Introduction

SHADOWS

Remembering Anglo-Chinese families

During the second half of the nineteenth century, hundreds of white women formed intimate relationships with Chinese men in New South Wales and Victoria. These relationships took place in Sydney, Melbourne and the bush, in towns, mining camps, and on rural properties. Some were fleeting encounters, others enduring and stable, but from both were born children whose faces reflected the differing heritage of their parents. These women, their Chinese partners and their Anglo-Chinese children farmed, mined, and ran stores and other businesses. Some were rich and lived in grand homes and owned large amounts of property, some only barely managed to scrape together an existence. Some had long, happy and prosperous lives together, while others faced tragedy, violence and poverty. Until recently, little has been known about them. They are historical subjects whose lives have remained in the shadows and on the margins.

This thesis aims to throw light on those shadows by presenting the first in-depth study of intimate relationships between white women and Chinese men in the southern colonies of Australia, and of the families they formed together. Its particular focus is the colony of New South Wales (NSW), between the gold-rush years of the 1850s and the early years of the twentieth century. It explores the experiences of these mixed race families, in both southern Australia and southern China, from a variety of perspectives, examining representation and discourse as well as lived experience, across time and place. Beginning in the southern colonies of Australia in the 1850s, it travels through city and bush, into family homes and through public discourse, to finish in China in the early decades of the twentieth century. This thesis is significant for the contribution it makes in both redressing the neglect of interracial relationships
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in the history of the Chinese in Australia and in contributing to a reassessment of colonial race relations.

This thesis uses the tension between representation and discourse and lived experience, the discrepancies between ‘prescription and practice’,¹ to complicate and extend our understanding of interracial intimate relationships and mixed race families in Australia in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It reveals that in spite of the hostility so strongly expressed in discourse, white women and Chinese men came together for reasons of love, comfort, security, sexual fulfilment and the formation of family. By approaching the subject from a variety of perspectives and through a range of sources (archives, fiction, family lore, the press), it demonstrates that there was no one typical experience of intimate relationships across racial boundaries. The lives of my subjects were as varied as the places they lived and the communities they mixed with, and as individual as their own characters and pasts. Their experiences were particular and individual and demonstrate personal negotiations of marriages and relationships and their place in families, communities and cultures.

The metaphor of the shadow in the title of this thesis represents two things. It suggests the way in which stories of the lives of white women, their Chinese partners and their children are a set of interconnected and intersecting plots which weave and blend and twist together, just as shadows shift and change. The idea of the shadow also suggests something not quite seen, something ephemeral, something that is there but not there, so it also represents the hidden presence of mixed race couples and Anglo-Chinese ancestors within Australian families today and within the history of the Chinese in Australia. As will be discussed further in this Introduction, their experiences have for a long time been hinted at, glossed over, and pushed aside. This thesis is an attempt to follow the traces of their existence and to draw together scraps of evidence to form a clearer picture of their lives.

By foregrounding the experiences of mixed race couples and families within both the white and Chinese communities in Australia and China, this thesis aims to challenge

the ideas of difference and the boundaries imagined around the Chinese and white populations of the Australian colonies, ideas which have been carried through from nineteenth-century sources to the secondary literature. By suggesting the significance and frequency of intimate relationships between white women and Chinese men, this study seeks to demonstrate that racial categories were inherently permeable and unstable and that interactions between the white and Chinese populations in Australia’s southern colonies were more complex than has often been assumed.

Lives across boundaries
The Australian colonies functioned as what Mary Louise Pratt has termed a ‘contact zone’, a space of colonial encounters where ‘peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations’. With the gold rushes of the early 1850s came a change in the social dynamics of colonial life and a change in the ethnic and cultural mix of the colonial population. Aside from the indigenous Aboriginal population, the majority of those living in NSW and Victoria continued to be of British or Irish origin, but there were also growing numbers of continental Europeans, Americans both black and white, Lebanese and Chinese. The Chinese formed the most visible group among these new populations and arguably created the greatest impact on the way the established white population imagined itself and its community. The relationship formed between white colonists and Chinese immigrants in southern Australia was not one of coloniser and colonised – both were migrant groups attempting to establish themselves and their cultures, traditions and ways of life in a new land which was already home to an indigenous population. However, the way that these groups interacted with each other and, in particular, how white colonists responded to the Chinese, were strongly influenced by earlier colonial encounters. It was in and through colonial interactions with colonised non-European populations that the British had come to define themselves as a race and as a people.

An important part of this self-definition for the British was the drawing, defining and maintenance of boundaries. Anne McClintock has written of how the Victorian
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middle-class in Britain and throughout the empire was preoccupied with boundaries and with boundary order. She has described how ideas of degradation—of both humanity and society—and of contagion were central to the concern over boundaries and were integral to the way in which the British imagined themselves and those people they encountered throughout the empire. They perceived differences between themselves and those they saw as ‘Other’—from the slum-dwelling poor, to colonial ‘natives’, to non-white migrants who like themselves came to inhabit newly colonised territories. They divided and defined populations, grouping them into social and racial hierarchies in which they unfailingly placed themselves (white, male, middle-class) at the top—men above women, white above non-white, Christian above ‘heathen’.

In Australia, such ideas of difference infused white colonial encounters with the Aboriginal population and with the Chinese. White colonists saw the Chinese as a people quite unlike themselves and believed that they would be unable to assimilate or integrate with white society for cultural, linguistic, racial and biological reasons. Colonial governments implemented exclusionary policies designed to cement boundaries between themselves and the Chinese, such as immigration legislation designed to keep large numbers of Chinese out of the colonies and naturalisation laws which prohibited Chinese residents from becoming British subjects. These boundaries went further than the political realm, too, as anxiety over social and biological contagion not only justified a politics of exclusion but also, in Anne McClintock’s words, ‘gave social sanction to the middle class fixation with boundary sanitation, in particular with the sanitation of sexual boundaries’. While asserting that the differences between themselves and the ‘Other’ were innate, white colonists knew that the boundaries they imagined between groups were, in fact, permeable and that they required constant definition and re-establishment.


4 McClintock, Imperial Leather, p. 47.
Sexuality and women's bodies were seen as particularly threatening and destabilising to the established boundary order. McClintock has suggested that white women's bodies were seen as 'the central transmitter of racial and hence cultural contagion' and that they therefore needed to be cordoned off.\(^5\) The future of the British/white race became tied to women's bodies, necessitating control of women's sexuality and behaviour, and childbirth, child-rearing and mothering became political endeavours tied to national or imperial interests. White women's bodies became contested ground as their role as mothers in either creating a strong race of nation- and empire-builders, or in destroying it, became more carefully defined. In this role as 'mothers of the race',\(^6\) white women's lives were subjected to a set of ideological and physical boundaries. They were tied to the private, domestic sphere of the home and family, and the dominant ideology prescribed that their primary duty was to their families and, through those families, to their race and nation. They were to give birth, nurture, educate and care for (white) children and maintain their (white) homes. Women's opportunities for participation in the public sphere were limited; so, too were their freedoms of movement and association, which were controlled on a broad level by hegemonic conventions of morality and respectability, and on a personal level by husbands, fathers or other male family members. Within the boundaries of morality, respectability and domesticity their sexuality was closely scrutinised and controlled.

Ideas of sexuality, domesticity, respectability and morality were tied to those of racial difference and to anxieties about degradation and contagion in colonial settings. The management of sexuality and intimate relationships, together with control of the domestic/female realm, were essential to the maintenance of racial and colonial boundaries.\(^7\) In part this was because white women had the power to disrupt and disturb these boundaries through behaviour seen as transgressive, from abortion and the limitation of family size to sex with non-white men and the mothering of 'coloured' children. In the colonies, anxiety over the future of the white race drew attention to the possibility and actuality of interracial sex in ways that it did not in

\(^5\) McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 47.


\(^7\) Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*. 

Britain. It was the co-presence of white women and non-white men in colonial spaces, in those colonial ‘contact zones’, that suggested the possibility of the crossing of racial boundaries in the choice of sexual partner.

White colonists were both horrified and fascinated by the thought of sex between white women and non-white men, yet it was not the frequent occurrence of interracial sex that was necessarily the trigger for white anxieties. In many cases numbers of interracial relationships were not great, while concerns were all-consuming.\footnote{Peggy Pascoe, ‘Race, gender and intercultural relations: The case of interracial marriage’, \textit{Frontiers}, vol. 12, no. 1, 1991, p. 6.} In the Australian colonies, for instance, early debates on the Chinese presence during the 1850s featured strong concerns about the possibility of the ‘destruction of the white race’ in the colonies through sexual relations between Chinese men and white women, yet there were only one or two known cases at the time. Interracial relationships were not common, yet much time and energy were devoted to discussing them, their potential dangers and possible social outcomes, because the mere possibility of their presence was both destabilising and threatening to the established order and social hierarchies of colonial life.

In southern Australia, anxieties over interracial sex between white women and Chinese men did not result in increased control, as it did in other settings and with other racial groups (such as Aboriginal Australians). In most situations, these relationships were not carefully policed, nor prevented by legal or social proscription. Anxieties over interracial sex between white women and Chinese men instead translated into discourses which permeated throughout diverse parts of colonial communities – discourses which came to be central to how white colonists imagined their community, nation and empire; discourses which surrounded mixed race couples and their families every day. Chinese-European couples cannot have been unaware that they were crossing racial and social boundaries imposed by the society around them and that this was a society essentially opposed to the idea of interracial sex. As this thesis will show, however, it was also a society which showed them, to
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use Martha Hodes’ word, toleration—‘a measure of forbearance for that which is not approved’.\(^9\)

**Lives in the shadows**

‘Tis strange indeed, how one’s memory can lead us down through the illusive shadows of the days of yore, so bewitching are those shadows, that one feels, that the stage of the mind, is merely producing one of those glorious transformation scenes, which we have come to connect with the pantomime. The glorious cavalcade of the years, passed with kaleidoscopic suddenness, opening with a word, or perchance a picture, then, the deeds of valour, of stoicism, thoughts of hope, of despair, of tragedy, of comedy, are conjured up from the repository of the mind as each scene passes. We pause a while—sometimes a sob, sometimes a smile, but with each a salute, for this is history.

Margaret Clarke, 1936\(^10\)

It was with these words that Margaret Clarke\(^11\) began her reminiscences of the life she spent in the small settlement of Broken Dam in south western NSW. Recalling earlier times and reliving the experiences of her youth gave Margaret great joy. ‘There was a thrill about those early days, the thrill of adventure, the knowledge of achievement, that spirit which has made the name of Australia, a byword throughout the world’, she wrote. Written in 1936, her reminiscences were published in the local newspaper, the *Ariah Park News*,\(^12\) and recorded the progress and history of the region, together with her own part in it—for Margaret and her family had been at Broken Dam for sixty years, since it had been nothing but a hotel and miles and miles of sheep paddocks.

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\(^10\) Margaret Clarke, ‘60 years at Ariah Park’, *Ariah Park News*, 3 July 1936.

\(^11\) Margaret Clarke was born Margaret Smith, and as was customary changed her surname to that of her husband at the time of each of her two marriages. Hence, she was at various times known as Margaret Fong and then as Margaret Clarke. For the sake of convenience, I will refer to her as Margaret Clarke, the name by which she was known during the later part of her life.

\(^12\) Margaret Clarke, ‘60 years at Ariah Park’, *Ariah Park News*, 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 July and 7 August 1936. Further details on the life of Margaret Clarke and her family are taken from Bill Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam: An Account of the Settlement at Broken Dam (Ariah Park, NSW); Its People and Its Progress*, JA Bradley & Sons, Temora, 1987.
In 1936 and at the age of seventy-seven, Margaret was the matriarch of a large family. She had ten children, forty-six grandchildren, twenty-seven great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild living. She had buried two husbands. It was with the first of these, whom she married in 1876 at the age of sixteen, that she came to Broken Dam. They had met and married at Wagga Wagga, after which he was keen to open a business as a storekeeper to support them. ‘We heard from travellers of the possibilities of a junction between roads leading to Narandera [sic], Wagga and Cootamundra, a hotel was being built there but as yet there was no sign of a store’, recalled Margaret. ‘Thus it was that we heard of Broken Dam.’ Margaret’s husband selected an initial forty acres of land in 1876 and there they built their store. Thirty years later as a widow, she owned over one thousand acres, including the block on which the family store was located. In 1906, she sold all but the original forty acres and store and by the time she wrote her reminiscences in 1936, Margaret had moved off the land to the nearby town of Ariah Park.

Margaret’s reminiscences focused on the highlights and progress of the region around Broken Dam and Ariah Park. She wrote of the first minister of religion, the first post office (run by Margaret herself), a terrible bushfire, the opening of a blacksmith’s shop, the first rainwater tank (at Margaret’s store), the opening of a school and the coming of the railway. The reminiscences do tell something of her early life—of her British migrant parents, her birth at the ‘canvas town’ of Tuena and her childhood on the goldfields of Lambing Flat—but these most personal aspects of her narrative feature only until the time of her marriage and the move to Broken Dam. After that point, her family life fades to a shadow and she makes only the occasional mention of her husband, baby or children. Instead, the lives and achievements of the region’s founding fathers (and one famous local daughter, Mary Cameron, later Dame Mary Gilmore) take the forefront. At the end of the sixth instalment of her history, Margaret finished with a description of the enjoyment she had found in reliving these memories of her past. ‘My greatest thrill is that somehow or other I feel that I am linked on to the illustrious army of pioneers of the early days of this country’, she wrote, pondering further whether the pioneering spirit they displayed had managed

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13 Clarke, Ariah Park News, 10 July 1936.
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to live on to the present generation. Her final words, directed to that generation of young men and women growing up around her were ‘Yours is a glorious Heritage, be worthy of your forbears.’  

Not once in her reminiscences, however, did Margaret mention a significant part of the ‘glorious Heritage’ of seven of her own children and their descendants—the fact that her first husband, the man with whom she had come to Broken Dam, was Chinese. He was James Fong, a Cantonese man who had arrived in Australia as a youth of about seventeen in 1856, three years before Margaret was born. In 1890, after fourteen years of married life together, James had died of gastric fever, leaving Margaret with their seven children to raise. Four years later, the widowed Margaret remarried to Millington Clarke, a man of British descent like herself. They had three more children, but tragedy soon struck Margaret a second time, for Millington was killed in a riding accident when her youngest baby was only two weeks old.

I came to Margaret Clarke’s memoirs in the *Ariah Park News* already knowing of her story, including that her first husband had been Chinese. A local history of Ariah Park by Bill Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*, includes substantial detail about the family and the significance of their role in their small rural community, much of which was provided by Margaret Clarke’s granddaughter, Ruth Genat.  

Already well into research for this thesis and longing to find a first-hand account of life as the white wife of a Chinese man in nineteenth-century NSW, I had great hopes about what Margaret Clarke’s memoirs might reveal about her family’s experiences. I wanted her narrative to touch on her feelings as a white woman involved in an intimate relationship with a Chinese man, what it meant for her to be part of an interracial relationship and how her family negotiated being both ‘Chinese’ and ‘white’ in a society known to be essentially racist and anti-Chinese. There were many questions I hoped Margaret Clarke’s memoirs would answer for me, but instead I found an all-too-significant silence. There was not even a mention of ‘the Chinese’ being around on the goldfields of Tuena and Young where she had grown up; the

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15 Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam.*
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only hint of their presence comes in Margaret’s description of her schoolmates at Lambing Flat being ‘a motly [sic] crew, drawn from every race under the sun’. What then, was I to make of Margaret’s narrative as a source for writing of the experiences of white women, their Chinese partners and their Anglo-Chinese children?

![Image 1. Margaret Clarke, back left, with her mother and her children at Broken Dam, 1901](image)

Reproduced in Bill Speirs, *The Beehive and the Broken Dam*

I realised, on reflection, that I had been unrealistic in my expectation, or hope, that this public piece of writing, which would be read by all those in the district in which she and her children and grandchildren lived, would contain intimate insights into Margaret’s family’s past. They were instead memories of the building of a community, a recollection set within the framework of the ‘pioneer’, one who contributed to the building of a community and one whose early trials and difficulties could serve as an example to the young people of the current day. There are many reasons why Margaret may have chosen to frame the narrative of her life within such a pioneering discourse rather than as a more personal account. Perhaps she was

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proud of the hardships she had tolerated in making a life in the bush and wanted others to know of the trials that had gone into the building of her community; perhaps the pain of losing two husbands still remained with her and she didn’t wish to relive the heartache by writing of her life with them; perhaps she didn’t think of her family in terms of their being ‘Chinese’, and so mentioning that fact did not seem relevant to her family’s story. Or perhaps, realising that the Australia of 1936 was very different from that she had grown up in, she hesitated to expose the non-white heritage of her children and grandchildren, to put down on paper for posterity that her family were not pure ‘white’. The meaning of Margaret’s reminiscences to my study, therefore, came from the silences, from what was not written about, from what was forgotten or deliberately omitted.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{Forgetting and remembering}

Over the passing decades of the twentieth century, many families descended from Chinese-European couples have chosen to hide themselves, as Margaret Clarke did, by erasing Chinese heritage from the family story. Annette Kuhn has written that all families have secrets they make efforts to keep concealed from the rest of the world, as well as at times from each other, and that in the stories families tell themselves and others ‘characters and happenings that do not slot neatly into the flow of the family narrative are ruthlessly edited out’.\textsuperscript{18} For many in Anglo-Chinese families living in early twentieth-century Australia, a place that was increasingly rigid in its definition of who did and did not belong to its ‘imagined community’,\textsuperscript{19} Chinese heritage was not a part of the family story they wished to tell. It was lied about, forgotten, denied and repressed, thereby whitewashing not only the family’s past, but their future as well.

The timing of this thesis has, however, coincided with a growing interest in the history of Anglo-Chinese families within the field of overseas Chinese history as well

\textsuperscript{17} For an interesting discussion on the transmission of family stories between generations, see Peter Read, ‘“Before rockets and aeroplanes”: Family history’, Australian Cultural History, no. 23, 2003, pp. 131-42.


as within families themselves. As older generations have passed on and Australian society has changed so that having a Chinese ancestor might now be considered intriguing instead of shameful, ‘white’ Australians who have uncovered their part-Chinese heritage are now more comfortable when discussing it. For many this heritage was something they may have known or suspected, for others it came as a complete surprise only revealed through a Chinese father’s name on a grandparent’s birth certificate. Also among those telling stories of their Anglo-Chinese ancestors are those who would identify themselves as Chinese Australians. The shift has meant that stories of Anglo-Chinese families are now being told in local histories (as Margaret Clarke’s family story is in Bill Speirs’ study of Ariah Park), in discussions at history seminars and conferences, in publications by family history societies, in self-published family histories, in museum exhibitions and in websites.20

Typically these stories of Anglo-Chinese families follow similar themes, revolving around long-term stable relationships, numbers of children, successful businesses such as stores or hotels, property ownership and community participation through church, school or charitable activities. The exemplar of this kind of narrative is found

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English-born Margaret Scarlett was a nineteen-year old schoolteacher living with her family in the Araluen Valley in southern NSW when she met the young Quong Tart through mutual acquaintances in 1884. He had arrived in the colony from Taishan, China at the age of nine in 1859 and by 1884 had already made a small fortune from mining interests in the Braidwood area. Margaret was apparently quite taken with him when they met, as she began collecting news cuttings about him, a practice which she continued for many years. The couple were married in Sydney in 1886 and made their home there. Quong Tart ran a successful tea importing business and tea rooms around Sydney, as well as acting as unofficial consul for the Chinese in the colony and campaigning for various social causes including that against the use of opium.

Margaret Tart raised their six children, born between 1887 and 1903, and maintained their elegant home, ‘Gallop House’, in the suburb of Ashfield. Quong Tart died prematurely at the age of 53 in 1903, the same year as his youngest son was born, and Margaret followed him in 1916 after spending the intervening years occupied in
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giving the children ‘a mother’s sole care, and striving to bring them up to be a credit to their father’s name’.  

Margaret and Quong Tart are frequently mentioned in discussions of the Chinese in Australia and have been the subject of a number of in-depth articles, a biography, a piece of public sculpture, online and museum exhibitions and in 2004, an international conference to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Quong Tart’s untimely death. Quong Tart has also recently had a community service award named after him. Much of this has been possible because Margaret and Quong Tart themselves left a significant legacy which has assisted in the telling of their lives — Margaret Tart’s newspaper cutting books, her biography of her husband and the family’s photographic collection, for example.

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21 Margaret Tart, *The Life of Quong Tart: or, How a Foreigner Succeeded in a British Community*, WM Maclardy, Sydney, 1911, author’s note.


25 A memorial to Quong Tart, in the form of a bronze bust, has been erected in the Sydney suburb of Ashfield where the Tart family lived. See the *Sydney Morning Herald* (hereafter *SMH*), 12 September 1998.


27 The International Conference on Quong Tart and His Times, organised by the Quong Tart Centenary Commemoration Committee, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, 1-4 July 2004.


29 The Tart family papers, including the newspaper cutting books and photographs, are divided between the Society of Australian Genealogists (SAG) and the Mitchell Library in Sydney. The biography was
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This remembering of Quong Tart and his Anglo-Chinese family marks him as one of the ‘successful’ early Chinese migrants to the Australian colonies, an ‘ideal migrant’ who integrated, assimilated, fitted in. The Chinese community in Australia is proud of his achievements and his successes and the broader Australian community is happy, too, to acknowledge and include him in the wider settler narrative. It is tempting to tell the story of Anglo-Chinese families in Australia using examples such as the Tarts, families of Chinese men who settled and contributed financially and socially to their communities, and whose lives were stable, secure and successful. Such lives fit comfortably with a number of agendas, including community desires to acknowledge Australia’s multicultural past and the contribution of non-European settlers to the building of the nation; the politics of family memory which hides and forgets things that might be considered shameful; and a desire to disprove the ‘sojourner myth’ that Chinese migrants could not and would not ‘assimilate’ to the Australian way of life. Anglo-Chinese families like these can be placed into narratives of the ‘pioneer family’—as Margaret Clarke did in her reminiscences—or of the ‘successful migrant’, creating stories of migration and settlement which are ultimately affirming and reassuring. For a long time, however, these were not the way Chinese-European couples and their families were imagined.

Historiography

The history of the Chinese in Australia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has long been written as a history of men without families. Because historically there were small numbers of migrant Chinese women in the Australian colonies, it has been assumed that for most Chinese men there was little or no chance of having what might be termed a ‘normal family life’, that they lived for the most part without

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female companionship and that their only real opportunities to form a family came with a return to China or, in rarer instances, in the migration of a Chinese wife. CF Yong, for example, wrote that ‘the most appalling feature of Chinese communities was a lack of family life’; Kathryn Cronin has written of Chinese men in the colonies ‘bereft of female or family companionship’; Vivien Suet-Cheng Burrage has claimed that the ‘lack of family life’ was ‘a tragic element, fundamentally detrimental to the normal, healthy running of the [Chinese] community’; and Weston Bate has stated that Chinese men were unable to ‘participate in the forward-looking, family-making life’ of the colonies because they migrated without women.  

Until recently, scant attention has been given to the lives of the, admittedly few, Chinese women who were part of the Australian Chinese community – as wives, mothers, daughters, servants and workers – or to those of non-Chinese women who became part of Chinese families and communities through the formation of intimate relationships with Chinese men and the mothering of half-Chinese children. There has also been little consideration of the ways in which Chinese men overseas remained an integral part of their families in China or of familial connections between men overseas. What has resulted from this oversight is a significant gap in the historiography of the Chinese in Australia concerning the domestic and familial lives of Chinese migrants and Australian-born Chinese. In the standard texts on Chinese Australian history, domestic life and familial relationships appear as mere footnotes to histories of race relations and, when they are discussed, Chinese women and the white and other non-Chinese partners of Chinese men and their families are primarily seen as oddities and exceptions in a population of single men.


32 For a recent example of how women in Chinese communities have been overlooked, see Michael Williams, *Chinese Settlement in NSW: A Thematic History – A Report for the NSW Heritage Office*, September 1999, available online at URL: www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/12_index, accessed 8 November 2005. Rather than writing women into his thematic study, Williams includes only two paragraphs in a separate section on ‘Women’ while also stating that they concern the ‘greatest gap in our knowledge’.

33 See, for example, Bon-wai Chou, ‘The sojourning attitude and the economic decline of Chinese society in Victoria, 1860s–1930s’, in Paul Macgregor (ed.), *Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South*
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**Early studies**

Geoffrey Oddie’s 1959 masters thesis on the Chinese in Victoria was the first study to consider the familial life of the Chinese in Australia, or rather the ‘lack’ of it. Noting the small number of Chinese women in the colony, Oddie attributed the apparent ‘high rate of lunacy amongst Chinese residents’ to sexual privation and the lack of a stable family life, discounting the possibility or likelihood of intermarriage with white women but including discussion of white prostitutes who worked among the Chinese population. Oddie concluded that rates of intermarriage with white women were very slow, a fact which he saw as retarding the process of ‘assimilation’ of Chinese into Australian society.\(^{34}\) Intermarriage was similarly used as a marker of Chinese ‘assimilation’ in other early studies of the Chinese in Australia by CF Yong and CY Choi.\(^{35}\) In *The New Gold Mountain*, Yong argued that there was insufficient evidence to show that the Chinese had intermarried ‘to any great extent’ and that this meant that the Chinese were not extensively assimilated.\(^{36}\) Choi’s *Chinese Migration and Settlement in Australia* provided a more detailed investigation of Chinese-European intermarriage after the turn of the twentieth century, but his conclusion was similar—that while intermarriage resulted from the small number of Chinese women in the colonies, considering the number of early Chinese migrants who were ‘at risk’ of it, the numbers who did, in fact, intermarry were very small.\(^{37}\)

The second group of scholars to attend to the question of relations between Chinese men and white women in the Australian colonies placed them within the broader

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context of race relations, of white reactions to the Chinese presence and the
development of anti-Chinese legislation. With less focus on intermarriage as such and
more on white responses to immorality, prostitution, the seduction of white women
and opium addiction, Ann Curthoys, Kathryn Cronin and Andrew Markus explored
how fears of racial mixing were central to white reactions to Chinese immigration.

Curthoys traced the ebbs and flows of white responses to the Chinese presence
between the 1850s and 1880s, highlighting the place fears of sexual relationships
between white women and Chinese held in the minds of policy makers and other
white commentators. Cronin wrote of how ‘Chinese sexuality became immorality’,
and she identified that one of the dominant stereotypes of Chinese men was that of
‘Ah Sin’—debauched, lustful and dangerous to white women, characteristics which
came to represent the whole of the Chinese community. She also made reference to
white wives of prominent Chinese men. Markus’ comparative work on Australia
and California made the important observation that in spite of widespread
disapproval of sexual relations between Chinese men and white women in Australia,
social taboos such as those in California did not emerge in southern Australia and
relationships continued to be formed. Markus also placed a different value on the
numbers of marriages between Chinese men and white women in Australia—while
Oddie had seen them as ‘insignificant’, Markus noted that they were much higher
than those in California. Writing at a similar time, Charles Price noted in 1974 that
‘some single Chinese married European girls’—those who were wealthy traders like
Quong Tart, those on isolated stations and farms who married domestic servants or

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41 Cronin refers to Mary Ann Prussia, the wife of Lowe Kong Meng, and ‘the European wife’ of James Lamsey. Cronin, *Colonial Casualties*, pp. 26-28. She also includes a picture of an unnamed ‘Bendigo farmer and his family’, which shows a Chinese man with his white wife and their two children, but she provides no further details of their identity or their significance in her study, p. 25.

those who met white women in city Chinatowns or country camps. He also noted the
growth of a mixed Anglo-Chinese population in the colonies, of whom some married
‘white’ and were absorbed into the European population and others became part of
the Australian Chinese community.43

While significant and ground-breaking in many regards, these early studies of the
Chinese in Australia were aimed at too broad a level to deal with individuals, families
and communities in any detail and therefore mostly overlooked the presence of
Chinese families in the colonies, in particular the numbers of Chinese-European
couples and their children. The early studies relied heavily on easily accessible and
available sources such as government reports and inquiries and newspaper articles,
and hence were primarily concerned with discussing stereotypes of domestic life in
Australia’s Chinese communities—Chinese ‘immorality’, the desperate character of
white women living among the Chinese and the scarcity of ‘real’ families for Chinese
men in the Australian colonies—rather than delving deeper into Chinese
communities themselves. This is particularly the case for less scholarly discussions of
the Chinese presence.44 For the most part they maintained the idea that Chinese
wives, mothers and daughters were most notable by their absence, that intimate
relationships between Chinese men and white women were uncommon, and those
which were formed on a long-term and continuing basis were exceptional.

The sources relied upon by these early studies, for the most part written by white
middle-class men, provided an overwhelming voice of opposition to the likelihood or
possibility of intimate relationships forming between white women and Chinese men
in anything but the most desperate or exceptional circumstances. By failing to
critically examine sources for the moral and racial biases of their time, scholars have


44 Dinah Hales has included a selection of quotations from popular histories showing the stereotypical
portrayal of white women involved with Chinese men. The general tone is that these women were
lazy, immoral, drunken, rowdy, opium-addicted—ideas taken directly from their nineteenth-century
sources. See Dinah Hales, ‘Local histories: Chinese-European families of central western New South
Wales, 1850 – 80’, Journal of Australian Colonial History, vol. 6, 2004, pp. 95-6 and Between two cultures:
Chinese-European families of central western New South Wales, HIST 397 research project, University
of New England, 2002, p. 4. This stereotype is explored further in Section 1 of this thesis.
repeated and compounded ideas of Chinese ‘vice’ and ‘immorality’ concerning white women. CF Yong is particularly guilty of this, uncritically adopting the nineteenth-century vocabulary used by commentators disapproving of intimate relationships between white women and Chinese men. As Jan Ryan has noted, Yong supported the idea of great Chinese ‘immorality’ in the colonies caused by a lack of family life, proved by the fact that Chinese men frequented brothels on the goldfields, and he gave credence to the idea that the Chinese were frequent ‘seducers’ of white girls.45 By maintaining ideas of difference found in nineteenth-century sources—that is, by continuing to imagine that there were fundamental and irrevocable differences between Chinese and white colonists, differences based, if not in race and biology, then in culture, habits, language and custom—scholars have been blinded to the possibilities of intimate interactions between Chinese men and white women in the Australian colonies. This has led to comments such as that by Jean Gittins, herself the product of an Anglo-Chinese family, that ‘few European women would wish to marry a Chinese, nor did the Chinese contemplate taking on European wives. They would prefer to do without.’46

A new starting point
Moving on from these early studies, research on the Chinese in Australia during the 1990s made further, although scattered, contributions to a history of Chinese-European relationships and Anglo-Chinese families. Jan Ryan, in Ancestors: Chinese in Colonial Australia, demonstrated how immigration records and birth, death and marriage records could be used to trace information about the family lives of Chinese and her research suggested the significance of relationships with non-Chinese women in Chinese communities.47 Drawing on both archival sources and oral histories, Shirley Fitzgerald’s Red Tape, Gold Scissors injected the history of Sydney’s Chinese communities with individuals whose personalities, thoughts, motivations and voices

47 See Ryan, Ancestors, pp. 80-1. Ryan notes, for example, that there were significantly more half-Chinese children born in late nineteenth-century Western Australia than full-Chinese.
appear in their dealings with each other and with the Europeans with whom they shared their city. Women and families, including those of mixed race, feature alongside early indentured labourers, wealthy merchants and market gardeners. In 1995, the proceedings of an early conference on Chinese-Australian history appeared and in it a number of papers which suggested that families, including those formed by white women and Chinese men, were not such an unusual part of Chinese community life in nineteenth-century Australia. Eric Rolls’ extensive but disorganised two-volume study, Sojourners and Citizens, published in 1992 and 1996 contained numerous references to interracial relationships and Anglo-Chinese Australians gathered from a wide range of sources throughout Australia. Although Rolls made the valuable point that ‘the majority of Chinese who married in Australia married European women’, he still returned to the standard claim that ‘many of them were Irish girls who could not read or write and who otherwise faced bleak marriages with brutal European labourers’. Despite growing evidence to the contrary, for the most part discussions of relationships between white women and Chinese men continued to rely on the well-known stereotypes, as Rolls did, and to feature families as only a small part of a larger narrative.

What studies such as these suggested most strongly was that there was a history of relationships between white women and Chinese men which could be explored outside dominant nineteenth-century discourses of immorality, prostitution and

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50 Eric Rolls, Sojourners, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1992 and Citizens, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1996. On Anglo-Chinese families see, for example, references in Sojourners to William Kinoon, his European wife and their two sons (p. 477), Sandy Williams and his two white wives (p. 491), Low Yan Fat and his English wife and child (p. 492), James Ah Catt and his family (p. 492) and Joseph Tear Tack, his Victorian wife and their children (p. 493).

51 Rolls, Citizens, p. 185.
seduction. By focusing on communities and individuals, and by looking at sources which revealed the complexities of people’s actions and motivations, these studies provided a starting point for the growth of research on women and Chinese families in southern Australia which has followed. In 1993, Henry Chan called for research into women, marriage and the family in Chinese communities in Australia, saying that these were topics ‘hardly touched upon yet’, probably ‘because of the assumption that there would not be a women [sic] or family history given the demographics of the nineteenth-century Chinese communities in Australia’.\footnote{HD Min-hsi \textit{[Henry] Chan}, ‘A decade of achievement and future directions in research on the history of the Chinese in Australia’, in Macgregor (ed.), \textit{Histories of the Chinese in Australasia and the South Pacific}, p. 422.} In the decade since, Chan’s challenge has been taken up by a number of historians focusing particularly on the lives of women in Chinese families and communities, as well as by others whose research, while not directly dealing with women and the family, nonetheless has contributed to the opening up of the field.

\textit{Studies of communities and individuals}

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Wilton has woven stories of women and families into her narrative and sourced numerous photographs which clearly show the presence of women in the Australian Chinese community. Even a 1915 photograph of twelve men and boys, all relatives of Percy Young of Glen Innes, suggests a female presence when we know that the five boys are Young’s Australian-born sons.\(^{55}\) Wilton’s research has also shown that a number of the ‘Chinese’ families she has worked with count among their ancestors a white woman, and the *Golden Threads* database includes information on more than twenty Anglo-Chinese families in rural NSW.\(^{56}\)

While Wilton’s work aims to cover the whole of regional NSW, studies based around more particular locales are also proving fruitful.\(^{57}\) Sophie Couchman’s detailed research on Melbourne’s Chinatown, Little Bourke Street, has shed light on both the Chinese and Anglo-Chinese families who lived there, as well as revealing the other interactions between white women and Chinese women and men in an urban locale, as has Janice Wood’s work on the nineteenth-century Chinese community in Sydney’s Haymarket and Surry Hills.\(^{58}\) Alan Mayne’s study of Hill End has uncovered interactions between Chinese and whites which, he writes, imply ‘a permeability in

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personal relationships between Chinese men and European women that contradicted the monocultural expectations of European colonists.\(^59\)

Work by historical archaeologists such as Jane Lydon and Barry McGowan on the Chinese presence in specific sites throughout NSW is revealing the close interactions between members of Chinese and white communities and their formation of relationships of many kinds, including of a sexual and familial nature.\(^60\) Lydon’s study of the Rocks focuses on the cultural exchange and cross-cultural communication between Chinese and white residents and includes discussion of intimate interracial relationships, based on the findings of the NSW 1891 Royal Commission into Alleged Chinese Gambling and Immorality.\(^61\) McGowan’s investigations of the Braidwood goldfields show the interactions and mutual dependency which developed between whites and Chinese who lived in close proximity to each other in mining communities.\(^62\)

‘Qiaoxiang’ approach

Henry Chan has repeatedly argued that one area lacking attention in the study of the Chinese in Australia and New Zealand is the ‘alliances’ Chinese men made with non-Chinese women and, asserting the centrality of the family to Chinese migration

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\(^{60}\) Work by other historical archaeologists is suggesting likewise. See, for example, the work of Lindsay Smith on southern NSW and emerging studies from Victoria. Lindsay Smith, *The Chinese of Kiandra, New South Wales: A Report to the Heritage Office of the New South Wales Department of Urban Development and Planning*, Heritage Office—NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, Sydney, 1997 and Cold hard cash: A study of Chinese ethnicity in archaeology at Kiandra, New South Wales, Masters thesis, Australian National University, 1998. On Victoria see, for example, Anna Kyi, ‘Unravelling the mystery of the Woah Hawp Canton Quartz Mining Company, Ballarat’, *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, vol. 6, 2004, pp. 59-78; and Keir Reeves, James Acoy, his trial, the Chinese poll tax and cross-cultural interaction on the Mount Alexander diggings during the 1850s and 1860s, unpublished paper presented at the International Conference on Quong Tart and His Times, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, July 2004.


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practices, he has also argued that the study of such relationships needs to be taken out of its assumed context of ‘nineteenth-century Victorian notions of “respectability” and returned to China and Chinese, and *qiaoxiang* traditions and family practices’. The only major study on the *qiaoxiang* ties of Chinese in Australia, Michael Williams’ doctoral thesis on the connections between the Zhongshan area of Long Du, and NSW, Hawaii and San Francisco, points to the ways in which a transnational ‘view from the village’ can broaden our understanding of Chinese family life in Australia. Williams notes the different forms families could take and different migration strategies they adopted, including the return of Chinese men with their white wives and mixed race children to China after a period of time in countries like Australia. The final section of this thesis, *Connections*, which examines the experiences of white wives and Anglo-Chinese children in China, builds on Williams’ work and that of American scholar Adam McKeown who has similarly noted the presence of foreign wives of Chinese men in China. McKeown’s idea of the transnational overseas Chinese family has also provided an important framework for positioning the experiences of Anglo-Chinese families which do not fit with traditional ideas of migrant settlement and acculturation.

**Chinese-European couples and their mixed families**

Recognising the fact that more families in nineteenth-century Australian Chinese communities were formed across boundaries of race than within them, researchers began to turn their attention to the study of Chinese-European couples and their mixed race families in the Australian colonies at the same time as work began on this thesis. These studies follow the pioneering work of Morag Loh, who twenty years ago

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undertook the first research in southern Australia which focused particularly on women in Chinese families. Loh examined the experiences of migrant Chinese women, European women married to Chinese men and their daughters and, basing her study on contact with descendants of these families, she was able to examine their lives and experiences from outside the discourses dominant in nineteenth-century sources. Following Loh’s family-based approach have been Sandi Robb on north Queensland and Dinah Hales on central western NSW.

Sandi Robb’s detailed and innovative research, which involved over fifty oral history interviews and use of genealogical sources, set out to challenge the myths and stereotypes surrounding relationships between white women and Chinese men and to provide a comparison for Queensland with the southern colonies. While suggesting ways in which white women made active choices in forming relationships with Chinese men and after outlining certain positive aspects of interracial relationships for white women, Robb concluded that white partners of Chinese men and their mixed race children continued to face marginality within the communities in which they lived, both Chinese and white. She wrote that ‘these women could never elevate themselves beyond the stigma of living with a Chinese man, and nor could their children, who were forever betwixt and between in the category of “half-caste”’.

Dinah Hales similarly framed her study on Anglo-Chinese families in central western NSW as a challenge to the abounding stereotypes about interracial relationships and the white women who took part in them, her methodology reflecting her scientific background. Hales compiled ‘empirical data’—genealogical information about

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69 Hales, *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, and Between two cultures.
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white wives and their Chinese husbands—to ‘test the validity of the various negative stereotypes common in the secondary literature’. Hales, Between two cultures, p. 7. She made contacts with descendants of Chinese-European couples and the most detailed biographical study she presents is that of two Chinese-European couples who are part of her own family’s history. The detail Hales uncovered on the lives and backgrounds of her subjects is illuminating and her study provides an interesting approach to how to write a history of subjects whose lives were overshadowed by negative discourses. However, by seeking to investigate and disprove the stereotype of white partners of Chinese men as ignorant, Irish prostitutes, Robb and Hales’ arguments essentially remain a struggle within the bounds of nineteenth-century morality itself—were white partners of Chinese men bad (prostitutes and ‘fallen’ women, opium addicts and drunks) or were they good (responsible, respectable wives and mothers)? They do not engage with the stereotypes in a truly meaningful way or consider how those stereotypical portrayals emerged or why they have been so persistent.

The approach taken by Pauline Rule in Victoria is more successful in engaging with and exploring stereotypical portrayals of interracial couples than the ‘prove or disprove’ approach of Robb and Hales. Rule’s research focuses on Irish women who formed intimate relationships with Chinese men in colonial Victoria, and she has approached her subject by reconstructing the lives of these women from court records and regional newspapers. Her work has provided a valuable contribution to understanding the creation of the stereotypical image of the ‘Chinaman’s wife’ as poor, illiterate and Irish and of the reputation for ‘immorality’ suffered by Chinese camps in the colonies. She has also pointed to the transnational nature of some Anglo-Chinese families.

70 Historians of convict women in Australia fell into a similar trap until the work of more recent scholars, such as Joy Damousi and Kay Daniels, provided alternative ways in which to explore their lives. See, Joy Damousi, Depraved and Disorderly: Female Convicts, Sexuality and Gender in Colonial Australia, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997; and Kay Daniels, Convict Women, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1998.

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Jan Ryan has focused on a different aspect of the lives of white partners of Chinese men— their treatment within frameworks of policing and the law. Based on research in Western Australia court records, Ryan has asserted that political and legal deterents actively prevented liaisons between white women and Chinese men in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Australia. She has stated that ‘any legitimate and intimate coupling of Chinese with “white” women resulted in trial, not only by the public and press, but also by the police and jury. Marriage was completely censured.’ While stating that some white women made active and positive choices when they formed relationships with Chinese men, through examining the treatment of white partners of Chinese men before the courts, Ryan has concluded that these women faced a process of ‘orientalization’ because of their interracial relationships.74

Central to this emerging body of scholarship on Chinese-European couples and their families has been the contribution of family and community historians. They have made available the fruits of their tenacious and dedicated research in the form of detailed biographical and genealogical information, work sometimes undertaken over decades.75 They have also offered valuable insights into families ‘from the inside’ and have made public personal and private stories, both positive and negative. One example of this is the work of Monica Tankey. Her research into her family’s hidden Chinese past began in 1972 and in the early 1980s she published a number of articles outlining her family’s history as well as the process of discovery she undertook. She commented that her own family history was, perhaps, ‘exceptional’; yet during her

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75 See references above for contributions of family and community historians to the study of Anglo-Chinese families in Australia. Mention also needs to be made of the work of James Ng in New Zealand, a medical doctor by profession, whose monumental study includes interesting discussion of Anglo-Chinese families in New Zealand. See James Ng, *Windows on a Chinese Past: How the Cantonese Goldseekers and Their Heirs Settled in New Zealand*, four volumes, Otago Heritage Books, Dunedin, 1993–1999. See vol. 2, chapter 5, ‘Mixed Marriages’, in particular.
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research she encountered many other examples of ‘Anglo-Chinese integration’. ‘The products of this integration are alive and well and are going about their business throughout Australia’, she wrote. Another excellent example of the contribution of family historians is the work of Dawn Wong on her great grandmother and great grandfather, Amelia Hackney and Wong Sat. After more than twenty years of research, Wong has contributed to the permanent Powerhouse Museum exhibition on the Wong family store at Crookwell and has presented a number of papers on her family at seminars and conferences. Historian Grace Karskens has commented how learning of family stories during her study of the Rocks enabled her to become free from the otherwise overwhelming discourses of those standing outside. Family historians researching their Chinese connections have a similarly important part to play in bringing Chinese-European couples and their Anglo-Chinese families out of the shadows and in contributing to a history that does not just present a ‘view from the outside’.

It is significant to note that most studies to date, including this one, concentrate on intimate relationships between Chinese men and white women in the southern colonies, rather than those with Aboriginal women. Certainly it is Chinese-European relationships which appear most obviously in NSW and Victorian sources, but recent research has demonstrated that intimate relationships did form between Aboriginal women and Chinese men in the south. A much more significant body of research

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79 See, for example, Peter Read, ‘Aborigines, Chinese and the Bicentennial: The Inverell District Bicentennial Memorial’, in Penny Edwards and Shen Yuanfang (eds), *Lost in the Whitewash: Aboriginal-
exists about interracial relationships in northern Australia, and while it can be argued, as Henry Reynolds does, that there were two very different Australias in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—the south and the north—with very different cultures and histories, the implications of the history of Chinese-Aboriginal relationships in the north for the study of the Chinese family in southern Australia need further exploration. Similarly, research on the history of relationships between white women and Aboriginal men is raising interesting questions about a different group of white women who chose partners across the racial divide.

Sources

Every historical study is shaped by the sources used in its creation and the approach of its creator, and this thesis is no exception. My subjects—white women, their Chinese partners and children—are documented and commented upon in a wide range of sources. Much of the most easily accessible and most obvious of this material has been used in earlier studies of the Chinese in Australia—government reports and inquiries, newspapers and contemporary publications like the *Bulletin*, for instance. The Chinese were a visible minority in colonial Australia and their activities, particularly those involving white women, caught the attention of white commentators, almost all of whom were men. Being such a curiosity and a concern to those both shaping and recording colonial life means that there is also material about Chinese-European couples and their families in many less obvious places, hidden in

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published and unpublished accounts by white colonists. Both the obvious and more hidden material present certain challenges for the researcher—references are often scattered, a few lines here and there in the midst of discussions of other things; generalised and anonymous characterisations are presented instead of named individuals; the majority of accounts are coloured by race, class and gender biases; and they typically present images of lives lived outside the bounds of respectable society.

I have outlined above how some earlier studies have taken these nineteenth-century writings on the Chinese and interracial relationships at face value, thereby perpetuating their biases and prejudices. This thesis has attempted to read the sources already used by others ‘against the grain’ and to gather from them different things. For example, in different parts of the thesis I explore particular aspects of my topic using the same set of sources. One newspaper article might be used to discuss how white journalists imagined interactions between white women and Chinese men, as well as to provide details of the conditions in which such couples lived. One government file might reveal the prejudices of white officials in their dealings with Anglo-Chinese Australians, but might also provide detailed information about an individual and their family not available elsewhere.

I have had to look further than the most accessible sources, too, to locate material which gives a fuller account of the lives of my subjects. Records created in the administration of customs and immigration laws have proved fruitful, as have records of birth, death and marriage. Correspondence with descendants and access to family histories, family archives and photographs have provided ways into the lives of my subjects available nowhere else. To open my study to possibilities other than those presented in the writings of white, middle-class men—journalists, policy makers and bureaucrats fixated with the more colourful aspects of the lives of mixed race couples—I have chosen not to make extensive use of court records, even though they could have yielded much material.83 I make no apology for the fact that I sought

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83 Examples of studies based on court records that include discussion of intimate relationships between white women and Chinese men include Ryan, *Journal of Australian Studies*; Heather Holst, ‘Equal before the law? The Chinese in the nineteenth-century Castlemaine police courts’, *Journal of Australian Colonial*
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Evidence of lives which show that interracial sex was not just the preserve of the susceptible, the recalcitrant and the marginal.

Even with the help of family historians and genealogists, detailed portraits of Chinese-European couples and their children in Australia’s southern colonies are not common. First-hand accounts, in the form of letters, diaries or reminiscences are even rarer. Speculation and imagination are always part of the reconstruction of the lives of historical subjects whose daily goings-on have not resulted in copious records, and the individual and family portraits painted in this thesis are no exception. I have, therefore, taken the liberty of using particularly the writings of Anglo-Chinese from other settler nations as examples to shed light on the experiences of those in Australia. New Zealand, Canada and the United States are countries whose histories of both British colonisation and Chinese immigration have parallels to Australia’s own and, while each place exhibits its own particularities, elements of their histories such as the desire for a ‘white’ nation, fears of racial mixing, and discriminatory anti-Chinese legislation are common to all.

Thesis outline
In this thesis I have chosen to examine Chinese-European relationships and Anglo-Chinese families in terms of a series of images of history and culture, as a threshold between two larger worlds. My approach is thematic and topical rather than the usual linear one. I believe that taking this approach provides a way to explore the varied and disparate facets of my topic, allowing a range of questions to be asked and considered.

Section 1: Imaginings looks at the political and cultural proscription of intimate relationships between white women and Chinese men in the southern colonies of Australia from the 1850s to the turn of the century. It considers the ways in which white policy makers and commentators struggled over the control of Chinese sexuality, particularly the possibility of sex between Chinese men and white women.

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By examining parliamentary debates, government inquiries, newspapers and popular literature, it examines how white male middle-class Australians imagined interracial sex and how they constructed imagined racial and social boundaries between whites and Chinese living in the colonies.

**Section 2: Traces** examines the lived experience of white women and their Chinese partners in colonial NSW as an attempt to move beyond the stereotypical portrayals of Chinese-European couples found in both nineteenth-century sources and in subsequent secondary studies. Based around a sample of almost four hundred marriages between white women and Chinese men in colonial NSW, it looks at the ‘reality’ of the lives of white women and their Chinese partners, as individuals and as families—who they were, where they lived, how they met and formed relationships, how they faced discrimination and how they lived within communities which were known to be overtly racist. It aims to flesh out and humanize white women and their Chinese partners as historical subjects and to suggest the different ways they interacted with one another in the context of their communities and society as a whole.

**Section 3: Interactions** shifts in focus from Chinese-European couples to the families they formed. It looks at interactions between Anglo-Chinese families and agencies of government, using the case studies of education, child welfare and nationality to consider how discursive concern about the ‘half-caste Chinese’ played out in dealings between authorities and mixed race families. *Interactions* considers how, because ‘respectable’ Anglo-Chinese families were thought to raise children who would be absorbed unproblematically into the white community, it was those families outside the bounds of respectable white society—the poor and marginalised—who primarily were the focus of concern.

**Section 4: Belonging** considers the question of identity for Anglo-Chinese Australians, the children of white women and Chinese men. It explores how they negotiated being of mixed race in Australia and China and how they dealt with the exclusive racial and cultural boundaries established by both the white and Chinese communities.

*Belonging* looks at factors influencing the formation of identity (language, family
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culture, the role of parents, education, visits to China and social group) and considers how Anglo-Chinese Australians blurred cultural and racial boundaries by displaying ‘cultural competence’ in either or both of the cultures of their parents.

Section 5: Connections argues that first-generation Anglo-Chinese families were, in many instances, transnational families which maintained connections with China, as well as creating lives based in Australia. It challenges the assumption of earlier studies of Chinese-European intermarriage which asserted that intermarriage was a sign of assimilation and the forgetting of China as ‘home’. Connections looks at Anglo-Chinese families who travelled to China for short or long stays, considering why they went, where they went and the challenges faced by both white wives and Australian-born children in ‘foreign’ surroundings. It looks particularly at the difficulties faced by Anglo-Chinese families in China, the conflicts created by two very different ideas of family and the cross-cultural negotiations necessary in the blending of these family cultures.