

Kate Bagnall

After the Rush

*Regulation, Participation and
Chinese Communities in Australia
1860-1940*

Edited by
**Sophie Couchman,
John Fitzgerald &
Paul Macgregor**

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Back cover illustration: Women and girls of Melbourne's Chinese community rehearsing for a fundraising concert, circa 1937. Courtesy Museum of Chinese Australian History collection.

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All correspondence should be addressed to:

Otherland Literary Journal
P.O. Box 200, Kingsbury 3083, Vic., Australia
www.ouyangyu.com.au
Email: youyang@bigpond.net.au

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Chapter 12

'He Would be a Chinese Still': Negotiating Boundaries of Race, Culture and Identity in Late Nineteenth Century Australia

Kate Bagnall

In today's multicultural Australia a plurality of personal identities and of ethnic identities is commonplace, and this mingling and melding of ethnicities is an important part of Australia's national identity. Many uncritically and unselfconsciously identify themselves as Greek Australian, Italian Australian or Chinese Australian. Yet a hundred years ago there was no idea of possessing dual or multiple identities in the way we do today. However, while White Australia refused the non-European and non-White a place in the newly emerging national identity, there was a growing population of Australian-born children of non-European or mixed parentage. This paper looks specifically at children of mixed Chinese and European parentage – they were not solely 'Chinese', but neither were they easily able to identify as 'European' or 'British'.¹

During the colonial period, most Chinese men emigrated to Australia without their wives or daughters. Consequently, the female Chinese population in the colonies was very small and from the mid-1850s there were numbers of White Australian women living with or married to Chinese men in the south-eastern colonies of Australia.² As a result of this intermarriage, by 1901 there were more than 1,000 people of mixed Chinese heritage resident in New South Wales, that is about nine per cent of the total New South Wales Chinese population³, primarily the Australian-born children of Chinese men and White women.⁴ This population of mixed Chinese Australians were labelled 'half-caste', part of a 'hybrid' race and this label, while acknowledging

their White blood, allowed them only an ambiguous and tenuous place within White society.⁵

The 'Half-Caste': Progeny of Races which could not Mix

Within the context of colonialism, 'hybridity', the mixing of races, was representative of weakness, danger, pollution: 'whether it highlighted physiological or cultural difference in identity, it served primarily as a metaphor for the negative consequences of racial encounters, or a set of mercurial metaphors'.⁶ In late nineteenth and early twentieth-century debates on the racial make-up of the new Australian nation, there was no positive expression in terms such as 'hybrid' or 'half-caste'. They were terms used to indicate the pollution, the dilution, the destruction of the 'pure European race' in Australia and the hopes for a racially homogenous nation.

Fear of the creation of a 'piebald race' inhabited discussions of Chinese immigration to Australia from the beginning, and continued to be a prominent part of the discourse on the Chinese presence throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Chinese European interracial sex was feared, and concern about 'racial pollution' featured in debates on anti-Chinese legislation, in social commentaries and the press, especially Sydney's *Bulletin*.⁷ No anti-miscegenation legislation concerning Chinese and Europeans was enacted in the colonies, however, and so in one important way there was some measure of toleration shown towards Chinese European sexual encounters.

Underlying the fear of racial pollution was a belief that the races 'could not mix' and that the results of racial mixing were detrimental to all. The White and Chinese races were thought to exist categorically in opposition to each other – not just in cultural, social and linguistic difference, but in differences which lay in the essential being itself. The title of this paper is taken from an 1881 newspaper article on the 'Chinese Question' which argued that children born to Chinese fathers were racially Chinese, no matter who their mothers were:

The two races [Chinese and European] are so opposite that they cannot exist together. One must make room for the other. If they were, say, Russians who came to settle among us, whether they took wives from our cir-

cle or brought their own wives with them, their children would be white, and we should soon be one people. But with the Chinese the case would be different. No matter who the child's mother was, or where he was born, he would be a Chinese still.⁸

In putting forward ideas against Chinese immigration, this article argued that environment and education would have no influence over the half-Chinese child, and that growing up in Australia would make no difference to their character, nature or habits. However, on Western racial taxonomies mixed Chinese Australians were usually thought of as somewhere between the 'superior' Whites and the 'inferior' Chinese and that in possessing European blood, mixed children could, with the right upbringing and education, be 'useful' members of Australian society. White Australians believed that the Chinese, too, viewed mixed Chinese European children to be racially and physically superior to full-Chinese children.⁹

It was not just White Australia that believed in the basic incompatibility of the Chinese and European races. The Chinese, too, found the idea of intermarriage distasteful and families and communities encouraged men to either return to China to marry or find a locally-born Chinese woman as a wife, rather than marry a White woman.¹⁰ For most Chinese, the world was divided between those who were Chinese and those who were not – the place of people of mixed race was difficult to ascribe, but mostly they were not 'really' Chinese. Half-Chinese children, like their White mothers, were *gwai lo* or foreign ghosts. William Liu, son of a Chinese father and White mother, recounted a story of how the people in his ancestral village in Taishan in southern China perceived him and his brother on their return there in the early years of the twentieth century:

What was to be done with the two *Farn Kwei Doi* (foreign devils) if war came between the White man and the Chinese. They said that as we were half European we might turn against them. One young fellow said perhaps they should put the two brothers in a pig cage and dump them in the pond, and a lot of the others seemed to agree until an old man with a long beard said, 'Yes, yes,

you're right. But what about their Chinese half?' That stopped them short and so they gave up the idea.¹¹

Boundaries

The idea of difference was central to the organisation of turn-of-the-century Australian society, central to the definition of the new Australian nation and the Australian citizen. Racial theories of difference set up boundaries between groups of people – there were legal, cultural and social boundaries between those of different races, ethnicities and skin colour, reinforced by legislation such as the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, and the ideology which came to be known as the White Australia policy.

Designed to limit the immigration of non-Europeans to Australia, the Immigration Restriction Act¹² also impacted upon mixed Chinese Australians. It categorised them as 'Chinese', not as 'Australian', and subjected them to similar exclusionary and discriminatory measures as full-Chinese. Legally their position was akin to that of Australian-born full-Chinese – it was their birthplace, not their blood, which gave them a chance to avoid the dictation test. To avoid sitting the dictation test, Australian-born part-Chinese could use birth certificates to prove their Australian nationality, and some also used Certificates of Domicile (CoD) or Certificates Exempting from the Dictation Test (CEDT) to ensure their ability to re-enter Australia. These certificates codified their identity as 'Chinese', as the Other – if they were 'Australian', 'British' or 'European' there would have been no need for them.

Mixed Chinese Australians were not identified as a distinct legal or social category and occupied an ambiguous place in Australian society, neither wholly part of one community nor the other. They faced exclusion and assumptions based on their ethnicity from both the Chinese and White communities and throughout their lives had to negotiate boundaries of race, culture and identity.

Identity Negotiation and the Idea of Cultural Competence

One way Chinese Australians negotiated social and legal boundaries was through what Wang Ling-chi calls *zhancao chugen* (eliminate weeds by pulling out roots).¹³ This process of assimilation with the dominant Western culture was also a strategy used by mixed families,

particularly in subsequent generations, to deal with the racist assumptions and discrimination they faced. Henry Chan has suggested that out-marriage within the Chinese communities in Australia

might also be a sign of *zhancao chugen*, though the best known Australian Chinese who married non-Chinese, such as Quang Tart [sic], seemed to attempt to retain Chinese characteristics.¹⁴

Chan is right in questioning the extent to which intermarriage was demonstrative of a Chinese desire to assimilate into Australian society and distance themselves from their Chinese culture and heritage. I would argue instead that rather than adopting one culture or the other, abandoning one identity for another, mixed Chinese Australian families adopted shifting identities dependant on context and interplay with others. Certainly there were some families which lost their 'Chineseness' by choice or circumstance, but there were others which continued to maintain at least a part-Chinese identity.

For mixed Chinese Australians, identity and the elements that created that identity could be divided along two lines, external and internal. External identity was based primarily on outward appearance – on the colour of skin, eye and hair colour and to a certain extent, clothing and language. It was that identity which others ascribed to mixed race subjects, how they were perceived and labelled by both the White and Chinese communities in Australia and in China. Internal identity was that which subjects gave themselves, whether they personally identified as Australian or Chinese or both. This self-identification was dependent on a variety of factors ranging from education, religion, physical location and family situation. It was also in part dependent on their external identification by others.

In her work on *métissage* and identity in colonial Southeast Asia, Ann Laura Stoler has used the idea of cultural competence, where linguistic and cultural knowledge enabled those of mixed race to find a place within the colonising society and to counteract negative identification as the Other.¹⁵ This idea is useful in considering the identity of mixed Chinese Australians. Attributes such as appearance, skin colour, education, manners and language were markers of racial and

cultural identity and were used to create boundaries based on race and colour. For many mixed Chinese Australians their identity as 'Chinese' was inscribed on their bodies and they were assumed to be foreign, the Other, until they could demonstrate otherwise. Through demonstrating cultural competence, in operating within White society as Whites did, mixed Chinese Australians were able to blur many of the boundary edges. Appearance, education, language and naming were four markers of identity through which mixed Chinese Australians were able to negotiate exclusionary boundaries and their identity as the Other.

Appearance

Racial identification is based primarily on outward physical appearance, on difference in skin colour and physical features. Physical difference, whether skin, eye or hair colour, physical features or clothing served (and still serve) as bases for discriminatory treatment. In dominantly British colonial Australia those who were 'coloured', whether they were Aboriginal, Indian or Chinese, stood out. In 1884, Jah Kee Govey, the seven-year-old son of a Chinese man and British woman in Albury had been expelled from attending school because he was wearing his hair in a queue in the traditional Chinese style, while other half-Chinese children who conformed to European conventions of dress were allowed to attend the school.¹⁶ Wearing Chinese clothing or hairstyles was viewed as 'exotic' and put those who did so squarely in the category of Other. Most mixed Chinese Australians therefore wore Western-style clothing and wore their hair according to Western fashion, only wearing Chinese styles on special occasions, for photographs or when they returned to China.¹⁷

Those whose looks marked them as racially Chinese may have secretly wished, like mixed Chinese American writer Winnifred Eaton, to be different: 'In all my most fanciful imaginings and dreams I had always been golden-haired and blue-eyed'.¹⁸ Some however, were able to adopt the strategy of passing for White.¹⁹ If their skin and hair colour and their features were suitably European, they could mix in White society and, whether on purpose or by accident, not have their 'coloured' blood identified. In the context of Aboriginal Australia, Darlene Johnson has re-evaluated this process of passing,

writing that it 'can be read as a positive cultural construction of acting out identity at different moments'. She further states that

the experience of 'passing' can be understood as a refusal to adopt either a hybrid identity or a strict dichotomy between a white identity or an Aboriginal one. The concept of 'passing' is more open, more complex and inherently unstable. It is used at moments strategically to achieve certain goals or aims and desires as a performance of identity.²⁰

The 'Whiteness' of mixed Chinese Australians could also be seen as a strategic tool in negotiating the boundaries of White Australia. However, physical appearance and the external identification by others of 'Whiteness' had important implications for the ways mixed Chinese Australians were treated. In an application for exemption from the prohibitions of the *Immigration Restriction Act* in 1903, for example, the Officer of Customs wrote that he knew the applicant and supported her application saying, 'I know the daughter, and she would be almost taken for a European'.²¹ She was able to re-enter the country without difficulty.

The ascribing of racial and cultural characteristics from outward appearance sometimes also resulted in discriminatory treatment. In the case of Walter Way, a mixed Chinese Australian boy who had been taken to China at age four by his Chinese adopted father, racial physical features of he and his sisters were used by the Australians authorities in determining his identity on his arrival back in Australia.²² When Walter landed in Sydney he was met by his sister Florence Lamont and a friend, Elizabeth Young. Despite positive identification by both these women, the authorities still doubted that the boy who stood before them was in fact the same one who had been born in New South Wales and departed seven years previous.

The reasons given by the authorities for doubting the identity of the boy came mainly from his appearance. Despite the fact that a child can change quite significantly in appearance between the ages of four and thirteen, the authorities used two sets of photographs taken at these times as the primary means of identification. In a letter to the Department of External Affairs in Melbourne, the Sydney Collector of

Customs used skin colour as a basis for his judgements. He wrote that Florence Lamont was 'fair enough to pass for a woman of pure white blood, and a younger sister of Mrs Lamont is almost as fair, while the boy is quite Chinese in complexion and general appearance'. He also noted that Chinese girls often had fairer complexions than their brothers. Despite this and an acknowledgment that Walter in fact had a 'striking likeness in profile' with Florence's younger sister, and a scar that had been noted on his departure in 1904 was still present on the boy's head, the authorities were not convinced and Walter was deported.

Language

Education was a primary means through which mixed Chinese Australian children obtained cultural competence – the linguistic, social and cultural knowledge which allowed full participation in White society. They were educated alongside their White peers, attending both public and private schools and some became teachers. At home, too, children grew up speaking English and at school they learnt to read and write it. By 1911, 863 out of a total of 1,132 'mixed blood' Chinese in New South Wales were able to read and write English.²³ As small children they spent most of their time with their mothers, most of whom had no or only very limited Chinese language skills, meaning that acquiring a native fluency in the language of their fathers was quite unusual. Samuel Sarsin, one of the witnesses called before the 1891 Royal Commission into Alleged Chinese Gambling provided an insight into this question. Sarsin was half-Chinese, and stated that he usually associated with Europeans and spoke Chinese only 'a little', 'not fluently'.²⁴

In most families, particularly those families which did not retain close ties to the Chinese community, Chinese language skills were essentially lost by the second generation. Evidence suggests that some mixed children grew up with some knowledge of their father's native tongue, but they had little opportunity to speak it or saw no use in passing the language to their children. Successful language acquisition required the learner to have the opportunity and desire or need to learn and practice, something which did not exist for most children growing up in colonial Australia. The cultural and racial environment in Australia provided little chance for mixed children to be educated

in the Chinese way and to learn to read and write Chinese fluently, especially for those in more isolated rural areas, where there were often no other people who spoke their father's dialect close to home. It was this realisation that prompted Chinese fathers to send their Australian-born children back to China for education.

Some mixed Chinese Australian children did acquire a knowledge of Chinese and as adults were able to use their bilingual skills in developing business links with China, or in Australia they found work as interpreters. Ohho Kong Sing, who had attended public school in Tingha, stated in his application to travel to Hong Kong in 1905 that his aim was to assist his brother in his legal practice there, until his brother's Chinese was sufficiently fluent. This suggests that language capabilities also differed between siblings raised in the one family. Kong Sing was later described as being 'a successful barrister in Hong Kong' by the *Tingha Advocate*.²⁵

Naming

Outside China, in places like Australia, New Zealand and the United States, most Chinese names were changed or anglicised to varying degrees.²⁶ Some Chinese took English family names, particularly those who arrived very early to the colonies.²⁷ Some 'translated' the meaning of their names to English and others, particularly in later generations, changed the orthography of their names to render them less foreign. What this changing of surname meant was that legitimate children born to Chinese men in Australia were legally given their father's anglicised surname, and as they grew up this became the name by which they were known. Siblings were also sometimes registered under different versions and variations of their father's name, but in practice would have used the same name. Often within the Chinese community Chinese surnames were known and used but often this surname was changed or lost in White records meaning that mixed children may or may not have known their 'real' Chinese surname. Today, one of the difficulties for Australian descendants trying to trace their families back to China is the absence of knowledge of this clan surname.

Most mixed Chinese Australian children born in the colonies were given English Christian names, perhaps in part due to the influences of White midwives or priests who may have assisted in registering the

birth or in baptisms. Many Australian-born children of Chinese parents were also given English names, but it was far more likely for them to be registered under Chinese names than for part-Chinese children. I have only located a handful of mixed Chinese Australian children who were registered with Chinese given names. One family was the Ah Chees of the small town of Tumut in the Snowy Mountains of southern New South Wales. Baptised into the Presbyterian Church at Tumut in the late 1870s were a son Ting Yang Ting, and daughters Lan Hoy and Lan Ho, born to their Cantonese father Ah Chee (also known as Dang Chee) and Irish-born mother Margaret nee Crothers. Ah Chee and Margaret later returned to live in China.²⁸

The question of naming was more problematic when the child was removed from the stability of a family with his or her natural parents or when those parents were not legally married. The way that couples and their children dealt with the question of naming was a very individual one.

Children born to unmarried parents were legally registered under the name of their mother, usually with a large 'illegitimate' written across the place left for their father's name. Very occasionally the name of their father was also recorded. As adults, numbers of these children appear in the records using the name of their father. For example, Ethel May Brown was born to Charlotte Ethel Brown in 1901. While on her birth certificate there is nothing to identify her father, the fact that he was Chinese is apparent because she came under the bounds of the *Immigration Restriction Act* in 1914 when she wished to depart from Australia. At this time, Ethel was known by both her mother's surname and that presumably of her father, Quinn Sing.²⁹ Similarly, Ellen Williamson was born in Inverell in 1878 and was registered under the surname of her mother, even though her father's name was also given on the certificate. As an adult, Ellen once again appears using both the names of her mother and her father, Too Tong.³⁰

Where the couple and their ex-marital children were living together as a family unit, or the parents later married, the children used their father's surname and possibly the only time the child was known by its mother's surname was at its registration. It was more important to fend off the stigma of illegitimacy than it was to deny Chinese parentage, but whether this move was prompted by the father,

mother or by the social group in which they mixed is difficult to know. What is suggested by the two examples mentioned above was that the names used by mixed Chinese Australians may have shifted with the circumstances in which they found themselves. Legally a child may have been registered under one name, but with accepted usage known by another. Within the immigration files, it was necessary for the authorities to identify these women as Chinese, and hence used their father's Chinese surname.

Some children also grew up in households that contained siblings from one or more different parents. Of Margaret Clarke's ten children, seven were from her first marriage to James Fong and three were from her second marriage to Millington Clarke. All but one of the sons from Margaret's first marriage took the surname of their White stepfather. Harry retained the surname of his father, taking the view that 'if you can't change your appearance there is no point changing your name', acknowledging that his siblings were attempting to hide or at least distance themselves from their Chinese ancestry through changing their name.³¹

'Not Chinese Enough'?

While most mixed Chinese Australian children were being educated to be culturally competent in the White community – being sent to public or Christian schools, speaking English and attending Christian churches – efforts were also being made on the parts of their parents to ensure that they possessed qualities of Chineseness. Numbers of Chinese Australian children returned to Hong Kong and China for the stated purpose of education, something that was noted as early as 1868.³² Frequently this fell to the eldest son, but not exclusively – girls were also sent overseas for education purposes. An important part of this education was learning about 'being Chinese', learning to speak/read/write the Chinese language (some forgot their English in the process) and maintaining cultural and family links which were easily lost from Australia.

Children were customarily sent to live with family members – their father's Chinese wife, their paternal grandparents or uncles. For some the journey ended in the bi-cultural surroundings of Hong Kong, for others the busy trade port of Guangzhou, but many also went

further to live in the rural villages where their fathers had grown up, far removed from traces of familiar culture and language. They remained there typically for a period of several years, although some remained for most of their childhood.

For Australian-born Chinese, particularly those of mixed race, visiting China for the first time, meeting a large number of relatives, not being fluent in the language, being expected to act according to Chinese customs and obey elders as a filial Chinese child must have been a shock, and the process of adjustment took a significant time. Even a child raised with frequent contact with the Chinese community in Australia would not have been fully prepared for the sights and sounds and challenges presented to them by living in China.

Their sense of belonging in China was unsettled and unsure and they felt a sense of alienation from that which they were meant to belong to. White Australia said that they were 'Chinese', but perhaps they had no personal feelings of being Chinese or did not know what 'being Chinese' meant. The Canadian writer Sui Sin Far (whose English name was Edith Eaton), the daughter of an English father and Chinese mother, described in an autobiographical essay written in 1909 her first encounter at age six with a Chinese person other than her mother – two Chinese men with queues sitting in a Chinese store – at which she recoiled in shock, and asked her elder brother:

'Oh Charlie, I cry 'Are we like that?'

'Well, we're Chinese, and they're Chinese, too, so we must be!'

Growing up with an 'assimilated' Presbyterian-educated Chinese mother, not knowing other Chinese families, it was only with adulthood that Sui Sin Far developed what she called her 'Chinese instincts', in part because of the identity that others ascribed to her from her physical appearance.³³

For a mixed Chinese Australian, a return to living in China or Hong Kong may have been fraught with similar questioning of identity. Henry Yue Jackson and his siblings were taken back as children to the ancestral village of their dead father in Taishan by their Scottish-New Zealand mother, Mary, in 1890. In his reminiscences about the time the family spent in China, Jackson recounted the tale of their arrival in

the ancestral village, a small rural community never before visited by a 'foreign devil'. Before their arrival, the children had been dressed in Chinese clothing and given queues to wear, as was Chinese custom. Jackson's queue was pinned onto his short hair, and as he walked up the narrow path to the village it fell off, causing the onlookers much merriment:

I instantly picked it up, and carried it with me, and the sight of my carrying my queue made them laugh all the more and louder. My third uncle tried to attach it again to my hair, but as it would not remain on, he rolled it up and put it out of sight in one of the parcels he was carrying.³⁴

Jackson's queue could be likened to his Chinese identity – arriving in China the family was meant to become 'Chinese', but being unable to speak the language and unfamiliar with most Chinese customs and living conditions and, importantly, only being racially half-Chinese, this identity initially attached itself to the children as awkwardly as Jackson's hairpiece. While it was meant to fit and meant to cover up where their Chineseness was lacking, its presence in fact resulted in making more of the fact that they did not yet fit in.

Social and cultural displacement was experienced by mixed Chinese Australians who went to live in Hong Kong and China. They found a conflicting identity as Australian and Chinese – as being identified as Chinese in Australia, and not Chinese enough in China, or in the words of Chinese Australian artist Greg Leong, being 'a victim of a double cultural displacement, of a historical white Australian racism, and of the no less prejudicial, rigid structures of Chinese ritual and familial relations'.³⁵ In around 1900, Mrs Jong Gutt (nee Ah Gin, a mixed Chinese Australian woman), along with her Chinese husband and children, left Sydney for Hong Kong where Jong Gutt found work as a clerk. Three years later, the family wished to return to Australia. Donohoe, the Officer of Customs at Sydney, wrote:

the Ah Gin family are old residents of Sydney and are respectable people. They have been reared as Europeans and are unable to speak Chinese. The mother has explained to me that her daughter is very ill and unable

to live in China with her Husband, on account of the Climate and not being able to understand the people.³⁶

While being identified as 'Chinese' in Australia, Mrs Jong Gutt had lived a Western life. When she went to Hong Kong, she did not possess the necessary cultural capital to feel comfortable living as a Chinese in a Chinese environment. The difficulty arose because in a Chinese environment she was not Chinese enough – she did not have the language or cultural skills to be 'Chinese', but neither would she be accepted as a 'European'.

The Connecting Link

Some viewed the boundary crossing of mixed Chinese Europeans as a positive and, despite the difficulties, thought some good could be made of being in middle ground. In 1895, Quong Tart was reported to have been especially proud of his mixed-race son, saying, 'who knows whether or not this child may one day become the middleman between China and England'.³⁷ Some mixed Chinese European children grew this idea of being a connection between two races, two countries and two cultures. Canadian Sui Sin Far wrote in 1909, 'I give my right hand to the Occidentals and my left to the Orientals, hoping that between them they will not utterly destroy the insignificant "connecting link"'.³⁸ In Australia, William Liu, born eight years before federation, of a Chinese father and White mother, educated in both Australia and China, devoted his life to being a bridge between the two cultures.³⁹

However, many mixed Chinese Australians, particularly after the tightening of racial boundaries after federation, sought to hide their non-White heritage. In 1916, Walter Hanming Chen wrote that 'the half-castes (i.e. Those born of white mothers & Chinese fathers) ... are practically Australians and do not as a general rule admit their Chinese nationality'.⁴⁰ There was little chance offered to 'half-caste' Chinese to adopt the kind of identity that has been taken up since the policy of multiculturalism of the last thirty years, that of a Chinese Australian. Shen Yuanfang has written that '[a] Chinese identity became only possible in a multicultural Australia. Before that, Chinese in Australia and their descendants were only "sojourners", "Chinks" or "heathens"'.⁴¹ Mixed Chinese Australians were not able to live fully

secure in their rights and privileges as Australians and British subjects. They were constantly fighting against negative images of themselves and fighting to be allowed to be 'Australian'.

Much of their acceptance in White Australia came through their display of cultural competence and community belonging, which they were able to use to negotiate cultural and social boundaries formed along lines of racial difference. Through their education and cultural knowledge, mixed Chinese Australians demonstrated to White Australians their right to a place within the community. However, there was pressure to choose between two separate identities and often the choices they made came at a cost, through the loss for many of connections to China and the Chinese community, the loss of a family tradition and name and culture. For most, 'fitting in' to Australian society required the abandonment of those aspects of self that differentiated them from the White community, and only a small few were able to maintain a sense of their 'Chineseness', forming a new cultural identity and bridging cultural gaps.

1 I generally use the terms 'European' or 'British' rather than 'Australian' because in the colonial and federation period, White Australians referred to themselves as of the 'British' or 'European' race. Although an Australian identity had begun to emerge since the mid-nineteenth century, identity was still more commonly defined along racial lines rather than by national boundaries, citizenship or birthplace.

2 For discussions of Chinese European interracial sex and marriage in colonial Australia, see Jan Ryan, "'She lives with a Chinaman': Orient-ing "White" Women in the Courts of Law', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 60, 1999, pp. 149-159, 215-217; and Pauline Rule, "'Tell father and mother not to be very unhappy for I am very comfortable": A Sketch of Irish Women's Experiences in Colonial Victoria', in Trevor McClaughlin (ed.), *Irish Women in Colonial Australia*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1998, pp. 123-141.

3 See T.A. Coghlan, *NSW Statistical Register for 1901 and previous years*, Government Printer, Sydney, 1903, p. 667. Coghlan lists the population of 'full-blood' Chinese men in New South Wales at 10,063 and women at 159 (total 10,222), 'half-caste' Chinese men at 527 and women at 514 (total 1,041). The total population of New South Wales was listed as 1,359,133.

- 4 *Census of NSW* 1901.
- 5 I use the term 'half-caste' only within the context of the period under discussion and regret any offence which use of this term may cause.
- 6 Nikos Papastergiadis, 'Tracing Hybridity in Theory', in Prina Werbner and Tariq Modood (eds), *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, Zed Books, London, 1997, p.258. See also Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory*, Routledge, London, 1995.
- 7 A.T. Yarwood has written of the *Bulletin's* influence, 'On the mind of the Australian Anglo-Saxon, with his special aversion to miscegenation and his race consciousness, the impact of the *Bulletin's* propaganda was immense'. A.T. Yarwood, *Asian Migration to Australia: The Background to Exclusion 1896-1923*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1967, p.34.
- 8 'The Chinese Question No. 1' (c. early 1881), *Newspaper Cuttings*, vol.57, Mitchell Library. Emphasis added.
- 9 A turn-of-the-century article detailing the alleged sale of mixed Chinese Australian children into slavery in China said 'it is stated that half-castes of English mothers are valued in China as always being better looking than the pure Chinese type, and accordingly, realise higher prices'. 'Chinese in Australia: Sending Children into Slavery', *Newspaper Cuttings*, vol.82, Mitchell Library.
- 10 See Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China*, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 1992, p.58. Dikötter also notes, however, that some Chinese reformers theoretically promoted racial amalgamation as a way for China to 'flourish' again, pp.87-88.
- 11 William Liu, 'Australia's Chinese Connection', *125th Anniversary of the Battle of the Eureka Stockade: 5th Annual Lalor Address on Community Relations*, Commissioner for Community Relations, Canberra, 1979, p.20.
- 12 The restrictions and requirements of the *Immigration Restriction Act* are well-known and discussed. See for example, Myra Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy to 1920*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, 1923.
- 13 Chan writes that Wang's idea of *zhancao chugen* 'is a type of *huayi* identity in response to the discriminatory policy and practice of the White Australia period by which many Chinese sought acceptance by attempting to assimilate to the dominant Anglo community by uprooting all traces of Chinese cultural heritage, conforming to WASP values, anglicising Chinese family names, suppressing their Chinese language skills and accents, distancing and disassociating themselves from the Chinese community.' Henry Chan, 'The Identity of the Chinese in Australian History', *Queensland Review*, vol.6, no.2, November 1999, p.3.
- 14 Chan, 'The Identity of the Chinese in Australian History', p.3.
- 15 Ann Laura Stoler, 'Sexual Offences and Racial Frontiers: European Identities

- and the Politics of **Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia**', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol.34, no.3, 1992, pp.514-551.
- 16 *Reports Upon Chinese Camps*, NSW Legislative Council, 1883-84, p.2.
- 17 In immigration files held by the National Archives of Australia (NAA), photographs attached to applications by Chinese men for CoDs and CEDTs often show the beginnings of a queue, presumably being grown for their return to China. NAA: SP42/1, **Correspondence** of the Collector of Customs relating to Immigration Restriction and Passports, 1901-1948.
- 18 Winnifred Eaton, *Me, A Book of Remembrance*, Banner Books/University Press of Mississippi, Jackson, 1997 (first published by The Century Company, 1915), p.41. See Pat Shea, 'Winnifred Eaton and the Politics of Miscegenation in Popular Fiction', *Melus*, vol.22, no.2, Summer 1997.
- 19 Anecdotal evidence suggests that subsequent generations continued to hide their Chinese blood, particularly as further intermarriage with the White community took place and the physical attributes of 'Chineseness' were harder to distinguish. I have had contact with a number of 'White' Australians who have only recently discovered their Chinese ancestry when embarking on family history research.
- 20 Darlene Johnson, 'Ab/originality: Playing and Passing Versus Assimilation', *Bulletin*, The Olive Pink Society, vol.5, no.2, 1993, p.21.
- 21 NAA: SP42/1, C1903/9633.
- 22 NAA: SP42/1, C12/1298.
- 23 *Census of the Commonwealth 1911*, quoted in C.F. Yong, *The New Gold Mountain*, Raphael Arts Pty Ltd, Richmond SA, 1977, p.267.
- 24 Statement of Samuel Sarsin, *Report of the Royal Commission on Alleged Chinese Gambling and Immorality*, NSW Legislative Council, 1892, pp.167-8.
- 25 NAA: SP42/1, C1905/1616.
- 26 See Emma Woo Louie, 'A New Perspective on Surnames among Chinese Americans', *Amerasia*, vol.12, no.1, 1985-86, pp.1-22.
- 27 Numbers of Chinese men who applied for naturalisation in NSW had European-sounding names, for example, Thomas Haines (who arrived from Amoy, China in 1848) and John Peters (who arrived from China in 1851). Terri McCormack, *Chinese Naturalisation Database 1857-1887*, 1997. See also Chan, 'The Identity of Chinese in Australian History', p.3.
- 28 Extracted from the records of the Presbyterian Church, Tumut. Photocopy held in the Local Studies collection of the Tumut Public Library. These births are also listed in the New South Wales Registry of Birth, Death and Marriage Index, with variations in the names: Ting Yang Ting Ah Chee or Crothers b.1876, Reg. No. 21119; Lan Owee Ah Chee b.1878, Reg. No. 23064; and Sam Ho Ah Chee b.1879, Reg. No. 24342. On the life of their father, see *The Tumut and Adelong Times*, 20 October 1905.

Photocopy held in Tumut Public Library.

29 NAA: SP11/28, B1924/3564, Birth and naturalization certificates found in a drawer in the Revenue Detective's Branch, Customs and Excise Office, on 6 October 1924 [includes certificates for Chinese persons in Australia].

30 Ellen Williamson's married name was Mrs Mon Howe. NAA: SP726/2, Register of Birth Certificates, 1913-1962.

31 NAA: SP726/2, Register of Birth Certificates, 1913-1962. Elizabeth Wiedemann states that Too Tong also changed his name to Williamson. Elizabeth Wiedemann, *Holding its own: The Inverell district since 1919*, Inverell Shire Council, Inverell, 1998, p.216.

32 *Illustrated Australian News*, 2 October 1868.

33 Sui Sin Far, 'Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian', *Chinese America: History and Perspectives 1987*, Chinese Historical Society, San Francisco, 1987, pp.170, 179. This autobiographical essay was first published in the *Independent*, 21 January 1909, pp.125-32.

34 Yue Jackson, *My reminiscences 1890-1917*, p.5. Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Micro MS 112.

35 Greg Leong, 'Remembering Chinese...', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 65, 2000, pp.67-68.

36 NAA: SP42/1, C1903/9633.

37 John Law, 'Quong Tart: The Story of a Successful Chinaman', in Frederick A Atkins, *The Young Man: A Monthly Journal and Review*, vol.9, no.99, March 1895, p.103.

38 Sui Sin Far, 'Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian', p.182.

39 See Wang Gungwu, 'The Life of William Liu: Australian and Chinese Perspectives', *Community and Nation: China, Southeast Asia and Australia*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1992.

40 Walter Hanming Chen, *The Chinese in Australia, c.1916*, p.5. Held at Society of Australian Genealogists, Primary Record N/6/4/641.

41 Shen Yuanfang, *Dragon Seed in the Antipodes: Chinese-Australian Autobiographies*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, 2001, p.152.

Chapter 13

'Oh, I Would Like to See Maggie Moore Again!': Selected Women of Melbourne's Chinatown

Sophie Couchman

The Chinese community of Melbourne during the federation period is generally imagined as a male community – a community of male miners, market gardeners and furniture workers and perhaps herbalists, fruit, vegetable and tea merchants and a good many Chinese store owners – all male. The overriding impression is one of a community dominated by men, earning a living in Australia, with the women in their lives keeping the home fires burning back in China. This impression is not an unreasonable one. Victorian census data show that in 1857 there were only three Chinese women compared with a little over 25,000 Chinese men living in Victoria.¹ By 1901, women still represented only 1.6 per cent of the total Chinese population in Australia and by 1921 this had risen to just 6.7 per cent.² If the part-Chinese population is included the proportion of women in 1901 in this mixed Chinese population was still only around 6 per cent.³ Even if census data under-represents the number of part-Chinese individuals, as Choi suggests, the proportion of Chinese and part-Chinese women in the Chinese community would still be very low.⁴ Marriage statistics in the post federation period show a great disparity between the numbers of married men and women, suggesting an overwhelming majority of Chinese men had wives and families in China.⁵

Although the numbers of Chinese and part-Chinese women in the Australia were very low, this does not mean that they were insignificant. In order to obtain a broader understanding of Chinese communities in Australia and indeed of Australian society more generally, we