!'

Ping is still suffering the humiliation of Dr Blackie's last visit. 'It's just bronchitis,' she tells Stan when he tells her to call him, 'serves her right for going swimming in this weather.'

By the middle of the second week, Loretta is beginning to feel better. She is able to sit up in bed and read Enid Blyton's *Folk of the Faraway Tree*. Her naps are peaceful now, no longer interrupted by coughing fits.

³⁴⁹ "Ladies"

Stan pops home early in the afternoons. It's his habit to greet her with a shout, 'You right?' to which Loretta nods, smile hidden under the blanket. Some days he brings presents: a drawing pad and felt tip pens, a book about trees, a radio that looks like a vintage car, and (their favourite) a cuckoo clock. Stan puts it on the bookshelf so Loretta can see it from her bed. They both laugh out loud the first time the cuckoo pops out, and when Loretta is alone, the tick-tock of the pendulum chops the day into almost cheerful chunks.

Loretta gives to Miss Brown a sick-note in her own handwriting:

Dear Miss Brown

Sorry Loretta didn't come to school for 3 weeks. She was very sick with pnnewmoania. Yours sincerely, Ping Chin

Christine: 'Did you go away on holiday?

Linda: 'Did you go back to China?'

Duggy: 'Did you see the Great Wall?'

The rules laid down for the management of children are very few. They are to be kept clean, they are not to be allowed to eat and drink gluttonously, nor to play too much for fear of contracting idle habits. . . .³⁵⁰

After school they roll sausages for Ping to dip in batter and watch Johnny the potato boy wash spuds and load up the chipmaker. Evenings when the shopfront is full of customers, Loretta, Lenore and Baby Joseph play on the street. They peer into the window of the TAB shop next door: here fluorescent strips light a black and white checkerboard floor, pens and paper sit neatly arranged on laminate countertops over colour co-ordinated wastepaper baskets, and the radio plays through clean air.

³⁵⁰ "Whole Duty"

In the back of *their* shop, naked bulbs swing over barrels of oyster shells and potatoes and cooking fat, the chip machine clunks and whines, and the air that Stan whistles through is heavy with grease. The highlight of the day is watching Stan push water across the cement floor and into the drain with the big squeegee mop. That and checking the rat-traps for prey.

Only gwei-paw 鬼婆 gwei-lo 鬼佬 can take the holiday. They never worry about the money.

Old Age Pensions Act, 1898

. . . This Act, in so far as it provides for the grant of pensions, shall not apply to – Chinese or other Asiatics, whether naturalised or not.³⁵¹

EVENING POST³⁵²

Volume LXXIX, Issue 102, 2 May 1910

FRACAS IN A LAUNDRY

EUROPEAN v. CHINESE

. . . Ernest Ferguson, a boilermaker, said he went to the laundry managed by Wing Lee on Saturday, 23rd April, to get his clothes. He had lost his check. . . There was a difference, and he was hit by a hammer.

Mr Herdman: Now is it not a fact that you were in a fightable frame of mind, that you had been drinking, and felt like fighting all the Chinese in the country?

. . . witness said that Ferguson was defending himself, with his hands by his side, and waiting for a Chinaman to hit him,

³⁵¹ From section 64(4) of the Old Age Pensions Act, 1898 (Murphy, *Guide* 153; Appendix 3)

³⁵² "Fracas"

“as any man would do” . . .

Counsel submitted that it was a piece of gross and unwarranted impertinence on Ferguson’s part to have gone behind the counter. Wing Lee . . . was a decent law-abiding and peaceful citizen, who had carried on his business in a perfectly reputable manner. . .

Gwei-lo too much trouble. I scare.

It’s Friday night and the shopfront is packed with customers, most of them builders from the construction site across the river. The vats are bubbling and Ping is shuffling baskets. Stan salts and wraps and whistles, stopping only to call out orders (‘Three fish, three sau-sa-jaaaah, three chip!’), hand over parcels and count out change. Between wraps, he watches Ping and the vats (‘That one’s done!’) and drums the countertop with his fingers.

All is going swimmingly until the phone rings and Stan ducks out the back to answer it. Returning with an armload of paper, he spies a ginger-haired hand on the till. ‘Hey!’ he drops the paper on the counter with a thud.

Ginger looks up, blue eyes startled.

‘You try to take my money?’ Stan opens the till, looks inside, slams it shut.

‘Nah...’ Ginger puts his hands in his pockets.

‘I saw you!’

‘Nah... I had me hand... here,’ and he puts a hairy hand on the countertop.

‘I saw your hand *on the till!*’

Ginger steps back.

‘You better go!’

‘But – but – I done nothin’...’

‘I’ll call the police!’

‘But – I done nothin’...’

‘You better go now!’

‘What about me chips...?’

Stan steps out from behind the counter. Ginger scans the other customers. They all avert their eyes.

‘You better go – I’ll call the police!’

‘But...’

Stan is at the door, holding the fly strips aside. ‘You better go NOW!’

For ten long seconds there is only the splutter of wet battered fish burning now in the vats as Ping watches her husband her heart (‘I scare’) going *boom-boom-boom*. Then Ginger steps out muttering and Stan turns to the other customers eyes wide and shouts, ‘I saw him!’

They shuffle their feet and clear their throats. ‘Yeah, he looked like trouble’, ‘I saw him too’, ‘sneaky bugger’.



Fig. 29

Although it was a magnificent afternoon, clean and bright, the two hours spent in pottering about amongst the dark and odorous homes of John Chinaman were not entirely wasted. . .

“Just going to have a look round,” says the Inspector. “Li’, all li,” replies the shopkeeper, and a door at the back of the shop admits us to the kitchen. Five Chinese are eating rice and curry, and using their chopsticks with wonderful dexterity. The eating utensils are very clean, but the kitchen is littered with all kinds of rubbish and the floor is

appallingly dirty. A strange smell of . . . Chinaman . . .
permeates the whole place. . .³⁵³

*Shop VERY CLEAN. EVERY DAY mop the floor, catch the rat. See gwei-lo 死鬼佬 tip all
the chip out, touch the fish – ai-ya! What they looking for? They never asking me. Just
make big mess. See gwei-lo – dui dung le! 死鬼佬最恨了!*

Baby Joseph is locked in the shed.

It had not been a good morning. There had been a visit from the health-inspector-man, the man Ping loved to hate. He'd marched around the back of the shop in his slick black shoes, poking and prodding his hairy sausage fingers through buckets of chip-cut potatoes, trays of neatly arranged filleted fish and bags of flour looking for god-knows-what. Ping had followed ('yes sir, of course fresh!'), picking up and tidying and straightening in his wake, all the while boring an evil eye through the back of the health-inspector-man's sweaty red neck. 'What's this?' the health-inspector-man had said on leaving, peering into a barrel by the back door. 'Fat,' Stan explained. 'What for?' 'To make soap.' 'Soup?' 'Soap!' 'And these?' 'Oyster shell.'



Fig. 30³⁵⁴

. . . Chinese food is supposed to be good, but it is strange
and uncanny. . . In a bowl of clean water there were several
things that looked like the specimens that are kept in

³⁵³ "Chinatown"

³⁵⁴ Demelza Wong. *Chinese Fish*. 2015. Ink on paper. Private collection.

spirits in surgeons' museums. "Fish!" explained the cook.
"What sort?" "Oh! Chinese fish!"³⁵⁵

When the health-inspector-man left, Baby Joseph, who'd been strapped in his highchair, waddled straight over to the oyster shell bin. Stan said, 'No!' and put the lid on. Baby Joseph took the lid off. Stan said, 'No!' and put the lid back and pushed the bin under the counter. Baby Joseph screamed. Stan yelled. Baby Joseph sat on the wet cement floor and screamed and kicked. Then Ping, wound tight from the health-inspector-man's visit, hissed, 'Get him out of here!' So Stan picked up Baby Joseph, hauled him out the back door, past the TAB, past the butcher's shop, past the scrub, to the old wooden shed where he planted him in a pile of cardboard boxes and quickly bolted the door. Baby Joseph screamed and kicked the door. Loretta looked at Lenore over their mound of rolled sausages: 'Not again.'

Ten minutes pass. The butcher, in blood-spattered navy and white striped apron and gumboots, appears at the front of the shop. He's holding Baby Joseph by the hand. Baby Joseph is holding a cone with two scoops of rainbow-coloured ice-cream. He's sniffing and licking. Ping and Stan laugh with embarrassment. Loretta and Lenore peek out between the fly-strips. The butcher winks at them. 'You girls want ice-cream?' They skip out the door but not before Stan presses a dollar bill into Loretta's hand: 'Get me a packet of Rothmans.'

The Chinese are very superstitious. The number four is considered to be supremely unlucky.

When Ping discovers she is pregnant with her fourth child, the first thing she says is, 'Ai ya! See see see', which translates either as 'Oh my god, death death death' or 'Oh my god, four four four' depending on how you say – or hear it.

³⁵⁵ "Chinatown"



Fig. 31³⁵⁶

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**Mothers Day Gift Suggestions:**

Sunbeam Mixmaster Mixer  
 Escort Pop-up Toaster  
 Ralta Salon Hairdryer  
 Hoover Spray Steam and Dry Iron  
 Hay Nest of Tables  
 Vanity Chair  
 Clothes Trolleys  
 Coal Hod  
 TV Table

~~~~~

In Chinese family EVERY DAY Mothers Day EVERY DAY Fathers Day.

³⁵⁶ Make Mum's Day. Advertisement. IGA Premier Food Stores. *The Press*. 8 May 1972: n. pag.



Baby Joseph is four years old. While his tantrums are now less frequent, he is somewhat disturbed when Ping, in the last months of her pregnancy, cuts back her working hours in the shop. For Baby Joseph, life at home is dull: there's nothing to do except dig in the vegetable garden with his mother or play alone with his toy cars while his mother naps. In the shop he could watch the potatoes in the chip machine, spy on customers from behind the fly-strips, and ride his tricycle past the butcher's shop. More recently, Stan had let him buy his Rothmans for him from the corner dairy – an errand that earned him jellybeans from the lady behind the counter.

After four days at home, Baby Joseph is itching for excitement.

It's Friday afternoon and windy. Ping is asleep and Loretta and Lenore, just home from school, are in the kitchen eating iced animal biscuits when Baby Joseph bursts in and shouts, 'Let's fly our kites!' Last Christmas Yeh-yeh had sent the granddaughters bird kites and the grandsons dragon kites. It has been months since they were last flown.

In the garage they find the birds entangled – only the dragon is free to play.

'Can we Joseph?'

'You have to let *me* hold it for a long long long time, cos it's *my* kite.'

The wind is strong: Loretta only has to run up the road once to get the dragon airborne. It swoops and dives and Baby Joseph and Lenore squeal and clap their hands.

Then the McAllister boys show up on their bikes. The big one is riding a brand new Chopper with a banana seat. He spits at Loretta's feet.

'Whatcha got there ching chong?'

Loretta narrows her eyes, keeps them on the dragon. Her hands tighten around the spool. She takes a step back into Little McAllister.

‘Watch it ching chong.’

Lenore flees.

‘Hey! It’s a dragon, innit? Where’dja get it ching chong?’

Loretta presses her lips together, backs away. Big McAllister makes a grab for the spool.

‘Give it to us!’

‘Yeah – gizzit ching chong! Gizzit!’

Baby Joseph flees. Little McAllister throws down his bike and wrestles the spool off Loretta. ‘Whoa! Look at it!’

Loretta folds her arms across her chest and sulks. Then she stomps home. In the driveway she runs into Baby Joseph tearing out into the street as fast as his little legs can carry him. His face is pre-tantrum red and in his hands he’s clutching Ping’s meat cleaver.

‘Joseph! What are you doing?’

‘I’m gonna *get* them!’

‘Joseph! Joseph! Give me the knife!’

‘It’s *my* kite!’

‘Give it to me!’

Loretta runs after him. The McAllister boys are on their bikes, ready to ride off with the dragon in tow. Then big McAllister sees Baby Joseph charging, grunting, face red, meat cleaver flashing, and he stands up on the pedals of his Chopper. ‘Shit, Wayne! Let it go, let it go!’ Little McAllister’s face turns homogenised-milk-white and he freezes. ‘Let it go, Wayne! Let it go!’ Little McAllister drops the spool. Baby Joseph charges after him and lands a clanging dent on little McAllister’s rear mudguard.

‘Joseph! Joseph! Come back! The kite, the kite!’

The wind is strong and the spool is tap-tap-tapping on the asphalt as the string unravels. The dragon is soaring so high Loretta and Baby Joseph can barely make out the flames.



Fig. 32³⁵⁸

Practitioners of the Oriental martial arts use a large range of weapons.

It's summer and the back door is open. Stan, Ping, Loretta, Lenore and Baby Joseph are eating dinner in the kitchen. Angie and Stavros are shouting next door.

'I didn't kill the fuckin' dog! Jesus Stavros, whaddya take me for?'

'You said you...'

'I said nothing...'

'You said you were gonna...'

'I said I *wanted* to...'

'Yeah, like a thousand times...'

'It wasn't me!'

'Then who...'

'How the hell would I know? That Rae bitch – how dare she fuckin' blame me...'

'She didn't...'

'You heard her – "did you give Jojo anything to eat this morning" ..?'

'She was just asking...'

'She was accusing...'

'But you're happy now, aren't you?'

'Whadda *you* think? Jesus Christ, maybe we can all get some sleep now!'

³⁵⁸ Zachary Wong. *Practitioner of Oriental Martial Arts*. 2016. Ink on paper. Private collection.

Rae doesn't like Angie. Angie doesn't like the dog. Dog doesn't like the meat, so dead. At least now no more noise.

'So how ya been, Ping?' They're in Angie's living room. The children are sprawled on the floor watching *Bewitched* on TV. Ping is perched on the coffee table. The sofas are piled high with laundry and stuff Angie's brought back from a recent trip to Australia. 'We had *such* a good time, didn't we kids? How do you like this?' Angie lifts a plastic doll off the sofa; it has blond hair, blue eyes that open and shut and a skirt made entirely of shells. 'Found her at the market, jeez they had good stuff there. Look at these t-shirts!' She fishes out an armful. They are all printed with 'Australia' and koala bears. 'So cheap! I got a dozen. Here, have some – what colour do you want?' Ping smiles and shakes her head, but Angie has already picked out three: 'These should fit your girls – and here's one for the little one.' She folds them roughly and lays them in Ping's lap. 'This – *this* – is the best! Look at this – a toilet radio! You screw it in the wall, put your loo paper here... tunes into all the stations.' She turns the dial and Neil Diamond sings *song sung blue, everybody knows one*.³⁵⁹

Loretta's hands are cold and moulded blue around the handlebars of her new bicycle. She's pedalling on the footpath, almost home (having spent the afternoon with the choir practising for the school production of *Joseph's Technicolor Dreamcoat*) when 'hey!' – the McAllister boys on their bikes. 'Hey! Ching chong chinaman!' says the little one, nudging her from the right. 'Ching chong ching chong!' sings the big one, nudging her from the left. He rings her bell and twists it under the handlebar. 'Why don'tcha go back to China, ching chong?' The little one spits in Loretta's basket and elbows her. Loretta swerves off the kerb and onto the road. The big one kicks the rear mudguard and they both take off around the corner.

The street is grey and blurred. Loretta rides slowly home, parks the bike in the garage, dries her face on the back of her sleeve. The fire's going in the living

³⁵⁹ Diamond

room but the house is, as always, cold. Ping is in the kitchen, wiping her hands on a tea-towel. She sees her daughter's tear-stained face, buttons up her work smock and says, 'Just heat this for dinner, ok?'

English boy very cheeky. What can you do? Nothing can do. Just put up.



Fig. 33³⁶⁰

In the classroom, Father Kevin is talking about Jesus and the resurrection.

Linda is painting her fingernails bubblegum pink. 'Does your mother let you wear make-up Christine?'

'Sometimes.'

'What about you, Loretta?'

'Sometimes I use my mum's eyebrow pencil.'

Linda peers at Loretta's eyebrows. 'Hmmm... you should *pluck* them.'

Loretta pulls a face. Linda peers closer. 'You should wear mascara – you hardly have any eyelashes – they're so short! Maybe it's cos your eyes are so slanty.'

Christine leans in from the other side. 'They are too.'

³⁶⁰ Brightly British. Advertisement. Beaths. *The Press*. 4 September 1972: 3.

Duggy: 'They're a funny shape.'

Linda: '*Ours* are round, yours are like this' – she stretches the outer corners of her eyes upward and juts her face into Loretta's.

Loretta screws up her nose at the smell of Linda's nail polish.

Duggy: 'They're not the same as *ours*.'

Christine: 'They are different.'

Father Kevin is walking around the room distributing chocolate fish and pictures of Jesus.

'Yay!' shrieks Linda, 'colouring-in!'

Loretta pulls her sheet in close. When she blinks, two fat teardrops fall onto the cross beneath Jesus' feet.



Fig. 34

Every Friday afternoon when Mrs Appleton buys two-fish-and-two-scoops-of-chips-please, she tells Ping, 'What beautiful children you have, you're so lucky to have three, I only have one boy', and they have a short, usually one-sided conversation about raising boy children. (Ping doesn't understand Mrs Appleton's insistence that 'you need eyes at the back of your head'). After several weeks during which Mrs Appleton has noticed Ping's expanding girth – and increasingly wan smile – she says, 'You're so busy dear, why don't you let me look after them?' to which Ping replies, 'you sure no trouble?', thus beginning a new Friday night routine: three children for two hours in exchange for one pound of groper.

Mrs Appleton has snow-white hair, silver-rimmed glasses and rosy cheeks. She lives in a tiny two-bedroom flat with her 36-year-old unmarried son Raymond. Mrs Appleton doesn't like being called Mrs Appleton. 'Call me Clarice,' she tells the children, 'it rhymes with Paris!' But neither Loretta nor Lenore nor Baby Joseph can bring themselves to call her 'Clarice'. Mrs Appleton is too old – and she looks like Mrs Santa Claus.

Mrs Appleton takes them to the park where there's a paddling pool (with stringy green stuff floating in it) and nobody else around. 'Here you go - take off your clothes and have a splash!' It is here that the quiet and worried Lenore confides: 'Mrs Appleton... I think I have a hole in my heart', and lifts up her t-shirt to point to the dent that is her sternum, the sight of which has kept her awake nights for weeks. 'Oh!' says Mrs Appleton, 'oh goodness me! You *do* have a little hole in your heart – you'll have to eat more, fill it up!'

When Baby Joseph throws a tantrum, Mrs Appleton leads him to the bathroom and gently closes the door. She patiently sips her tea in the kitchen while he kicks and screams and bangs. When Baby Joseph emerges, damp and red-faced, she welcomes him back as if he'd done nothing more than pop outside to gather caterpillars off the back fence. 'Oh, there you go! What have you been up to?' To which Baby Joseph responds with a sniff of his hanging head. Mrs Appleton makes no mention of the hole in the bathroom wall or the plaster crumbs on her immaculate linoleum floor.

Mrs Appleton has a sister called Ivy Dunbar who speaks in a stern, unsmiling headmistress voice and insists on being called *Mrs* Dunbar. When Mrs Dunbar visits, Loretta, Lenore and Baby Joseph cower in the corner of the living room. They hang their heads in shame when they hear her scold Mrs Appleton, 'those children are so *dirty*, I don't know *how* you can have them in your house.'

We lucky Mrs Appleton helping us. Friday we working all day all night never stop my heart go boom-boom-boom can't stop.

At 4pm on Guy Fawkes Day, Loretta and Lenore are in the bathtub when Donna walks in. She looks and smells like she's been rolling in her mother's freshly manured vegetable garden.

'Can I play with Betty?' she says. (Betty is Loretta's dark-brown-with-blond-hair rag doll).

Loretta's eyes widen. 'No'.

‘What about Rosie?’ (Rosie is Lenore’s: pale pink with red hair). Lenore shakes her head. Donna narrows her eyes, stamps her feet, leaves.

At dusk Stan launches skyrockets and Catherine wheels from empty milk bottles, and they all twirl sparklers on the front steps.

At ten o’clock when Stan is out and the children in bed, Ping is washing up in the kitchen when a man thrusts his face into the open window – she jumps at the sight of his bushy black eyebrows arched above the sill. *Ai-ya – (boom-boom-boom) – burglar!*

‘Good night for it, ay?’

Ai-ya! (boom-boom-boom) – Ping gropes for the bread knife beneath the suds – *burglar been drinking the beer.*

‘You got any matches?’

Matches? (boom-boom-boom)

‘How about lemonade? ...kids are thirsty, you got any lemonade, or *Fanta?*’

Soft drink?? Ai-ya. . . ohhhh, it’s Rick - Donna’s Baba. ‘No... sorry.’

The man – Donna’s *Baba* – shrugs and leaves and Ping pulls the window shut shaking.

In the morning the driveway is littered with spent rockets and the inside of the letterbox is burned black. There are cracker remnants inside. Lenore says, ‘Bet it was Donna.’

no ordinary filth

My mother grew bouquets of dust in the red brick house.
They bloomed beneath the sofa and on the carpet
between the roses. My mother could not clean house.
A good day for her was a bowl of rice and shoes to walk
to school in. The dirt she grew up with was not the kind
that could be wiped away lovingly with a warm damp cloth.

When sweeping the floor have to sweep inside, if sweep outside all the good luck go out then whole family bad luck.

Ping's so fat now she can barely move. The floors of the house are strewn with dirty socks, crayons and biscuit crumbs. When the doctor tells Stan that Ping's blood pressure is up and that she needs complete bed-rest in hospital, it's all Ping can do to shuffle out to the car in her dressing gown.

Loretta, Lenore and Baby Joseph move in with Aunt Betty and Uncle Joe. Life with Aunt Betty is like homemade vegetable soup: warm and slow with yummy chunks. Aunt Betty makes pikelets and custard squares, and she lets Loretta, Lenore and even Baby Joseph help with the stirring and flipping and icing. Aunt Betty likes to sit on the front veranda and make dandelion chains. She likes to amble down to the library late in the afternoon and she lets the children borrow as many books as they can fit into Baby Kevin's stroller. Aunt Betty lets the girls stay home from school when they're feeling tired. She lets the four of them – Loretta and Lenore, Tracey and Brenda – squeeze into the old clawfoot bath together and she doesn't yell at them when they splash water on the floor.

Ping's hospital room has a large window in the corridor. Visitors can see right in as they pass. Ping's lying on her back: a pink velour mountain with unclimbable curves. It's two o'clock in the afternoon: visiting hours have just begun. Aunt Betty, Loretta, Lenore and Baby Joseph file in. Aunt Betty says, 'Have you had lunch?' Ping opens her eyes, closes them. Loretta moves forward with a cellophane parcel in her hands. 'Mummy, here's the wool you wanted.' She places the parcel at the foot of the mountain.



Fig. 35³⁶¹

³⁶¹ Demelza Wong. *New Zealand Wool*. 2015. Ink on paper. Private collection.

Ping gives birth to a baby girl. She had been expecting a boy. She had all Baby Joseph's clothes washed and ready. She had made blue and white checked curtains for the room the baby would share with Baby Joseph. Stan had chosen the name already: Stevenson.

When the baby is born, Ping weeps for four days. She refuses to feed the baby and she doesn't want her in the room with her. She refuses to see her other children. She does not speak to Stan.

The baby is brought home in Baby Joseph's blue grow-suit. For weeks the child remains nameless. Then one day Stan receives a reminder notice from the Registrar of Births Deaths and Marriages.

'We have to choose a name for her.'

Ping says, 'Stevenson will do.'

'That's a boy's name.'

'So?'

'She should have a girl's name.'

Lenore pipes, 'What about Stevie?'

Stan: 'Sounds like a boy, how about Stephanie?'

Loretta: 'Does it have to start with S-T?'

Joseph: 'What about Star? Let's call her Baby Star!'

They name the new baby 'Starlet'. Ping dresses her in Baby Joseph's clothes. When people tell her what a cute little boy she has, she doesn't bother to correct them. And she doesn't intervene when Baby Joseph clocks her on the head with his string of wooden ducks.



Fig. 36³⁶²

³⁶² Demelza Wong. *String of Wooden Ducks*. 2015. Ink on paper. Private collection.

There is . . . the widest difference, in their estimation, between male and female offspring; the former are as eagerly desired, as the latter are generally deprecated. . . Sometimes . . . the extreme desire of male offspring leads parents to suborn the midwives to purchase a boy of some poor person, and substitute it for the girl, just born. This is termed, tow long, hoan foong – “stealing a dragon in exchange for a phoenix.”³⁶³

English Mittens³⁶⁴

It was afternoon and I was nine:
there appeared a white wicker bassinet
in the corner of the bedroom
by the window where the sun shone
in the mirror
Our mother was sitting
on the pink candlewick
like a cake decoration
My brother and I tiptoed into the room
and peeped into the bassinet
The new baby had her eyes closed
and a pale blue hat on her head
Her hands were bound in white mittens
When we asked ‘why?’ our mother replied
‘so she doesn’t scratch her face and cry.’
In our Chinese the word for scratch is *wah*
and the word for cry is *hook*

³⁶³ J. F. Davis 271

³⁶⁴ Adapted from G. Yee, “English”

so if the baby *wah*-ed her face
she would *hook*
I looked at my sister's face:
the folded eyes, the barely nose
flat cheeks glowing like a sixty-watt lightbulb
and that's when it came to me
that's when I knew
that even if we spent the next hundred years
carving roast lamb on Sundays
buttering white bread
and boiling Brussels sprouts
we could never be them
nor they us
because if someone were to hook
an English baby's face
she would 'wah!'
– even if she had her mittens on

The Chinese are not fond of the sunlight, and most of the rooms are dark and depressing. How the children can grow up healthy is one of the secrets of this strange race. . These children grow up in the darkness and the smell and take their exercise in a tiny backyard among the rubbish. But they seem happy enough.³⁶⁵

In Ping's vegetable garden, the courgettes have burst to the size of giant marrows and bear broad yellow bands on their flanks. The spring onions, gone to seed, are as tall as Baby Joseph. Inside the house, dust balls, sweet wrappers and toenails have

³⁶⁵ "Chinatown"

gathered against the skirting boards. The bathtub is ringed with a dozen grey bands; the towels are rank and damp. All the windows are closed and the air is stuffed with dust.

Ping has retired to bed as she does every afternoon when Baby Starlet sleeps. Loretta, Lenore and Baby Joseph are playing 'going to the movies'. They have drawn the faux velvet curtains in the living room and lined up their dolls and soft toys on the sofa. Loretta has distributed potato chips in china rice bowls. The door is closed and the television is switched on.

Ten minutes into *The Flintstones* Baby Joseph has his hands in Loretta's bowl. Loretta slaps his hand. Baby Joseph squeals. Lenore hisses, 'shush!' Loretta's bowl falls with a thud and the chips spill over the carpet. Loretta shouts, 'now look what you've done!' and she whacks Baby Joseph's knee. Baby Joseph screams, 'ow! don't!' and throws the china bowl at Loretta's head. Loretta ducks. The bowl lands on the hearth and breaks into three. Lenore wails, 'shush! you'll wake Mummy!'

Angry footsteps in the hall: a shaft of light and Ping's face dark in the living room door. She marches in, wooden coathanger in hand, whacks bottoms, legs, arms, heads, screaming, 'I'll kill you, kill you, kill you!' 殺你! 殺你! 殺你! until they all fall down, cowering on the floor weeping and shaking, arms clamped around their heads. 'I'll kill you all! I *told* you – *QUIET!*' and she flings the coathanger against the door jamb. Hands on hips she sweeps a steely gaze over her whimpering balls of children, and slams the door shut.

Ai-ya! Too many children. Can't sleep my heart go boom-boom-boom.

Chinese parents are strict. They seldom praise their children and corporal punishment is very harsh by our standards. They don't believe in sparing the rod. Consequently, their children are extraordinarily well-behaved.

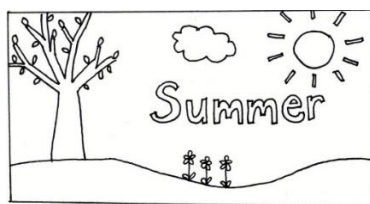


Fig. 37³⁶⁶

The days are hot and blue. Loretta, Lenore and Baby Joseph spend their afternoons running through the sprinkler on the front lawn. They do handstands and cartwheels and leapfrog over one another. They push each other's heads into the water. With Baby Starlet so small, Ping stays home most days. She makes apple pie and raspberry jelly. She knits jerseys for Baby Joseph and cardigans for the girls.

When Ping needs something from the corner dairy, she tells her children to 'call me when the Fat Lady 肥婆 comes'. The Fat Lady lives around the corner and she ambles past the house every morning. When Ping sees her she calls out from the kitchen window: 'Excuse me missus, buy butter please', and she waves a dollar bill under the awning and makes the Fat Lady waddle across the soggy front lawn. The Fat Lady is always obliging, though she never smiles. She wears her black hair in a tightly scraped bun and her barrel belly beneath a cotton floral shift. Most days she doesn't bother to remove her apron before she leaves the house.

What strikes one afresh at every turn is the way in which, in almost everything, the Chinaman adheres to the customs of his race. Apparently it never occurs to him to adopt the customs of the European.³⁶⁷

Monday, 9am: Loretta and Lenore jump out of the car. 'Bye Baba!' Stan drives off. Christine is hugging her mother on the kerb. She's wearing a new pink and white

³⁶⁶ Demelza Wong, *Summer*. 2015. Ink on paper. Private collection.

³⁶⁷ "Chinatown"

dress and a white headband in her hair. Her mother gives her a loud sucky kiss, 'have a good day, darling – love you', and she toots and waves as she pulls out.

Loretta: 'Does your mother say 'I love you' every day?'

Christine: 'Most days... why? Doesn't your mother?'

Loretta: 'No.'

Christine: 'Sometimes?'

Loretta: 'No, never.'

Christine: 'What about your dad?'

Loretta: 'No... my parents don't love me.'

Christine is wide-eyed. 'Don't be silly – of course they do!'

Loretta, with no hint of sadness, her eyes on the cut-out hearts on

Christine's white sandals: 'No... they don't.'

. . . and the radio made noises
like the meaning of "love"
eyes dry, you confessed
you could not comprehend. . .³⁶⁸

There is, perhaps, no people in the world that keeps fewer holidays than the Chinese...³⁶⁹

Christine is going away with her parents and older sister for two weeks. They're going to The Sounds. Loretta doesn't know what or where The Sounds are, but judging by the way Christine and her mother intone the words, she figures it must be somewhere posh with plenty of sand, water and yachts. The week before they go, Christine's mother asks Loretta, 'Would you like to feed our pussycat while we're away? We have an arrangement with the butcher – all you have to do is pick up the meat every day, and we'll leave the hose dripping into her bowl.' And she

³⁶⁸ Excerpt from G. Yee, "Like"

³⁶⁹ J. F. Davis 285

takes Loretta round the back to show her Pussy's bowl under the Pohutakawa tree. Pussy is a fat grey tabby with white front paws. 'She's quite happy outside all the time, aren't you Puss?' Christine's mother rubs Pussy's head. Then she stands and unfurls her arm toward the hedge like a showgirl introducing a late-model car: 'You can use the swimming pool on hot days if you like.' She smiles broadly and Loretta notices that her top incisors overlap like fingers crossed for luck.

FOR THE GOOD HUSBAND

For the good husband, you must be have good figure and show off little bit, you know? And wear little bit make-up. Girl have to be look pretty, otherway the man can't see you.

The girls didn't see each other at all during the holidays. Loretta can't get over the change in Linda: her power-socket hair is bleached blonde, her eyes are lined in black kohl, she has brown skin and breasts, and she spends every recess glossing her lips and teasing her hair with a bright yellow afro comb. Linda's skirt is so short the frayed edges of her knickers hang below the hem, and her shirt so threadbare that Dan and Solly sitting behind her compete with one another to ping her emphatically black bra straps. And on that first morning, just after Mrs Dale calls out the word 'unfortunate' in a spelling test, Linda hisses: 'Hey - you know what *fuck* means? Do ya know? Say it... go on, say it. *Fuck – f-u-c-k.*'

The Chinese are very protective of their children, particularly their girls. Some of them are not even permitted to go on school camps. And dating boys outside of the Chinese community appears to be much frowned on. They seem to think our world is a dangerous place for their daughters. But really, New Zealand is the safest country in the world. What harm could they possibly come to?

Loretta has a crush two doors down. Shane is sixteen. He has dirty blond hair. He wears sunglasses inside. He rides a red Yamaha motorcycle. 250cc. Loretta rides Baby Joseph's skateboard (Ping: 'Don't ride the skateboard') down the hill past Shane's house ('*danger, very danger*') trips on a rock, bumps her head and fractures her coccyx. Fortunately, Shane is no witness, but for two weeks sitting is silent agony.



Fig. 38³⁷⁰

Delia can hear dead people talk. At the local cemetery, she and Loretta sit between the graves with a tape deck to record the voices. At her slumber party Delia fashions an ouija board and with her father's whisky glass channels messages from the spirit world. Delia has thick dark eyelashes and when she's channelling, her eyes twitch like spiders wrestling out of her eye sockets.

For the good husband, you can't wear the glasses – the man don't like the woman wearing the glasses. You see the bride wearing the glasses? Of course – never see such thing!

Mr Frank, the optometrist: 'Your daughter needs to wear her glasses every day.'

'Noooooo... she ok.'

'Mrs Chin, she can't read the biggest letters on the chart without them.'

Later, in the car: 'Ai-ya... Baba doesn't like. Uncle Joe doesn't like... look *terrible* - very hard get boyfriend... better take off.'

'But I can't see without them.'

'Better not see.'

When Loretta gets home from school, she finds Lenore sitting at the kitchen table, her face in a bowl. Her upper lip is red and she's pinching her nose with a blood-soaked flannel. 'Where's Ma?' 'Id bed.' Loretta pours a glass of Ribena, gulps it down, grabs a handful of iced animals from the tin, runs into her mother at the

³⁷⁰ Zachary Wong. *Resting in Peace*. 2016. Ink on paper. Private collection.

door. Ping pushes past, strides to the bench, picks up the Ribena glass, thrusts it in Loretta's face: 'Don't leave dirty dishes lying around!' throws it in the sink, glares at Lenore and barks, 'Haven't you stopped bleeding yet!'

Delia says the curse is karma. Loretta is bedridden three days a month, and she wonders if it's got anything to do with the skateboard accident. 'Really,' Delia advises, 'you should use tampons – much less mess.' They're sealed behind the glass doors in Delia's living room with the family cats (Milo and Mucky), all of them passively inhaling the smoke from Delia's mother's chain of cigarettes. Just that afternoon a large blot appeared on the back of Loretta's skirt. She swung it around to the front, crossed her legs, and shuffled from class to class minimising the flow, before Delia offered her a luxurious Barbie-doll-mattress-sized pad wrapped in the morning's front page news.

Rae's daughter Donna is sixteen and broken.

Ping warns Loretta: 'You know Donna? she big tummy! you know why? she go *camping* with *boy*! *Danger – very danger!* *ai-ya* 哎咗! sixteen – mother! you preg-nick, you get out! you broken girl 爛女 – I throw you away!'

The boys are firing their steel compasses around the classroom like darts. Some of them nick the blackboard, others get stuck on the cork on the rear wall. Loretta is sitting at the back, arms around her head on the desk when Linda rushes in. 'What happened to your hair??' The left side of Linda's head is completely shorn. Her eyes are red and swollen. 'You all right?' Linda blows her nose. 'Mum left last night.' 'What do you mean? Where's she gone?' Linda shrugs her shoulders. There's a god-awful screech: Dan and Solly are scraping their fingernails down the blackboard and the girls in the front row are shrieking.

Afternoons while Ping naps, it's Loretta's job to keep the coal bucket filled. (Life, she thinks, would be so much easier if the coal was left at the letterbox every morning like the milk.) The coal bin is right by the back door, just a few feet from the side

fence that Stevie (Angie & Stavros' youngest) likes to climb. He likes to prop his face over the palings and stare at Loretta while she works, snot dripping from his nostrils. Once he threw dirt at her back while she was shovelling the last rocks of coal from the bottom of the bin. Another time, the kitchen window was open and he threw gravel through that. It scattered all over the lino and Ping slipped on it and gashed her forehead on a cupboard door. (Grandmother was visiting at the time and told her not to be so careless: if Ping had done her housework properly, she wouldn't have had such an accident.)

Stevie's gone feral since his dad left. The talk is that Stavros went to Greece to visit his mother and while he was away, Angie had a fling with some Māori bloke she met at the pub. Stavros was away for six weeks and when he got off the plane, who should he run into but Rae at the airport (where she works in the cafeteria), and Rae (having never forgotten the poisoned puppy incident) let on about Angie's 'new friend'. Before the week was up, Stavros was on the plane back to his mother in Greece. The talk about the neighbourhood is that he's not coming back. Meanwhile, Angie has found a job cleaning at the hospital and Cherie (the second daughter) is looking out for little Stevie because Sharon, the eldest, has left school to work at the check-out at the *New World* that's opened up the road.

By the 1960s and 1970s, New Zealanders were beginning to establish a new and independent identity. The young country was growing up and recognizing itself as part of Asia and the Pacific, rather than as an outpost of Britain. . . The Māori began to assert their rights as original inhabitants. . . of New Zealand, and they began to insist upon increased recognition of their language and culture.³⁷¹

³⁷¹ Barr 12-13

Mr Chester, the history teacher: 'What does biculturalism mean, Loretta?'

Loretta: "'Bi" means two ... two cultures? the Māori and the Pākehā? ... It means that – these two cultures, these people, are important – equally important...'

Mr Chester: 'What do you think of that?'

the mission

each day it began with the morning poo
father's coffee steaming kitchen tiles
greased with the splatter of wok-fried food
baby sister dribbling Marmite in her highchair
while burning toast smoked the kitchen sepia
father would hand out the Cadbury's
after we'd tied our tattered shoes
and slid into the backseat of the rusty fusty Toyota
by the time we got to school our eyes were wide as walnuts
'stay out of the sun' our wan-faced mother would warn
'too-dark-like-a-Māori!'
but I knew I had to be brown
– it was the colour of everyone
and everything
in the world that wasn't white

I writing letter to my mother every week. She never writing back. Not even one letter.

It's Baby Joseph's eighth birthday. Ping has declared that there will be a party. All the aunts and uncles and cousins are invited.

Loretta sulks. 'What about me?'

'What about you?'

'My birthday's soon, too.'

'You're too old for parties.'

‘I’ve never had a party.’

‘Well-*I*- never-had-a-party-my-mother-*never*- remembered-my-birthday-she-never-gave-me-a-present-not-even-one-*I*-had-to-live-in-a-boarding-school-and-I-cleaned-the toilets-and-cried-every-night-we-were-lucky-to-have-one-bowl-of-rice-to-eat-every-day-and-one-pair-of-shoes-on-our-feet-and-you-want-a-party!’

Loretta hangs her head.

Ping is banging pots now and throwing dirty dishes into the sink. She sighs and says, ‘You can invite *one* friend to Joseph’s party – *one*.’

On the morning of the party, Loretta sees Sharon and Cherie over the fence, and she invites them both. Ping is not pleased. Ever since the poisoned puppy incident, she’s avoided Angie.

‘Don’t you give them girls any lolly bags,’ she warns.

Lunch is roast chicken and potatoes and pumpkin and carrots and boiled peas and gravy made out of a sachet. Dessert is apple pie. The birthday cake’s a chocolate sponge baked in a casserole pot. There is one candle. They all crowd around the kitchen table and sing ‘happy birthday’ to Baby Joseph sitting on a stool in his green checkered shirt and best corduroy pants. Ping helps him make the first cut into the sponge with a bread knife. Then Loretta cuts the cake into squares and serves it straight into everyone’s hands. Because there are only six chairs around the table, most of them eat standing up. Auntie Betty says to Ping, ‘hmmm good – how many eggs?’

As Donna’s tummy grows bigger and rounder, so do her eyes. It’s as though she can hardly believe what’s happening to her body. Then, when it looks as though she couldn’t possibly get any bigger, she disappears – all of a sudden – like a popped balloon.

‘Did Donna have the baby?’

‘That broken girl 爛女?’

‘Haven’t seen her for a long time.’

‘Her mother kick out.’

‘She wouldn’t do that.’

‘Useless broken girl 爛女.’

‘Where did she go?’

‘She dead girl 死女.’

It’s winter now and dark by 5:30pm. Loretta has found that if she turns out the light in her bedroom, climbs up on the windowsill and hangs out the bedroom window, she can watch Shane working on his motorbike in his garage. The view is even better with Stan’s binoculars. Loretta is unfazed when Lenore barges into the bedroom.

‘What are you doing?’

‘Shshsh! Shut the door!’

‘What are you doing?’

‘Looking at the stars.’

For the good husband, must be always listen the mother father. We know more.

The word is out about Loretta and Shane.

Sharon next-door asks her straight out, ‘You goin’ out with him?’ Loretta smiles and says nothing. The truth is, she and Shane haven’t been ‘out’ further than the shops at the end of the street, and the closest she’s got to him is on the back of his motorbike. He did invite her swimming in their pool once. Just the two of them, it would’ve been, but Ping forbade it (‘Nooooo, stay inside, tan too dark’) and dragged Loretta off to a pink carnation Chinese wedding, where she got drunk on vodka and orange and danced all night with the only Pākehā boy there. Ping had glared at her from her all-seeing seat in the mothers’ circle and lectured all the way home about the dangers of consorting with *gwei-jai* 鬼仔.



The Assembly Hall, where the reception to over 600 guests was held, presented an exotic and colourful spectacle, created by the many Chinese women who wore richly embroidered but simple Chinese dress, offset by the conventional attire of the many European guests.³⁷³

‘You come.’

‘Why can’t Ba go?’

‘You come, meet more Chinese friend...’

‘Who’s getting married this time?’

‘You know Jello?’

‘Who?’

‘Jello – Barba’s big brother.’

‘You mean *Gerald*? *Barbara*’s brother? It’s Gerald, Ma – *Jeer – rold*.’

‘Jello mother got very nice girl...’

‘China girl?’

‘Beautiful... white skin....’

‘He doesn’t like the Chinese girls here?’

‘Here girl too fussy! Jello good boy, always listen to mother father, *never argue*, he got the good job – nearly doctor!’

‘He’s a *dentist*, Ma...’

‘Den-tit better! No sick people, no talking, more money... Jello wife lucky girl, Jello good husband...’

³⁷² *hei*

³⁷³ “Chinese Wedding”

Barbara swoops on Loretta. 'Love that dress! I made one *exactly* the same last year for Franklin's wedding – but... mine was *real* silk – isn't it Vogue two-zero-four-two?'

'Uh – I – can't remember...'

'Let's see...' Barbara consults her seating plan, 'where are you sitting...? Here we are – you're opposite Rex and his mum – lucky you!' And she weaves expertly between tray-bearing waiters, hobbling elders and toddling children to a table at the rear of the hall.

Ping greets Rex's mother: 'Ah – Ting, *ni hao ma* 你好吗?' and so begins a chicken-squawking dialogue that continues through the evening's formalities. Most of the five hundred and twenty guests are engaged in their own equally loud conversations. Nobody – bar the happy couple's closest friends (of which there are few on account of Gerald's overly studious character and his bride's immigrant status) is particularly interested in hearing the best man's mildly funny anecdotes on Gerald's short and largely uneventful life. Nobody – bar the bridesmaids' parents and boyfriends – is particularly interested in hearing how blushing beautiful they (the bridesmaids) look in salmon pink tonight. Nobody – bar the bride's mother (the father remained in China) is particularly interested in toasting the bride. They know that she is a 'last resort' bride. (They can see that she is pretty. They can see by her wedding gown – snow-white frills and modest neckline – that she is sweet-natured and young. They can see by the way she looks at her husband that she will be a good and dutiful wife and – more importantly – a good and dutiful daughter-in-law.) But a hush does descend on the room when the speech is made to toast the groom's parents. Everybody – except the littlest children – stops to listen.

'Connie and Gilbert, congratulations on the wedding of another son. What an admirable job you have done raising your five children. They are all so successful in their careers and studies... They have all made fine achievements in sport and music... We can see that they have all inherited Connie's good looks.' (Laughter.) '... the most amazing thing – and I think that everyone will agree – is that all your children are so *respectful* and *obedient* to you and... to all their elders. They *listen*

and heed your advice. This is truly admirable these days, with so many young people ignoring their parents' wishes and going their own way...'

Ping casts a meaningful sideways glance at Loretta whose eyes are heavenward. They all stand and some of them sing '*...you will never grow old, while you have love in your hearts...*' while Barbara plays the piano. Then, soberly, they clink their glasses 'to Connie and Gilbert', fine raisers of obedient offspring.

There is no buffet. There is a choice of beef or chicken. The orange juice, sitting in large jugs on the tables amidst the baby's breath and single salmon pink roses, is warm and watery. Loretta picks at her beef. She raises her eyebrows at Rex and Rex raises his back and tugs at his tie. The old lady sitting next to Loretta – a friend of Gilbert's dead grandmother – has fallen asleep, her head on the napkin tucked under her chin.

Microphones squeal, cymbals clash, and guitar strings twang as the band sets up. The lead guitarist is a strutting cockatoo in black leather and studded boots. He opens with Anne Murray's 'Could I have this dance'. Gerald, pencil-thin and awkward in black tuxedo, barely moves as he holds his new wife on the dance-floor. Loretta reapplies her chilli red lipstick, straightens her shoulders and clops to the bar.

SUNDAY GARDENING ³⁷⁴

It's ten-thirty at night and there's a low rumble in the kitchen, a rumble that trails into throat-clearing, tearless sniffs and long silences. Yeh-Yeh 爺爺 is dead. Stan, Robert, Joe and Charlie sit late, smoking cigarettes and drinking tea.

Not a word is spoken on the flight over.

They bury Yeh-Yeh in a cemetery on the side of a hill overlooking the city. The hill is steep and the graves are packed close in tiered rows: an amphitheatre of headstones looking down on the city below.

They take it in turns to pay their last respects: bowing three times, quickly. Stan trips and the incense stick flies out of his hand and lands in a vase of plastic flowers on the terrace below. (Grandmother hmmphs.)

The headstone is engraved in gold and inlaid with a black and white photograph of Yeh-Yeh in his prime: skin smooth and cheeks fat. It is a good face. He looks satisfied. He looks like he had a prosperous life.

Great-Grandfather would've been proud.

1908 黃 ³⁷⁵

They called him yellow
he who starched their whites
and bleached the shit out of their underwear
long after there were no more nuggets
to be found in the riverbeds

With Stan away, Ping has Rick (Donna's dad) helping out in the shop. Rick is a panda bear: large and lumbering, with big dark eyes, jet-black hair and pale skin. Ping likes him because he is half Chinese and because he does everything she asks him to do. Now and then he *smell like the beer*, but he turns up on time and is happy to stay

³⁷⁴ Adapted from G. Yee, "Sunday Gardening".

³⁷⁵ *wong*

late and take on Stan's jobs of going to the fish and vegetable markets, filleting the fish, taking orders and chatting to customers while she cooks.

It's all going well until the night Ping gets a call from Dawn who lives behind the dairy.

'Stan home?'

'No – she go to Hong Kong.'³⁷⁶

'Oh dear... did you know your shop's on fire? Fire truck's there now.'

There are puddles on the cement floor. At a glance, Ping takes in the flame-licked walls, the blackened ceiling, the ash that was once the pile of newspaper wrap, the greasy towel Rick had flung over the two-bar heater.

The waiting room is a perfect rectangle. Vinyl seating lines the perimeter in mission brown. The windows are cut just below the ceiling: skinny horizontal panes slash grey sky in Morse: short, short, short; long, long, long; short, short, short. In the consulting room, Starlet stands stripped to the waist. Doctor Blackie has declared 'bronchitis'. He's scrawling a solution. 'So...' he says, without looking up, 'how are you, Mrs Chin?'

'Tired... and ...' Ping leans forward, hand at her throat, 'sometime my heart go boom-boom-boom...'

'How many hours are you working?'

'Ah... Stan go to Hong Kong, I go to work seven clock, come home eight clock.'

'When's Stan coming back?'

'Two week.'

'How many days will you work then – when he comes back?'

'Sunday day off, open four clock.'

'Seven days! With four children?'

³⁷⁶ It is not uncommon for Chinese speakers for whom English is an additional language to confuse 'he' with 'she'.

Starlet is getting goosebumps. She rubs her upper arms and eyes the balled-up skivvy in Ping's wringing hands.

'Have to.'

'Mrs Chin,' the Doctor peers over his glasses like a courtroom judge presiding over the conditions of a defendant's life sentence. 'Keep working like this,' he pronounces, 'and you'll be *dead* before you're fifty.'

'No choice – English no good, no job.'

'You can *learn* English, go to school.'

'Before I go, but... no time.'

The Doctor's advice: 'Try reading the newspaper every day.'

EVENING POST ³⁷⁷

Volume LXXXVII, Issue 58, 10 March 1914

Sunday gardening

CHINESE FINED
(BY TELEGRAPH – PRESS ASSOCIATION.)

Dunedin, This Day.

At the Police Court this morning a Chinese market gardener was fined 5s and costs for working at his calling on Sunday.

The day Loretta has to take a cup of grated cheese to school she discovers her latest crush is sleeping with the class mouse. 'I *saw* them,' says Delia, delighting in her audience, 'buying *condoms* from the *chemist*.' The girls all scoff: 'No way! Not her!'

In Mr L's English class they watch the lovers ignore one another, she beneath her long greasy fringe, he behind his boarish demeanour, carefully cultivated to conceal all signs of tenderness.

³⁷⁷ "Sunday"

Mr L (today in lime-green pants suit) notes their inattention. 'Are you *listening* to me, girls?' to which Loretta replies 'No,' at which Mr L launches into a pompous tantrum, stomping his click-and-salute platform boots and shouting, 'Are you *defying me*?' to which Loretta mutters 'yep', to which Mr L responds with a pointed finger at the door.

Which is how Loretta finds herself cycling through the park at one-thirty in the afternoon and falling asleep on the creek bank, napping long enough to be late to cooking class – which sends her into a spin because the grated cheese was so much damn trouble to get. (The night before she ran down to the dairy to buy a block. Cheese is never on Ping's shopping list. Not having a grater – one knife does all in Ping's kitchen – she spent the evening chopping the cheddar into teeny tiny cubes that she then crammed into a plastic cup and sealed with lunch paper and a rubber band.)

In the home ec kitchen Loretta notes that everyone else has brought their cheese in neat Tupperware tubs with plastic lids that click on closing (the kind of click that induces a *finished that* housewifely smugness.) Everyone else's cheese is light and delicate and fluffy (because, of course, it has been grated). Loretta's cheese comes out of her cup in an ugly solid mass and she hurries to fold it into her bowl of flour and milk.

But Delia is watching: 'That's too much butter.'

'No, it's not.'

After scones – Loretta's turn out extra cheesy – it's time to go home. Ping is at the back gate in the Fiat, early and anxious. Lenore, Joseph and Starlet are slouched in the back seat and the engine is running. When Loretta slams the door, steam shoots from the bonnet with a hiss and she screams, 'It's gonna blow up!' Joseph shouts, 'Quick! Get out! It's gonna blow up!' They all leap out and run across the road leaving Ping, face white as her work smock, clutching the steering wheel, trying, but not knowing how, to get a grip on the situation.

Happy Valley, Hong Kong: Grandmother is sitting in Yeh-Yeh's chair by the window, staring at the racecourse below, listening to the rumble of machines and falling

mortar down the hill. She wedges a cushion behind her back and folds her arms across her chest.

Around Ping's kitchen table, the daughters-in-law fuss: 'She'll be cold.'

They worry: 'She won't understand a word.'

And they fight: 'She's *not* staying with *me*.'

They decide that Grandmother should live with Joe and Betty because they have the most room and because Joe is the youngest, and because Betty is the one least likely to argue. The others agree to take her on weekends – now and then.

Loretta: 'Ugh! What is that green stuff she leaves in the bathroom sink?'

Tracey: 'Hair dye. You should smell her room – she rubs that icky tiger balm oil on *every* night.'

Loretta: 'Do you have to clean in there?'

Tracey: 'No way, Mum does it. But I've been in there. She's got this huge collection of plastic bags and newspapers in the wardrobe – *piles*.'

Loretta: 'Shsh! She's right there.'

Tracey: 'She can't hear.'

Grandmother is sitting on the sofa, a blue plastic cap on her head attached to a tube attached to a round whirring machine.

Loretta: 'What *is* that?'

Tracey: 'Her hairdryer.'

After school they find Stan in the bedroom, sprawled flat on his back, face glowing from the sun filtered through red faux velvet curtains. An almost empty bottle of cough mixture sits sticky on the bedside table.

'Ba?'

Stan turns his head. 'Give me medicine.'

'How much have you had?' Loretta wipes the bottle with a tissue, hands it to her father.

Stan struggles to raise his head, sucks down what's left of the syrup, flops back down on the bed.

It's a busy night at the shop and Ping is struggling to keep up. Rick, as instructed, is writing down orders, making conversation with customers, sprinkling salt and wrapping.

'Where's Stan? Got the night off?' It's Mr R, principal of the local primary school. He's a grey-haired, ruddy-cheeked English gent; with his tweed cap, he looks as though he's just stepped off some windswept Yorkshire moor.

Ping, shuffling baskets in the bubbling vats, says nothing.

Rick says, 'He's having a rest at home, bit tired.'

And Mr R responds, 'Leaving the wife to do all the work, eh?'

A splotch of hot oil lands on the back of Ping's hand. She wipes it on the front of her smock.

It's six-thirty and dark outside. Loretta, Lenore, Joseph and Starlet are in the living room with the door closed. The lights are bright and coals are glowing in the grate. They're watching TV and eating the chocolate cake Lenore whipped up from a box that afternoon.

Starlet: 'Daddy wants you.'

Loretta: 'Huh?'

Stan's voice is hoarse: 'Loretta!'

Loretta rushes down the hall, breath white before her, flicks on the light in the bedroom. Stan is on his side. His face is grey and slippery. 'Get me a bowl!'

'Could I speak to Doctor Blackie please?'

The voice is tired. 'He's not home, dear.'

'My father's sick.'

The voice sighs. 'What's the matter, dear?'

'He – he – he's vomiting blood.'

The voice sharpens. 'Are you sure about that?'

'Yes! And – and he has a temperature.'

Although she is waiting in the hall, Loretta is startled by Doctor Blackie's large grey frame and the rap-rap-rap of his fat-knuckled fist on the frosted glass. She opens the door and, overcome by the smell of chimney smoke and mothballs, and the Doctor's imperious boom ('Where's your father!'), flattens herself against the wall to let him pass.

'Flu, Stan?'

'Feel terrible, Doctor Blackie, terrible.'

The Doctor roams his cold stethoscope across Stan's chest, scratches on a pad and slaps a prescription on the bedside table, right on the sticky ring left by the syrup bottle.

Doubling the dose, Stan finishes the antibiotics in three days. He feels no better. When he gets up in the night to go to the toilet, the room tips and he claws at the swaying walls. The scraping wakes Ping and she pulls the blankets up to her nose, eyes wide at the sight of her husband's shadow flailing around the room like some pre-phosphorescent fire.

The next afternoon, Robert brings in a family friend. In the vermillion darkness of the bedroom, Dr Gin pumps the sphygmomanometer. As the cuff deflates he squints at the falling mercury. *Aiya, aiya, aiya* 哎吔, 哎吔, 哎吔.

Stan likes the hospital food, especially the stewed apples and corned beef.

'The damage occurred in the cerebellum,' the resident doctor tells Ping, who nods her head and says, 'I see.' 'That's why he's having problems with his balance – but he'll be all right – probably not a full recovery, but he'll be fine – as long as he stops smoking.'

'He can work?'

'He needs time to recover, get his balance back.'

'How long?'

'At least six months, maybe a year. We'll see – we'll monitor his progress.'

Stan's favourite seat is on the porch by the front door. It's sheltered and the arms of the chair are flat and wide – good for coffee cups, bowls and books. The traffic passing by the house lulls him to sleep.

Afternoons he wakes to crunching gravel. Loretta: face red, shirt-tails loose, satchel hanging precariously from the back of her bicycle. Stan gets up and, legs wide, staggers to the toilet. When he returns there's a steaming bowl of pork mince *jook* 粥 on the arm of the chair. 'Hey!' he shouts, 'where's the soy sauce?'

'Here,' Ping says to Loretta, 'take this – two hands.'

'I *know*,' Loretta, eyes down, passes the cup of tea to Grandmother with both hands.

Joseph barges into the kitchen, heads straight for the fridge. 'Any *L & P* left?'

Loretta: 'Didn't you finish it yesterday?'

Joseph: 'Nah – not me.'

Loretta: 'I never touch the stuff... Lenore and Star wouldn't – gives them a bleeding nose...'

'There was a whole bottle there last night,' Joseph slams the fridge door, leaves.

Loretta calls out, 'Water's good for you.'

Grandmother hmmpths to Ping pointedly, 'They can't even speak one word of Chinese.' *Yet goi m sik gong*.

Stan appears, grasping the doorframe with both hands. He shouts at Loretta, 'Any more soft drink?'

'I'll bring it out to you, Ba.'

Grandmother, staring after her son, sighs. '*Aiya* 哎咗 – he walks like he's been at sea.'

Queen's Birthday weekend:

Stan: 'They spent a lot of time in boats back then, the men. Stay away long time – sometime ten, twenty years. Not easy, the life... *gwei-los* 鬼佬! they don't like them – sometime they drive them all out – or *kill* them... your great-great-grandfather

build the railroad, go home every two year. Every two year he got a son. Lucky man.
But the last time, nearly home, pirates got him... ambush. Hong Kong Harbour...
everybody drown... very hard life – a lot of people go crazy, taking the opium, you
know.’

c.1793 to 1839 喜樂 ³⁷⁸

From the fields of East India They sent
ten thousand trunks of happiness

On the eve of Chinese New Year:

Ping: ‘The god, he everywhere. He see all the thing. All the bad thing, he see.
You put the broom up – make the god angry. Bad luck. Hard life.’

EVENING POST

Volume LXXXVIII, Issue 154, 28 December 1914 ³⁷⁹

CHINESE GARDENER’S SUICIDE
(BY TELEGRAPH – PRESS ASSOCIATION.)

GISBORNE, This Day.

Wong Mun Cheong, a Chinese gardener,
aged 60, hanged himself to a blue-gum tree
at Mangapapa. He had suffered some gambling
losses.

‘Baba gamble all the money away. Every night go out – you don’t remember. Every
night he come home two, three clock. I can’t sleep. I waiting for him – use the
vacuum cleaner, try to *suck all the bad thing out.*’

‘Didn’t you get a mouse with that vacuum cleaner?’

‘*Dead mouse.*’

³⁷⁸ *hei lok*

³⁷⁹ “Chinese Gardener’s”

The doctor says Grandmother has liver failure. Her eyes are yellow and her blood is full of bile.

Ping: 'She very angry something.'

Betty: 'She not happy here.'

1995 唔識講³⁸⁰

They brought her in a cage

She stopped singing

as soon as she landed

They sell the fish and chip shop to Rick.

Ping and Lenore get work in a factory that makes cheap wool-blend coats. They can't afford to get the Fiat fixed, and Ping can't cope with Stan's Toyota (manual drive), so they take a bus to work each day.

With the exception of Claire, a young university student (a history major), the other workers ignore them completely. The staff tearoom is small, dark and windowless and the roof leaks when it rains. There is a large puddle of water in the centre of the room where the cracked concrete dips. The other women huddle behind a screen of cigarette smoke on one side of the puddle and Ping, Lenore and Claire sit on the other.

Compared to frying fish, the work is easy. All they have to do is steam iron the coats and brush the fluff off them. They start at seven-thirty in the morning and get away by four in the afternoon. The work is bearable but for the boss: a too-tight-pencil-skirted, forty-ish shrew of a woman who clops around the factory floor in heels as sharp as her tongue, tearing coats off hangers and demanding in the voice of a plum-mouthed banshee, '*Who pressed this? Absolutely appalling – do it again!*'

³⁸⁰ *m sik gong*

Loretta works weekends at the local hospital where rich people have their tonsils, cataracts and abdominal fat removed and where the casual staff's change-room is a broom cupboard/storeroom.

The night shift is best. She gets to while away the wee hours answering call-bells ('Could I have a glass of water, dear?' 'Would you mind straightening my sheets, dear?') and rolling butterballs for the breakfast trays.

The nurses are all pleasant bar one, Sister Lois – a thin, young (she can't be more than thirty) bony woman with short boyish hair, too-large glasses and a pale, angular face. Everything about her – nose, chin, stare (especially her stare) – is sharp. And everything she utters – 'For God's sake, Loretta, why didn't you *ask*?' – has a jabbing point at the end.

Loretta finds the Sister's lack of humour curious. Honed to efficiency, the woman is like a washing machine fixed on drain and spin – with marked agitation – with no option for soak, suds or froth. At the bedside of a sheikh who has recently undergone kidney surgery, Sister Lois barks, 'Go get me a bottle.' Knowing full well that a urine bottle is what's needed, Loretta brings back a glass vase from the utility room. Quickly suppressing a smirk (the effort!), Sister Lois narrows her eyes, points her chin at Loretta and chides, 'For God's sake, can't you do *anything*?'

Ping comes down with flu and takes to her bed. The following day, Lenore sleeps in and wakes to a pounding headache and fever. There's a sharp pain in her left ear when the banshee-boss screeches, '*Really?* Are you *sure* you're not just staying home because your *mother's* sick?'

Lenore, head thumping, desperate to get back to bed, mutters, 'I'm *really* sick.'

Loretta's eyes narrow when she hears this. 'You know what you should've said to her? "If you don't believe me, boss, come visit us at home – we'd be happy to pass on our flu to *you*, Mrs."' "

1842 香港³⁸¹

They took the Fragrant Harbour
– for one hundred and fifty-five years –
and let Their people roam the countryside
selling Jesus to poppy-heads

After they take out her gall bladder, Grandmother dies in the hospital.

Stan and Robert choose the gravestone: black granite with their mother's
origins engraved in gold. The service is held at St Augustine's Anglican Church. They
sing English hymns and mouth English prayers:

'God of mercy... I shall not want... in the paths of righteousness...'

Yet goi m sik gong.

1998 唔識講³⁸²

Her death was a long one
After, they found her life in sepia print
neatly stacked and dated
beneath the bed

EVENING POST³⁸³

Volume LXIX, Issue 49, 28 February 1905

. . . PROSPECTS OF WORSE EVILS

With regard to the question of the admission of
Chinese women, it is very hard to know just what
to do.

³⁸¹ *Heung Gong*

³⁸² *m sik gong*

³⁸³ Excerpt from "Wifeless"

They leave Grandmother to rest beneath a eucalyptus tree: Li May-Yun, born Taishan County, Guangdong Province. To the left of her: Edgar Thornton, dearly beloved husband of Olive; to the right of her, Walter Sharp, Gone Fishing.



CONCLUSIONS:

CONTINUING THE MASQUERADE

A History Symposium:

They are all talking about Chinese women: secluded wives, mothers, and daughters of the Flowery Land. We are: invisible, marginal, lost and excluded. We are exotic and fascinating. We are spoken for.

I am here to talk about us. My first slide reads:

‘Chinese New Zealand Women: “A Gross and Bitter Evil”’.

They let me talk.

And then, they speak for me:

Audience: ‘You’re the only Chinese woman presenter here today. How do you feel about others co-opting your history, telling your story?’

Me: ‘Uncomfortable... but mainly because, as I said, there seems to be no space for us to tell our own stories...’

Audience: ‘That’s *not true* that there’s no space – and anyway, if we don’t tell these stories, who will?’

Audience: ‘Do you have to be a Chinese woman to tell Chinese women’s stories?’

Audience: ‘Well I *feel* very ‘Chinese’, even though I’m not... *how ‘Chinese’ are you?*’

In this thesis I have endeavoured to account for the Chinese woman subject’s self-awareness of her separate identity beyond the hegemonic narratives that subordinate her as ‘Chinese woman’. By analysing the stories that settler Chinese New Zealand women have told about their lived experiences across a range of platforms, I have drawn attention to our autonomous subjectivity. I have argued that this subjectivity needs to be articulated prior to any claim for a publicly recognised identity, and I have raised the question of whether, in fact, it is possible to claim such an identity. I have concluded that although the Chinese woman

subject can certainly express her autonomy by telling her own stories, the hegemonic force of narratives that continue to re-Orientalise and therefore re-subjectivate her impedes the recognition of her separate identity in the public domain.

This thesis is unique in a number of respects. It has drawn attention to enduring Colonialist Orientalist narratives that continue to subordinate settler Chinese women in New Zealand. It has paid particular attention to the nexus between these narratives and Chinese women's subjectivity, foregrounding their lived experiences through an interrogation of the mechanics of their subjectivation. Utilising a bricolage of critical and creative methods, I have shown how Colonialist Orientalist narratives have not only marginalised stories about Chinese women, but provided little space for Chinese women to tell their own stories. I have brought to light the work of settler Chinese New Zealand women writers, who previously have not been the subject of extended academic research. And the autoethnographic narratives that underpin this thesis frame a unique analytical perspective that encompasses both personal and broader theoretical concerns. In bringing together settler Chinese New Zealand women's voices in diverse storytelling platforms for the purpose of addressing concerns about my own subjectivity, I have produced an intersubjective nexus that illustrates that the prototype 'Chinese woman' is indeed a political designation that *obscures* and at the same time *accommodates* and *enables* Chinese women's autonomy, and agency.³⁸⁴

I have borrowed from Judith Butler's critical analysis of subjection, Rey Chow's analysis of traditional Chinese women's subjectivity, Linda Alcoff's positional feminism, Erving Goffman's dramaturgical schema, and Mary Ann Doane's theorisation of femininity as masquerade to construct conceptual frameworks through which I have analysed settler Chinese New Zealand women's subordination. In different respects and to varying capacities, these frameworks have illuminated Chinese women as subjectivated subjects who nonetheless have

³⁸⁴ 'Chinese woman' as a political designation discussed in Introduction: Critical Literature Review: 'Chinese Woman' and Subjectivity.

the capacity to be autonomous. I have shown that responses to 'Chinese woman' on diverse platforms take on new meanings with each citation. Chapter One showed how 'Chinese woman' has been constructed by Colonialist Orientalist narratives as Oriental and invisible, thereby revealing the hegemony of narratives that subjectivate Chinese women. Chapter Two's imagined inside conversation distinguished Chinese women subjects from the prototype 'Chinese woman', thereby illuminating their autonomy. Chapter Three's comparative analysis of stories told in inside and outside interviews revealed the reflexive distance between Chinese women and 'Chinese woman' cultivated from the sharing of retreat stories. Chapter Four's close critical readings of Chinese women's published writing revealed a range of narrative strategies that exploit this distance, facilitating diverse disruptions of 'Chinese woman'. Chapter Four also revealed that the intersubjective nexuses enabled by retreat stories in this writing constitute robust constellations of extra-hegemonic subjectivity, which have the potential to ground assertions for a separate identity. And my own critiques of hegemonic narratives inform the strategies deployed in the work of creative writing in Chapter Five and the autoethnographic narratives that undergird the thesis. Across the range of storytelling platforms in Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five, Chinese women's responses to the hegemonic narratives that co-construct 'Chinese woman' reveal how different (re)citations of 'Chinese woman' express autonomy and agency. I contend that together and over time, these responses have the potential to unsettle the prototype 'Chinese woman'.³⁸⁵

This research is certainly tightly framed: I have drawn on a small range of familiarly constrained subjectivities and lived experiences as illustrative examples of subjectivation and attempted to configure from these an account of autonomous subjectivity that has the potential for broader applications. But as this thesis is

³⁸⁵ As Judith Butler asserts with regard to words that injure (and 'Chinese woman' is, due to the constraints it imposes, an injurious term): 'The possibility of decontextualizing and recontextualizing such terms through radical acts of public misappropriation constitutes the basis of an ironic hopefulness that the conventional relation between word and wound might become tenuous and even broken over time' (*Excitable* 100).

driven by very personal concerns, it likely has more than the usual blind spots. Despite the analytical reflexivity enabled by autoethnographic narratives, I am entangled, for the hegemonic narratives that co-construct 'Chinese woman' are integral to my own subjectivity. Subjectivated as 'Chinese woman', I see the world – at least partially – through the eyes of 'Chinese woman'. In this thesis, I have not only highlighted how Chinese women themselves reproduce 'Chinese woman', I have reproduced 'her' in my own storytelling. I have (re)deployed Colonialist Orientalist narratives that subjectivate Chinese women as 'Chinese woman'. I have (re)essentialised Chineseness. And I have *spoken for* Chinese women. Despite my analysis of the historical conditions of my own articulation of 'Chinese woman', I am, it seems, guilty of the very 'exploitativeness' I have been at pains to critique (Chow, "Against" 605).

I have also valorised Pākehā/western narratives. The value I have placed on personal lived experiences (both my own and the experiences of other Chinese women) stems from an implicit endorsement of the liberal-humanist precept that the individual's experience of the world – that is, her subjectivity – offers the 'truest' interpretation of 'reality' (Weedon 7-8). I am guilty not only of venerating the individual, but of assuming that the public recognition of identity (based on the individual's subjectivity) is, to quote Judith Butler, the 'consummate moment of politics' (*Psychic* 29). Although the main focus in this thesis has been, as explicitly stated at the outset, on the articulation of an autonomous subjectivity, it has been motivated by the belief that this has the potential to ground the public recognition of a separate identity. This research has been driven by the very western – and very optimistic – belief that such recognition is, in fact, possible (Ang, "I'm a Feminist" 192). In my valorisation of such beliefs, I have therefore sought to have my autonomy validated by the very discourses that subordinate me.

It appears that to be publicly recognised as 'Chinese woman' requires loss: a virtuous transaction (Chow, "Virtuous"); for the Chinese woman subject must forgo recognition for her autonomous subjectivity, and therefore any public claim for a separate identity, in order to be afforded a place in the mainstream. As shown in Chapter Four, the public acknowledgement of the Chinese woman's expression of

autonomous subjectivity entails surrender to hegemonic appropriations: on the outside, such expressions are read as stories that supplement 'Chinese woman'. The Chinese woman who tells a new story is re-Orientalised with 'fascinating' new images of her hitherto unseen inside life.³⁸⁶

But the Chinese woman subject does not, in fact, sacrifice a part of herself in such transactions; for what is appropriated is not her autonomous subjectivity, but the *stories* produced from this subjectivity. Her autonomous subjectivity – that is, the *origins* of her story production – remains unrecognised. Because it lies beyond the reach of hegemonic narratives, the Chinese woman subject retains her autonomous subjectivity and therefore, her autonomy. Her separate identity is situated in the critical space that she inhabits behind the 'Chinese woman' mask, a space that cannot be appropriated because from the hegemonic narrative perspective this space does not exist: the Chinese woman *is* her mask.

If public recognition is sought, there is solidarity in the form of intersubjective nexuses of the kind produced through the frontstaging of retreat stories outside, as discussed in Chapter Four. Here the epistemological value of our stories has potential. Such nexuses constitute a robust mainstream presence within which what I say is necessarily political; due to an enhanced awareness here of the hegemonic narratives that subjectivate us collectively, I cannot speak only for myself: speaking up entails *speaking for* other Chinese women (Alcoff, "Problem" 241-42). The intersubjectivity enabled by our collective awareness makes available a thicker 'Chinese woman' mask, which can accommodate, protect and therefore assert a greater diversity of critical gazes. By collectively masquerading as 'Chinese woman' we can, while speaking to and *for* each other, assert our unique autonomous subjectivities and at the same time co-construct a *heterogeneous* 'Chinese woman' to (surreptitiously) deploy a broader range of counterhegemonic narrative strategies.

³⁸⁶ As Roof and Wiegman point out: '... the minoritized subject' who speaks 'from the specificity of its cultural position' is '*recontained* through a new, deafening "authenticity"' that 'disturbingly reduces the complexity of social subjectivity' (ix-x) (my emphasis).

It has been pointed out by Hilary Chung that the influx of Chinese immigrants to New Zealand in the late twentieth century gave writers and artists in the settler Chinese community cause to reflect upon, 'authorize and valorize' their own distinctive identity. From Chung's perspective, storytelling in the settler community has been facilitated by the phenomena of 'rising China' and increasingly prominent and global 'Chinesenesses' (H. Chung, "Autoethnographic" 81-82).³⁸⁷ In New Zealand, the 'new' Chinese, many of whom sustain transnational lifestyles between Asia and the west,³⁸⁸ have certainly not gone unnoticed. According to Manying Ip, many settler Chinese have noted 'with pride and envy, the new cosmopolitan and sophisticated young Chinese . . . who carry themselves with a degree of ease and confidence not attainable by themselves, who grew up in a white-dominated society' (*Dragons on the Long* 127).³⁸⁹ The new Chinese, who appear to have long 'broken free' from the colonialist discourses that continue to constrain the settler Chinese, inhabit subject positions that may best be described as products of 'diasporic Chinese modernities' (O. Khoo 11).³⁹⁰

The recognition of Chinese women's stories and storytelling in New Zealand certainly appears to have been enhanced by a more dynamic 'diasporic perspective', which has facilitated what may be termed a 'liberating productivity' (Chow, *Writing* 25; Ang, "Can One" 241). In recent years, the more confident, modern Chinese presence in New Zealand has been reflected in the higher profile afforded to stories about and told by Chinese/Asian women in the mainstream. For example, two of the subjects offered in the field of Media Studies in the 2015 NCEA school curriculum were: "My Wedding and Other Secrets", a study of a film (of the same name) by Chinese New Zealand woman Roseanne Liang; and "Asian Women in Media Texts", which looks at how Asian women are represented and stereotyped in mainstream media. Notably, one of the 2015 priorities for the Chinese Poll Tax Heritage Trust, funded by the government in the wake of the 2002 Poll Tax Apology

³⁸⁷ As discussed in Introduction: Literature Review: Settler Chinese Women's Storytelling

³⁸⁸ Manying Ip has described their 'migration process' as 'circulatory and continuous' ("Here").

³⁸⁹ See also: Kirsten Wong's responses to racism in Ip, *Dragons on the Long* 124, 141.

³⁹⁰ Olivia Khoo describes the modern feminine Chinese 'exotic' in these terms.

(Appendix 24), was research on the 'histories of Chinese wives and mothers pre 1970s' (*Chinese Poll Tax*). Recent productions of plays such as Lynda Chanwai- Earle's *Foh Sarn* (2000) and *Man in a Suitcase* (2012), and Renee Liang's *The Bone Feeder* (2011) indicate that conversations and collaborative storytelling projects between settler and later arrivals have a greater capacity to disrupt reified Colonialist Orientalist tropes than settler Chinese stories alone (H. Chung, "Chineseness"; Howard). Research into such cross-fertilisations therefore has the potential for a more optimistic outcome than the current project.

While the need for a thicker 'Chinese woman' mask seems like a discouraging conclusion, for it points to our continued marginalisation, it is a pragmatic one. Given that we are collectively subordinated by hegemonic narratives about 'Chinese woman', it follows that our resistance is best grounded in collaborative endeavours. Although the space assigned to us as Chinese women in New Zealand is the very space we must continue to inhabit, the capaciousness of this space is such that it allows us not only to play along while we engage in the project of reconfiguring 'Chinese woman' for our own various ends, but also to mark the site of a more substantive critical gaze.

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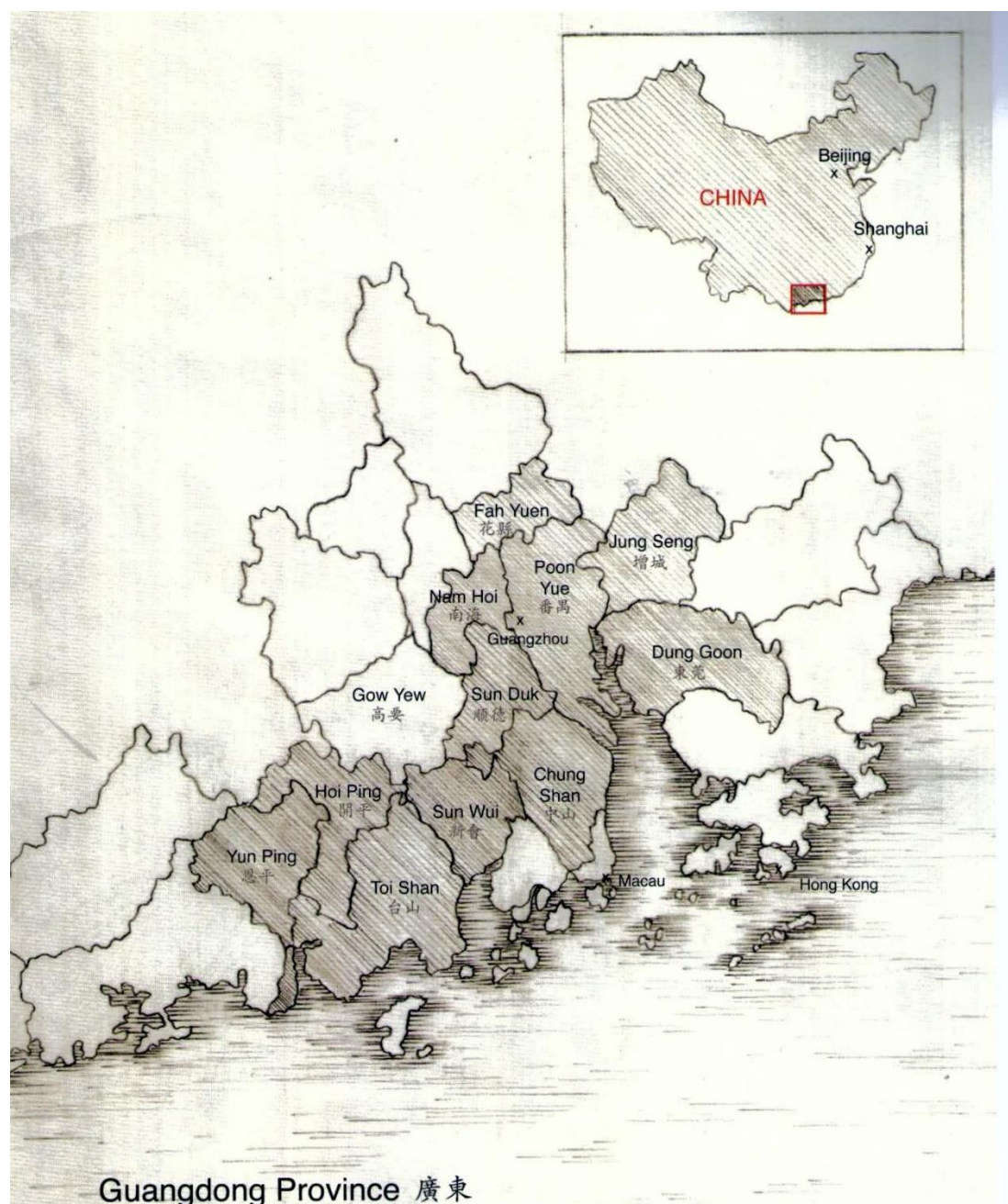
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1:

Home Counties of Settler Chinese New Zealanders



Source: Lee and Lam (533)

Appendix 2:

Chinese Population in New Zealand 1871-2013

Year	Males	Females	Total ³⁹¹
1871	2641	0	2641 ^(1%)
1867	1219	0	1219
1874	4814	2	4816
1878	4424	9	4433
1881	4995	9	5004
1886	4527	15	4542
1891	4426	18	4444
1896	3773	86	3859
1901	2885	78	2963 ^(.3%)
1906	2515	55	2570
1911	2542	88	2630
1916	2017	130	2147
1921	2993	273	3266
1926	2927	447	3374
1936	2432	511	2943 ^(.2%)
1945	3119	1254	4373
1951	3184	1648	4832
1956	4026	2705	6731
1961	4913	3611	8524
1966	5700	4583	10283 ^(.5%)
1971	6851	5619	12470
1976	8081	6779	14860
1981	8649	8004	16653
1986	9903	9603	19506
1991	19971	20187	40158
1996	33909	36318	70227^(1.9%)
2006	67143	72585	139728
2013	76752	86349	163101^(3.8%)

Sources: Mair 18 Dec 2015; Murphy, *Guide* (336)³⁹²

³⁹¹ Percentages indicate approximate proportion of total New Zealand population.

³⁹² The figures for the years 1991 to 2013 were provided by Ronald Mair at Statistics New Zealand.

Appendix 3:

Regulating the Chinese Presence in New Zealand: Policies and Legislation 1881 to 2008

- 1881: Chinese Immigrants Act. Entry restricted to one Chinese per ten tons of ship's cargo. Poll Tax of £10 (Murphy, *Guide* 132-33).
- Gaming and Lotteries Act. Chinese games of chance declared illegal (131).
- 1882: Aliens Act Amendment Act. Fee for naturalisation reduced from one pound to two shillings, except for Chinese applicants (135).
- 1892: Aliens Act Amendment Act. Fee for naturalisation abolished, except for Chinese applicants (140-41).
- 1896: Chinese Immigrants Act Amendment Act. Entry restricted to one Chinese to 200 tons of ship's cargo. Poll Tax raised to £100 (146-47).
- 1898: Old Age Pensions Act. Chinese and 'other Asiatics, whether naturalised or not' ineligible (153).
- Shearers' Accommodation Act. Employers required to provide separate accommodations for Chinese shearers (154).
- 1900: Chinese returning from China with no Poll Tax receipt required to provide thumb prints (156).
- 1901: Opium Prohibition Act. Search warrant not required for police searching premises occupied by Chinese (160-61).
- 1904: All Chinese fingerprinted on arrival (162).
- Shops and Offices Act. Only 'British' shop owners were permitted to decide closing hours of businesses in their district (164).
- 1907: Chinese Immigrants Amendment Act: reading test of 100 words in English. Teachers of Christian religion exempt (168).
- 1908: Naturalisation of Chinese ceased (170).
- Immigration Restriction Act. Chinese returning to New Zealand without Poll Tax receipt required to deposit Poll Tax until identification established (173).
- 1910: Factories Amendment Act. Working hours restricted in Chinese laundries (186-87).
- 1911: Widows Pension Act. 'Chinese, or other Asiatics, whether naturalised or not' deemed ineligible (188).

- 1917: Registration of Aliens Act. All Chinese not born and not naturalised in New Zealand required to register as 'Alien' (192).
- 1920: Immigration Restriction Amendment Act. Chinese entry only with permit, granted by Minister of Customs, whose decision was final (195).
- 1921: Thumb printing abolished (197).
Quota for entry of 100 permits per year for Chinese, including 25 women (198).
- 1923: British Nationality and Status of Aliens (in New Zealand) Act. European New Zealand women married to Chinese men – and her children – cease to be British subjects (202).
- 1925: Women excluded from entry quota of 100 permits for Chinese per year (205).
- 1926: No residence permits granted to Chinese men this year due largely to representations by the White New Zealand League (206).
Family Allowances Act. 'Asiatics' ineligible 'whether naturalised or not' (207).
- 1927: Shops and Offices Amendment Act. Restrictions designed to limit the working hours of Chinese fruit shops (214).
Dangerous Drugs Act. Chinese premises remain subject to police searches without warrant (212).
- 1934: Poll Tax payments waived (226).
- 1935: Quota for entry includes 10 Chinese women per year, restricted to the wives of Chinese men born in New Zealand (229).
- 1936: Pensions Amendment Act. Chinese able to receive Old Age and other pensions (232).
- 1939: Temporary permits granted to refugee wives and children from China. Conditions for application: Chinese men to be permanent residents; payment of £200 pound 'maintenance' deposit and £500 bond as guarantee that wife and all children would return to China after two years. Re-entry Certificates denied to children under the age of 15 years (88-91, 235-36).
- 1940: Temporary permits for Chinese refugee wives and children discontinued (242).
- 1944: Finance Act. Repeal of the Poll Tax (245).
- 1946: British Nationality and Status of Aliens (in New Zealand) Amendment Act. Women marrying 'alien' Chinese no longer lose citizenship (321).

- 1947: Permanent residence granted to Chinese refugee wives and children admitted in 1939 (247).
- Temporary permits for Chinese entry ceased (249).
- 1948: Entry granted to 50 Chinese women. Only the wives – and minor children – of Chinese men resident in New Zealand for 20 years or more eligible (251).
- Aliens Act. Due to the 1908 prohibition on naturalisation, the majority of Chinese in New Zealand at this time were ‘aliens’ and were therefore required to: be registered; notify police of changes of name, address, and occupation; and to produce registration when required by police. (255).
- 1949: Permits denied to Chinese teachers seeking entry to teach in Chinese schools (259).
- Entry granted to another 50 Chinese women. Again, only the wives – and minor children – of Chinese men resident in New Zealand for 20 years or more eligible (260).
- Request for 250 Chinese to enter New Zealand to work on market gardens refused (258).
- 1951: Family reunification prioritised. Quota increased to 150 Chinese wives and children per year. Priority given to couples married the longest.
- Re-entry permits (for Chinese returning from China) reduced from four years to 18 months (265-67).
- Chinese naturalisation resumed.
- 1952: Quota system discontinued. Applications for entry processed on a case by case basis.
- 1954: Chinese men could bring in wives from China, but were required to be naturalised, and the marriage solemnized in Hong Kong (271).
- No provision for Chinese women to bring in fiancés from China (273).
- 1965: Narcotics Act. Police no longer permitted to search Chinese premises without warrant.
- 1971: Chinese with professional qualifications eligible to apply for entry.
- 1972: Equal rights of entry obtained for Chinese New Zealanders to Australia. Previously Chinese visitors to Australia only granted 72 hour transit visas (288).

- 1974: Family reunification criteria changed to include aged parents.
Fifty Chinese men admitted at request of New Zealand Chinese Commercial Growers, 'as an exception to normal policy' (292). Married men excluded (Murphy, "Joe" 55).
- 1975: New Zealand begins to accept Indo-Chinese refugees, mostly from Vietnam. Around 80% are ethnic Chinese (Murphy, *Guide* 293).
- 1977: Abolition of the 'alien registration system' (Murphy, *Guide* 294).
Gaming and Lotteries Act. Chinese games of chance no longer illegal.
- 1987: Immigration Act. Liberalisation of immigration. 'Opens door for Chinese immigration' (323).
The last Indo-Chinese refugees resettled in New Zealand (293).
- 1994: Six hundred Chinese nationals granted permanent residence under humanitarian category (309).
- 1995: Immigrants required to sit English language test. Deposit of a \$20,000 bond required: fully refundable if test passed within three months of arrival, in part (\$14,000) if passed within twelve months, and forfeited if not passed within twelve months (311).
- 1998: English language test revoked (Ip and Murphy 163).
- 2002: Labour Government Poll Tax Apology.
English test requirement raised to IELTS 6.5 – perceived by many as an attempt to limit Asian immigration (163).
- 2003: Skilled Migrant Category applicants for entry assessed in accord with 'employability and English language skills'. Significant drop in number of applicants from Asia (163).
- 2004: Pursuant to the Poll Tax Apology of 2002, the New Zealand Government announces \$5 million Chinese Heritage Trust Fund (Appendix 24).
- 2008: The New Zealand-China Free Trade Agreement facilitates the temporary entry of skilled Chinese workers, and working holiday visas for up to 1000 young Chinese annually (New Zealand Parliament).

Appendix 4:

Richard Goodall's "Yellow Peril"

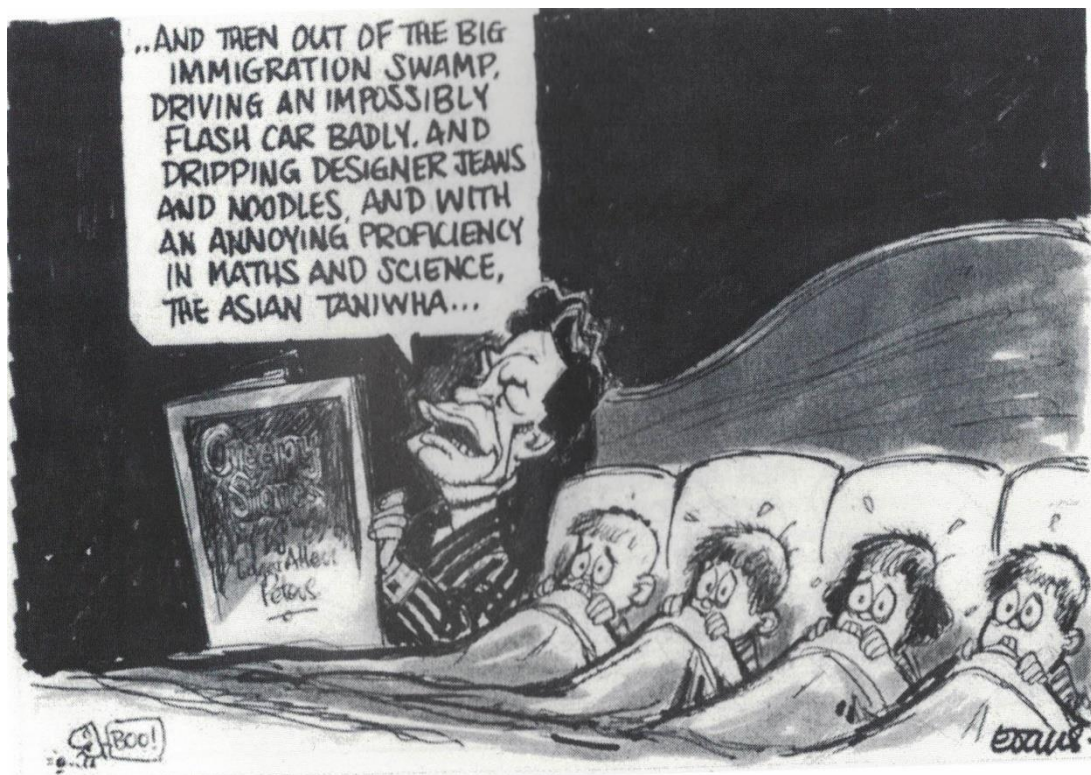


THE YELLOW PERIL.

Richard Goodall. *New Zealand Truth* 16 Feb 1907: 5. *Papers Past*. National Library of New Zealand. Web. 31 Jan 2016.

Appendix 5:

Malcolm Evans' "Asian Taniwha"



Malcolm Evans. *New Zealand Herald* 12 Nov 2002.

Ref: DX-002-134. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington,

New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22713022>

Appendix 6:

Anthony Ellison's "Believe Me. . . It's Not Worth Translating"



Anthony Ellison, *Sunday Star*, 9 May 1993.

Ref: H-123-002. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

Appendix 7:

Tom Glover's "No Man's Land"



NO MAN'S LAND.—NEW ZEALAND HOME FRONT, 1922.

Ellis (Tom Glover), *New Zealand Free Lance*

15 Mar 1922. Ref: A-313-3-031.

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand

<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22739331>

Appendix 8:

Tom Scott's "Crafty Little Asian"



Tom Scott. *Listener* 18 May 1996. Ref: B-147-064. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22486376>

Appendix 9:

John Collis Blomfield's "Useful Weapon"



A USEFUL WEAPON.

The Prime Minister has announced that the Royal assent had been given to the Chinese Immigration Bill.
—*News item.*

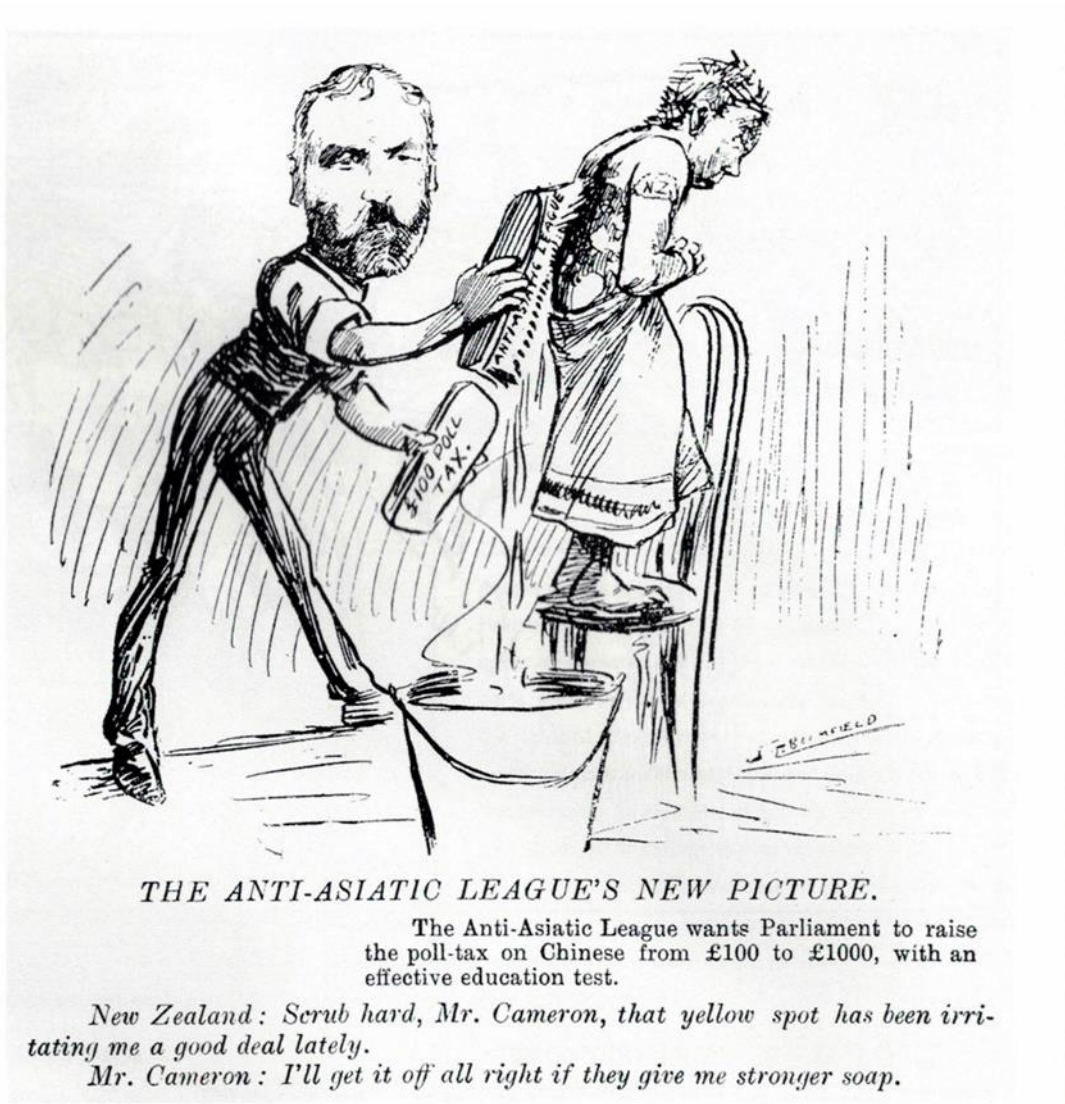
Public Opinion: Now that you have got the weapon, Sir Joseph, see that you hit hard.

John Collis Blomfield, *New Zealand Free Lance*, 4 July 1908: 13. *Papers Past*.

National Library of New Zealand. Web. 31 Jan 2016.

Appendix 10:

John Collis Blomfield's "Anti-Asiatic League"

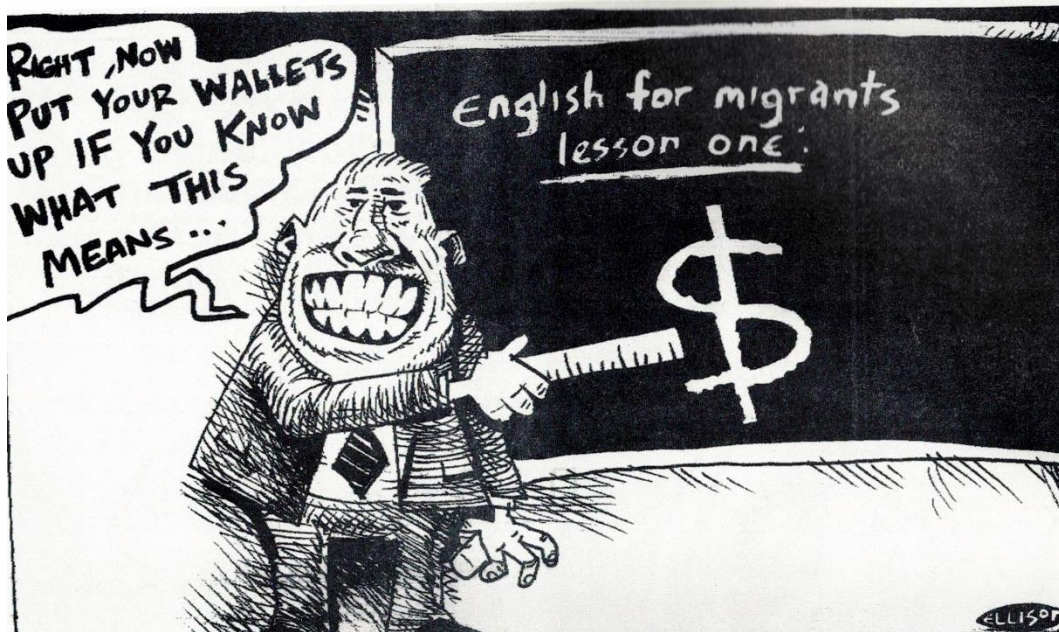


John Collis Blomfield. *New Zealand Free Lance* 22 June 1907: 12.

Papers Past. National Library of New Zealand. Web. 31 Jan 2016.

Appendix 11:

Anthony Ellison's "English for Migrants, Lesson One"

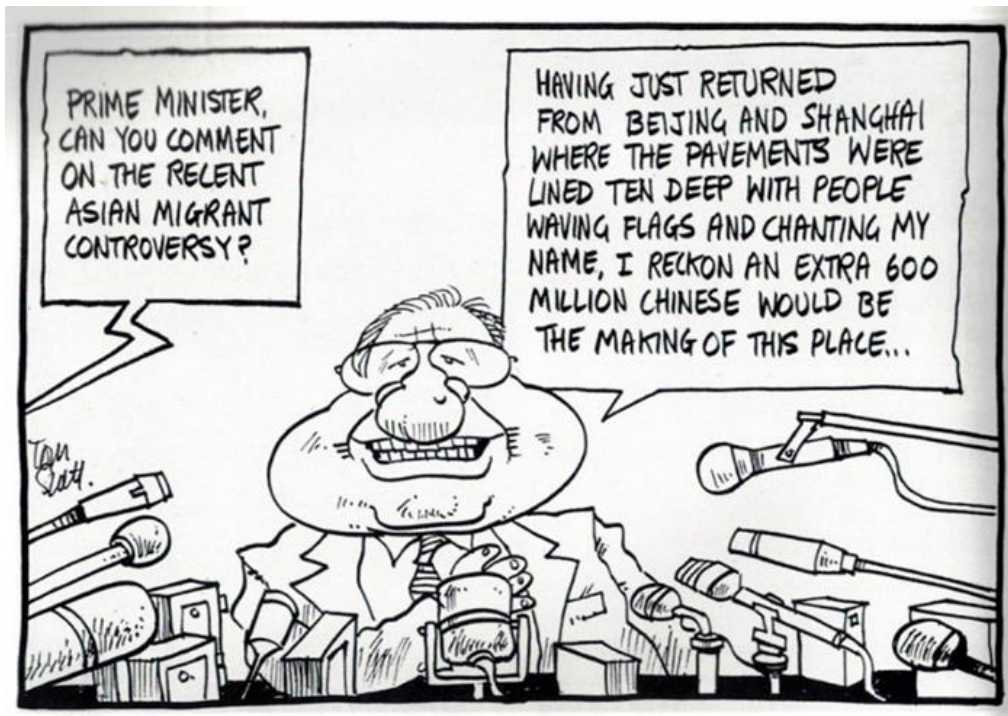


Anthony Ellison. *Sunday Star-Times* 23 July 1995.

Ref: A-427-22. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand

Appendix 12:

Tom Scott's "Prime Minister, Can You Comment. . ."



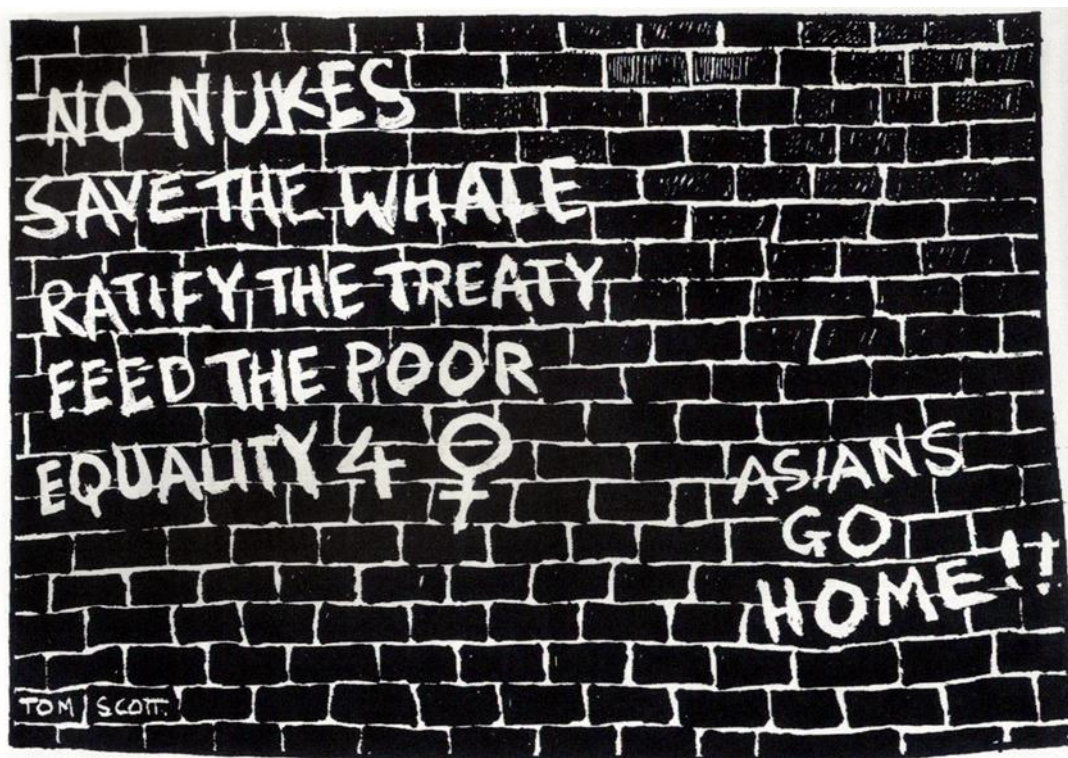
Tom Scott. Evening Post 19 May 1993. Ref: H-046-013.

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22347546>

Appendix 13:

Tom Scott's "Asians Go Home"

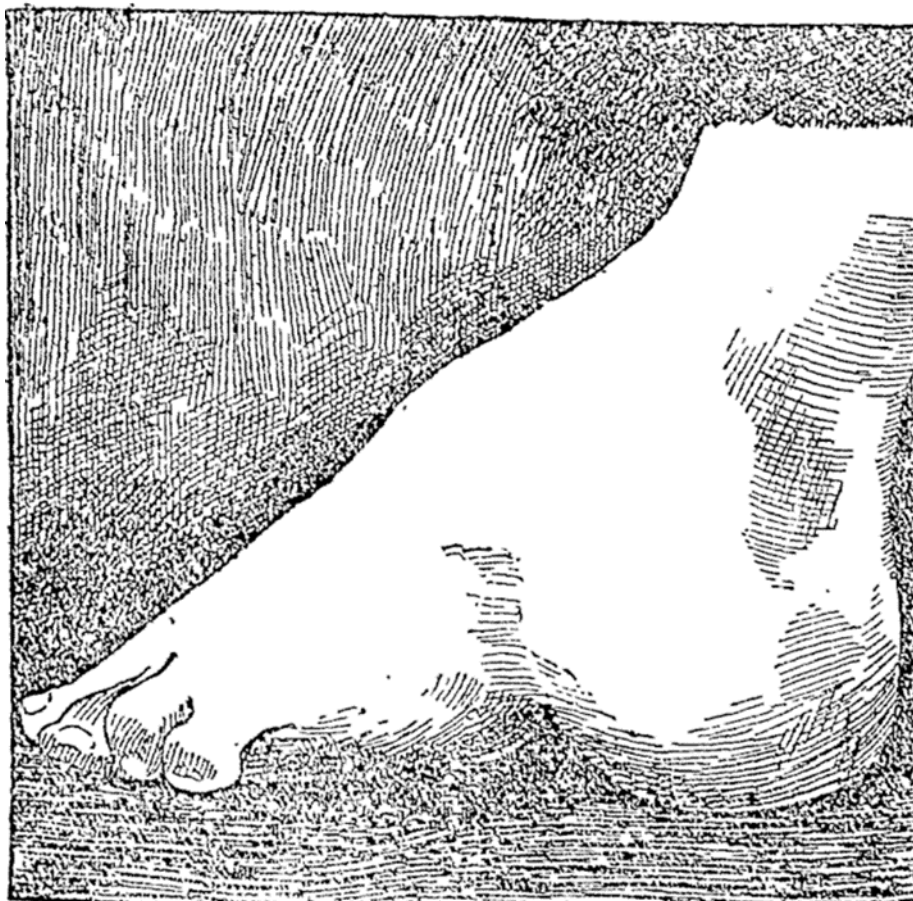


Tom Scott. *Evening Post* 17 May 1993.

H-046-011. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22674849>

Appendix 14:
"Chinese Girl's Foot"



CHINESE GIRL'S FOOT-ACTUAL SIZE. *Auckland Star*, 16 Sept 1898: 6.
Papers Past. National Library of New Zealand. Web. 31 Jan 2016.

Appendix 15:

Beatson and Beatson's Chinese Family



Source: Beatson and Beatson 68.

Appendix 16:

Gisborne Chinese Community Float



The Gisborne Chinese community float, from left: Lily Lee, Gin Wong, Janice Foo, Judy Lowe, Joyce Luen and May Wong, c1950s. JENNY WONG

Gisborne Chinese community float, c. 1950s. (Lee and Lam 299).

Appendix 17:

Two Women in Costume for the Chinese Opera



Two women in costume for the Chinese opera. 1956.

Negatives of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: EP/1956/0734-F.

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22770130>

Appendix 18:
Mrs Liu, Artist



Mrs Liu, artist, beside her traditional Chinese landscape painting. Taken circa 14 Aug 1950. Negatives of the *Evening Post* newspaper. Ref: 114/183/26-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22743018>

Appendix 19:

Chinese Girls on a Chinese Dragon Float



James Smith's Christmas Parade: Chinese girls on a Chinese dragon float.

Mercer Street, Wellington, c.1962-1968

James Smith Ltd: Photographs of personnel, activities and shops.

Ref: PAColl-3332-05-06. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand

<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23041913>

Appendix 20:

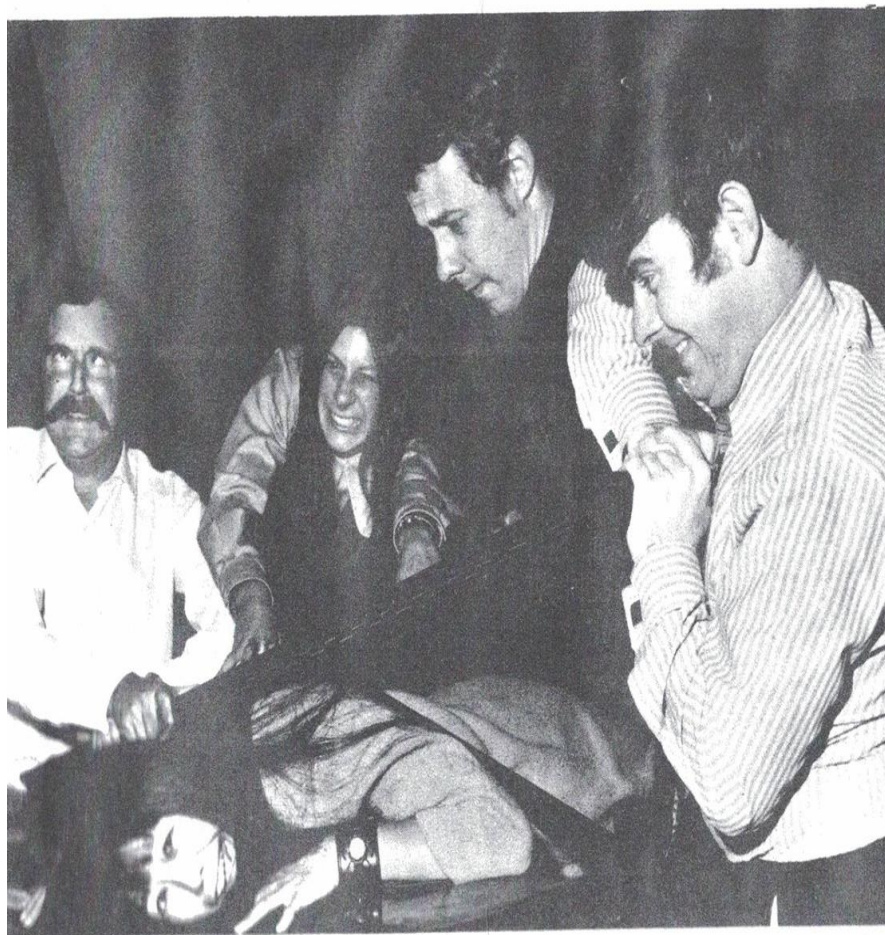
Girls in Chinese Costume at Miss Daniel's Dancing School



Girls in Chinese costume, at Miss D Daniels dancing school. 2 Dec 1958. Negatives of the *Evening Post* newspaper. Ref: EP/1958/4114-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23260263>

Appendix 21:

"The Greatest Little Satirical Show in the Southern Hemisphere"



THE GREATEST LITTLE SATIRICAL SHOW IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

"One in Five" is the title of this year's Capping Revue. The reference is to Dr. Fraser McDonald's recent comment that one in five New Zealanders are mentally ill. Significantly the number in the case is five, and the show may easily develop into a sort of 'Spot the Lunatic' competition. The choice is from Dave Smith, Roger Hall, John Clarke, Cathy Downes and Helene Wong. Smith and Hall co-produced and wrote the enormously successful 'Victorijana' at the beginning of this term; they guarantee that this show although different in style will be just as funny. John Clarke, one of the mad geniuses from Knackers will contribute his own brand of lunacy, whilst for your delectation and delight the lovely Mesdames Downes and Wong have been held over from Victorijana also.

There is no doubt that the Press will hammer the show, since one of the major skits is a lambasting of the two Wellington papers, so it looks like word of mouth will be the main advertisement. This means of course that people will be turned away from the last performance on the Saturday night (it always happens). However this time students will be able to book on the campus — for details see posters. Another innovation is that instead of the 8 o'clock performances on Wednesday and Thursday the show will begin at 10.30 to tie in with the Graduation ceremonies.

"One in Five" opens Monday May 3rd at the Memorial Theatre and runs until the Saturday.

Salient ? April / May 1971

Student newspaper

Salient Apr/May 1971, n.pag. Helene Wong's personal collection

Appendix 22:

Mollie Ngan Kee, Deputy Mayor



Mollie Ngan Kee (front left), Deputy Mayor,
Lower Hutt, 1980. (Ip, *Dragons on the Long* 132)
Reproduced with permission of Susan Ng, Vicki Chin,
Tim Frank Ngan Kee and Mark William Ngan Kee.

Appendix 23:

The Poll Tax Apology, 2002

Helen Clark

12 FEBRUARY, 2002

Address to Chinese New Year celebrations³⁹³

It is my pleasure this evening to welcome all our guests to this celebration of Chinese New Year at Parliament. I extend a special welcome to all guests from the Chinese community, many of whom have travelled from other parts of New Zealand to be with us this evening.

In the Chinese calendar, 2002 is the Year of the Horse. Those born in this year are said to be cheerful, popular, wise, hardworking, and good with money. Our special good wishes this evening go to all those born under the sign of the horse.

Chinese New Year is the oldest and most important festival in the Chinese calendar. These days with New Zealand's significant and growing Chinese population it is also an important festival in the New Zealand calendar. For us all, it is an opportunity to see the richness of Chinese culture and to celebrate the diversity of culture in New Zealand today.

There was of course a time when New Zealand was fearful of cultural diversity and distinctly unwelcoming to migrants of Chinese descent in particular. That was so despite Chinese people being among the earliest migrants to New Zealand. Chinese came to the goldfields in the 1860s, around the same time as my great, great grandparents did. The open air museum at Arrowtown today tells us something of the lives they lived and the hardships they endured.

In the late nineteenth century, the New Zealand Parliament passed discriminatory laws against Chinese seeking to enter New Zealand. The Chinese Immigrants Act of 1881 imposed a poll tax of ten pounds per Chinese person and restricted the numbers able to enter the country to one person per ten tonnes of ship cargo. In 1896 the tax was lifted to one hundred pounds per person and there were further restrictions on the numbers of Chinese able to enter New Zealand.

No other ethnic group was subjected to such restrictions or to a poll tax. Other legislative initiatives also singled out the Chinese.

³⁹³ Helen Clark. *Address to Chinese New Year Celebrations*. *Beehive.govt.nz*. New Zealand Government, 12 Feb 2002. Web. 16 April 2015.

- In 1908, Chinese people had to put a thumbprint on their Certificates of Registration before leaving the country – no other ethnic group had to leave thumbprints.
- Chinese people were deprived of their right to naturalisation in 1908 and this was not rescinded until 1951. No other ethnic group was deprived of this right.
- A reading test in English was introduced – other immigrants had only a writing test in their own language.
- Even in 1935 when entry permits were introduced after a suspension of 15 years for reunification of family and partners of Chinese people, they were severely restricted.

There were those who spoke against the passing of the poll tax legislation. They included journalists, members of the House of Representatives, and members of the Legislative Council. Quotes from these people are on the displays here tonight. Chinese people organised petitions against the poll tax, and one backed by the great majority of Chinese residents was sent to the King via the Governor-General. Many Chinese suffered the indignity of the poll tax and the other restrictions. Arrivals in the port of Wellington between 1888 to 1930 numbered around 2100 people. In total, the estimated number who paid the poll tax between 1882 and 1930 was 4,500. The tax was not abolished until 1944. At that time, the Minister of Finance, Walter Nash referred to the “removing of the blot on our legislation” and affirmed that the government would not in future countenance any discrimination against Chinese people in New Zealand.

Nine years ago the New Zealand Chinese Association commissioned Nigel Murphy to undertake historical research on the poll tax. His work was completed in 1994 and published in 1995. Discussion followed on seeking a formal apology from the New Zealand Government for the discrimination suffered by those subjected to the poll tax and other practices. I recall this matter being raised with me at a meeting of the New Zealand Federation of Ethnic Councils in 1999, and it has been raised since with the Minister for Ethnic Affairs, the Hon George Hawkins.

I wish to announce today that the government has decided to make a formal apology to those Chinese people who paid the poll tax and suffered other discrimination imposed by statute and to their descendants.

With respect to the poll tax we recognise the considerable hardship it imposed and that the cost of it and the impact of other discriminatory immigration practices split families apart.

Today we also express our sorrow and regret that such practices were once considered appropriate. While the governments which passed these laws acted in a manner which was lawful at the time, their actions are seen by us today as unacceptable. We believe this act of reconciliation is required to ensure that full closure can be reached on this chapter in our nation’s history.

The Government's apology today is the formal beginning to a process of reconciliation. The Minister of Ethnic Affairs and I have been authorised to pursue with representatives of the families of the early settlers a form of reconciliation which would be appropriate to and of benefit to the Chinese community. To that end we wish to meet with key representatives of the descendants to discuss the next step in this process of reconciliation.

The New Zealand Chinese Association, representing many of the descendants of the Chinese who paid the poll tax, has suggested that it may be appropriate for the government to make a contribution in the form of funds and resources for the purpose of restoring and maintaining the Chinese heritage, culture and language in New Zealand which was severely eroded as a result of the injustice of the poll tax and other discriminatory policies. The government looks forward to engaging further with the New Zealand Chinese Association and other descendants' representatives to discuss such proposals.

Each year as Minister for Arts and Culture I have organised an essay competition for secondary school students on an aspect of New Zealand history. This year, in recognition of the Government's move to offer a formal apology for the discrimination imposed by statute on Chinese people in the past, essays are invited on the history of the Chinese in New Zealand. The winners will be invited to a reception with the Prime Minister and members of the Chinese community and presented with copies of James Ng's beautiful work *Windows on a Chinese Past*.

Through the essay writing initiative we hope to ensure that this little known aspect of New Zealand history is better understood by present generations.

Today's New Zealand Government both recognises and values the importance of the Chinese community in New Zealand. The community is making a huge economic and social contribution to our country. The many new Chinese migrants are also bringing new ideas, a strong work ethic, and valuable contacts with their countries of origin.

Modern New Zealand has a bicultural foundation, and today is home to many peoples. It is important that we value, honour, and respect all our communities and see our diversity as a great strength. For that reason it is a great pleasure to me to be hosting this Chinese New Year celebration here at Parliament and to wish the Chinese community a very happy New Year. Gung Hei Fat Choy!

Appendix 24:

Announcement of the Chinese Poll Tax Heritage Trust 2004

Chris Carter

11 FEBRUARY, 2004

Funding for recognition of Chinese heritage announced (excerpt)³⁹⁴

Prime Minister Helen Clark and Ethnic Affairs Minister Chris Carter today announced the formation of a new charitable trust and other initiatives with the broad aim of raising awareness of the early Chinese community in New Zealand and their history, language, and culture. The announcement follows the government apology in 2002 to those Chinese and their descendants who faced statutory discrimination in New Zealand, particularly through the infamous Poll Tax.

"Punitive legislation targeting Chinese alone imposed considerable hardship on earlier generations of Chinese settlers to New Zealand. It and other discriminatory immigration practices by earlier governments split families apart," Helen Clark said. "Since the apology was offered in February 2002, the government has consulted widely on how it might best contribute to reconciliation over these events. It became clear that descendants of the Poll Tax payers were deeply concerned about maintaining the unique identity of the local Chinese community."

The measures announced today were developed after consultation with representatives of those who paid the Poll Tax and their descendants. They comprise a variety of government initiatives, including:

- A \$5m seeding grant for a government-administered community trust;
- New school resources which tell the stories of Chinese settlers in New Zealand; and
- The preservation of a significant Chinese heritage site in Central Otago.

It is envisaged that the community trust will fund projects to boost the study of Chinese New Zealand history, encourage cultural and language maintenance, promote greater public awareness of ethnic diversity, and support projects that strengthen the unique identity of Chinese New Zealanders.

³⁹⁴ Carter, Chris. *Speech in the Parliamentary Debate 13 November 2002*. *Beehive.govt.nz*. New Zealand Government, 13 Nov 2002. Web. 24 July 2015.

Appendix 25:

Alison Wong, "One Hundred Pounds"³⁹⁵

For Wong Wei Jung, Wellington 1914

There is no photograph of the father
of the father of my father
only one taken
from the ancestral home by a man
not related. I imagine him
(inside a cardboard
box, lost in the tenements
of modern Canton)
shot
in pure black
and white, and perhaps aged
the colour of old blood,
and wonder
did he have hair
that swung across his back
in the style of Manchurian
subjection, or was it cut
short and covered by
a trilby? Ah, there
is nothing to see, only brazen black
letters on aged white paper:
a notice of Murder
from the Minister of Justice
the reward as great
as the poll tax.

³⁹⁵ From Alison Wong's collection *Cup*, Wellington: Steele Roberts, 2006: 57. Print.

Appendix 26:

Settler Chinese New Zealand Stories told by Settler Chinese New Zealand Women, 1959 – 2015 (Selected)

Histories and Biographies:

Chang, Kitty. "Victims? No. Opportunists? Yes. Controllers of Their Own Fate? Definitely." *Oral History in New Zealand* 16 (2004): 31-34. Print.

Chang, Kitty. "Zengcheng Women in New Zealand." *Zengcheng New Zealanders: A History for the 80th Anniversary of the Tung Jung Association of NZ Inc.* Ed. Henry Chan. Katoomba: Echo Point Press for the Tung Jung Association of New Zealand Inc, 2007. 99-109. Print.

Lee, Lily and Ruth Lam. "Chan Dah Chee (1851-1930)." *ENNZ* 16.1 (2011): n. pag. Web. 22 Jan 2016.

Lee, Lily and Ruth Lam. *Sons of the Soil*. Pukekohe: Dominion Federation of New Zealand Chinese Commercial Growers, 2012. Print.

Shum, Lynette. "Remembering Chinatown: Haining Street of Wellington." *Unfolding History, Evolving Identity: The Chinese in New Zealand*. Ed. Manying Ip. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003. 73-93. Print.

Wong, Helen. *In the Mountain's Shadow: A Century of Chinese in Taranaki 1870 to 1970*. Auckland: H. Wong, 2010. Print.

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